

Community vs. Democracy:  
Communitarian Theories and the Israeli West Bank Settlers

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Abstract

This paper examines the ideology of the Israeli Jewish settlers in view of contemporary communitarian theories: Focusing on the thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor, it strives to show that there are distinct similarities between these thinkers' ontological and communal premises and those of the Israeli settlers, concluding that communitarian theoreticians ought to better define their concept of the community if they wish to disassociate themselves from anti-democratic phenomena such as the settlers.

In the first stage, the paper presents the communitarian critique over liberal thought, arguing that MacIntyre and Taylor present a distinct voice within the communitarian discourse. These thinkers are marked, firstly, by their perception of human nature as naturally inclined to moral degeneration and to failure of self-realization; and secondly, by their claim that the inherent human weaknesses can be overcome only within the community, which supplies the individual with moral constraints and allows its self-realization. Thus, although MacIntyre's and Taylor's definitions of the community are nebulous, their ontological premises portray a redeeming community which contains authoritative and hegemonic elements.

Following this interpretation, the paper proceeds to demonstrate the congruence between Taylor's and MacIntyre's thought and the settlers' worldview. This comparison is conducted through a text analysis of the Settlers' periodical *Nekudah*, focusing on the period prior to the assassination of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Exploring the settlers' stands in regards to personal autonomy, community and democratic procedures, it reaches the conclusion that their ideas are in fact similar to Taylor's and MacIntyre's abstract premises, inasmuch as the settlers too present a pessimistic view of human nature, as their condemnation of secular society illustrates. As an alternative, they present the analogue to MacIntyre's and Taylor's "communitarian self", in the figure of the "Hebrew Self", or the pioneer settler, who devotes himself to the general good of the Jewish community.

The settlers' ontological assumptions lead to a clearly anti-democratic critique of Israeli politics: first, they demand the exclusion of non-Jews from the political sphere, in the name of the Jewish conceptions of the common good; Secondly, their highly intolerant values, combined with the restrictions they set over individuals' ability to question communal authority, generate a negation of the majority rule once it is set against their messianic vision. It can thus be argued that the settlers' ethnic definition of the community is a concrete example of the anti-democratic potential embedded in MacIntyre's and Taylor's ontological premises.

This comparison leads to some conclusions regarding the political implications of MacIntyre's and Taylor's critique of liberalism: For as it demonstrates, the communitarian critique can turn by far more radical than MacIntyre or Taylor intended, when manifested in a political context lacking strong liberal

foundations, as witnessed in Israel. Hence it seems that both MacIntyre and Taylor implicitly presuppose the existence of a solid liberal political framework, and that their communitarian longings were never meant to be an actual alternative to liberal politics.

## **1. Communitarianism and the Politics of Israel**

### 1.1 The communitarian critique

Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre are two thinkers usually associated with the communitarian school of thought. In a nutshell, the communitarian thought originated in the early 80's as a critique over the dominant theory of procedural liberalism. It consisted of two central contentions against liberal politics: First, in the ontological level, communitarians defy the liberal conception of 'the unencumbered self'; secondly, in the political level, they condemn the neutrality of the liberal political sphere. Instead, they portray the image of the 'encumbered subject', whose values and morality is molded by the social frameworks within which it interacts. Accordingly, they develop a political model which is founded on the 'politics of the common good', according to which the political sphere is not neutral towards different conceptions of the good, but rather strives to realize the particular "shared way of life" of the members of its community. Thus, communitarians claim that political decisions should be reached not in light of some impartial rational and universal principles of justice, but rather should be the expression of the contextual set of values of the community.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.2. Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre

Taylor and MacIntyre share the premises of the communitarian critique, yet, as I shall demonstrate later on, in my opinion they develop these premises in a distinct and unique way. In brief, MacIntyre's criticism on liberalism and modernity is presented in his book *After Virtue*, where he argues that modern political thought has reached a dead end after losing its faith in transcendental moral truths.<sup>2</sup> From MacIntyre's point of view this is a catastrophic state, the responsibility for which lies on the Enlightenment project which tried to ground morals on rationality and not on their contribution to the realization of the human *telos*.<sup>3</sup> The Enlightenment's individualistic approach, claims MacIntyre, perceives the human subject as an autonomous being, committed only to attachments which it chose, and as such it detaches the individual from its social context. Yet in reality, individuals are not autonomous but are rather conditioned by the social context to which they belong.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in order to recover the moral essence of modern political discourse we should

recognize our dependence on social, cultural, and historical circumstances and nurture our attachments to them.

Taylor too disapproves of the individualistic tones conferred upon liberal values in contemporary political thought. He too conceives human nature as defined by its social and moral environment, with which it is engaged in a constant dialogue, and which defines its moral purpose.<sup>5</sup> In "*Sources of the Self*" he describes the development of the modern individual in light of two major schemes: "the self-responsible independence", and "the recognized particularity" that is, the idea that every individual has its own unique way of achieving self-realization.<sup>6</sup> These two axes are the fount of the modern individual's morality, but they can also lead one to lose the ability for self-realization; for modern liberal society, according to Taylor, is not sufficiently involved in a discourse on moral values, which - had it existed - would enable individuals to define for themselves their own conception of the good and the moral.<sup>7</sup> Thus, once liberal society neglects its role as the core and foundation of the individual's values, it leaves the individual in a moral vacuum which inhibits it from realizing its human capacity for moral choice and for moral reason.

To conclude, both Taylor and MacIntyre refute the existence of an autonomous individual who precedes a particular social framework and acts in light of universal principles.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, they present a subject whose mere human and moral essence is a product of the social context of which it is part - be it the family into which it was born, the language it speaks, its culture or its national identity. Without proper cultivation, these attachments are loosened and as they weaken the individual is deprived of its confidence in the existence of values and commitments transcending its own self. Accordingly, Taylor and MacIntyre portray modern liberal society as a spiritually and morally impoverished society, entangled in meaningless discussions over procedural ethics instead of fostering a solid foundation of values.

