Utopia and Its Discontents: The Kibbutz and Its Historical Vicissitudes

ABSTRACT Following an explication of “utopianism,” this article describes the social and cultural systems of the original utopian communes comprising the Israeli kibbutz movement. It then describes the radical changes that have been made in those systems. After accounting for these changes, it assesses their implications for the utopian and cultural determinist theories of human nature. [Keywords: utopia, kibbutz, cultural determinism, cultural change, human nature]

UTOPIANISM

My title, of course, is borrowed in part from Sigmund Freud who, in his “Civilization and Its Discontents,” argued that because civilization—a term he used interchangeably with culture—thwarts some basic human desires, especially aggressive desires, its persistence requires the development of a superego; the superego, in turn, produces remorse and guilt. Because these painful affects are the necessary price for the benefits of civilization, human beings are to a greater or lesser extent discontents.

Although classical utopian thinkers, beginning with Sir Thomas More, also argued that civilization produces discontents, they disagreed, however, with Freud’s diagnosis. Discontents, they maintained, are produced by the type of social order characteristic of civilization as we have known it; consequently, the creation of a communitarian social order will preclude the development of discontents. In order to assess this argument, it is perhaps useful to examine utopian thought in finer detail.

George Kateb, a foremost expert on the subject, defines utopian thought as

a persistent tradition of thought about the perfect society, in which perfection is defined as harmony. The harmony . . . of each man within himself and of each man with all others . . . [is conceived as] perpetual peace; full satisfaction of human wants; either a happy labor or a rich leisure, or a combination of both; extreme equality . . . ; the absence of discretionary authority . . . ; and a nearly effortless virtue on the part of all men. [1968:267]

Although utopian thought has produced any number of literary and fictional utopias, my concern here is with actual utopian communes. Based on her historical and sociological studies, Rosabeth Kanter summarized their generic characteristics as follows:

[They] place values, moral concerns, group solidarity and relationships above instrumental or economic purposes; they have a . . . consciously limited membership; they share resources; and they constitute a primary group, in which people interact with each other on a generalized basis . . . rather than in terms of specific roles. [1973:xiii]

To which, following Arthur Bestor (1970:4), the preeminent historian of early U.S. communes, I would add one more characteristic. Utopian (unlike nonutopian) communes are concerned not only with their own salvation but also with the salvation of society as a whole. They believe that when others become aware of their way of life, they will take it as a model for the reconstruction of the larger society.

It should finally be stressed that secular (but not religious) utopians believe that their values can be achieved— as Frank Manuel (1966:73) among others has emphasized—because of their theory of human nature. According to that theory, man is by nature capable of both good (harmony, cooperation, and fraternity) and evil (aggression, envy, and exploitation). Which of these traits, however, are actualized depends on the social order: An individualistic order produces the second set of traits, while a communal order will produce the first set. In the event, childhood education is the foundation for the “new man” that a communal order is expected to produce.

Based, however, on his historical survey of U.S. utopian communes, Yaacov Oved argued that this is an illusory expectation. Having discovered that the average duration of the 277 identifiable utopian communes established in the
United States from 1663–1940 was less than four years,3 Oved concluded that

The utopian belief in the unlimited power of education, its ability to bring social change, to create a new man, and to overcome the heritage of an individualistic order has not stood up to the test of the historical experiment of communes in the United States. [1988:401]

In my view, however, the experience of utopian communes in one country is not sufficient for an empirically grounded assessment of this utopian belief. Accordingly, in this article I attempt such an assessment by examining the utopian communes (kibbutz, sing.; kibbutzim, pl.) in Israel against the experience of the U.S. communes. I have chosen them for three reasons. First, the 270 kibbutzim, and their 125,000 members (as of 1990), constitute the largest utopian movement in history. Second, an anthropological expert on utopian communes (Bennett 1975) has persuasively argued that an adequate assessment requires three generations of communally born and educated members; and unlike the U.S. communes, most of which came to an end before they produced even one such generation, the oldest kibbutzim have produced four. Third, I have known the kibbutz movement firsthand for 50 years, beginning with my first fieldtrip in 1951–52 to a kibbutz I call “Kiryat Yedidim,” which was, at the time, almost thirty years old. As I then was committed to the cultural determinist theory of human nature, my aim was to describe the socialization techniques by which the kibbutz putatively shaped the personality of its children in accordance with its collectivist values and institutions.4

BEGINNINGS OF THE KIBBUTZ

The earliest kibbutzim—the four created between 1910 and the outbreak of the World War I—were founded by young Jews who emigrated from Russia following the failure of the 1905 revolution. Though their decision to migrate to Palestine—rather than, say, America5—was motivated by their Zionist ideology, their creation of a kibbutz, however, was a consequence of the need to cope with the problems that confronted them following their arrival. Only by living and working communally, so they discovered, were they able to cope with their inhospitable social and physical environments.

The Eastern European Jewish immigrants who created the first postwar kibbutzim arrived in Palestine with the explicit intention of establishing a kibbutz, an intention that was influenced by the ideology they had acquired from membership in one or another Socialist–Zionist youth movement. Thus, the teenage founders of Kiryat Yedidim, who migrated from Poland in 1920, were members of Hashomer Ha-tzair, a movement that had forged a synthesis of Socialist–Zionist ideology and that of the Wandervogel, a highly influential German youth movement (Bloch 1952:14ff.).

From Socialist Zionism, they, like earlier immigrants, acquired the conviction that Jews are a nation that, like any other, has the right to live in its historic homeland. Only there, they believed, could Jews escape the disabilities of their minority status, which not only rendered them an easy target for antisemitism but also distorted their psychological and cultural characteristics by excluding them from productive economic activity. Consequently, they had no appreciation for the dignity of physical labor, they were alienated from nature, and they suffered from a sterile intellectualism. By living, however, in their own homeland—and, moreover, by working on the land—they would achieve a “normal” existence and, thereby, be transformed into “new Jews.”

