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Martin Buber and the Bruderhof Communities *

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Introduction

Martin Buber needs no general introduction. One of the most significant intellectual figures of this century, he has been the subject of biographies and detailed analyses, and he continues to be the subject of articles exploring aspects of his thinking in learned journals. This article proposes to explore an aspect of his thinking and his life: his relationship to a particular movement of people who have chosen to live in a full community. (Full community is defined here as a group of people who own all their goods in common and work in common using productive resources that are owned by them communally.)

This relationship to communal living is interesting to students of Buber for several reasons. In common with his great friend Gustav Landauer, Martin Buber was a powerful advocate of the notion of living in such communities. Arguably this advocacy was the cornerstone of his distinctive socialist viewpoint. It was most clearly presented in his book *Paths in Utopia*. There he declared:

Faced with this medley of correct premises and absurd conclusions I declare in favour of a rebirth of the commune.¹

This declaration is made towards the end of the book. In the Epilogue, 'An Experiment That Did Not Fail', Buber shows that what he had in mind when he made it was the Full Co-operative, which combined Production and Consumption, in a Village Commune. The experiment that had not failed, of course, was the Jewish Village Commune—the Kibbutz movement.²

What will be shown in this essay is that Buber was also familiar with another Communal Movement, one that was founded in Germany in 1920 and that was a specifically Christian organisation. Buber will be shown to have had contact with the movement in a number of ways, including actually visiting it. This movement, the Bruderhof, has incidentally had a lengthy and continuing relationship with the Kibbutz movement, a relationship that has been chronicled authoritatively by the Kibbutz scholar, Professor Yaacov Oved.³

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¹ M. Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (1958), p. 136.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 140–141.

³ Y. Oved, *Distant Brothers* (1993). This short book is exclusively concerned with the Kibbutz/Bruderhof relationship, and thus touches upon the intellectual aspects of the relationship that include the influences of thinkers such as Buber and Landauer.

The Bruderhof does require rather more by way of introduction than Martin Buber. Founded in 1920 by a group of young people connected with the German Student Christian Movement, it is still in existence today. In fact, today it is larger than it ever has been previously, having nine communities: six in the northeast USA, two in Europe and one in Nigeria. Rather more than 2,000 adults and children live in these communities.

The first site of the Bruderhof was Sannerz in Germany. This remained its only community until expansion required a move to the Rhön Bruderhof at Fulda in 1926. In the late 1920s the group established contact with the centuries-old Anabaptist group called the Hutterian Brethren, based, after much wandering, in the mid-western states of the USA and provinces of Canada. This connection has been important in several ways. Firstly, it has shaped the particular variety of Christianity espoused by the Bruderhof, which is firmly within the type known as Anabaptist. The Bruderhof has several features which are clearly Anabaptist: adult baptism, pacifism and a refusal to participate in the mechanism of the state (its members do not participate in politics, for instance). Their life in full community mirrors a very longstanding feature of the Hutterian trend in Anabaptism. Secondly, they have had a direct relationship with the Hutterian Brethren since the visit to all the Hutterian colonies in North America of the leading thinker of the Bruderhof, Eberhard Arnold (1883–1935), in 1930 and 1931. Thirdly, the Bruderhof's publishing wing, Plough Publishing House, produces a number of books which reproduce important texts and letters from earlier periods of (especially Hutterian) Anabaptism.

Following the advent of the Nazi regime and the death of Eberhard Arnold, the Bruderhof entered a phase of enforced relocation. They briefly regrouped in Liechtenstein in 1937 following the dissolution of the Rhön Bruderhof. They then moved to England, where the Cotswold Bruderhof was founded in Wiltshire. This expanded, and the neighbouring Oaksey Bruderhof was also set up. However, the community had to leave Britain in 1941, given the large number of German citizens it contained and the absolute pacifism of all members. Three British members were left behind, and they eventually formed the core of the Wheathill Bruderhof in Shropshire. The rest went to Paraguay, which was the centre of the movement for the next twenty years. In the mid 1950s interest in the USA permitted the formation of the Woodcrest Bruderhof, and there were also expansions in Germany, Britain and Uruguay. However, the movement went into crisis in 1961, and lost a good proportion of its membership (though some returned over a period of years). The Bruderhof consolidated in the northeast USA, and its current communities in Europe are relatively recent products of the overcoming of the 1961 crisis.⁴

Throughout its history, the Bruderhof has held that Christianity requires a life lived in full community. It has been particularly inspired in this belief by the Sermon on the Mount (see the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapters 5 to 7) and the

⁴ The Bruderhof has told its own story in two books: Emmy Arnold, *Torches Together* (1971), which deals with the period to 1937, and M. Mow, *Torches Rekindled* (1989), which focuses on the mid 1950s to the mid 1970s, but also throws some light on the Paraguayan period.

accounts of the early Christian community given in the Acts of the Apostles (especially chapters 2 and 4). The movement has always been aware of trends in Christianity that have held to this vision—Mormonism, Anabaptism and others. However, it should be understood that many of the Bruderhofers who were active in the community in the 1920s had a background in the German Youth Movement of that epoch, and that several of them—including Eberhard Arnold—were familiar with, and appreciative of, the writings of Gustav Landauer.