In the political level, the repudiation of the liberal ontological premises leads MacIntyre and Taylor to the endorsement of communal attachments as a possible resolution for the crisis of modernity. Thus, the community is the core of these thinkers' political model, standing prior to the individual and determining it - through the shared feeling of belonging it bestows, and the common practices, common

narrative and common moral tradition which are shared by its members.<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that these attachments are non-voluntary, and as such, so Taylor and MacIntyre claim, are stronger and much more significant than commitments which we do choose, as our choices are liable to be modified.<sup>10</sup>

Yet a possible criticism on this communitarian political model is that it is too vague and nebulous to be translated coherently to the political reality. For Taylor's and MacIntyre's definitions of community as "a common platform of values" can encompass a wide variety of diverse communities – be it the academic community, the national community, the religious community or even the businessmen community.<sup>11</sup> In fact, without a concrete definition of the community we cannot clearly ascertain to which community both thinkers refer to and what are the implications of their political critique. This claim is all the more true in light of the fact that different communities endorse different attitudes towards liberal politics and towards the western model of procedural democracy, and while some communities may be supportive of the democratic ideal, others may find it contradictory to their beliefs and practices. The lack of a clear definition of community in Taylor's and MacIntyre's writing render their model compatible with both these forms of community, leading to the conclusion that their critique of liberal politics lacks a clearer boundary that will set it apart from more radical and intolerant communitarian worldviews.

### 1.3 Communitarians theories and political praxis

Taylor's and MacIntyre's critique of liberal thought strives to remain in the theoretical and abstract level, and one can rarely find references to concrete examples for their ideal description of the community. Nevertheless, one can find in the real world actual communities, whose definitions and views of the self and of the collective sphere are not very different from those introduced by Taylor and MacIntyre. One such model of community is the community of the Israeli Jewish settlers, whose social and political worldview, so I claim, have much in common with the ideas and perspectives presented by Taylor and MacIntyre. Indeed, it is my opinion that one can interpret the Settlers' religious approach towards the self and the community as a concrete manifestation of Taylor's and MacIntyre's more abstract concepts. These very premises, in the social context of the settlers, receive some very disturbing radical and

anti-democratic flair, thus testifying to the inherent problematic potential of Taylor's and MacIntyre's communitarian politics.

It should be noted that the comparison between Taylor, MacIntyre, and the Israeli settlers does not imply that there is any casual connection between the two worldviews. For clearly, Taylor and MacIntyre refer to a very different political context from that of the settlers' be it a Canadian or an American context. To some extent, the essential differences between the Israeli context and the Canadian or the American contexts render the comparison between the two worldviews less valid. Nevertheless, I believe that this comparison does hold some explanatory value; for both Taylor and MacIntyre claim that their criticism of the liberal foundations of western democracy would not weaken the foundations of the democratic order in itself, but on the contrary, will endow it with a new vitality.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, the comparison presented here reaches the conclusion that endowing more political power to social units such as the settlers' community does not necessarily contribute to the strength and constancy of the democratic order, especially in political entities such as Israel, whose liberal foundations are less stable.

#### 1.4 The Israeli Jewish Settlers

The Jewish settlers' ideology belongs to the extreme right of the Israeli political map. The settlers endorse a religious and zealous approach towards the Land of Israel, an approach which serves as the ideological foundation for the project of settling the occupied territories, often on confiscated Palestinian land. Accordingly, the settlers strongly object any sort of territorial concessions which must accompany any future agreement with the Palestinians, and in fact they deny the very idea of Palestinian political and territorial rights.

It should be noted that although the settlers' movement is highly ideological, it does not consist one comprehensive doctrine, and one can find different types of communities beyond the 1967 border line at the time of the research. In fact, many of the Israelis living in the territories are not motivated by purely ideological or religious reasons, but rather by economical considerations.<sup>13</sup> In light of this, the research presented here focuses on the more articulate political worldview of the ideological

core group of the settlers' movement - "Gush Emunim" (The Bloc of the Faithful), and ignores the group of non-ideological settlers.

Gush Emunim's ideology originated from one of the dominant early Zionist schools of thought – the Kookism, named after Rabbi Kook (1865-1935). Kook's thought is interpreted as an attempt to reconcile Zionism with traditional Judaism. For classical Zionism's rebellious secularity arose much objection from religious Judaism, who condemned Zionism on the base of the claim that returning to the Land of Israel prior to any divine revelation violates God's will and the proper course of history. In contrast, Rabbi Kook composed a unique dialectic combination of Zionism and Judaism, claiming that the secular Zionist movement was sacred in itself, indicating the first stage of the heavenly redemption.<sup>14</sup> The teachings of Kook gained their political momentum throughout the 60's, when his son, Zvi Yehuda, took over the Kookist study center (Merkaz Harav). Kook the Son was by far less metaphysical than his father; He called for concrete political action, gathering around him a circle of devoted disciples. After the dazzling victory of the Six-Days-War (1967) and the occupation of Jerusalem, Sinai, Judea, Samaria and the West Bank, Kook the Son followers formed Gush Emunim, believing that the latter victory was a heavenly sign for the coming of the messianic age.

Gush Emunim was formally founded in 1974 as a small, enthusiastic, which intended to turn Kook's teaching into political action.<sup>15</sup> Their interpretation of him called for the conquest of the whole biblical Promised Land as a necessary condition for the arrival of the Messiah.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, the locus of their political agenda was the settling of the recently conquered territories, concentrating on Judea, Samaria, the West Bank and Sinai. From the very beginning, their actions took an illegal note, insisting on the establishment of small settlements (called *Nekudah*) in highly populated Arab areas without official authorization or support. Despite their defiance of the Israeli law, they were never officially condemned: central-leftist governments tended to unofficially encourage the Jewish settling in Arab territories, for strategic reasons, while right-winged governments openly supported the settlement project, allocating it extensive funds.