If from the former ideology, these young pioneers acquired a vision of a “new Jew,” then from the ideology of the Wandervogel they acquired a vision of a “new man.” In accordance with the latter ideology, they believed that human nature, though essentially good, is corrupted by private property, social inequality, and the artificial conventions of urban society. That being so, they intended to created a kibbutz, as a founder of Kiryat Yedidim put it in 1951, “in order to discover [the true] man” (limtzo et ha’adam)—that is, as he went on to explain, to discover the love, the fellowship, and the concern for others that constitute the true qualities of human nature.

These qualities could find their expression, they believed, by creating a commune with the following characteristics: (1) members live on, and make their living from, the land; (2) property is collectively owned; (3) goods and services are distributed according to “need”; (4) luxurious living is eschewed; and (5) equality is the dominant mode of social relations. These characteristics comprised the value system of the kibbutz movement when, in 1951, my wife and I began fieldwork in Kiryat Yedidim. The following sketch of this value system, together with its institutional implementation, constitutes a brief description of what is referred to today as the “classic kibbutz.”6

THE CLASSIC KIBBUTZ

Equality

The central moral value of the culture of the classic kibbutz was equality—economic, social, and political. The achievement of economic equality was the primary purpose of the collective ownership of property: not only land, housing, and producer goods but also consumer goods, except for such personal items as toothbrushes and combs. Equality in consumer goods was assured by the distribution system. Guided by the principle of “the equal worth of [all] labor” (shivyon erech avodah), all members—whatever their field of work, and regardless of differences in skill, responsibility, and productivity—received the same annual personal consumption allowance (taktziv). This, in effect, constituted their wages. Thus, every male received the identical quantity and style of shirts, trousers, and the like, just as every female received the identical quantity and style of dresses, undergarments, and so forth—modified only by differences in need.
This system confounded the economists, for whom economic reward constituted the main motivation for work. In the kibbutz, however, in which it was axiomatic that members place the interests of the group above their personal interests, work was motivated by hakkarah, or the self-conscious recognition that the welfare of the group depended on each member working as efficiently as possible. The consequence (as I can personally testify from my experience in Kiryat Yedidim) was that virtually all members worked with intense, even obsessive, dedication.

A second principle—"the equal worth of [every] person" (shiyon erech ha-adam)—underlay the value of social equality. This principle served to mute, if not wholly preclude, the development of social stratification. Thus, both in theory and fact, the member who, for example, cleaned the latrines, was the social equal of the farm manager.

The value of political equality was implemented by the twin norms that leadership positions, both political and economic, rotate every three years and that they carry no special privileges—hence, rather than seek such positions, most members preferred to avoid them—and by the rule that any decision affecting the group be made by the general assembly (sichat kibbutz).

**Moral Centrality of the Group**

This value, which more simply might be called "fraternity," comprised a number of dimensions, the first of which was expressed in the norm of "mutual responsibility" (aravut hadadit). In accordance with this norm, members' personal consumption allowance would be larger than others if they had more children; they would consume more of the communal dining room budget if they required a special diet; they would utilize a greater proportion of the kibbutz's health budget if they required special medication; and so on. In short, based on this norm, the resources of the kibbutz were allocated according to the principle "from each according to ability, to each according to need."

A second dimension of this value consisted of the norm that if the interests of the group conflicted with those of an individual, the former would take precedence. As an extreme example, consider the practice found in the early years of the kibbutz whereby—as a result of insufficient housing—a married couple shared a one-room apartment, separated only by a curtain, with an unmarried member of the kibbutz, even though the latter's presence was experienced as an intolerable invasion of the couple's privacy. For a less extreme example, consider the following practice, which persisted into the 1960s: If the workforce in a particular agricultural branch was unable to complete the harvest by themselves, other members of the kibbutz accepted a work draft to assist them, even though such drafts not only were frequent but also entailed giving up a welcome day of rest from hard labor in their own work stations.

A third dimension consisted of the norm that the group, not the individual, was the legitimate locus of decision making. Not only were all decisions that affected the kibbutz as a whole made by the general assembly but also those that affected individual members. Thus, it was the general assembly, or one of its constituent committees, that decided where a married couple lived, in what economic branch a member worked, whether a member could pursue higher education, and the like.

A fourth dimension consisted of the unspoken, but shared, sentiment that group togetherness is a desirable end in itself, a sentiment most importantly expressed in the spontaneous and informal nightly gatherings in the communal dining room. The importance of togetherness is perhaps best gauged by the prolonged resistance of kibbutz veterans to the suggestion that the kibbutz provide its members with electric tea kettles (koomkoom). Were it implemented, they argued, members might prefer to spend their evenings in the privacy of their rooms; furthermore, it would violate the prohibition on private property. Hence their rallying cry: "The koomkoom will destroy the kibbutz!"

This emphasis on group togetherness was also expressed in the downplaying of the importance of both the married couple and the nuclear family as structurally differentiated units within the kibbutz. Like many communes (Kanter 1973:283–288), the early kibbutz viewed itself as one large family, so that emotional involvement in any subgroup was considered a competing loyalty. Consequently, spouses refrained from any public behavior that might signify their special relationship. They did not, for example, demonstrate affection in public, arrive together in the dining room, or take vacations together—thereby demonstrating that their attachment to each other did not diminish their attachment to the group.

Although spouses shared a common living unit, their children lived in (age-graded) children's houses where women members of the kibbutz, most of whom received formal training as child caregivers, reared them. Children visited with their parents for approximately two hours a day when the latter returned from work.7 Known as "collective education" (chimuch meshataf), this system of child rearing had a number of objectives. In addition to the aims of ensuring the transmission of the collectivist values of the kibbutz to the children (thereby creating the "new man" of its utopian vision), and the freeing of mothers from the burden of childcare (thereby enabling women to participate fully in the economic, cultural, and political life of the kibbutz), it also emphasized the priority of the group over the nuclear family.8

**Work**

The value of physical labor, a moral imperative of the classic kibbutz, had two dimensions. First, physical—but, especially, agricultural—labor was viewed as a transformative experience. In the words of the early pioneering folksong, "We have come to the land [Palestine] to build it and to be rebuilt in it." This mystique of labor was known as dat ha'avaoda, "the religion of labor." A second dimension consisted of the norm that kibbutz members, and they alone, perform
all required labor. Known as avoda atzmit ("self labor"), this norm proscribed the employment of outside workers, because to profit from the labor of others was considered exploitation. Accordingly, while it was permissible to hire outside labor for work regarding which kibbutz members were untrained—building construction, for example—they were never employed, however, for agricultural work or for what was called "black work"—the cleaning of latrines, for example.