The Bruderhof has been a prolific publisher of material setting out the rationale for their way of life and exhorting others to consider their message. Useful starting points for an understanding of the Bruderhof's outlook can be found in three publications by Eberhard Arnold. The first of these is the pamphlet *Why we live in Community*, which very briefly and clearly sets out Arnold's view on the issue. The second is the book *Salt and Light*. This is a series of lectures and articles by Arnold on the subject of the Sermon on the Mount, and shows the centrality of that text to the Bruderhof. Finally, there is *God's Revolution*, a book edited by the Hutterian Society of Brothers and the eminent Mennonite thinker John Howard Yoder. This consists of extracts from Arnold's work, arranged in a systematic manner. The extracts mainly come from talks given at the Bruderhof in the 1920s and 1930s. This book affords a clear, thematic understanding of Arnold's viewpoint on a range of issues.

Buber and the Bruderhof

How was Buber connected to the Bruderhof Movement? Clearly, there was the potential for direct contact between Buber and the community at Sannerz and later the Rhön Bruderhof, given the location of the Bruderhof in the 1920s and 1930s and its relative proximity to Buber's home at the time. So, we can examine not only intellectual links between Buber and the Bruderhof movement, but also concrete links between them.

To commence, then, such concrete examples of contact—in the form of direct personal contacts and then of letters—will be examined. Following this an assessment of intellectual links, in the shape of the impact of Buber on the Bruderhof and vice versa, will be considered.

Turning first to direct personal contact, there are a number of instances that can be considered which show that Martin Buber had contact with the community. In the first instance, we can show that Buber actually visited Sannerz quite soon after its foundation.

Emmy Arnold in *Torches Together* notes regarding the summer of 1921 that 'There were other visitors during this summer too, men like Theo Spira, . . . and the Swedish Nicolai Scheiermann, who came together with Dr Buchholz from Soden-Salmünster. One day these two visited with Martin Buber. I think.'⁵ However, one of the members of the community was being baptized on the morning of the visit, which meant the household were all out that

morning. Emmy Arnold's memory of this is supported by Walter Hüsey, who in interview also noted Buber's visit and that there had been an event that did not allow the community to have as much contact as it would have liked on that occasion of Buber's visit.⁶ In connection with this point it is perhaps worth noting that Friedman mentions Theo Spira as a colleague of Buber's in a circle known as the 'Frankfurt Union', which stressed a political attitude stemming from conscience.⁷ Walter Hüsey also recalled in interview an instance when two of Eberhard Arnold's sons, Heini and Hardi Arnold, travelled down to Switzerland and visited Buber at his house at Heppenheim an der Bergstrasse.⁸ Unfortunately, little more is known of this instance of contact.

In *Brothers Unite*, we find in Eberhard Arnold's diary for his trip to the Hutterian colonies of the USA and Canada in 1930 a reaction to some news from the Rhön Bruderhof. The entry is dated 5 August 1930: 'I was astonished and surprised that Erich [Mohr] won over not only A. Paquet and F. Siegmund-Schulze but also Martin Buber and the German Quakers for the work week.'⁹

Moreover, it is interesting to examine the specific case of Hans Meier, a Bruderhof member of Swiss origin, who arrived at the Bruderhof on the day that Hitler took power (although there had been prior contacts).¹⁰ Meier had in fact had some contacts with Martin Buber previous to his joining the Bruderhof. He had been a member of a radical Swiss Youth Movement group called the Freischar (this appears not to be the same organisation as the German Youth Movement group of the same name). Amongst other activities this group went to educational meetings held by the Christian Socialist thinker Leonhard Ragaz. According to Meier, Martin Buber was an occasional visitor to these meetings.¹¹ In his autobiographical accounts, Meier makes it clear that he was present at the Whitsun 1928 Religious Socialist Conference that took place at Heppenheim.¹² Interestingly, Buber himself quotes from his own contribution at this conference in *Paths in Utopia*.¹³ (It appears from Yaacov Oved's account that Meier had in fact first met Buber at a Christian Socialist conference in 1924 in Zurich.¹⁴)

However, perhaps the most moving instance of Hans Meier's contact with Martin Buber is related in Yaacov Oved's *Distant Brothers*:

Neither did the Bruderhof hesitate to keep in touch with Jewish circles and notables. Hans Meier relates how in 1936 he and several others paid a visit to

⁶ Interview of Walter Hüsey by M. Tyldesley, Darvell Bruderhof, 5 April 1993. A copy of this is lodged with Darvell Archives, and copies are available to interested parties from the author.

