

Topos and Utopia in Landauer's and Buber's Social Philosophy

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“There is now a need to bring to fore a different sort of martyr, not heroic sacrifice, but rather tranquilly silent martyrs who aren’t seen in order to serve as a model of the righteous life.”

(*The Call to Socialism*, these lines were inscribed on Landauer’s tombstone in Munich)

Gustav Landauer saw himself as “the bearer of an anarchistic weltanschauung.” His central concept was that anarchism would be realized by the force of the good-will of men, through small co-operative settlements which would change the existing conditions of society.¹ His plan postulated group-living based on a “confederation arising from freedom and communal spirit.” Such a society would represent an alliance of communal settlements which had self-managed co-operative economics, and which would establish fair trade among themselves. The form of socialism which is realized in this way is an individualistic socialism.

The actualization of this type of socialism would be voluntary. There would be no separation between means and ends. Independent self-realization would be the main aim, with its sources in humanitarianism, spirit and culture, and not through class-struggle or any sort of revolutionary coercion. The new co-operative community would be based upon the individual, and it would gradually take the place of the state, resulting in a “withering-away” of its apparatus of control and suppression.

After the “Topia” comes the transition to “Utopia” (with religious implications that are particularly relevant to the mystical elements of the Jewish faith). This transition may be regarded as the re-birth of a new type of man, with a new style of living out of repentance.

The pioneers in spirit would be those who begin with the independent realization of collective life within community groups (Gemeinden) which will join the federated alliance and which will maintain the new socialist way of life within the old world. The revolution occurs not through parties or labor unions, or through politics or coercive power, but rather through the force of personal example. The revolution awakens all that is superior in man and grants good to all; it is not an isolated rebellion, not a deed of successful establishment, but rather a continuing renewal, a changing of the daily way of life as an infinitely perpetual process.²

After the publication of his essay *Die Revolution* in 1906, the following year saw the appearance of *Thirty Socialist Theses*.³ In this publication he developed his anarchistic ideas with regard to the abolition of the state. This process would take place as communal groups and communities grew up alongside the state and succeeded it.⁴ The “Volk” and the “Land” are key terms (with mystic

¹ See the letter of Landauer to *Paul Eltzbacher*, Gustav Landauer: *Sein Lebensgang in Briefen*, ed. by M. Buber, 2 vol., 1929 1, 51. His identification with and his disagreement with, anarchism as an ordered system are found in the following articles: “Der Anarchismus in Deutschland,” *Zukunft*, January 5, 1895; “Anarchistische Gedanken über Anarchismus,” *Ibid*, October 26, 1907. In his thought the influence of *Proudhon*, *Kropotkin* and *Tolstoy* are notable. For the similarities and the differences between his thought and these thinkers, see M. Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, 1947, pp. 30–59 (Hebrew) and W. Kalz, *Gustav Landauer Kultur Sozialist und Anarchist*, Mersenheimam Ilan, 1967, 113–19.

² The following of Landauer’s essays, *Call to Socialism*, *The Revolution*, *Twelve Principles*, were translated into Hebrew by *Israel Cohen*, Tel Aviv, 1955 (Am Oved). See there the translator’s introduction. Landauer’s influence on *Hapoel Hatzair*, (The Young Worker), *Zeirei-Zion* (Yong Men of Zion), and Zionist youth movements are studied in collections which appeared in his honor in 1929 and 1939. See my books: *Buber’s Social Philosophy*, 1981; *G. Landauer: Writings and Letters*, 1982 (in Hebrew).

³ In January 1907, *Zukunft*, “Volk und Land: Dreissig Sozialistische Thesen.” (See also in *Beginnen*, 3–20).

⁴ His opinion of the communal settlement (Siedlung) and the allied community (*Gemeinschaft*) are mystic in source with romantic-socialistic connotations. On this matter, see his article in the collection *Beginnen* and also the introduction of *H.J. Heydorn* to the new edition of *Call to Socialism*, Frankfurt, 1967.

connotations), in Landauer's theories. Moreover, the organization called upon to effect socialism is not a party, but rather an "alliance" (Bund), which surpassed the party in the same way that the *Gemeinschaft* (community alliance) surpasses all "establishment" organizations including the state.⁵

The centrality of his concept of the "Socialist Alliance" epitomizes Landauer's social outlook, which he briefly defined in *Twelve Articles*. The ideas expressed in the Articles were expanded in his lectures, in his pamphlet *What Does the Socialist Alliance Want?* and in his book *The Call for Socialism*.

The following translation of the Twelve Articles is helpful in an understanding of our subsequent discussion of the letters found in the Buber Archives in Jerusalem.

The Twelve Articles of the Socialist Bund

(June 14, 1908)

1. The basic form of socialist culture is the Bund of independent economic groups, exchanging goods with one another in justice.
2. This Socialist Bund treads the path that history assigns, in place of the state and the capitalist economy.
3. The Socialist Bund accepts the word "republic" in its original sense as the goal of its endeavors: the affairs of the commonweal.
4. The Socialist Bund declares anarchy in its original sense as the goal of its endeavors: order through voluntary union.
5. The Socialist Bund embraces all working men who want the social order of the Socialist Bund. Its task is neither proletarian politics nor class struggle, both of which are necessary accessories of capitalism and the authoritarian state, but the struggle and organization for socialism.
6. The real activities of the Socialist Bund can begin once the organization has been joined by large sections of the masses. Until then its task is propaganda and organizing.
7. The members of the Socialist Bund want to place their work in the service of their consumption.
8. They shall unite their consumption in order to exchange the products of their labor with the aid of their bank of exchange.
9. They shall send out pioneers who, in domestic settlements of the Socialist Bund, shall produce everything they need, including the products of the earth.