**Asceticism**

A final moral value of the classic kibbutz we need to discuss here is asceticism, the shunning of luxuries in favor of simple living. The kibbutz founders, influenced by their European youth movements, believed that the simple life, materially speaking, would encourage the realization of the full potentialities of human nature. Consequently, while in the early years of the kibbutz they lived in tents out of economic necessity, in the later years their living conditions were not much better. Thus, when we arrived in Kibbutz Yedidin in 1951—30 years after its founding—housing consisted of single-room apartments that, though cold and damp in the winter and unbearably hot in the summer, contained neither heaters nor fans. Similarly, sanitation and bathing facilities consisted of wholly inadequate communal toilets and showers, difficult to access in the winter rain and mud and foul smelling in the summer heat. Also, the small and dingy communal dining room was chronically noisy and overcrowded.

Insufficient financial resources were doubtless an important reason for these rudimentary conditions, but the members' willingness to put up with them, with only intermittent complaining, was as much morally as economically motivated. As one kibbutz founder, a woman, put it: "[When we came here] our ideal was to live like Spartans. We thought there were more important things to think about than comfort." Their Spartanism, it might be added, was reflected not only in their living conditions. As late as 1951, women, like men, typically wore shorts or baggy trousers during the day, and the dresses they wore in the communal dining room in the evening were plain and utilitarian, designed more for protection from the elements than for style; in addition, makeup and jewelry were strictly avoided.

**ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CLASSIC KIBBUTZ**

If the classic kibbutz, as the term implies, is now history, it is not for lack of achievements. By the middle 1960s, as the classic period was coming to an end, the kibbutz movement had grown from one kibbutz and 11 (adult) members to 229 kibbutzim and more than 85,000 members. Moreover, though comprising only three percent of the (Jewish) population of Israel, it was producing 33 percent of the gross national farm product, five percent of the gross national industrial product, and 12 percent of the total gross national product. In the same period, kibbutz members comprised a disproportionately high percentage of the country's distinguished novelists and poets, as well as a disproportionately low percentage of its criminals: As late as the 1970s, the total recorded kibbutz crime consisted of one murder and one embezzlement.

The contributions of the kibbutz to the Zionist enterprise were equally impressive. In order to bring more land under Jewish cultivation, the early kibbutzim settled on and drained malarial swampland. To protect the small Jewish community of Palestine from Arab raiders, they settled on the borders where they constituted self-defense units. Moreover, kibbutz members were disproportionately represented in the preindependence underground Jewish army (Hagana) and in the leadership of its commando units (Palmach), and they comprised (and still comprise) a disproportionate percentage of the officer corps of the Israeli army and air force.

In the light of these achievements, it is not surprising that the Jewish community of Palestine viewed kibbutz members as an elite. As Amos Elon pointed out,

Kibbutzniks [kibbutz members], more than any other group, were implicitly accepted by a majority of the settlers as the virtual personification of highest Zionist purposes. [Their] personal life-style [represented] libertarian ideas and ideals of social justice with which even outsiders liked to identify vicariously. The ideal of kibbutz life was often worshipped, at least verbally, by those personally unprepared to live by it. [1971:412]

It is no accident, then, that even after the establishment of the state, Israeli cartoonists employed the image of the kibbutznik, with his khaki shorts, open shirt, and floppy sun-hat as the symbol of the new nation. Nor is it an accident that as late as 1969, when the kibbutz movement comprised only three percent of the Israeli (Jewish) population, four of the 24-member cabinet (16 percent) were members of kibbutzim, and six more were former members. In addition, 15 of the 120-member parliament were kibbutz members, another 30 were former members or closely associated with the kibbutz movement, and four prime ministers had been kibbutz members.

Notwithstanding this impressive record of achievements, signs of discontent with the classic kibbutz were already evident in the 1960s. They became widespread in the 1980s, when "the crisis in the kibbutz," as it was called, was publicly acknowledged by the kibbutz movement. The "crisis" is usually attributed to two factors: one economic, the other psychological. The economic factor consisted of a huge collective indebtedness (as much as five billion dollars) that resulted from massive kibbutz losses in the stock market, an inability to repay excessive bank loans, and a 400 percent inflation in the Israeli economy. Only a government-brokered arrangement with the banks saved many kibbutzim from bankruptcy. The psychological factor consisted of the recognition by kibbutz members—especially following the ascendancy of the political Right in the 1977 elections—that not only had they lost their elite status in Israeli society but also they were actually despised by a significant proportion of the population—particularly
immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East, who recently have gone so far as to challenge the moral right of the kibbutzim to their land.

While these factors constituted external determinants of the “crisis,” an internal determinant was perhaps of greater importance: namely, the disaffection of kibbutz-born and -educated members—sabras, as I shall call them. (Conventionally, the term sabra is used to refer to any native-born [Jewish] Israeli, but I shall use it here to refer to anyone born in a kibbutz.) The founders’ expectation that the kibbutz would produce a “new man,” one shaped by its communitarian values and institutions, has not been realized. Although first-generation sabras, still influenced by the heroic deeds of the founders, accepted those values and institutions, at least to some degree, most of the succeeding generations—who today comprise the total membership of veteran kibbutzim, and a majority in the others—reject many, if not most, of them. In short, they are discontent, as signified both by the far-reaching changes they have made (and continue to make) in the kibbutz and by the large numbers who have left (and continue to leave).