This research focuses on the settlers' worldview and approach towards Israeli government in the mid 90's. At that point of time, after years of massive support from right-winged governments, the settling project had been flourishing, and in 1995, there were 140,000 Jewish settlers living in the occupied territories.<sup>17</sup> Around that time the strong ideological impetus of the early, formative stages of Gush Emunim had already resided, and the core of the Gush leadership was replaced by some more bureaucratic and practical figures (the Yesha Council).<sup>18</sup> Even so, this specific period is especially adequate for the purposes of this research, given that throughout that year the settlers readdressed their ideological premises more frequently, thus articulating their stands towards the democratic procedures and values. Their ideological resurrection was made due to the fact that in 1992, after years of material and spiritual support from the Israeli government and public, the wheel of politics had turned; A left-winged government was elected, led by Yitzhak Rabin, whose political platform consisted mainly of a promise to start negotiations with the Palestinians, agreeing for territorial concessions, and putting an end to the Israeli-Palestinian on-going conflict. In 1993 the Oslo peace agreements were signed, plunging the settlers' community in deep turmoil; not only their religious vision was being rejected by the Israeli public, but their own future and safety were put to question. The new state of affairs forced the settlers' community to readdress vital ideological questions in regards to the Israeli public and government.

In order to decipher the intellectual climate of the Israeli Settlers around 1995 I conducted a textual analysis of the settlers' periodical *Nekudah*.<sup>19</sup> It is the official periodical of the settlers ever since its foundation in 1979, and is generally considered a reliable indicator of their worldview, or at least of those more ideological segments of their community who have clear stands in regards to politics, community and society.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, despite the fact that *Nekudah* is not an academic periodical, being published by a highly ideological and religious community it consists mainly of opinion articles and intellectual discussions of a rather profound manner, and especially so throughout 1995, when the accelerating conflict with the Israeli government leads the writers in *Nekudah* to tackle with political and moral issues, referring over and over again to the tensions arising between their worldview and the democratic consensus, and thus allowing to explore the nature of their political premises.<sup>21</sup>

## **2. Communitarian and Settlers – a Comparative Analysis**

The analysis presented here wishes to portray the settlers' views of regarding the self, the collective and the community and to present them as a concrete manifestation of MacIntyre's and Taylor's theoretical conjectures, claiming that while Taylor and MacIntyre remain in the abstract level, never committing themselves to one concrete manifestation of 'the community', the settlers endow this model with a particular substance, and as such – indicate the possible problems this model entails. The comparison between the two worldviews will be conducted along three axes – the ontological premises, the definition of the community, and the political implications deduced from these premises. In each axe I shall first present MacIntyre's and Taylor's abstract contentions, proceeded by an analysis of the settlers' particular version of them.

### 2.1. Ontological Premises

The communitarian version of MacIntyre and Taylor is unique in two senses – their concept of personhood, and the role of community it entails. Thus, both Taylor's and MacIntyre's writings aim at restoring the ontological foundation of modern morality,<sup>22</sup> and their portrayal of human nature refutes, first and foremost, the liberal idea of an autonomous individual who precedes a particular social framework and acts in light of universal principles. Instead, Taylor and MacIntyre present a rather pessimistic view of human nature, as naturally inclined to moral degeneration and failure of self-realization, and as engaged in constant warfare against sin and temptation. Accordingly, their criticism of liberalism centers on its settling loose the “degenerated” dimension of human nature. As Taylor proclaims: “what is self-defeating in modes of contemporary culture [is that they] concentrate on self fulfillment...these self centered narcissistic forms are shallow and trivialized... they fly in the face of the culture of authenticity”.<sup>23</sup> Certain religious influences may be recognizable here, which see the human subject as a creature destined to moral failure, a self-centered being which lacks moral foundations and as such leads a narcissistic and shallow life.<sup>24</sup>

Yet MacIntyre's and Taylor's criticism of 'the unencumbered self' remains to a great extent in a theoretical level; both focus on the idea of the liberal individual as

portrayed in the theories of Rawls or Nozick, refraining from the use of concrete examples to describe this morally degenerated modern man. The settlers' portrayal of the human subject is by far more concrete, for they easily identify 'the unencumbered self' with the non-religious Jews. Accordingly, one can find in *Nekudah* repeated references to the "General Self", standing in contrast to the "Actual Self" (185/25; 188/22; 187/23). The General Self, so they claim, is a version of the enlightenment's rebellious free individual, master to its destiny and uncommitted to past traditions (185/26). It was imported to Judaism through secular Zionism, and in its Jewish version it has abandoned the divine commandments and restrictions set on the practicing Jew, thus becoming a slave to its own passions and "lower dimensions" (188/25). For once this self has abandoned its God, it was thrown into a state of monologic self-interested existence, setting loose its "destructive tendencies" which leads to the disintegration of the society (188/25). The Israeli secular society which is founded on this destructive image is therefore doomed to extinction (187/42-44) - it lacks any substance and meaning (185/62), it is obsessed with self-interests and is torn by petty quarrels between individuals who lack all commitment and respect towards values and morality (187/23; 185/62). As described by Rabbi Aviner, one of the leading religious figures of the Settlers' community, this society is "Radical, left-winged society, rebellious, permissive, filled with drug-addiction, prostitution, lack of work ethics, alienation to the motherland, treachery and resentment to the spirit of Judaism".<sup>25</sup>

The settlers' severe criticisms of 'nihilist' Israeli secular society and of Western culture in general are in many ways parallel to Taylor's and MacIntyre's condemnation of the modern society as a shattered society, trivial and shallow<sup>26</sup>. In both cases, these harsh words are accompanied by a general eschatological and pessimistic view; thus some of the writers in *Nekudah* prophesy the decline of the west and the degeneration of humanity in general, to be hastened by the loose moralities of the liberal worldview (188/24), while similarly MacIntyre describes modernity as the age of barbarism and of moral catastrophe, and Taylor warns from the collapsed lungs of modern spirituality.<sup>27</sup> Thus, it seems that Taylor, MacIntyre and the writers in *Nekudah* conceive the human subject as holding an inherent degenerated dimension that once set loose, is bound to lead the whole society to a life of meaningless existence (188/25).