⁵ *Shmuel Hugo Bergman* tells of A.D. Gordon's excitement when "he found his ideas" in the writings of Landauer which he brought with him upon his return from the convention of the Hapoel-Hatzair (Prague, 1920, where Martin Buber had eulogized Landauer). See Bergman's article "Landauer and Gordon" in the collection *Gustav Landauer*, edited by Y. Zandbank (Tel Aviv, 1939), p. 58.

A.D. (Aharon David) Gordon was born in Trojnov, Ukraine in 1856 and died in 1922, in Degania, the first *Kvutza* in Palestine. He was involved in the development of the kibbutz movement and an ideologist of "back to work and nature". See note 12.

10. Culture does not rest upon some form of technology or upon the satisfaction of needs but upon the spirit of justice.
11. The settlements should be models of justice and of joyous labor; not a means to reach these goals. The goal is only to be reached if the ground and earth come into the hands of socialists by means other than purchase.
12. The Socialist Bund strives for justice and, with that, for the power to abolish private property in land and soil through great fundamental measures; it seeks to give all Volk comrades the possibility of living in culture and joy through a union of industry and agriculture in independent economic exchange communities on the basis of justice.

(E. Lunn's translation)⁶

The following exchange of letters between Landauer and Nachum Goldman represents the peak of Landauer's interest in the realization of communal settlements in Palestine (the Zionist Kibbutzim). The correspondence reflects his awareness of the problems involved in a synthesis of agriculture with industry in the settlements.⁷ As he was to be assassinated within a few months of the exchange, we have here a last witness of Landauer's position.

Exchange of Letters: Goldman-Landauer, March 1919

Nachum Goldman
 Berlin
 14 March 1919⁸
 Mr. Gustav Landauer
 Munich
 Wolf Hotel⁹

⁶ Gustav Landauer, "The Twelve Articles of the Socialist Bund", "Appendix", in Eugene Lunn's *The Prophet of Community; The Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1937), pp. 349–50.

The translation is from the version of *Twelve Principles of the Socialist Alliance* in German in W.Kalz, pp. 142–3; *Der Sozialist*, 2jg, 14.

A broader version of the *Principles* is extant, dated 1912 (op. cit. p. 143).

⁷ In *Landauer's* anarcho-socialism, various influences are notable, especially the influence of *P.J. Proudhon*. The "People's Bank", spoken of in par. 8, is one of the foundations of the just society according to Proudhon's theory. Products must be traded for other products of the same value; because of the difficulty of organizing direct trade, a popular credit system is needed which will insure general trade without the banks and the various financial institutions being able to appropriate excessive profits in a parasitic manner. See Proudhon's *Solution du Problème Sociale* (1848–9), and also his plan for a "Popular Bank."

Silvio Gesell, an economist and friend of Landauer, and a member of the Soviet government of E. Toller, developed ideas according to Proudhon's theory in the fields of banking and economy.

⁸ Heading the letter of Nachum Goldman, in handwriting, is the printed address, Berlin w15, Sachsischestr. 8. The two letters published here are to be found in the *Buber-Archives* (The National and University Library in Jerusalem) (numbers: 167/168, 432. Ms. Var.)

⁹ *Landauer's* address in Munich was at that time: Hotel Wolf, Anulfstr. From the time that *Kurt Eisner* invited him to Munich, he divided his time between political activities in that city and Krombach, where his family lived (and afterwards, also Eisner's daughters).

The Very Honorable Mr. Landauer:

You have no doubt received my two telegrams with regard to the convention of the representatives from Eretz-Israel and you realize that the convention will take place only at the end of April.¹⁰ We sincerely hope that you will have the chance to be in Berlin during that period and that you will be able to participate in the convention.

From Dr. *Buber*¹¹ you already know that he plans to arrange a small preliminary convention in Munich in mid-April to study the question of building (national) settlements in Eretz-Israel.¹² You offered to co-operate with us in Munich and expressed willingness to assist us in drafting the proposals and the outline which we will want to present to the convention. I wish to propose to you today the most important points on which we need your advice; these are the result of the counselling amongst, friends here:

1. As a fundamental question of building the settlement, we see the problem of centralized vs. decentralized society.¹³ We here are all united in the desire that the settlement be based on a decentralized community system¹⁴ while the emphasis is on the community as a unit

¹⁰ Reference is to a special gathering *Palestina-Delegiertentag*, which was planned for the end of April in Munich, on the initiative of Buber, Goldman, and others. In Volume II of Landauer's letters, this gathering is mentioned as a "Jewish Socialists Convention" (*Konferenz Jüdischer Sozialisten*) and it is mentioned, with Goldman's appeal, only once in G.L.'s letter to *Buber* on March 20 (Briefe, 1, 402).

More information is found in the second volume of M. Buber's letters: *Briefwechsel aus Sieben Jahrzehnten*, Vol. II, 1918–1938, Heidelberg, 1973. In letters 18–20, from early 1919, the convention, its importance and its potential participants are mentioned. Buber left Munich on the very day of the murder of Kurt Eisner (February 21); previously, he met with Landauer and among other subjects the convention was spoken of: Landauer promised to participate and to help in its preparation. In a letter from Arnold Zweig to Buber on March 6, he writes that it would be justified if it would be possible to "transfer" Landauer from German to Jewish politics, and this was apparently the thinking of Buber, who knew that in *Pesach* 1919 several Zionist conventions were planned in Europe and representatives from Eretz-Israel were likely to participate.