⁷ M. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work: The Early Years 1878-1923* (1982), pp. 277-278.

⁸ Interview of Walter Hüsey, details as at note 6 above.

⁹ Hutterian Brethren, *Brothers Unite* (1988), p. 102.

¹⁰ H. Meier, *Hans Meier Tells His Story: To A Friend* (1979), p. 6.

¹¹ H. Meier, *Salange das Licht brennt* (1991), p. 9.

¹² H. Meier, *Hans Meier Tells His Story: To A Friend* (1979), p. 4, and also see H. Meier, *Salange das Licht brennt* (1991), p. 9.

¹³ M. Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (1958), p. 6.

¹⁴ Y. Oved, *Distant Brothers* (1993), p. 9.

Martin Buber's home. When the latter warned them of the risk, Meier replied, 'We are facing the same danger and have been forbidden to receive guests.' During that visit Buber presented them with his and Franz Rosenberg's [sic] German translation of the Bible.¹⁵

Accordingly, we can see that certainly during the period between the foundation of the community at Samnerz and its removal from Germany and the nearly contemporary removal of Buber from Germany, there was a degree of direct contact between Buber and the community and its members.

Correspondence between Martin Buber and Bruderhofsers

Yaacov Oved has pointed out that there had been a correspondence between Buber and Eberhard Arnold.¹⁶ As he notes, there are extant in the Buber Archive, at the Jewish National and University Library, three letters from Arnold to Buber. These date from 1918, 1921 and 1927. There is also a postcard from Buber to Arnold from 1927 in the Bruderhof Archives. This postcard is almost certainly a reply to the letter from Arnold of 1927.

What do these letters say? Considering them in date order, let us briefly examine their content. The first, namely from Arnold to Buber of 10 December 1918 (obviously before the formation of the community in 1920), is on the notepaper of the Furche Verlag, which Eberhard Arnold worked for at the time. It appears to be a reply to a refusal on Buber's part to undertake some form of request the publishing house had made to him. Arnold notes that he understands that Buber cannot allow anything to stand in the way of his great work at the moment. (Pamela Vermes points out that Buber wrote his outline for *I and Thou* in May 1916, its first rough draft in autumn 1916, and that it reached final form in Spring 1922.¹⁷ It is surely not too fanciful to assume that the 'great work' that could not be interrupted was connected with *I and Thou*.)

Arnold states, further: 'It is especially important to me to form a close working relationship with you. I have always followed your career with great interest and the warmest sympathy, having gained so much inspiration and such great benefit from your work ...'¹⁸

The letter also indicates that Arnold sent Buber a copy of *Die Furche* magazine containing an article Arnold had written about Buber (this will be considered in due course in this piece), and a copy of his book *Inner Land*.

The second letter dates from 9 May 1921, and is on the notepaper of the Neuwerk Verlag Schlüchtern, which was the publishing house that Arnold headed at that time, based at the Samnerz settlement. The context of this letter to Buber is provided by a previous letter that Eberhard Arnold had sent to Karl Joseph Friedrich, a pastor with whom Arnold had some contact.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 13. (The reference to Rosenberg should presumably be to Rosenzweig.)

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 9 and footnote on p. 87 for further information.

¹⁷ Pamela Vermes, *Buber* (1988), p. 39.

¹⁸ Eberhard Arnold to Martin Buber, 10 December 1918. Letter in Buber Archive, Jewish National and University Library, Reference Arc. Ms. Var. 350/70.1. Translation, Roland Crump and M. G. Tyldesley.

The letter was dated 26 August 1920, and in it Arnold offers Friedrich the job—with a sum for expenses—of compiling a book of Gustav Landauer's work.¹⁹ The project had appeared in the letter to Friedrich to be a collection of Landauer's essential texts; passages of his decisive words from both letters and writings. However, by the time of Arnold's letter to Buber, plans seemed to have changed slightly.

The letter to Buber starts: 'We have already long intended to seek personal contact with you, and to discuss with you the publishing of a biography of Landauer that would take the form of a collection of his letters.'²⁰

It appears from the contents of the letter that one of Eberhard Arnold's associates, Otto Herpel, had already had discussions with Buber on this topic, and that further discussions were to be handled by Otto Salomon. It is interesting to note that eight years later in 1929, *Gustav Landauer, Sein Lebensgang in Briefen* appeared, in two volumes, edited by Martin Buber and published by Rütten and Loening Verlag of Frankfurt am Main. It is perhaps now unlikely if we will be able to discover whether Eberhard Arnold played any role in the publication of a book that bears a strong resemblance to the one proposed in the letter from May 1921. (Ruth Link-Salinger refers to notices placed in two newspapers—*Der Syndikalist* and *Münchener Morgenpost*—by Martin Buber requesting letters for the collection. Significantly, the notices were placed in the 12 December 1921 editions of both titles—several months after the letter from Arnold. She also notes letters concerning Buber's plans for a Landauer *Nachlaß* in the *Weltbühne* journal, also in December 1921.²¹)