**GROUNDS FOR SABRA DISCONTENT**

**Discontent with Standard of Living**

Veteran kibbutz members tend to attribute sabra discontent to the desire for a higher standard of living. While this is doubtless one of their motives, it is hardly the most important. Indeed, this desire first surfaced in sabra cohorts who came to maturity after, not before, the dramatic improvement in the standard of living that had already taken place in most, especially veteran, kibbutzim. To take Kiryat Yedidim as an example, I would point inter alia to the three-room duplexes, complete with air conditioning, refrigerator, TV, stereo, and VCR; the spacious and tasteful communal dining room; the auditorium, with facilities for public lectures, concerts, holiday celebrations, basketball, movies, and the like; the well-stocked library and reading room; the social club, open in the evenings for espresso and snacks; the Olympic-size swimming pool, sauna, and tennis court complex; and the well-kept gardens and park-like landscaping.

Equally impressive improvements had taken place at the personal level. Consider the clothing of the women, for example. Unlike their utilitarian appearance in the early years of the kibbutz, women were now wearing well-cut dresses, form-fitting slacks, nylon stockings, jewelry, makeup, perfume, and coiffed hair; moreover, virtually every kibbutz had a beauty parlor, complete with beautician, skin specialist, and masseuse. In addition, men as well as women enjoyed annual paid vacations, many took regular trips abroad, and higher education became routine for most anyone who wanted it. Furthermore, most kibbutzim had introduced a long-desired change in the personal consumption allowance, by which it now consisted of cash rather than goods. As a result of this change, members were free to make their own consumption decisions in accordance with individual requirements, preferences, and tastes.

To assess the standard of living in the kibbutz today, it is perhaps useful to compare the annual income of kibbutz members with that of other (Jewish) Israelis. For this comparison, I rely on information supplied by a kibbutz member who has followed economic conditions in the kibbutz movement for over 50 years. In 1992, the personal consumption allowance—in short, the per capita cash income—in the average kibbutz was roughly 24,000 shekels, equivalent approximately to US$6,000. While admittedly low by Israeli standards, once free housing, food, quality education, good medical care, and superior cultural and recreational facilities are factored in, the actual per capita income, according to my informant, was roughly equivalent to that of the upper 20 percent of the Israeli (Jewish) population.

In sum, in the light of this evidence, it seems unlikely that sabra discontent is primarily motivated by a desire for a higher standard of living. Rather, based on an array of data—interviews, articles in the newspapers of the major kibbutz federations, changes still to be described, and sabras’ self-reported motives for leaving the kibbutz—it is evident that their discontent is motivated primarily by the two components of the communal life: collective property and collective living.

**Discontent with Collective Property**

Sabra discontent with collective property is most importantly evidenced by their retreat from this institution—only, however, in respect to consumer, not producer goods—and from the traditional values of equality, sharing, and mutual responsibility, for whose implementation collective property was instituted. Their retreat is manifested both in unofficial changes initiated by individual members and in official changes introduced by formal action of the kibbutz. Here, I can instance only several examples of each type, beginning with the first.

Unlike the classic period, in which gifts received by members from family or friends were typically transferred to the kibbutz, today recipients usually retain these gifts. A public secret, this practice has introduced private property, as well as economic inequality, into the kibbutz. A more important change, also a public secret, consists of the possession by some members—the number is unknown—of private bank accounts, the funds for which are acquired from undeclared cash gifts and inheritances and from wages received from employment outside the kibbutz. The latter requires explanation.

Following the economic crisis referred to above, many kibbutzim, strapped for cash, permitted and even encouraged members to seek outside employment, with the understanding that their wages would be assigned to the kibbutz. Today, 30 percent of kibbutz members work outside, though in some individual kibbutzim it has reached 60 percent (Mort and Brenner 2003:76). Whatever the motive of
the kibbutz, members so employed have various motives of their own, one of which—at least for some of them—consists of the opportunity to acquire savings accounts, which is achieved by withholding some fraction of their wages from the kibbutz. These savings do not, however, acquire social significance until they are withdrawn for private purchases. While in most cases the latter are relatively minor, in a few extreme cases they are major—such as the purchase of automobiles. That the consequent criticism and envy does not deter this practice is a measure both of the sabras’ desire for private possessions and the erosion in their commitment to the values of equality and sharing.

This erosion is more importantly signified by changes officially introduced by the kibbutz and initiated by the “committee for change” found in many kibbutzim. These committees, whose aim is the “privatization” (ḥafṭata) of the collectivist economic institutions of the kibbutz, came into being in the 1980s as a response to the previously mentioned economic crisis. Let us consider four of these changes.

In the first place, take the requirement that members pay for consumption items heretofore provided without charge by the kibbutz—including dining room meals, home electricity, education, and the like. Thus, as of 2002, 60 percent of kibbutzim charge for meals; 74 percent for home electricity; and smaller percentages for laundry, recreational facilities, medicine, and higher education. Because the previous system constituted the institutionalization of the value of mutual responsibility—members who consumed fewer of these resources were in effect subsidizing those who consumed more—this change represents an important erosion in that value. While this was not the intent of the change—its intent, rather, was to discourage waste—it is, however, its recognized and accepted consequence.

Second, consider the recent decision by one-fourth of the kibbutzim (and counting) to transfer ownership of members’ housing from the kibbutz to the individual members themselves. Although this change was motivated by two “rational” considerations—with the erosion in the value of mutual responsibility, it serves as an insurance policy for members in their declining years, and it provides an inheritance for their children who leave the kibbutz—nevertheless, it constitutes significant erosion in collective ownership.

A third official change, a critical retreat from economic democracy, consists of three related innovations. First, 70 percent of kibbutz factories and 40 percent of its agricultural branches are now run by salaried boards of directors, many of whom are nonkibbutz members. Second, 40 percent of kibbutzim have taken on private partners for their factories, and 60 percent have hired nonkibbutz managers for their business enterprises. Third, even those who retain kibbutz managers have discontinued their mandatory rotation (Gavron 2000).

Finally, consider the innovation in the kibbutz wage structure. Because the classic kibbutz was committed to the principle of “the equal worth of labor,” all members, whatever their occupations, received the same personal consumption allowance—in effect, their wages. Based, however, on the new principle of “compensation proportional to contribution” (tmura l’troma), 104 kibbutzim (and counting) have introduced a different wage structure—“differential reward” (sachar differentially). According to this principle, the consumption allowance is determined by the going wage of the member’s occupation in the free labor market. This radical innovation not only represents a rejection of “the equal worth of labor” but also signifies critical erosion in the values of economic equality and sharing.