¹¹ N. Goldman mentions the Buber-Landauer conversation in Munich. Among the letters published in Volume II of Buber's letters, is found a letter from *Goldman to Buber*, No. 21 from March 14, 1919, in which the program of the convention is described. Goldman suggests that *Landauer* open with problems of communal settlement. The suggested date is *Pesach*, so that representatives from Israel travelling to the convention in Berlin could also participate. The place — Munich, for the convenience of *Buber* and *Landauer*. He promises to telegraph *Landauer*.

In a second letter on the matter, No. 22, dated March 20 (No. 573 in the letters of Landauer), he writes to *Buber* that he has already replied to *Goldman*, will be pleased to meet them in Munich and hopes it will be a fruitful session. He even agreed to *Goldman's* suggestion that the invitation to this special convention be signed by both of them.

¹² Settlement and building of Eretz-Israel seemed unlike an ordinary process of settlement of barren land, in the eyes of the Socialist-Zionists. In a speech from 1918, Buber describes this settlement as "revolutionary settlement," since it was not to repair an existing social structure, but rather to base a new existence in the act of settlement and "in this we are called upon to bring about the renewal of our image" *Paths in Utopia*, p. 145). According to the program of the convention, Landauer was invited to lecture on the social aspects of the settlement in consideration of this original concept of communal settlement as the first means to the socialist change of society. His influence on Zionist youth groups and on *Hapoel Hatzair* was obvious. Bergman (op. cit.) tells of A.D. Gordon's excitement upon his dis-covery of the ideas of Landauer (see Note 5, above). Landauer's belief in settlement, *cooperation*, and closeness to the *earth* are elements that can be found in A.D. Gordon's own writings.

¹³ Centralization was seen in G.L.'s eyes as a feature of coercive capitalist systems. Only with decentralization is face-to-face democracy possible. M. Buber specifically mentions Landauer when he describes socialism as real cooperation between people, a direct living-relationship between "I" and "Thou" — in his article "Why Should the Building of Eretz-Israel be Socialistic?" (See *Paths in Utopia*, p. 149).

¹⁴ In the historical debate between *Hapoel-Hatzair* and the *Akhdut-Ha'avoda* (Labour Union), the former were the proponents of decentralization i.e., they emphasized the autonomy of the socio-economic unit (the group). Goldman uses the term "*dezentralisierten Gemeinschafts ordnung*."

(by itself) in which the people have a direct relationship with one another. The difficulty in this question is only in determining which areas of the social life demand a centralized structure, for instance, technical administration and economic life.

We request that you inform us of your opinion and, if possible, draft it in outline form.

2. With regard to the *nationalization of land*,¹⁵ we are all united (in opinion) and with us as well, I believe, are most of the Zionists. With the nationalization of land, we are also demanding the nationalization of the resources (water, coal, etc.).
3. Very difficult and unclear to us is the question of industry. Only a few amongst us are Marxists in the sense that we demand socialization of the means of production.¹⁶ Before our eyes is the image of a factory organized on the basis of association¹⁷ in which the workers participate as owners and have equal rights concerning all problems of distribution of profits, administration, etc. The controversy is as follows:
 - a. Will the entire united community be credited with profits, or only the collective association of the given factory, something which we suspect as dangerous, since a new, petit-bourgeois, capitalistic working class will spring up; furthermore, (circumstances will be created in which) the situation of the workers in a profitable factory would be better than that of workers in less profitable factories?
 - b. Is it not possible to combine the two principles: on the one hand, a single factory unionized on a cooperative basis and on the other hand, collectivized industry; this unique society will make possible supervision and far-reaching rights of intervention on the part of the public which seem necessary, and not on the part of workers in the successful factories, who don't know to defend themselves against penetration of new elements?
4. Also very difficult and unclear are the questions of trade arrangements. Are they to be nationalized or are they to be turned over to the settlements themselves, and who will deal with the international exchange of goods, etc.?

These are the same points which we have debated until now in our own circles and on which we are now asking your advice. On all these questions we will want, perhaps, to present outlines or proposals to the convention of delegates and we ask you to formulate your position in such an outline form. We can discuss any of the questions at length at our meeting in Munich, but it is most desirable if you could inform us beforehand in writing, so that we may come somewhat prepared,

On other important questions (the Arab question, the agricultural settlements, terms of land acquisition, etc.), it is preferable that we discuss them here before approaching you with a request for advice on these matters also.

¹⁵ Nationalization of land, a return to soil and nature, special attention to "nature and land" (Gordon), these typify the Socialist-Zionist and "Agrarian Socialism" in general and the anarchist socialism of Landauer in particular; but also the opinions of Proudhon, Kropotkin, Tolstoy, Gordon and others. See Landauer's reply to Goldman, above.

¹⁶ Goldman wrote on "*Vergesellschaftung der Produktionsmittel*" and this standard claim of Marxist German socialism (and sometimes Marxist theory) is challenged in the arguments of Landauer's letter).

¹⁷ Written "*Genossenschaftlich organisierte Fabric*". (An early hint of the problem of kibbutz industry of our times).