A second manifestation of the self to be found in *Nekudah* is the image of the religious Jew of the Diaspora, or “the religious man of nature” (185/25), idioms referring to the orthodox Jewry. In a nutshell, the dispute between the settlers and Jewish orthodoxy revolves the commandment of the settling of the land; for contrary to the settlers’ beliefs, the orthodox Jews do not perceive the state of Israel as signifying the end of the age of the Diaspora, and while some of them accept the Israeli government as a “foreign rule”, the more extremist condemn its very existence as blasphemy.<sup>28</sup> Either way, Jewish orthodoxy does not ascribe such central importance to the settling of the Land of Israel, and perceive it either as valueless or premature. The settlers, on the other hand, find the orthodox Jews’ interpretation of religion as an omission of the very moral essence of the Jewish destiny – the bringing forth of the Messianic age (188/30); The Diaspora Jew, according to them, wastes its life in petty observance of the Jewish law, and his obedience is motivated by constant fear rather than elevated morality. In fact, like the secular Jew, the Diaspora Jew is embedded in his own self-interests and does not realize that his true vocation lies beyond its own well-being.<sup>29</sup>

The depiction of the Diaspora Jew indicates another interesting analogy between the settlers’ ontological premises and those of Taylor and MacIntyre. For it reflects the settlers’ teleological view of human nature, according to which the predestined vocation of all Jews is the settling of the Land of Israel. This vocation, not fulfilled by the Diaspora Jew, is described as an authentic nature (185/60), and in this sense, it is similar to Taylor’s and MacIntyre’s rhetoric, which refer to the teleological and authentic essence of human nature.<sup>30</sup> Thus, while MacIntyre and Taylor focus on the ‘moral life’ in general as the key to the realization of the human *telos*, the settlers depict a particular set of values as crucial for such fulfillment, and in fact are not too tolerant towards other sets of values and beliefs.

The idea of the authentic human nature leads to the third dimension of subjectivity to be found in both the writings of Taylor and MacIntyre and in the settlers’ thought: the positive mirror-image of the degenerated unencumbered self, or of its particular manifestation – the secular Jew. It is the image of the ‘communitarian self’, or more particularly – the Hebrew Self. The communitarian self is described by Taylor as a subject who is in touch with his moral feelings, thus attaining true and full human

life.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, MacIntyre claims that human life lived at its best revolve the exercise of virtues.<sup>32</sup> This authentic moral self-realization of the communitarian self is achieved through the community: for, as Taylor claims, the ideal of authenticity entails the internalization of social values, being a sentiment that connects us to the wider whole.<sup>33</sup> MacIntyre, in a similar manner, argues that the moral man identifies his interests with those of his community.<sup>34</sup> It can thus be concluded that Taylor's and MacIntyre's definition of the self in fact consists of two opposite, perhaps incompatible, dimensions: on the one hand the barren, morally deficient self, who is the dominant manifestation of personhood in modern political existence. On the other hand, the utopian 'communitarian subject', the absolute opposite of its former, whose qualities are courage, readiness to self-sacrifice, and an obligation towards his fellow community members, to whom he is tied by feelings of friendship and love.<sup>35</sup>

This schizophrenic description of human nature can be found in *Nekudah* as well. Thus, the mirror image of the secular, unencumbered Jew is the “Hebrew self”, or the “National Self” (188/22), whose identity is defined by the Jewish conception of the common good. This self is often described as the dialectic combination between the secular and the religious conceptions of personhood (185/23; 185/60; 187/23). It finds its happiness and self-realization not in himself but first and foremost in its dialogue with God (184/15; 185/25) and in God’s chosen community – the Jewish nation (187/23); thus it is completely devoted to the future of the Jewish people, and as such bares responsibility to their destiny (188/54). As proclaimed in the 1973 Gush Emunim manifesto, the Hebrew self “considers the national good over the needs of the individual, and is willing to sacrifice and devote himself to the general good, as an expression of its own wholeness and individual expression”.<sup>36</sup> The Hebre Self is therefore by its very essence both observant and free-minded (as is the communitarian self) and most important, it carries a distinctive role as bringing forth the messianic age by fulfilling the commandment of the settling of the land. In my opinion, it is a concrete manifestation of the theoretical “communitarian self”; for it too draws its values from its (religious) social surroundings, and its affinity to the divine will endows its life with meaning and destination (184/15; 185/25), sought by the communitarian self as well.

It can be concluded at this point that the two worldviews discussed here present a similar depiction of human nature, which consists of contradicting dimensions, engaged in a constant war one against the other; Thus, the unencumbered, degenerated and narcissistic self, an its more concrete manifestation, the secular Jew, pose a constant threat on the human self realization and therefore must always be restrained. Once this degenerated potential of human nature is indeed restrained, the communitarian subject, or his particular manifestation – the Hebrew subject, is able to realize its moral authenticity and to lead a full human life, finding its inner wholeness and peace in the very compliance with divine orders and with the religious authority.

## 2.2. The Idea of the Community

Every communitarian thinker, by definition, ascribes a central and principal function to the community as forging the individual's identity. Yet, as this part will demonstrate, MacIntyre's and Taylor's perception of the self confers their model of the community with a highly authoritative potential, which is indeed manifested in the settlers' definition of the community.