### Discontent with Collective Living

Sabra discontent with collective living is motivated, in the first place, by the constraints on privacy attendant on the pervasive group togetherness that characterized the early years of the kibbutz. Discontent with togetherness, which was expressed as early as 1951 by the then-first-generation sabras, has led to a number of institutional changes, the most important, perhaps, being the demolition of the communal dining room from the focus of kibbutz social life. Formerly a nightly gathering place, in most kibbutzim the dining room has long been dark at night, members preferring to remain at home with books, TV, and friends. Moreover, because many prefer to eat their evening meal at home, 70 percent of kibbutzim (as of 2002) have stopped serving dinner in the dining room, and others have closed it altogether. Significantly, the communal Passover dinner (seder), a quintessential symbolic expression of togetherness, has been discontinued by ten percent of the kibbutzim.

Discontent with group togetherness includes the subgroup of the family, as well. Most kibbutz founders were strongly attached to their children, which the latter reciprocated until they reached adolescence when, typically, as a consequence perhaps of ambivalence toward them, they only infrequently visited their parents. Some founders attributed their children’s ambivalence to the emotional burden of having to live up to the expectation that they would become the “new man” of their utopian vision, which is doubtless true to some extent. But this does not explain why more than a few contemporary sabras, though they do not carry this psychological burden, are likewise ambivalent toward their parents. Such ambivalence, of course, is hardly unique to the kibbutz: In my judgment, it is most probably universal. In the kibbutz, however, it is complicated by a social structure in which adult children performencounter their parents virtually daily—in the communal dining room, and at meetings, lectures, and other public gatherings—as well as weekly at the customary Saturday family dinner. While most sabras are able to negotiate all this family togetherness without undue difficulty, for others it is an important source of discontent, and one of the motives, conscious or unconscious, for leaving the kibbutz.

An even more important motive for sabra discontent with collective living consists of constraints on personal freedom entailed by the need to subordinate individual

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desires to the interests of the group. Consider, for example, a member’s desire to take leave from the kibbutz to pursue some personal desire or need. Understandably enough, collective living requires that the group authorize the implementation of such a desire, and in the kibbutz this is a long and cumbersome process. The member must first submit a formal request for leave to a relevant committee, which in turn transmits its recommendation to the representative assembly (formerly the general assembly) for decision. Because both bodies are governed by (what they construe to be) the best interests of the kibbutz, their decision not infrequently is to deny, or at least postpone, the member’s request. Formerly, when the primacy of the group’s interests was taken as axiomatic, such a decision, however frustrating, was usually accepted by the member without undue protest; however, lately, as that axiom has come under strenuous challenge, it is infuriating. Moreover, even when the request is granted—as it usually is today—the very requirement of group authorization is itself infuriating because the sabras want the freedom to make their own decisions.

Consider, again, the constraint on freedom of occupational choice. Although inherent in any village as a consequence of the narrow range of available occupations, this constraint is especially frustrating for the sabras because from the very beginnings of the kibbutz, its educational system concentrated on science, the humanities, and art. While this concentration expanded the sabras’ intellectual and cultural horizons far beyond the small world of a rural village, nevertheless, to live in the kibbutz, they perforce had to confine their occupational aspirations to those occupations available in it: typically, for males, agricultural and other forms of manual labor; for females, child care and other “service” occupations. To aspire to other vocations was to be guilty of careerism, a highly pejorative term in the lexicon of the classic kibbutz.

To be sure, when agricultural and manual labor more generally were paramount kibbutz values, hence the occupations of greatest prestige, this contradiction was—at least for the males—mostly theoretical. It became actual—and, thus, a major source of sabra discontent—as a consequence of the decline in the economic importance of kibbutz agriculture and the lifting of the prohibition on university study.

Beginning in the 1950s, as changing market conditions reduced the profitability of agriculture, some few kibbutzim added factories to their productive economy. It was not, however, until the 1970s that industry became widespread in the kibbutz movement, and only in the 1990s was the economy of most kibbutzim preponderantly industrial. Thus, by 1990, members working in industry exceeded those in agriculture—24,000 versus 18,000 (Ben-Rafael 1997:31). By 1995, industry accounted for 70 percent of the net income of kibbutzim (Levitan et al. 1998:160). Although this dramatic increase in industrialization began as a response to an economic imperative, it was accompanied by the sabra rejection of agriculture as a paramount value, so that for many, if not most, it was no longer the occupation of choice.

With the lifting of the former prohibition on university study, other forms of manual labor also become undesirable for the sabras. This is reflected in part in the massive introduction of hired labor into virtually every branch of the kibbutz economy, such that today hired workers comprise 60 percent of the kibbutz industrial workforce, up from 30 percent as late as 1990. This change, like the first, was also a response to an economic imperative—in this case, a shortage of manpower. However, this shortage is in large part a consequence of the sabras’ rejection of the traditional kibbutz values of manual labor and of self-labor.

In sum, for some considerable time, the constraint on occupational choice has been a major source of sabra discontent. Thus, those who aspire to a career, say, in the academy, in management, or in the free professions—the current occupations of fully half the sabras who have left the kibbutz—are confronted with a painful dilemma: Should they remain in the kibbutz, renounce their aspirations—for how many academics, business managers, and doctors does a kibbutz need?—and suffer frustration? Or should they leave the kibbutz, fulfill their aspirations, and suffer guilt?

More recently, the kibbutz has enabled the sabras to resolve this dilemma by allowing, indeed encouraging, them to work outside while still remaining kibbutz members. While ideal for those sabras who opt for this resolution—they can fulfill their professional aspirations and still live in a park-like setting, enjoy clean country air, and provide their children with a quality education—this arrangement is hardly ideal for the kibbutz, at least not in the long run. Were it to be widely adopted, it would transform the kibbutz from a fully functioning communitarian village into a suburban bedroom community: Indeed, many informed observers have already predicted that this is the future of the kibbutz.