I hope that among all the preoccupations in which you find yourself in these days arid weeks in Munich, that you will find, nonetheless, time to reply to our questions. I thank you in the name of all us ,

My very best wishes and regards,
Yours,
Nachum Goldman

* * *

Krombach (Schwaben)¹⁸

19 March 1919

Dear Mr. Goldman,

Buber has not written me.¹⁹ In any event, I shall be glad to participate in the small convention in Munich. If possible, I would like only then to decide on the matter of my participation in the larger convention of delegates in Berlin. The uncertainties on which I am dependent are too numerous.²⁰ With regard to the questions, we can try to answer them together at the convention and it any event, I have no desire to give answers, rather, to point out additional questions to the problems which you brought up.

1. Decentralization, and with it, freedom and volunteering are to be introduced to a wide degree in any place where there is no need to insist upon profitability and competitive power, that is, where ever it's possible, in the matter, to permit non-thrifty management of the economy. And here as well belongs the question of whether the economy which is also called the "State economy" (Staatswirtschaft) will be based on the productivity of work only or whether profitability is needed as well? A further question is whether by disregarding the existing centralized establishments (the System), can the growth of centralization which the communities demand (to introduce) be made possible? Are we to judge the possibility according to the instance? And closely related to the question of centralization are the questions of taxation, State economy, police, judicial administration, officialdom, representation system (democratic government). And with all this, it seems to me, nonetheless, possible not to demand beforehand all which will be necessary on the part of the State, but rather to leave this to the development of the communities and their desires. Only then, when not the benefits of the organism, but rather the welfare of the individual is considered — this is the most important principle.²¹

¹⁸ Most of Landauer's letters of mid-1912, were addressed from Krombach (Swaben). This is the birthplace of *Hedvig Lachman*, his wife, and the Landauer family lived there until his murder.

¹⁹ In his letter to *Buber* on March 20, there is mention of a letter of March 18, which has not been found. Probably in this letter *Buber* mentioned the convention, but the letter was not yet in *Landauer's* hands. (See notes 10–11 above).

²⁰ On the events and on Landauer's mood in the last month of his life there is reliable evidence. And the facts are supported by his letters from the same days. His words proved to be prophetic.

²¹ *Landauer* belonged to the school of anarchism that sees the foundations of anarchism in the individual. He found an original theoretical solution to the integration of the individual within the whole, the part in the organism (these problems were not foreign to the pioneers of communal life in *Eretz-Israel*). This emphasis is important in order not to classify Landauer as a "folk"-ideologist (*Volk*), of which totalitarian collectivism is one example.

2. Nationalization of the land must be a *fundamental principle*. It must become, an existing actuality in the specific case of rare land resources which are claimed for the allied community (ore, coal, clay deposits, large waterways which serve as a passage for the goods of the community, etc.). But we can usually realize this fundamental principle in various ways: leasing of land parcels by means of the community, community ownership and collective working of the land, etc. Here too, the direction of Question 1 is influential. I think that each community should have its own means of marketing, which will be under its control in an independent manner, but excluding the abundant land resources which are owned by the united community. In fact here is the golden opportunity for taxation on the part of the whole: in communal acquisition of chemical fertilizer, agricultural machinery, marketing unions, etc. Also, suppose, in spite of the danger of waste, it is better to allow volunteering to develop than to decide beforehand on compulsion.
3. To be truthful, one needn't be a Marxist in order to refuse the economy which is based on profits. Your posing the question has no meaning in my eyes.²² Here belongs more appropriately the question of equal exchange in trade, of financial operations without interest, and of mutual credit.²³ Afterwards, when we are able to solve these questions as far as possible, comes the turn of the following question:
4. National trade and trade with the rest of the world, which is still capitalistic. Both of these questions are secondary. If we can only solve the problems in Question 3, then there is no difficulty, since each product has a market value of its own, and with regard to the method of trading, supply and demand in the market can be advertised for example in the newspapers. The question of trade with foreign nations is dependent on the following circumstances: (a) is there a surplus of products? (b) are these superior in quality and inexpensive so that there will be buyers for them in the world market? If the reply to both these questions is positive then the community will be able to import the specific products that it needs. This is undoubtedly the (present) situation. It is not important to what degree it is vital, above all else, *to nationalize foreign trade* and the individual economies as these are separate from the community economy. The supply of goods from abroad and their distribution must be the interest of the community; the community will see to it that there will be appropriate products for export, otherwise the situation will lead to debt and dependence on foreign countries.

I suggest that you and your friends think over my hurried comments and afterwards we'll attempt, in a joint effort, to reach the phrasing of an outline. Looking forward to seeing you and with warm regards,

²² It is obvious that not only Marxist socialists reject an economy based on the race for profits. The society envisaged by Landauer is based on autonomous cooperative-communities producing goods and commodities through love of work as described in *Twelve Principles*.

In addition Landauer saw worth and urgency in the immediate realization of these new forms of society, independent of a change in the structure of the state. In 1903 he participated in meetings of the union of "*Deutsche Gartenstadt Gesellschaft*" which was based on a romantic "anti-urban" spirit involving a shift from the city to the country. Among the members of the organization was *Franz Oppenheimer*, the author of *The State*. His interest in the organization, like Landauer's, was directed toward cooperative settlement. (On this subject, see the memoirs of Max Nettlau). Oppenheimer was the initiator of cooperative settlements in Palestine: Merhavia (now a kibbutz).

²³ Equal worth in exchange, an exchange bank, credit without interest, are ideas of *Proudhon* that found expression in Landauer's description of the just future society. (See also his collection *Beginnen*).

Yours,
Gustav Landauer

II

“When an inspired man, — seeking a role in chaotic times — cannot realise his role, he becomes a rebel.”