MacIntyre's and Taylor's pessimistic view of human nature leads to the restraining of the individual's free ability to question accepted hierarchies and conventions; for since they perceive human nature as incapable of achieving morality on its own, they endow the community with a redeeming role, as providing the individual with the moral background necessary for its self realization. Thus, the community is the framework which endows the individual with the mechanisms to control the temptations of moral decay, by means of hierarchical practices, discipline and respect for authority.<sup>37</sup> In Taylor's and MacIntyre's view, the community is prior to the individual since it is the setting to which the individual's *telos* aspires, and only in this setting will it achieve its realization. This redeeming significance, in my opinion, may render the community authoritative, for the "communitarian subject", saved by its social attachments from a barren and morally deficient existence, is above all obliged to the community, and its obligation is being compared to familial obligations which are not voluntary by their very nature. Indeed, both MacIntyre and Taylor describe the community as a set of attachments based on sharing and consent, thus implicitly assuming the full readiness of all its members to recognize the absolute congruence between the collective demands and their private interest. In this sense, MacIntyre's

and Taylor's political model is a hegemonic model of moral consensus which cannot tolerate essential conflicts among the individuals who are its members as to the community's conception of the good.<sup>38</sup>

The authoritative potential of MacIntyre's and Taylor's depiction of human nature is exemplified, to my opinion, in the thought of the Jewish settlers. For in fact, the underlying authoritative nature of the settlers' political vision and beliefs were rejected by most of the Israeli public. The settlers' response to this state of affairs is the contention that in order to control the degenerated dimension of human nature, which has indeed reached a dangerous climax at that time, the fault of the left-winged government and culture (186/17-18), every Jew must comply with the authority of the Jewish community (188/60; 188/51). In making this claim, they in fact adopt authoritative principles, for it leads to the argument that independently of one's will, the authentic inner nature of all Jews, the "Jewish Soul", must be nurtured and expressed even if the subject himself chooses to renounce it (184/12-16). Thus, in parallel to the communitarian self, the authentic Jewish self can only be realized within a Jewish community which abides to the Jewish law (188/30). The fact that the actual majority of the Jewish community in Israel refuses to recognize this truth is irrelevant, for it only proves that the majority of the Jews in Israel deny their very own true authentic nature, and therefore need to be shown the right path to their own moral salvation, so that they too will overcome the inner conflict between their true selves and their natural inclination towards moral degeneration (187/20-21; 188/32-34). Eventually, the demand for a total compliance with the community's authority as a mean to achieving self realization leads the settlers to exclude those who are conceived as betraying the Jewish destiny. Thus, for example, one writer condemns Prime Minister Rabin as no longer a Jew but a traitor and an enemy of the Jewish nation (188/30).

To conclude, according to the radical and intolerant worldview of the settlers, one must choose between two exclusive options: first, to turn away from its divine destiny, which is manifested in the ideals of the settlers' community and especially in its religious way of life and its political vision. Yet by choosing this path one fails to realize its very own nature, and thus is condemned to a lesser form of living. Secondly, one can choose to realize its destination through obedience to the

community's tradition, history, and culture, thus defining itself firstly as a Jew, and only secondly as an individual person. Indeed, it seems that such blending of a pessimistic view of human nature with a teleological view of the community, as done by the settlers as well as by Taylor and MacIntyre, may result in the formation of a highly intolerant and authoritative community, that draws its legitimacy to power from the very idea that human nature is in need of a guiding framework of values, or else it will not be able to reach self-realization.

Conversely, one can claim that possibly neither Taylor nor MacIntyre will support the radical restrictions that the settlers set on autonomy and free will. Yet nevertheless, I feel that, as the comparison here demonstrates, there is no clear separation between the theoretical premises of their political model and the settlers' communitarian interpretation: both worldviews assume that individuals are the product of a specific social context, and hence they should accept the social commitments dictated by this social context. Accordingly, the settlers endow the communitarian theorists' abstract arguments with a clear content, which exposes these arguments' possible intolerant and deterministic aspects. It seems to me that both Taylor and MacIntyre will find it difficult to point out to the exact disparities between their assumptions concerning the subject and those of the settlers. But, without such proper differentiation, the settlers' worldview remains a concrete and daunting example of communitarianism come to life.

### 2.3. Political Manifestations of Communitarian Politics

The two previous sections illustrated the essential conceptual similarities between the worldviews of Taylor and MacIntyre and the settlers'. In this last section, I shall present the anti-democratic results of these assumptions, exploring the political stands of the settlers throughout 1995. Accordingly, I shall first focus on the settlers' exclusionary interpretation of the politics of the common good, and following that will examine the aggravating gap between the settlers' ideology and the democratic values of the Israeli's political system, which eventually resulted in a settlers' complete defiance of the democratic ideal.

As was presented above, the politics of the common good is a central theme in the communitarian model of Taylor and Macintyre, who assert that political norms and

laws should reflect the virtues of the community.<sup>39</sup> The settlers' interpretation of this argument demonstrates, to my understanding, its problematic nature when manifested in a social context in which the notions of the common good are still contested.

There are ample examples in *Nekudah* of arguments calling for the enforcement of the communitarian dimension in Israeli politics. Throughout 1995 these demands center on the condemnation of political bodies which, to the settlers' understanding, do not sufficiently reflect, and even threaten, the Jewish nation's common interests and conception of the good. These claims are referred to the Israeli juridical system, describing it as detached from any moral considerations, and its verdicts as reflecting an excessive dependency on empty decontextualized notions of equality, which allow it, for example, to legitimize homosexual relations, in utter contradiction to the Jewish tradition as well as to any common sense (184/22-24). Another example is the attack on the IDF ethical code.<sup>40</sup> This document is denounced as a "not-kosher document", a fowl manifestation of a left-winged set of values, which is very far from the Jewish and Zionist ideology and completely detached from the actual common and agreed-upon perceptions of Israeli society (184/28-31). In addition, many of the articles attack the Israeli government's policy as contradicting the Jewish religion and the Jewish values, especially in reference to the on-going negotiations to peace. Thus, Nadia Matar, a salient figure among the radical right-winged activists, describes the peace agreement as "a rape of the Jewish people", which forces it to have intercourse with the enemy (187/20). This metaphor not only has a strong communitarian nature, but it also alludes to a nationalistic-organic discourse, indicating the possible affinity between communitarianism and organic nationalism. Other writers in *Nekudah* also define Israeli politics at that time as "non-Jewish", alienated, and empty (187/28-29). The underlying assumption of all these arguments is that the legitimacy of the government should be derived from the community's shared ideas and values – a contention MacIntyre and Taylor will most likely support. But, as the settlers' rhetoric exemplifies, the combination of this claim with the communitarian perception of human nature may lead to a highly intolerant form of politics: For the settlers negate the secular attempt to free the individual from the burdens of tradition, and in addition, they perceive their own interpretation of Judaism as the only true one which allows for the realization of "the true authentic Jewish soul". This reasoning denounces the legitimacy of any political model but their own. Moreover, it leads the