As a final example of sabra discontent with the need to subordinate personal desires to the interests of the group, consider the matter of the children sleeping at night in the children’s houses. Although even in the early years of the kibbutz, a few pioneer mothers were unhappy with this arrangement, nevertheless they reluctantly accepted it because it allegedly served the best interests of both the kibbutz and the children. When their daughters, however, became mothers, many of them complained that it was, on the contrary, harmful to both the children’s interests and their own as mothers: It thwarted their “maternal instincts.” Consequently, these sabra mothers, and their daughters in turn, demanded that this it be abolished, but it was not until the 1967 War that many kibbutzim began to accede to their demands to replace the communal sleeping of children (lina meshutefet) with “family sleeping” (lina mishpachit). Although traditionalists condemned this change as spelling “the end of the kibbutz,” by the 1990s virtually every kibbutz had adopted it, the last holdout capitulating in 1996.10
In concluding this section it should be emphasized that despite the many changes in the kibbutz that have been introduced over the years to deal with sabra discontent, their resignation rates have increased, not decreased. Thus, whereas until 1958 less than 10 percent of the sabras had resigned, by 1969 their cumulative resignation rate had risen from a low of 20 percent in some kibbutzim to a high of 70 percent in others, and by 1995 it had risen again from a low of 50 to a high of 90 percent. As a consequence, there has been a serious decline in kibbutz membership: For the 1987–99 decade alone, it declined from 127,000 to 103,000 members. Moreover, since two-thirds of sabra resignations occur before the age of 30, and since married couples today have fewer children than was the case in the past, the kibbutz birth rate has dropped from 3,000 to 1,800 per annum. What is more, in 1999 the average age in the largest of the three kibbutz federations was 52, whereas for the Israeli (Jewish) population as a whole it was 30. Should these demographic trends continue, then clearly the future of the kibbutz is bleak.

THE KIBBUTZ EXPERIENCE AND HUMAN NATURE

Introduction

With the above account of radical generational change in the kibbutz as background, we may finally return to the question that motivated the writing of this article: To what extent, if any, is the kibbutz experience relevant for an assessment of the utopian—alternatively, the cultural determinist—theory of human nature? Before, however, addressing this question, we must first define human nature.

As I shall use the term, human nature denotes the psychological characteristics that are acquired by children, whether biologically or socially, prior to their acquisition of culture. To preclude misunderstanding, I should explain that socially, but preculturally, acquired psychological characteristics consist of those cognitive orientations and motivational dispositions that children acquire as a consequence of their social experience with the emotionally salient persons comprising their microsocial world—typically the family—before the values, norms, and cognitions that constitute the culture of their social group are transmitted to them. Because cultural acquisition depends on the development of language, “precultural children,” generally speaking, are prelinguistic children. To whatever degree that children’s social but precultural experience may be universal, to the same degree the social and psychological characteristics that these experiences produce are also universal (Spiro 1994:xii–xxi). In the event, the latter characteristics are no less a part of human nature than those produced by the human genome.

The Sabras’ Individualist Motivational Dispositions

If, despite their enculturation with the collectivist values of the kibbutz and their socialization to perpetuate its collectivist institutions, tens of thousands of sabras have participated in the erosion of those values and the changing of those institutions and, furthermore, if a dangerously large proportion have rejected those values and institutions altogether by leaving the kibbutz, then surely these findings constitute a critical challenge to the utopian and cultural determinist theories of human nature. In short, insofar as many sabra values—let us call them “individualist”—are the opposite of the “collectivist” values of traditional kibbutz culture, they can hardly have been determined by that culture, which suggests that they were instead preculturally determined. Whether their precultural determinants were biological, social, or, more likely, both, I cannot say, but whichever is the case, this suggestion implies that the sabras’ individualist values are characteristics of human nature (as this term was previously defined).

There is, to be sure, an alternative—cultural—explanation for the sabras’ individualist values. The kibbutz, after all, has never been a hermetically sealed social group, wholly cut off from the outside world. Quite to the contrary, the world has entered the kibbutz through the media—newspapers, magazines, books, radio, movies, television, and the Web—as well as through temporary volunteers—mostly foreign students, who spend their vacations working on a kibbutz. Furthermore, kibbutz members (most especially, the sabras) have entered the world through extensive travel, both domestic and international, and through military service (following high school graduation, males are drafted for three years, females for two). Consequently, although the individualist values of the sabras cannot have been determined by the collectivist culture of the kibbutz, they may have been culturally determined, nonetheless, by the culture of the world outside the kibbutz. In my judgment, however, this is unlikely on two accounts, one theoretical, the other empirical.

Theoretically viewed, it is difficult to believe that the sabras’ powerful discontent with, for example, the communal sleeping of children or with group decision making was caused by their awareness that, in the outside world, children most often sleep with their families or that decision making is most often personal. Indeed, theoretically, the direction of the causal arrow is just the reverse: As studies of acculturation have long established (Beals 1953), social actors borrow cultural and social items from an external group just in case they possess some desire(s) or need(s) that are met by the adoption of those external items. In short, had the sabras not already possessed powerful individualist desires and needs, then in the competition between the collectivist values of the kibbutz culture, in which they had been enculturated, and the individualist values of the world outside of the kibbutz, what would have motivated them to choose the latter values over the former?

That the sabras’ individualist values may be precultural—characteristics of human nature—does not imply that the changes they have made in the collectivist institutions of the kibbutz were not influenced by the outside world. The contrary is the case. Had they not been aware of the alternative institutions found outside the kibbutz, then despite their discontent with the collectivist

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institutions of the kibbutz, they might have taken the kibbutz institutions as givens; hence, they may have seen no way of alleviating their discontent. With their awareness, however, of institutional alternatives, they realized that they could alleviate their discontent either by changing the collectivist institutions of the kibbutz in accordance with one or another of the outside individualist alternatives or by opting to live in the outside world.