G. Landauer, *Die Revolution*

For Martin Buber, as for his friend Landauer, the rebirth of community was the epitome of the interhuman relationship.²⁴ This idea was expressed in his opening lecture at the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus in 1939: “The only political chance for a small nation thrust between large states is the meta-political status Isaiah implies ... Deep down in the nation it lives in the form of human yearning to sustain the truth ... In order to sustain and realize truth he needs a *topos*, a certain place... in order to *begin* the realization, that is, to be a real nation, a social people, which by its very reality seems to call the peoples to come together as a people of peoples, a humanitarian people, the real humanity.”²⁵

These words are not chosen randomly; there is continuity in his thinking throughout the years, focusing on man as a social being, that is, in society and state. I will allow myself to note at the outset that the end of Buber’s pre-dialogue period initiates a phase of profound concern with the problems of society, a phase marked by the editing of a series of books *Die Gesellschaft* (Society) and by the growing influence of Landauer. In his *Die Revolution* which appeared in Buber’s series, Landauer stated, in the spirit of communal anarchism that “a large proportion of our institutions ... are today dead, cold, turned into paper, and lacking any relevance to man ... the spirit creates laws. But if the laws survive and the spirit disappears, the laws cannot create spirit and cannot substitute for it.”²⁶ I find clear echoes of this position in what Buber said in a public speech when he cited Kant that it is in the nature of authority to necessarily distort the free judgment of reason. In this idea of Kant, Buber finds the renunciation and disappointment of the philosopher. He can no longer believe in the capacity of the spirit to achieve hegemony without losing its purity.²⁷

Buber lauds the Essenes as being the righteous (*Hassidim*) who did not wish to be party to government (the successful government of the Hasmoneans) but chose to be part of a perfect vital community. On the other hand there was Rome, the ruling state the “state in stark nakedness”. Jesus of Nazareth is represented as continuing on the path of the Essenes in the attempt to build a true community, in contrast to the “bare state” which is only a “coercive association repelling

²⁴ “Mein Weg zum Chasidismus”, (1918), *Hinweise*, Zurich 1953, S. 187.

²⁵ “The Demand of the Spirit and Historical Reality”, (1938), *Am Ve Olam*, pp. 59–60

²⁶ G. Landauer, *The Revolution*, (Hebrew), Tel Aviv, 1951, p. 177; and his *Call to Socialism*: “Where there is no spirit and no inner necessity there is external authority, and constitutional and state arrangements. When there is Spirit, there is society. Where there is a lack of Spirit, there is a state. The state is a substitute for Spirit ... A nation as the natural necessity of a born community is beautiful indestructible primordial Spirit. But a nation joined to a state in violence consists of contrived cruelty and deliberate stupidity,” *ibid.*, p. 48. For Landauer’s meaning of “Spirit”, which very much like Buber’s, see Maurer’s *Call to Revolution*, Detroit, 1971, and Kohn’s *Buber*, p. 195. Landauer’s influence on Buber’s social thinking, is discussed in my *Buber’s Social Philosophy*, Tel Aviv, 1981 (Hebrew).

²⁷ *Am VeOlam*, p. 54.

any natural fellowship.” Jesus founded “a new sect destined to grow in the belly of the monster and burst it.”²⁸ The prophets’ lofty resistance lay in their fight against “a state that no longer has God in it, and no spirit within it.” This is from an article dedicated to the memory of Landauer, in which Jesus is described as an anarchist in the image of Landauer, who really believed that the renewed growth of fellowship will blow up the monstrosity of the state (the artificial hollow Leviathan) from inside.

In a number of essays Buber includes an historical survey of the intensifying opposition between society and state. Thus in a lecture dated 1901²⁹ containing the first of his “sociological doubts”, with earlier influences (Nietzsche) still discernible, he notes that the old *Gemeinschaft* was marked by purposefulness and instrumentality, while the new one coming into being will be the representation of life itself, expressing creativity and vital reciprocal relationship (*Wechselwirkung*) between perfected individuals. This is the true society; it is an aim in itself, life itself is its aim. Buber rejected the *Gesellschaft-Gemeinschaft* dichotomy of Ferdinand Tönnies which has since become well-known in sociology; nor did he incline toward the socialist theories then current on cooperatives, and on political revolution as a means to renovate the structure of society. He explicitly declares: “So *will* unsere gemeinschaft nicht Revolution, sie *ist* Revolution ... Unsere Revolution bedeutet, dass wir in Kleinem Kreise, in reiner gemeinschaft, ein neues leben schaffen” ... (Our community does not *desire* revolution, it *is* revolution ... our revolution means that we will create a new life in a small group in a pure community).³⁰

What unites those who belong to this new community is the common *Erlebnis*: the members of the same generation feel a kinship of souls, and join together in a radical criticism of the environment they lived in; but their union is not a purposeful association for changing the historical reality of society.

I would tentatively define the young Buber’s approach as socio-psychological. He quotes Landauer’s *Die Revolution*, “*Sociology is not a science*; and even if it were, the revolution for special reasons could not be a subject for scientific treatment ... our subject:... to examine the phenomenon of revolution from the point of view of social psychology. Social psychology itself is revolution ... the beheading of Charles and the storming of the Bastille were applied social psychology ... Rousseau, Voltaire, Stirner were revolutionaries, being the savants of social psychology.”³¹ The thought of Buber was still to evolve, outgrow that of the “New Community” circle. His subsequent over-sociologization and then ontologization as man as a social being would lead Buber to convert his early cultural radicalism into “volkist” conservatism and even justification of Ger-

²⁸ “The Holy Way”, *Teuda VeYeud*, Jerusalem 1959, pp. 96–100 (“In memory of my friend Gustav Landauer”) (English in *On Judaism*, ed. by N.N. Glatzer, 1967).