settlers' politics of the common good in an exclusionary and anti-democratic direction. For the settlers' definition of the community is rather isolationist, being based on ethnical and religious criteria. Thus, the settlers repeatedly claim that only Jews can take part in the shaping of the political sphere, since only Jews can have an "authentic Jewish nature". Accordingly, they subtly call for the political exclusion of non-Jews, using communitarian arguments, such as the Arabs are members of the enemy's community and therefore should not be let to participate in the Jewish political sphere (188/32).<sup>41</sup> A following argument is that the Rabin government is not legitimate, since it depends on the support of the Arab parliament members, who are "the agents of the enemy" (186/18; 188/60). Since any Israeli government's legitimacy is derived from the legacy of the Jewish people and its laws, the current government is a "wicked government", which was *prima facie* elected in a democratic procedure, but in fact does not act in behalf of the Israeli public, nor as its representative (188/60). It should be noted that even after the assassination of Rabin, Rabbi Felix repeats the same argument that the Rabin government had no legitimacy and was not *Malkhut Israel*,<sup>42</sup> but an agent of the PLO. Arguments of that kind had previously served to undermine the moral legitimacy of Rabin's authority (190/62).<sup>43</sup>

It can be concluded that the settlers' ethnical-religious definition of the community renders their communitarian politics exclusionary and even racist. Indeed, presumably neither Taylor nor MacIntyre would find this version of communitarianism plausible, and they may even condemn it as contradictory to one of their model's main political goals, which is the inclusion of as many parts of the society as possible, especially those that find themselves alienated from the over-bureaucratic and over-procedural modern democracy. Yet, the fact of the matter is that both thinkers, in the numbered references they make to real communities, do allude to national communities such as French Quebec, or small religious communities of the American kind.<sup>44</sup> These forms of community are likely to have exclusionary self-definitions – whether on the basis of a national identity or religious belief. Thus, the settlers' separatist approach does serve in my opinion as a radical example for the problematic potential of such political models which are based on a self-definition of a particular community, and it seems that in this level too, the communitarian theorists in discussions still need to provide better grounds for any consistent distinction between the ethnical and

religious communities they would wish to see realized and the settlers' exclusionary interpretation.

Another problematic aspect of communitarian politics to be discerned from the settlers' ideology is the fact that communitarian notions are not always compatible with the democratic procedure. The possible collision between the communitarian worldview and democracy, as mentioned, became salient especially between 1992 and 1995, when the policy of the elected Israeli government was in direct contradiction to the settlers' beliefs. As mentioned above, one way in which the settlers chose to handle the dissonance between their worldview and the Israeli government is proclaiming it is not a Jewish government and therefore - not legitimate. This view, expressed by the more moderate figures of the settlers' community, such as Yoel Ben-Nun and Moshe Shamir, does not repudiate the democratic procedure in itself nor the sacredness of the Israeli Government, but rather insist that the specific government of Rabin is in itself anti-democratic since it does not represent the Jewish nation (186/68). As I claimed before, this line of reasoning, anti-democratic and exclusionary as it is, is in fact in accordance with MacIntyre's and Taylor's stands in regards to the necessary compatibility between the national, ethnical or religious community and the political sphere.

Another more radical approach towards the 'problem of the majority rule' to be found in *Nekudah* is the negation of the very democratic procedure itself. Thus, for example, Elyakim Haetzni contends that a majority can become a minority when it rebels against the will of God, for the people have neither the authority nor the power to break the ancient treaty between Israel and God. In fact, he continues, the democratic procedure has its limits, and should not be applied on some obvious, divine truths such as the prohibition to concede any parts of the Land of Israel (188/60-62)<sup>45</sup> This statement, and others of its kind, bring forward once more the problem of the source of authority in communitarian politics; for Haetzni explicitly claims that the Jewish system of values is set by an external factor and is therefore indisputable. Accordingly, when the "actual" Jewish nation clashes with its "true" nature, the conclusion is that the actual people are simply wrong, and their decision should be reversed, one way or another. Thus, the peoples' vote is described as fickle and unreliable, and the democratic systems and its institutions as artificial artifacts, not

representing the true and inner substance of the Jewish people (185/64; 188/68). This repudiation of the people's will is, in my opinion, founded upon the very same ontological premises of those of the communitarian approach; for the settlers, like Taylor and MacIntyre, deny individuals' competency to mold their own conceptions of the good, and locate their moral self-realization in the existing sets of communal values. Thus, the democratic procedure – an expression of individuals' will, becomes secondary to the authority of the community, and when the two clash, the later takes precedence over the former.

### **3. Aftermath and Conclusions**

Throughout 1995, the conflict between the government and the settlers aggravated, and the articles published in *Nekudah* testify as to the rising level of panic and fear among the settlers' community. The ongoing process of morally undermining the legitimacy of the government produced different suggestions as to the proper mode of action to be taken. The most extremists explicitly called for rebellion against the authority of the state, suggesting even the establishment of an independent Jewish political entity in the occupied territories, which will reflect the true Jewish worldview and which will remain standing when all is lost (185/61-62). Others call for active action against the government (185/50-53, 186/36-7), which will lead to the founding of a religious state (188/63; 188/61). These radical means were not supported by all leaders of the settlers' community, and some objections to the negation of the legitimacy of the state and to the refusal to pray for its safety are to be found in the periodical (188/20; 188/32-34). Yet in the last account, it seems that throughout 1995, the settlers' political ideology indeed broke with the legacy of Rabbi Kook, the legacy who strove to integrate secular Zionism with Jewish religion. Rabin was declared by a forum of Settlers' Rabbis a 'persecutor' – a halakhic term indicating a person who poses a threat to another's life and therefore should be stopped even at the price of taking his life (190/63). Yigal Amir, Rabin's assassin, was inspired by this very verdict.