Let us turn then to the empirical grounds for rejecting the hypothesis that the sabras’ individualist values were determined by the outside world. In the first place, during the first 40 years or so of the kibbutz movement, the culture of the local outside (Jewish) world (first Palestine and, later, Israel) was in large measure collectivist. That was not the case, of course, for the larger outside world, but the sabras’ values, as we shall now see, were individualist much before they were acquainted with the larger world—or, for that matter, with the local outside world. This is demonstrated by the study of young children—aged 2 years to 4 years and 11 months—that my wife and I conducted in the children’s houses in Kiryat Yedidim in 1951.

Contrary to my (cultural determinist) expectations, the social behavior of these children—notwithstanding the efforts of their caregivers (nursery and kindergarten teachers) to inculcate them with the collectivist values of the kibbutz—was predominantly individualist on all the variables we measured. Here, I can cite only three of the specific findings. First, competition and aggression were more frequent than cooperation in the children’s free play—even though caregivers systematically reinforced cooperative play and, moreover, taught games to the children that were uniformly cooperative. Second, although the children were taught that the toys in the children’s houses belonged to all the children, nonetheless, they would insist that certain toys were theirs alone, resisting the caregivers’ requests that they share them with the others. Third, various children would demand the exclusive attention and affection of the caregivers, and they were overtly jealous of, and hostile to, any perceived competitors. These findings, it should be noted, are consistent with the caregivers’ reports that of all their socialization goals, sharing was the most difficult to achieve.

This study, I suggest, constitutes critical support for the hypothesis that the individualist values of the sabras—rather than being culturally determined—are precultural for three reasons. In 1951, Kiryat Yedidim was a classic kibbutz, all of whose collectivist values and institutions were intact. Moreover, the children comprising the study—first-generation sabras and some from the second generation—were too young to have become acquainted with, let alone influenced by, the values and institutions of the worlds outside the kibbutz (whether the local or the larger world). Furthermore, although the study was confined to one kibbutz, its findings can be applied to the other kibbutzim of that era: They all shared the same collectivist values and institutions, and inasmuch as their child caregivers were trained in the same kibbutz-sponsored teachers’ training college, they employed the same socialization and enculturation techniques.

There remains, however, a formidable challenge to the hypothesis that the sabras’ individualist values are characteristics of human nature: It flies in the face of our findings regarding the European founders of the kibbutz. Having rejected in their early teens the individualist values with which they were enculturated, they replaced them with the collectivist values that led them to establish a kibbutz. To address this challenge, I suggest that the reverse life trajectories of the kibbutz founders and the sabras constitute evidence for the formulation of two complementary hypotheses.

The evidence from the sabras suggests that preferences for individual over collective possessions, privacy over togetherness, personal over group interests, and freedom over equality—let us call these “a constellation of individualist motivational dispositions”—are characteristics of human nature. The evidence, however, from the kibbutz founders suggests that, under specifiable conditions, social actors may develop a counter set of preferences—namely, collective over individual possessions, togetherness over privacy, group over personal interests, and equality over freedom. I shall call these “a constellation of collectivist motivational dispositions.” The evidence from the founders also suggests that their development of this counterconstellation was a function of three conditions in particular: (1) adolescent rebellion against parents and other authority figures who represented the values of the regnant social order; (2) an emotionally powerful social experience (or experiences); and (3) a motivationally powerful belief system.

The Founders’ Collectivist Motivational Dispositions

That adolescent rebellion was a critical condition for the development of the collectivist motivational dispositions of the kibbutz founders is documented in their writings, as well as in my interviews with the founders of Kiryat Yedidim. However, collectivist motivations are one thing and collective living is another, and because collective living is often difficult, it requires—in the words of Henry Near (1992:322), himself a kibbutz member—a passion for community.” In the case of the kibbutz founders, this passion was produced by the experience of communitas.

By communitas—a term I have borrowed from Victor Turner (1969)—I mean an emotionally powerful social experience consisting of primordial and reciprocal identifications among the members of a small—typically a single generation—social group. By primordial identifications, I mean a member’s sense of “oneness” with the group in which the psychological boundary separating self from others is blurred. Typically, the founders of early post–World War I kibbutzim had two periods of communitas. The first occurred during their nature hikes in Europe with their family-like youth movement groups—family-like because these groups served as functional alternatives for the biological families whose values these teenagers had rejected.
The second period, which I discuss here, occurred following their arrival in Palestine.

Recall that the kibbutz founders were still teenagers when they abandoned home, family, and country to migrate to Palestine; that when they arrived, they found themselves in a strange land, its landscape gaunt and forbidding, and its climate harsh and enervating; that more often than not they had little to eat and were frequently ill; and that, above all, they were isolated, lonely, and alone. Not surprisingly, most of them either left for the cities or returned to Europe. Thrown back on their psychological heels, their emotional strength and comfort dependent on bonds they forged with each other, it is understandable that it was in these circumstances that they experienced an extended period of communitas that, even years later, many of them remembered as a unique charismatic moment. The quality of that moment is captured in the recorded reminiscences of some few founders (the following being typical):

The only institution that existed then [1922–23]... was the general discussion.... [The latter] was all important. The source of its power was in our conception of the [kibbutz] as a family-type community. Between twelve and seventeen young men and women would sit together every evening after work... and exchange impressions and opinions. In the course of this discussion, in the most honest fashion... all the questions of our life were decided. And, if you wanted, together with sixteen other arms, you could embrace matters in the realm of eternity, of the salvation of the world and of the Jewish people. There was a kind of longing of each for his neighbor, a desire to sit together until late at night, and thus to penetrate the depths of the vision of a communal life. Soul entered soul. There was a yearning to become a sort of sea of souls, whose tributaries would flow together, and together create a fresh and mighty current of fraternity and comradeship. [Near 1992:81]14

I would suggest, then, that it was from this “mighty current of fraternity and comradeship” that the participants in this charismatic moment acquired the motivation to share their lives and possessions with each other. In the nature of the case, however, such a moment is of limited duration, and when it ends and charisma—as Max Weber (1964:363–373) put it—is routinized, the persistence of that motivation becomes a critical question. To address that question, I again take Kiryat Yedidim as my example.