²⁹ *Alte und Neue Gemeinschaft* — (Buber archives MS47/C, published in 1976 in Vol. I of *Association for Jewish Studies Review*, Cambridge, (Mass.)) This was Buber’s lecture at the Architects’ House in Berlin, 1901, before the circle of the Hart brothers; I find some significance in Landauer’s early retirement from this “new community” as its members, he felt, did not display the modicum of social sensitivity. See my introduction to Buber’s texts on community, Kibbutz Research Center, Haifa 1980 (Hebrew).

³⁰ *Association for Jewish Studies Review* (op. cit.) pp. 54–55. F. Tönnies *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* appeared in 1887; Buber was not pleased with the diagnosis that *Gesellschaft* totally dislodged *Gemeinschaft*, and held that elements of *Gemeinschaft* relations persist beyond the institutional formalization characteristic of the *gesellschaft*-stage; nor did he approve the remedies necessary to permit a return to an organic rural community. He expressed his explicit criticism in a public debate in 1919. (See *Worte an die Zeit*, München 1919, Bd. 2, S. 11).

³¹ G. Landauer, *The Revolution*, pp. 151–153 (Hebrew).

man policy in World War II. Afterwards, in his contact with social reality in Palestine, later Israel, would come the formulation of his socialist-religious attitude with the “topi-anarchic” tinge.

It will not be digressing too seriously from our discussion if we touch lightly on the further development of Buber’s social thinking. As noted, beginning in 1906 Buber initiated and edited a series of monographies entitled *Society* which published books by Sombart, Simmel, Bernstein, David, Mauthner, Oppenheimer, Tönnies and Landauer (40 books in all between 1906 and 1912). It is hard to find a properly defined central idea passing through this varied series like a liken thread; but there was undoubtedly a unifying and connecting frame of mood and mind. The title of the series certainly implies this, and the disciples of Simmel, Dilthey and insurgent intellectuals found it a proper vehicle for their approach which was detached and critical of the “civilization” at the turn of the century.³²

In his preface to the series, the direction he meant to give it is interesting.³³ It does involve a socio-psychological approach in which Buber for the first time dealt with his famous concept of *Zwischenmenschliche* (between man and man; inter-human) as a key problem. Years later he wrote: “When almost fifty years ago I began to purchase my own foothold in social science, I then used the concept ‘interhuman’ which was not yet known ... we have before us a special category ... a special dimension of our experience ... It is our right to speak of social visions at any time or place that the common existence of multitudes of people, the connection with each other, leads to joint experiments and joint reactions ... This does not mean that there is any personal relation whatsoever between one person and another in that group ... I differentiate between the social and inter-human.”³⁴

The “interhuman” is primarily a category of social psychology. The “between” is a state in which there is a reciprocal connection between I and thou. It may be called societal. The “inter-human” assumes the existence of differences between individuals, with purposes of their own, as a basis for the creation of formed patterns; and these are the objectivization of the expressions of the human society: values, spiritual and economic intermediators, the social aspects of culture, etc. On the other hand, actions are the dynamic aspect of the “interhuman”. (Revolutions are one example). “Sociology is the science of the *forms* of the “interhuman”. Activity in the “inter-human” is a matter for economic, social and cultural history. If there is a desire not to remain detached from real life (*erlebte leben*) all these must not be separated from psychology. Society cannot be conceived without examination of “the life experience of souls” (*das Erlebnis von Seelen*). Everything that happens between individuals is only what obtains between complexes of psychic elements — and only thus can it be understood. Social forms have a unique significance

³² This was the “aristocracy of the spirit” (Geistesaristokratie), which found provincial and challenged Prussia’s aristocracy and royal court.

³³ The introduction appears in the first volume of the series: W. Sombart, *Das Proletariat*, 1906. Buber questions the possibility of community as it appears in the first chapter of Simmel’s *Die Soziologie* and also questions “social psychology” of the Dilthey type.

³⁴ Buber’s introduction takes up pages IV to XIV in the first volume of the series. The term *das Zwischenmenschliche* appears on p. IX. Buber later translated it as “interhuman” in his essay “The Elements of the Interhuman” (1953) included in the collection *Sod Siah*, Jerusalem, 1959, pp. 211–233. The quotations are on pp. 213, 216. In the opinion of M. Friedman, authority on Buber, he was the first to use the term. At times Buber uses the term *das Zwischen* (inter-medium) in the same sense. This is the area of tension — of attraction and repulsion — between two when both are complete subjects: “The sphere of the interhuman is the sphere of the individual facing his fellow, and its manifestation before us. I call the dialogue ... (What happens then) is only a hidden accomplishment to the talk itself, an accompaniment to a highly social happening of many meanings, and its significance lies not in either of the participants, or in the two together but in this coordination of the act in their bodies, their ‘intermediation.’”

in human psyches. “The problem of the ‘interhuman’ is basically a problem of social psychology: Its object is social life which should be viewed as a psychic process.”³⁵

There is no “social soul” above the soul of the individual; all the processes take place in the individual soul, but they are discernible when the individual is in a socialized situation (*Vergesellschaftung*) and in that situation mutual relations and socialization are the “interhuman”: For Buber at that time divine presence as a *sine qua non* belittles the status of man. In fact, in his anthropology, man was only a minor partner in creation. Here too there was to come a change. It is up to man to reform the world of creation — the *Messiah* will not redeem this world bringing about the kingdom of heaven which cancels out this “vale of tears”. “Life-long partnership and a full heart between human beings, that is real community here and now, that is the kingdom of God directly, His kingdom in this world. The kingdom of God is the community that will emerge in the future ... And like the Essenes, man does not flee from this secular society, but seeks to really establish it as a *true* religious community ... For the Divine Presence rests only where the desire to make a covenant with the Lord is strong, and man’s aspiration to keep it is mighty, where man is bold enough to live his life face to face with the Absolute ... The true community is the *Sinai* of the future.” (This is from “*The Holy War*”, dedicated to Landauer).