The third letter, of 10 March 1927, is actually a round-robin letter to a number of people including Martin Buber. It concerns some problems that had arisen between the 'Freusberg Co-operative' and the 'Frankfurt Co-operative'. These problems appear to have centred around a conference the two bodies were proposing. A small group appears to have been given responsibility for aspects of the event, consisting of Hermann Schaft, Allons Paquet, Nicolaus Ehlen, Martin Buber and Eberhard Arnold—all of which suggests that there may have been quite considerable day-to-day contact between Arnold and Buber in the context of these bodies. (It is worth considering whether further investigation might reveal that the 'Frankfurt Co-operative' of this letter was in some way connected to the 'Frankfurt Union' of Friedmann's biography previously referred to. At least one of the persons the round-robin letter was sent to, Allons Paquet, who was part of the small group with Buber and Arnold, is mentioned by Friedman as being a member of the Frankfurt Union.²²)

The crux of Arnold's argument was that 'It is a mistake to look at the life of faith as a separate sphere, which can be put side by side with other separate

¹⁹ Eberhard Arnold to Karl Joseph Friedrich, 26 August 1920. English-language version of letter held at the Darvell Bruderhof Archives.

²⁰ Eberhard Arnold to Martin Buber, 9 May 1921. Buber Archive, Reference Arc. Ms. Var. 350/70.2, trans. Roland Crump and M. G. Tyldesley.

²¹ R. Link-Salinger, *Gustav Landauer, Philosopher of Utopia* (1977), p. 92, footnote 19.

²² M. Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work, The Early Years 1878-1923* (1982), pp. 277-278.

spheres.²³ Moreover, he continued:

Religion brings into question all culture and politics, every social and economic order, every ethical life style, all art and education. Faith in God presents the decisive question to culture, politics, socio-economics, every life-style, all art and education—the question what the creative Spirit of love, the power of divine life wants and does for all these different areas of life.²⁴

So, Arnold argued against the idea of discussing Weltanschauung and Religion on a special day. Rather the group already mentioned should intervene in line with Arnold's viewpoint in all the discussions. He argued that this would not be putting religious life into the background, rather the opposite. He suggested a first main lecture on 'The German Youth Movement in its religious and cultural significance'.

The extant correspondence from Buber to Arnold is dated the following day, 11 March 1927. It reads in full:

I feel that your point of view that religion can never be a 'department' is the only right one. The idea of one day set apart from other days has always gone against my feeling too. Religion has to embrace the whole of life (but not in the sense of a synthesis) or it has to be rejected. Warm greetings, Martin Buber. I have strong misgivings to put 'Religion and Culture' together in one lecture heading.²⁵

Clearly this is a response to Arnold's letter of the previous day. There is agreement with Arnold's substantive point about the position of religion in life, and disagreement about the proposed title of the lecture on the German Youth Movement.

Taken together with the material concerning direct contact, the evidence in this correspondence suggests that between 1918 and 1936 there was considerable contact between the Bruderhof and Martin Buber. Eberhard Arnold was evidently involved in this, but we should also bear in mind the role of Hans Meier. The importance of this contact to the Bruderhof can be gauged by the fact that at a much later stage, the Bruderhof Movement, following its sojourn in Paraguay and the difficulties it faced at the end of that period of its history, resumed its contact with Martin Buber.

On 26 June 1964 John Arnold (Eberhard's grandson) wrote to Martin Buber, recalling Buber's visit of many years previous to the Bruderhof in its Samnertz period. He noted that 'Quite a number of us have read and enjoyed your books. We appreciate & respect what you represent. We would be grateful if a deeper contact with you and also with the Kibbutz movement were given.'²⁶ John Arnold sent Martin Buber some of the books that the Bruderhof had recently started to publish in the USA, noting that the publishing concern was not started to earn money but to share the communal experience

²³ Eberhard Arnold to Martin Buber *et al.*, 10 March 1927, Buber Archive, Reference Arc. Ms. Var. 350/70.3, trans. Lotfi Magee and Ruth Land.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Martin Buber to Eberhard Arnold, copy obtained from Darwell Archives.

²⁶ John C. Arnold to Martin Buber, 26 June 1964, Buber Archive, Reference Arc. Ms. Var. 70e.1. This and the subsequent letter were in English.

of the Bruderhof and to publish the work of others who were willing to put into practice what they believed in regardless of the consequences.