It should be noted that the undermining of the legitimacy of the rule of democracy among the settlers continued long after 1995. In fact, in the very last year Israel has been witnessing a new social phenomenon of settlers' youth establishing new small settlements on hills located at the very heart of Palestinian populated areas.

Throughout 2002 IDF tried to evacuate these settlements but encountered extreme violent resistance from the young settlers, hence after named “the Youth of the Hills”; in an interview, these radical youngsters claimed that Sharon’s government has betrayed its role as a Jewish government, and that they too omit the prayer for its safety.<sup>46</sup> Such familiar declarations lead to the conclusion that the seeds planted in 1995 are now bearing fruits; the gap between the settlers’ ideology and the rule of democracy and law has only widened in the past seven years, the de-legitimization process of the government’s authority continues, and this process slowly turns the occupied territories into a lawless land, where the settlers’ radical worldview becomes a political reality,<sup>47</sup> perhaps a disturbing manifestation of communitarian politics.

Indeed, the relevance of the violent outcomes of settlers’ ideology in regards to the theoretical premises of MacIntyre and Taylor can be questioned: after all, the communitarian constructions erected by MacIntyre and Taylor are, firstly, theoretical, and secondly belong to a very different political context and therefore any attempt to connect these thinkers to the Israeli context is too farfetched. To a large extent, this objection is plausible, since one cannot recklessly blame theory for reality. Indeed, in some respects the analysis presented here is no more than a ‘mind game’, indicating the similarities between two seemingly disconnected paradigms. And yet, I think that there are some conclusions to be drawn from it. For this analysis does not altogether refutes the claim that modern liberalism lacks a more communitarian dimension, but rather strives to expose this critique’s darker sides, which, in my opinion, do not receive enough attention in MacIntyre’s and Taylor’s writing. For the settlers’ ideology and its violent outcomes point out, first and foremost, that such criticism on liberal politics should be conducted with greater care, and always discern itself from anti-democratic interpretations. One way to do that, I believe, is to explicitly accept the liberal underlying set of universal and rational guiding principles (as perhaps both MacIntyre and Taylor implicitly do), even out of no better alternative. In my opinion, Taylor and MacIntyre have so far avoided the problem of their affiliation with anti-democratic communities such as the settlers, and preferred focusing in their writings on some more easy to handle communities, who either due to their isolated position, or to the mildness of their communitarian demands, do not pose any actual threat to the dominant democratic and liberal paradigm. Yet, as the case of Israel demonstrates, not all communities are about sharing and love; some communities are still

aggressive, xenophobic and anti-democratic, and when given too much ground, they can cause real damage and jeopardize the whole democratic structure of a society.

It can be thus concluded, in my opinion, that Taylor and MacIntyre take liberal premises and actual achievements too much for granted. In fact, I believe that their criticism can only be manifested within a liberal world, for in a context whose liberal foundations still face a hard and challenging political reality, its communal values may turn to be more aggressive than its originators intended. Thus, what “mind game” hoped to demonstrate is that the communitarian theories discussed here lack a better sense of self-knowledge as to the true extent of their attachment to liberal premises.

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<sup>1</sup> There is extensive secondary literature covering the dispute between Communitarians and Liberals and its different aspects. For a preliminary survey see: Kymlicka Will, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, (Oxford University Press, 2002); Mullhal Stephen & Swift Adam, *Liberals and Communitarians*, (Blackwell Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Duckworth Press, 1981), 8-11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, “Hegel: History and Politics” in: M. Sandel, *Liberalism and its Critics* (Blackwell Press, 1984), 182.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the self* (Harvard University Press, 1989), 185.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 495

<sup>8</sup> MacIntyre and Taylor reject both the actual and the theoretical existence of such a subject. According to them, even a theoretical acceptance of the unencumbered self undermines the foundation of the community’s morals.

<sup>9</sup> *After Virtue*, 233; Derek, *Looking Backward* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 10.

<sup>10</sup> MacIntyre, *Is Patriotism a Virtue?* (The Lindley Lecture, University of Kansas, 1984), 17.

Tomasi opposes this claim and argues that on the contrary, we are more deeply committed to attachments which we choose than to those we are born into. See: J. Tomasi, “Individual Rights and Community Virtues” *Ethics*, 1991, 101:525-526.

<sup>11</sup> E. Frazer, *The Problems of Communitarian Politics: Unity and Conflict* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 106.

<sup>12</sup> This claim is made more clearly by Taylor, who repeatedly stresses the positive connection between democracy and functioning communities (for example: *Hegel History and Politics*, 197; *Ethics of Authenticity*, 43-44); MacIntyre is less keen on defending the democratic ideal in itself, and in fact dismisses the whole modern political order (*After Virtue*, 237). And yet, he does recoil from despotic manifestations of government, and on the whole perceives his political model as one that will encourage individuals to participate and identify with the political sphere, in the Aristotelian sense (*ibid*, 220, 247).

<sup>13</sup> For the sociological portrayal of settlers' population see: Goldberg & Ben Zadok "Gush Emunim in the West Bank" *Middle Eastern Studies*, 22 (1) (1986), 52-73.

<sup>14</sup> Avineri "The Making of Modern Zionism", (Basic Books, New York: 1981), 187-198.

<sup>15</sup> To what extent is the Settlers' ideology a continuation of Rabbi Kook's metaphysics is a disputed question. See: Don Yehiya "Jewish Messianism, Religious Zionism and Israeli Politics: the Impact and origin of Gush Emunim", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 23 (1995), 215-234; Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (in Hebrew), (Am Oved, 1994), 111-200.