In “*Hebrew-Humanism*”³⁶ there is no longer any hint of the “community of blood”. Buber here speaks of the “realization of the spirit”, of the partnership in which God is revealed “among men”, of “our revolution, the revolution of communal settlement”, and of “the community — a communal society — in which the direct relations between men emerge and develop, relations which carry with them the divine component which imparts to the group a permanent image.”³⁷ Landauer’s influence is clearly discernible. As shown in the foregoing correspondence, Buber even tried to involve Landauer in the discussion of the problem of communal settlement in Eretz-Israel.³⁸

The ontic-religious dimension Buber gave to “true” social relations is in contract to the political-anarchist conclusions of his friend; at the same time he adopted part of his social-anarchistic outlook. This aspect of Buber’s social philosophy was to be reinforced during his life in Palestine, afterwards Israel, and to lead to a deepening interest in that form of socialism known as Utopian, and in the achievements of the communal movements. His thinking at this stage, we will term *socialist-religious-communitarian*, with a *tinge of anarchy*.³⁹

The model of the covenant [Brith] found in biblical literature persisted in Buber’s thinking. The acceptance of the Bible was the beginning of the existence of the Jews as a people. The people as a political organism originated in faith in the God of Israel. The religious-political unity *Moses* forged is a social ideal Buber contrasts with the split characteristic of anything mundane and historical.⁴⁰ That split derives from the imperfection of the created world. The active person,

³⁵ “The Holy Way”, *Teuda VeYeud*, pp. 99, 103.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 110

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 113, 115.

³⁸ See: “Gustav Landauer — On Communal Settlement and Its Industrialization”, *Hakibbutz*, 2(1975), pp. 165–175 (the first publication of Landauer’s letter with my notes).

³⁹ Buber considered himself a religious socialist, see: *Paths in Utopia*, Tel Aviv 1947, pp. 13–14, and also “Drei Sätze eines religiösen Sozialismus”, *Hinweise*, S.259.

⁴⁰ “What in Moses was personally united was rent in two and the split goes through the very order of the nation set up by him ... among the strongest elements of his, Moses’, work was that ‘religion’ and ‘politics’ are not to be separated ... Moses wanted undivided human life as the proper answer to divine revelation; but the division, is the historical path of man,” *Moses*, p. 180.

insofar as he is free and decisive, will redeem himself from this split through his participation in the realization of the kingdom of God. The renewal of the Covenant is thus the original human ideal in the face of the vulgarity and materialism dominating the state and the politics. Buber always feared the encroachment upon God of the national-state, and he appeals to anti-statist elements that are mainly socio-anarchic.

Buber's book, *Paths in Utopia*,⁴¹ is a clear expression of the innovations in his social thinking. It was written in World War II, during the holocaust in Europe, and was complemented by two articles: "On the Essence of Culture" and "Between Society and State".⁴² (see III below).

III

"*Between Society and State*" provides an historical panorama of the developing concept of the "true categorical separation between the social elements and the political element."⁴³ Buber rejected Aristotle's concept of the state as congruent with society, and also the further development of this idea in Stoicism. The Hobbes model was also rejected, as in it people rally round the state because of mutual fear of annihilation, as was Rousseau's concept, in which the social and political element "are blended in a most questionable manner".⁴⁴ With Locke, Smith, Ferguson and Hegel another line emerges which takes root in the writings of *Lorenze von Stein* and *Karl Marx*.

It was Buber's fear that the appurtenances of the state destroyed creative social spontaneity. And further: "Only after the birth of the finished bourgeois society from the womb of the revolution" could Saint Simon ("a dilettante of genius" as Buber called him) propose the separation of social leadership (which is *administration*) from political leadership (which is government). Buber is enchanted by Proudhon's statement that "The limitation of the function of the state is a question of life and death for liberty, collective and individual."⁴⁵ Nor was he unaware that Saint Simon very closely approached "the idea of innovating the structure of society". What he lacked was the concept of real, organic social units from which this new structure could emerge, "... and it is precisely the social unit that was central for Fourier ... and in his school (we find the concept that) the association of individuals is free ... in which individualism is joined spontaneously with collectivism."⁴⁶ Harmonious spontaneity between the individual and the community is of the essence, and an organic society is one whose structure permits it. The more varied and rich the structure, the more perfect is the society and the more resistant to the other, the political element. With the historical evolution of centralization and industrialization involving vulgarism and the other curses of capitalism, there is nostalgia for a solution of that kind! Buber's ideal from now on would be the restructuring of human society and its upbuilding as a community of

⁴¹ *Paths in Utopia* was published in 1947 by *Am Oved* Publishing House of the Worker's Trade Union; chapters of it appeared in Hebrew periodicals during World War II. Buber also lectured on subjects dealt with in the book.

⁴² "On the Essence of Culture" first appeared in *Mahbarot LeSifrut*, 4(1943) and was included in *Pnei Adam*, Jerusalem 1962, pp. 377–393. "Between Society and State" first appeared in *Molad* 27(1950) on the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Hebrew University. The essay was issued in English in: *World Review*, N.S.27, 1951 IV.