Evidently, a reply was received to this letter, as it is referred to in a further letter of 29 September 1964, in which it was noted that Buber had sent the Bruderhof the names and addresses of two of his younger friends in the Kibbutz movement.²⁷ Of course, this contact occurred very shortly before Buber's death, and there appears to have been no further contact on either side.

Eberhard Arnold on Martin Buber

Having considered the contacts that existed between the Bruderhof Movement and Martin Buber, we can now consider whether it is possible to speak of intellectual interactions between them.

To commence by looking at examples in Bruderhof thinkers, the earliest example is an article by Eberhard Arnold in *Die Furche* for November 1917. It seems clear that this must be the article which Arnold sent to Buber in 1918. (It should also be remembered that this article was written nearly three years before the foundation of the Samnertz community.) It is called 'The Prophet of the New Jewish Movement, Martin Buber and his Religiousness'. It includes references to several of Buber's works: *Die Jüdische Bewegung*, *Vom Geist des Judentums*, *Drei Reden über das Judentum*, the anthology *Ekstatische Konfessionen*, and his works on the Hasidic figures, the Baalschem and Rabbi Nachmann.

Yaacov Oved has indicated that this was one of a number of similar articles that Eberhard Arnold wrote, others being on Kierkegaard and Tolstoy. He has also indicated the import of Arnold's comments in the article for an understanding of the vision of the Bruderhof:

Only Buber was not criticized, evidently Arnold agreed with his ideas. In fact, Arnold called him the 'prophet' of a new religious concept at whose centre was 'the realization of Divinity', something achieved through finding peace with one's religion and overcoming one's internal duality. Arnold adopted Buber's concept of realization and turned it into one of the cornerstones of the doctrine he instilled in his young followers.²⁸

(Oved makes the final assertion on the basis of interview evidence and a book written by his source.)

What, then, does Eberhard Arnold have to say about Buber in this article? He commences by noting that there is a new movement in Judaism, with two currents, a religious one and a national one. These are united in Martin Buber, who certainly seeks a gathering of Jews in a national home, but who seeks through this a liberation in which the transformed Jewish spirit can be renewed.

Religiousness for Buber, claims Arnold, is people's longing via communion

²⁷ John C. Arnold to Martin Buber, 29 September 1964, Buber Archive, Reference Arc. Ms. Var. 70e.2.

²⁸ Y. Oved, *Distant Brothers* (1993), p. 8.

with the absolute to give shape to the absolute and bring it to bear on the human world. So, religiousness is action and renewal, and the opposite of tradition as each individual's relationship to God is new and different. For Buber, a true relationship with God depends on a total, exclusive and unconditional decision for the one God. All genuinely Jewish movements, meaning especially the Prophetic, Essene, Early Christian and Hasidic Movements, have in common the urge to restore decisiveness as the driving force of religiousness. This has consequences, and for the Jew the religious act means nothing if it does not mean God working through people—in other words, people fashioning their environment to reflect communion with the absolute.

For this to happen a renewal is needed, a renewal that could not be a gradual evolution but that took the form of a conversion or transformation, abrupt or staggering. So, the ideas of unity, the deed and the future need to be realized. Buber called his people to be prepared for the future synthesis of these quickening ideas.

Arnold notes the importance to Hasidism of its seeing the divine not in the world beyond, but as being alive in all things. He examines the question of evil in Hasidic thought, noting that for Rabbi Nachman the illumination of peoples' spirits means they no longer confuse good and evil within themselves, but take hold of the good alone with all their might. To Buber this deed must be seen as a religious act, which according to Arnold leads Buber into the argument that God depends upon the works of man.

This thought leads Arnold into a contrast between aspects of Christian and Judaic thought:²⁹

For us Christians the principle of the deed flows from the experience of unity and of the future, love flows from faith and hope; whereas the Jew strives through the deed to bring about the divine presence with its unity and future. The expectation of the future Messiah is where the deepest encounter [between Jew and Christian] takes place.³⁰

This article foreshadows a number of themes in the thinking of Eberhard Arnold. For instance, we can see in this article a prefiguring of the attitude taken in the round-robin letter of 1927, with its stress on the notion that religion is something that impacts on all aspects of life and is not just a separate 'department'. Secondly, we can note the way that Eberhard Arnold picks out from Buber's account of Hasidism its stress on finding the divine not in the world beyond, but in all things. This links to Eberhard Arnold's concept that the idea of the Kingdom of God is about something that can and will happen on Earth:

This message means that the invisible Kingdom—the cause of the future—is now at hand, that it is being realized now, and that finally the earth will be won