<sup>16</sup> See: G. Aran "Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Block of the Faithful in Israel" in: M. Marty & S. Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalism Observed* (Chicago Press: 1991), 265-344; E. Sprinzak "Three Models of Religious Violence" in: M. Marty & S. Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalisms and the State* (Chicago Press: 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Ben-Zadok, "Ideology and Nationalism and Policy of pragmatism in State-Religion Partnership: The Case of Israel" *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* (2000), 27, 81-92. Today there are about 200,000 Jewish settlers in the occupied territories (*The foundation for Middle East Peace Publication*, 2001, 11/5, 14).

<sup>18</sup> For an analysis of the movement's ideological development and deterioration due to inner ideological disputes see: Lustick, *For The Land and the Lord* (The council for Foreign Relations, New York: 1988).

<sup>19</sup> *Nekudah: The Periodical of Settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza*. *Nekudah* can be translated both as "period"; "dot" and "settlement". For *Nekudah* as reflecting the Settlers' intellectual climate see: Yanovizki and Weiman: "The Attitudes of the Settlers towards Democracy and the Rule of Law in Israel" *Megamot* 37, (1996) 194-215.

<sup>20</sup> The comparison presented here consists only of text analysis; it does not examine the actual communitarian practices of the settlers, their concrete social structures, relations to the Palestinians, restrictions over personal autonomy etc. Thus, it is possible that many of the settlers do not endorse the premises articulated in *Nekudah*, or that their actual way of living expresses different theoretical assumptions.

<sup>21</sup> The analysis presented here focuses only on the six issues of *Nekudah* published in 1995 (184-189). In November 1995 a new chief editor was appointed to *Nekudah*, and the periodical went through some extensive changes – becoming less intellectual, more informative, and 'lighter' (much to the dismay of its readers).

<sup>22</sup> *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 5; *After Virtue*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Taylor, *Ibid*. 39.

<sup>24</sup> *Ethics of Authenticity*, 39-40; *After Virtue*, 233-234.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Goldberg & Zadok, 1983, 76.

<sup>26</sup> *After Virtue*, 212, 241; *Ethics of Authenticity* 39, 104

<sup>27</sup> *Sources of the Self*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Ravitzky, 1994, 60-111.

<sup>29</sup> Feige, "Cultural Movements, Hegemony and Political Myth" (dissertation paper, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1995), 104; Goldberg & Zadok, 1983, 78.

<sup>30</sup> *After Virtue*, 139-40; *Sources of the self*, 23.

<sup>31</sup> *Sources of the Self*, 26.

<sup>32</sup> *After Virtue*, 140.

<sup>33</sup> *Ethics of Authenticity*, 32, 91.

<sup>34</sup> *After Virtue*, 212

<sup>35</sup> It should be noted here that I find great similarity between Taylor and MacIntyre in these respects, and therefore though it proper to portray them as one theoretical unit. However, I should stress that there are dissimilarities between the two as well; in general- the perception of personhood presented here is more salient in MacIntyre's *After Virtue*. In contrast, Taylor's, *Sources of the Self* and *Ethics of*

*Authenticity* are more moderate. He too conceives the individual as potentially morally degenerated, but his portrayal is less ominous

<sup>36</sup> Shafat, *Gush Emunim – the Behind the Scene Story* (in Hebrew) (Beit El, 1994), appendix.

<sup>37</sup> For instance, in *Is Patriotism a Virtue?* MacIntyre calls for a practically blind obedience to the moral authority of the community: "Of the members of these armed forces it must require that they be prepared to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of the community's security, and that their willingness to do so be not contingent upon their own individual evaluation of the rightness or wrongness of their country's cause..." (p.17). Taylor, I believe, holds a similar conception of the community, though his is less severe than MacIntyre's. Thus, he too demands compliance with the standards of the community. According to his view, an authentic life is one that recognizes that "independent of my will there is something noble, courageous, and hence significant in giving shape to my own life" Hence Taylor finds the individual's authentic determination not in his own self but in a heteronomous source which is prior to her, with which demands the individual must comply, otherwise she will be sentenced to a life of moral superficiality (*Sources of the self*, 507).

<sup>38</sup> *Is Patriotism a Virtue?* 235-236; *Ethics of Authenticity*, 39.

<sup>39</sup> *After Virtue*, 220, "Hegel: History and Politics", 186.

<sup>40</sup> The IDF ethical code is a much contested upon manifesto, which was published in 1995. it was conceived by the Israeli philosopher Asa Kasher, and consists of 10 principles, such as dignity, loyalty, love of country and purity of arms. It is traditionally memorized by all Israeli officers as part of their training.

<sup>41</sup> Etzion was one of the ideological leaders of the Jewish Underground, convicted in 1985 and later pardoned by the president.

<sup>42</sup> *Malkhut Israel* is a religious term meaning a legitimate rule, supported by God.

<sup>43</sup> This declaration implies to an on-going debate within the Settlers' community, concerning the legitimacy of the Jewish government. For one of the core arguments of Rabbi Kook the father was the holiness of the state of Israel, despite its secular nature. Thus, some say that by defining the State of Israel as a wicked state, and by refusing to praise it in the daily prayers, Felix and his followers in fact turn away from the legacy of Kookism. For an interesting inner debate on the subject see *Nekudah* 187/16-30.

<sup>44</sup> *After Virtue*, 241; See also Derek, 1993, 14.

<sup>45</sup> See also 188/52-54; Goldberg & Zadok, 1993, 78, Ehud Sprintzak "The Iceberg model of Political Radicalism" *State, Government and International Relations* (in Hebrew) 1981 (3).

<sup>46</sup> N. Sargai "Nowhere Land" *Haaretz* 10/31/2002 (in Hebrew).

<sup>47</sup> See R. Dudai, *Approval through Silence - B'tselem Report on the Policy of Law Enforcement in the Territories*, (in Hebrew) March 2001.