⁴³ *Pnei Adam*, p. 400 ("Society and State").

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 400, 403–405.

⁴⁵ *Paths in Utopia*, p. 33 (Hebrew).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26. The problem of *individualism and collectivism* preoccupied Buber more than once. Here is a typical passage: "If individualism conceives of only part of man, collectivism also conceives of man only in part: neither penetrates or reaches the totality of man, man as a whole", *Pnei Adam*, pp. 109–110.

communities. This is the reason for Buber's support and interest in the fate of the *kibbutz* and *kvutza* in Eretz-Israel, where the Jewish people was renewing its life.

Just as the expression of the "social elements is in diversified social forms, so the "political element" is expressed in political institutions. The "political element" with its materialism and utilitarianism consists of the state as against groups and associations. Groups, circles, congregations, societies, unions, associations of all kinds, and not individuals are the basic components of a society. Society develops what these groups have in common but is incapable of forcing it upon them, and lacks the power to cope with the conflicts between them. Society also does not have the power to defend itself against external foes. The fact of "general instability" endows the state and its organs with "decisive, unifying" strength. "The state rests on the instinct for survival of society itself; the external crises enable it once in a while to overcome the internal crises."⁴⁷

Under those circumstances, Buber finds the constant maintenance of the "political element" necessary, and in this he deliberately departs from any consistent anarchistic ideology including that of Landauer. He also disagrees with Marx, about whom he writes: "With him begins the movement of socialism in which the social element no longer exists except as a final goal and is missing from the practical program."⁴⁸ His discussion thus focuses on the relations between the social and the political, and on a search for a norm that restricts the tendency of the "political element" to split the various social forms.

In *Between Society and State*, Buber considers Lorenz von Stein to be the founder of the "science of social reality".⁴⁹ Not accidentally, the essay opens with a quotation from Bertrand Russell's *Power*.⁵⁰ Russell is a brave fighter for freedom which he considers to be the foremost "political good" and he consequently finds it an urgent necessity to limit the power of the state and its governing establishment. At the same time he is critical of anarchism which seeks an absolute revolutionary annihilation of the state (as preached by *Bakunin* and others) and his chief proposals are in the spirit of guild-socialism. Buber does not accept Russell's social creed. He considers it to be vague and too general. "Social beings all contain a grain of power, authority, command, which they need to survive; but that element is not the chief one in any being that, is not political."⁵¹ However, Buber and Russell are closer than appears at first glance.

The "political element" is thus compulsion, the application of power which is always a clear infraction against the social approach based on "spontaneity, shaping from within, which is also the foundation of variety of forms".⁵² Buber's inclination for the "Utopian" socialist creed is clearly indicated in the following statement: "Human relations, that is, real life, are in fact distorted and perverted ... in the time of the capitalist regime. The change in the political and economic order (away from the existing capitalist order) is not for the purpose of realizing socialism but in fact for

⁴⁷ *Pnei Adam*, p. 410.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 409. See my *Marx's Political Philosophy*, (Hebrew) (forthcoming 1983).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ The usual Hebrew translation of *Power* is *otzma*. In his book Russell writes: "In the course of this book I shall be concerned to prove that the fundamental concept of social science is Power, in the same sense in which energy is the fundamental concept in physics (p. 12)

... It is obvious, for example, that owing to increase of organization, the State has more power now than in former times (p. 13) ... The most important organization of which a man is an involuntary member is the State" (p. 211).

⁵¹ *Pnei Adam*, p. 397. See also my paper (1982) "Does an anarchist community like the kibbutz need government and laws?"

⁵² *Paths in Utopia*, p. 77.

the imperative removal of inhibitions. However, the change of order should by no means be considered as first in time with the renovation of structure following ... “Utopian” socialism considers cooperatives as a means for the renovation of structure ... the main task belongs to comprehensive, complete association, which includes production and consumption ... The most important thing is to establish the power that ... will converge into a many-faceted unity. “Utopian” socialism can in a special sense be called “topian” socialism: it is not outside of place but aspires to realization at all times in a particular place and under particular circumstances.”⁵³

Buber finds Utopian elements in every socialist doctrine: “The Utopian picture is a picture of what ‘ought to be’ ... The Utopian wish is ... a desire for the right thing ... which by its nature cannot be realized in an individual but only in a human group ... The vision of the right thing as an idea is contained within the picture of a place that is entirely good, a sort of Utopia.”⁵⁴ The “Utopian” in socialism is revealed as “topian” – it is not aimed at the perfecting of the created world (eschatologically speaking) but at the development of possibilities inherent in the life of human beings together. Man’s improvement depends on his will and on his being aware of his abilities.

In *Paths in Utopia* Buber tells us that it is important *now* when an “anti-dialogic trait has gained control”, to attempt to implement the idea. This attempt must be bold, although it is problem-ridden. And he is seeking the inner connection between settlements of communal labor and Utopian-topian socialism. From his examination of this inner connection, he is convinced that the *kvutza-kibbutz* in Israel is the one “experiment that did not fail”, and for that reason it has a special national as well as an universal significance.⁵⁵

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Personal Address: Kibbutz Merhavia Israel 19100.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 77–78.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵⁵ See my “Buber and the Sociology of Kibbutz”, in *HaKibbutz* 8, 1982, pp. 183–212, included in *Vision and Daily Life in the Israeli Kibbutz*, 1982 (Hebrew).

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