²⁹ For this whole account, I have used a copy of an English translation—including the title—of the article, provided by Darvell Archives and translated at Woodcrest Bruderhof in 1993. The title of the German original is 'Der Prophet der neuen jüdischen Bewegung, Martin Buber und seine Religiosität'. Page numbers refer to the document provided by the archives (reference EAEI 7/11) rather than the original article.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5. The material in brackets is either original or was added by the translators

wholly for God.³¹

(This quote in turn links back to Buber's idea—noted in Arnold's article—of the need for the realization of the ideas of unity, the deed and the future.) Finally, we can point to Eberhard Arnold's picking out of Buber's stress that genuinely Jewish movements urge to restore decisiveness as the determining force of religiousness. Decision is a theme in Arnold's work also, and a good example can be found in the introduction to *Inner Land*; the second sentence of that introduction reads:

[I]f [i.e. *Inner Land*, M.G.T.] is an appeal for decision in the area of faith and beliefs, directed to the hearts of all those who do not want to forget or lose God and His ultimate Kingdom.³²

So, we can see from this article that, despite a clear statement of the differences between a Christian and a Jewish understanding of certain questions, that there was a considerable degree of identification on the part of Eberhard Arnold with positions he argued were taken by Martin Buber, and that those congruences that can be seen in the article continue to be borne out in Arnold's subsequent work. (It also suggests that when Eberhard Arnold wrote to Buber and told him of the extent to which he had gained inspiration from Buber's work he was not exaggerating, and also the references to various works of Buber in the article bear out Arnold's claim to have followed Buber's career with interest.)

The article is interesting and important as it constitutes the longest and clearest statement on Buber on the part of Eberhard Arnold. Is there any other evidence of intellectual linkages between Buber and the Bruderhof in the works of the latter? We do know that John Arnold's letter of 1964 asserted that numbers of Bruderhofers read and enjoyed Buber's writings. (Walter Hüsey, in interview, mentioned that he had read Buber's *The Legend of the Baal-Schem*.)³³

Evidence of a rather different type can be found in Yaacov Oved's *Distant Brothers*. He records the views of Mordechai Nissim, who was sent to visit the Bruderhof's community in Uruguay in 1957 by the Religious Kibbutz Movement. Oved notes: 'He held long conversations with his hosts about their religious convictions and was impressed with the way they had integrated Christianity and Martin Buber's ideas as expressed in his book *I and Thou*.'³⁴ This external evidence does lend credence to John Arnold's assertions about Buber being read and appreciated in the Bruderhof.

Evidence of Intellectual Impact

Having examined the actual contact between the Bruderhof and Martin Buber and the comments made by Eberhard Arnold on Buber, we can now

³¹ Eberhard Arnold, *Why we live in Community* (1976), p. 6.

³² Eberhard Arnold, *Inner Land* (1976), p. 1.

³³ Interview with Walter Hüsey, details as at note 6 above.

³⁴ Y. Oved, *Distant Brothers*, p. 32.

consider the evidence for intellectual impact. This means examples in the writing of either Bruderhofers or Buber which suggest the use of concepts or terminology originating with the other, but without direct references. Two examples will be highlighted.

Firstly, we can consider Eberhard Arnold. It is possible to point to an instance that suggests a direct impact by Buber. We might note the following statement by Eberhard Arnold:

Not the individual believer, but the Church, whose orderly plan is given by God through his instruments, is the new Body of Christ. It is the new embodiment of the Word made man. Here, prayer to God—the ruling, commanding, helping and loving 'Thou'—subjects the rebellious resistance of the human 'I' within the 'we' of the Church, with complete trust and faith, to the almighty, all-uniting God.³⁵

This quotation comes from 1929, and is intriguing as well as suggestive. It suggests that Eberhard Arnold was, by 1929, deploying categories that could well have been derived from a reading of Buber's *I and Thou*. The use of these words is quite clear in the text, and the use of quotation marks around them can surely be seen as a device which Arnold is using to indicate that he is employing concepts with a widely understood meaning.

However, the quotation from Eberhard Arnold is also intriguing because it also signals in the same way the concept 'we'. Buber also utilized a concept of 'we', discussed most clearly in section 8 of his essay 'What is Man?'.³⁶ K. L. Plant has signaled what she considers to be the immense importance to Buber's thought of this concept, noting that 'In his later work, *Between Man and Man*, Buber introduces the concept of We, which is absent from his earlier work.'³⁷ However, the intriguing point here is that 'What is Man?' was actually Buber's inaugural course of lectures at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, delivered in 1938, nine years after Eberhard Arnold wrote the words quoted. If the words of Arnold do reflect an impact on the part of Buber, then one might conjecture that they perhaps derive from discussion in which the concept of 'We' had been considered. Given the contents of the round-robin letter of 1927 this does not seem an altogether implausible suggestion.

Secondly, let us consider an example from Martin Buber. In a brief consideration of religious communal experiments—a positive consideration, which defends them against charges made by Kropotkin—Buber observes:

... it is characteristic that the federative form makes its appearance here and here alone, as, for instance, with the Russian sect of Dukhobors in Canada or the 'Hutterite Brothers'.³⁸

³⁵ Hutterian Society of Brothers and I. H. Yoder, *God's Revolution* (1984), p. 114. The German original of this work also has the words translated as 'I', 'Thou' and 'We' in quotation marks. It was checked at Darvell Bruderhof Archives, where a typescript copy is kept as document EA 29/3, with the title *Lebensweise Lebender Gemeinden*.

³⁶ M. Buber, *Between Man and Man* (1974), p. 213, et al.

³⁷ K. L. Plant, 'The Two Worlds of Martin Buber', *Theology* LXXXVIII (1985), p. 285.

³⁸ M. Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (1958), p. 73. In the German edition, M. Buber, *Platz in Utopia* (1950), the formulation is: '... wie bei der russischen Sekte der Duchoboren in Kanada oder

(It is important to note that the quotation marks are used around Hutterite Brothers and not around Dukhobors in the German text of this work also.)

This passage may indicate that there had been some communication between Buber and Eberhard Arnold following the latter's visit to North America in 1930 and 1931. We know from the account of this journey given in *Brothers Unite* that Eberhard Arnold had, in addition to his visits to the Hutterian colonies of North America, visited a Dukhobor colony in Alberta, Canada.³⁹ So, Arnold might certainly have been in a position to supply Buber with information about both communal movements in North America. This in itself is hardly decisive; material on both groups was probably available to Buber.

What is more important is the formulation 'Hutterite Brothers' used by Buber. Why is this placed in quotation marks—unlike Dukhobors? Perhaps this is because Buber had been given information by Arnold about preferred usage on the part of the Hutterites. Walter Hüsey noted in interview: 'By then we had decided to become Hutterites. We preferred to say the Brothers called Hutterians, because they didn't want to call themselves after men.'⁴⁰ In *Brothers Unite* examples can be found of this type of usage: in a letter from the Bruderhof to the North American Hutterites of July 1931 we find the heading, 'To the church of God on the Bruderhofs in America—to the Brothers called Hutterians in South Dakota, Manitoba and Alberta.'⁴¹ That is an example written by Eberhard Arnold. In a letter to other Hutterian colonies indicating Eberhard Arnold's acceptance into the Hutterian Church, signed by Elias Walter, we find the following: '1. On December 9, 1930, Eberhard Arnold from the German Bruderhof of the Church of God was incorporated into the Brethren called Hutterian ...'⁴² Arnold was clearly aware of the desire of the Hutterites not to be known by the name of a human. Is it implausible to suggest that it was from Eberhard Arnold that Buber received information which led him to use the formulation he did in *Paths in Utopia*?

Conclusion

This article has shown that there was a relationship between Martin Buber and the Bruderhof, and that this relationship consisted of personal contact, correspondence and intellectual influence. It has shown that at least one source indicates the crucial importance of ideas derived from Buber for the developing Bruderhof of the 1920s. It has shown that at least one outside observer has attested to the importance to the Bruderhof of the 1950s of the

bei den Hutterischen Brüdern, ...' (p. 126). Whilst the original version of this work was in Hebrew, it seems reasonable to assume that Buber would have approved the German text. Indeed, it appears he may have been responsible for it, as the name of no translator appears in the book. Accordingly, it is assumed henceforth that this formulation, using quotation marks around Hutterian Brothers but not around Dukhobors, was approved and intended by Buber.

³⁹ Hutterian Brethren, *Brothers Unite* (1988), p. 180.

⁴⁰ Interview with Walter Hüsey, details as at note 6 above.

⁴¹ Hutterian Brethren, *Brothers Unite* (1988), p. 269.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 185.

ideas of Martin Buber. It has reviewed the evidence about the relationship and has also suggested that certain aspects of the remaining record point to the possibility that rather more contact occurred than is immediately apparent. As a result, it can be asserted that when Buber wrote his book on Utopian and Communal Socialism, *Paths in Utopia*, he was aware at a personal level of at least one communal movement other than the Kibbutz.

It should be stressed that the context for the Buber-Bruderhof relationship was the fact that both Buber and leading figures in the Bruderhof, especially Eberhard Arnold, were strongly influenced by the ideas and writing of Gustav Landauer. The impact of Landauer on Buber is well documented in both Buber's writings (one might especially note his chapter on Landauer in *Paths in Utopia* where he expounds the ideas of his friend) and in the various biographies of Buber (see the chapter in M. Friedman's *Martin Buber's Life and Work: The Early Years 1878-1923* on 'Communal Socialism and Revolution: The Murder of Landauer').

The relationship between the Bruderhof and Landauer is less well known, although some references have been made to it by Yaacov Oved in his book *Distant Brothers*. To indicate the importance of Landauer to the Bruderhof, it is worth considering two quotations. The first is from Eberhard Arnold: in 1920 he wrote of Landauer, 'I love this man very much and consider him to be the best and deepest influence to come out of the present-day world revolution... the memory of Gustav Landauer must not be allowed to fade.'⁴⁴ However, the importance of Landauer to the Bruderhof movement was not simply to be found in a recognition of his qualities. Landauer's ideas had a practical impact as well, as the following comment by Emmy Arnold makes clear: 'From the start it was clear to us that community life would have to be a life of unity in faith, and community of property and work in voluntary poverty. Particularly the writings of Gustav Landauer turned us in this direction.'⁴⁵ Emmy Arnold, married to Eberhard Arnold and one of the group that founded the Bruderhof, is here writing about its very early days. Whilst Landauer's ideas were, therefore, obviously important to the Bruderhof, there is no record that anyone from the Bruderhof ever actually met or corresponded with Landauer. So, the relationship, whilst important, was purely intellectual.

The legacy of Landauer can be seen as the common ground between Buber and the Bruderhof. The existence of this common ground means that it is not entirely surprising that one can find instances of common themes in the writings of Buber and Bruderhof thinkers, even where there is no evidence of direct influence, or of the use of concepts derived from the thinking of the other.

On the crucially important issue of the basis for community, for instance,

⁴³ The author is currently working on a piece in which this relationship, and in particular that of Eberhard Arnold to Landauer, is examined in full.

⁴⁴ Eberhard Arnold, *The World Situation and Our Task* (1992), p. 6. This comment is appended by the editors to the text to explain a reference to Landauer by Eberhard Arnold.

⁴⁵ Emmy Arnold, in Plough Publishing House, *Eberhard Arnold: A Testimony of Church Community from his Life and Writings* (1973), p. 12.

we find Eberhard Arnold arguing that for humans, community is not possible without God:

Here it becomes very clear that the formation of true community, the actual building up of communal life among men, is ruled out if there is no faith in the ultimate powers. In spite of all that goes wrong, men try again to put their trust either in the good in man (which really does exist) or else in the force of law. But all these efforts are bound to come to grief against the reality of evil. The only power that can build the kind of community meant here is faith in the ultimate mystery of the good, faith in God.⁴⁶

Buber's viewpoint, expressed in *I and Thou*, can be found in the following:

Thus, too, the authentic assurance of constancy in space consists in the fact that men's relations with their true *Thou*, the radial lines that proceed from all points of the *I* to the centre, form a circle. It is not the periphery, the community, that comes first, but the radii, the common quality of relation with the centre. This alone guarantees the authentic existence of the community.⁴⁷

Buber reiterates the image of the circle described by the radii and not the points of its circumference, in the final chapter of *Paths in Utopia*, adding:

And the originality of the centre cannot be discerned unless it is discerned as being transparent to the light of something divine. All this is true; but the more earthly, the more creaturely, the more attached the centre is, the truer and more transparent it will be.⁴⁸

These two arguments use radically different language, but express a similar theme, which is that community cannot simply be based upon the mutual relationships of the participants. Rather it has to have a centre, a focal point. Finally, in Eberhard Arnold's writings to and about Martin Buber there is, perhaps, an element of what Michael Löwy has recently discussed under the heading of 'elective affinity'.⁴⁹ In certain respects this is rather surprising—as is the similar element of elective affinity between Arnold and Landauer—in that the Bruderhof was and is a determinedly Christian movement (in a fairly orthodox sense—the Bruderhof accepts the Apostles' Creed, for instance), and this is something most definitely present in the writings of Eberhard Arnold himself. Martin Buber was, of course, a very prominent Jewish figure, a point that we have seen Eberhard Arnold was very well aware of. Perhaps the paradox of this most staunchly Christian of movements being open to the views of one whose arguments—for instance—regarding Jesus himself it would find most unacceptable, can be partially explained. Yaacov Oved quotes from a letter from a Bruderhofer of the 1950s to a Kibbutznik:

However, after getting to know Martin Buber's and Max Brod's writings, I have arrived at the conclusion that we are closer to the Jewish entity than to the large Christian churches. The connection between us and Judaism ensues from our aspiration towards a new social order, towards a classless society... and

⁴⁶ Eberhard Arnold, *Why we live in Community* (1976), p. 2.

⁴⁷ M. Buber, *I and Thou* (1987), p. 146.

⁴⁸ M. Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (1958), p. 135.

⁴⁹ M. Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia* (1992), especially chapter 1.

towards the establishment of a nation that is based on justice and brotherhood.⁵⁰ In the context of views such as these it is not really surprising that the Bruderhof, practioners of the idea of community, felt drawn to Martin Buber, a prophet of that idea.

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⁵⁰ Y. Oved, *Distant Brothers* (1993), p. 36.