When my wife and I arrived in Kiryat Yedidim, 30 years after its founding, its period of communitas existed only as an emotionally charged memory of the founders. Moreover, as a consequence both of internal and external population growth, the kibbutz had changed from a single-generation gemeinschaft into a multigeneration, multifamily gesellschaft, with most of whom the founders had not shared their communitas experience. Consequently, not having forged “a mighty current of fraternity and comradeship” with them, they had no special motivation to share their possessions or their lives with them. Because, however, they retained their commitment to their collectivist values, they shared them nonetheless—willingly, in the case of their possessions; reluctantly, however, in the case of their lives. As one founder, a woman, put it in 1951: “It is possible to share possessions with others even if you don’t love them, but unless you love them, it is not always possible to want to be with them.”

But if, though “not always possible,” they did so nonetheless, then their commitment to their collectivist values must have been powerful indeed. No longer motivated, however, by a shared communitas experience, it was motivated instead by a third condition suggested above as conducive to the development and persistence of collectivist motivations—a motivationally powerful belief system—which in their case consisted of their Socialist-Zionist ideology. Because each kibbutz federation had a somewhat different version of that ideology, the one summarized below is that of the federation to which Kiryat Yedidim belonged.

According to this version, the historical process leads to the inevitable triumph of socialism, the stage of social evolution in which all social and individual evils will have been conquered, and the Zionist goal of an old nation reborn in its homeland will have been realized. Though inevitable, nevertheless this evolutionary stage will be attained only following prolonged struggle, in regard to which the kibbutz, representing the “future society of humanity,” is the avant-garde in Israel. But the kibbutz is also a home for its members; and though quotidian kibbutz life is often difficult and frustrating, these hardships can be overcome by an unwavering faith that when socialism is attained, the vision of a New Man and a New Society will become a reality. This ideology, it is perhaps evident, provided the kibbutz founders with two powerful motives for retaining their commitment to their collectivist values: (1) the conviction that the hardships associated with the collective life have “meaning” in the light of transcendent goals and (2) the faith that with sufficient effort and time, these hardships will be overcome.

An ideology, however, like any cultural system, acquires motivational power if and only if it is internalized by social actors as a personal, emotionally salient, belief system. That this was the case with respect to the Socialist-Zionist ideology of the kibbutz founders was evidenced in many ways including, but not restricted to, their personal testimonies. In this regard consider the following extracts from a sample of interviews conducted in 1951 with founders of Kiryat Yedidim.

At the end of a long work day, a founder said that her work—she was a gardener—was becoming too difficult for her; when I jokingly commented that it was for an important cause, she seriously retorted: “Yes, if we did not always have that cause uppermost in our minds, we could not continue here. That is what makes it possible for us to go on.” Another woman, recounting the difficulties of the early years in the kibbutz, commented: “It was very romantic, but it was very hard. Still, if you want to live for an ideal, you can overcome all hardships.” While discussing the functions of the kibbutz ideology in the school curriculum,
another founder—a high school teacher—explained: “This is vital. Without our ideology we would not be able to survive here.” As another founder described the advantages of kibbutz living, his wife interrupted to say it would be deceptive to deny that the disadvantages were much greater. He readily conceded this point and added: “No one primarily interested in a comfortable life would remain in a kibbutz. Ultimately, living in a kibbutz is based on ideological conviction, and its appeal rests only on its superior ideology.”

If the three conditions just discussed—adolescent rebellion against parents, the experience of communitas, and a compelling ideology—jointly comprise a valid explanation for the collectivist motivational dispositions of the kibbutz founders, then seeing that those of the sabras are predominantly individualist, we would expect that these conditions do not apply to them, and in fact this is the case. In the first place, sabras—most of them at any rate—display little evidence of adolescent rebellion. If, however, their preference for individualist values were viewed as evidence for such rebellion, I would observe that this preference is already manifested in early childhood, when they are strongly attached to their parents.

In the second place, the sabras, understandably, have never had a communitas experience or an emotionally equivalent alternative experience. Thus, they never had to cope with the special set of social conditions that produced the founders’ communitas experience or with an alternative set of functionally equivalent conditions.

In the third place, despite the attempts of the kibbutz to inculcate them with the Socialist–Zionist ideology, most sabras are indifferent to it. According to the sabras, “All the grand ‘isms’ [Marxism, Socialism, etc.] are dead.” Or, using an English loan word, ideology, they say, is bullshit. Already in the 1950s, attempts to persuade teenage sabras to some view or to a particular course of action by appealing to one or another moral principle were disparagingly dismissed as “preaching Zionism” (l’hatiftzionut). When asked why they lived in a kibbutz, sabras virtually never responded by saying that the kibbutz is a means for creating the socialist society of the future, for or for implementing Zionist goals, or anything along these lines; instead, their most frequent response was—as it is today—the kibbutz is “home” (bayit).

That the sabras have not internalized Socialist–Zionist ideology is not, perhaps, hard to understand. Like other cultural systems, ideologies are internalized just in case social actors are psychologically preadapted, cognitively or motivationally, to do so (Spiro 1997:chs. 3–5). The Eastern European founders of the kibbutz, for example, were motivationally preadapted to internalize Zionist ideology because of endemic antisemitism in Russia and pogroms in Poland and the Ukraine, which most of them experienced personally. Similarly, they were motivationally preadapted to internalize socialist ideology because of the economic misery and social injustice suffered by Jews (and by most everyone else) under the regnant economic and political systems.

The sabras, however, are neither motivationally nor cognitively preadapted to internalize either of these ideologies. Zionism (as opposed to Israeli patriotism) has little motivational power for them. Thus, except for the first sabra cohort, they typically feel no compelling need to bring the Jews of the diaspora to Israel. Furthermore, sabras typically have little interest in preserving traditional forms of Judaism; in the Israeli cultural landscape they are preponderantly secularists (chiloni‘im). As for socialism, inasmuch as their personal experience with kibbutz socialism has led most sabras to attempt to change it, the image of the socialist society of the future, a source of inspiration for the kibbutz founders, understandably evokes little positive sentiment in them.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In this inquiry, I have argued that the historical experience of the kibbutz movement, especially when compared to that of utopian communes elsewhere, constitutes grounds for the formulation of two conclusions and one hypothesis. The first conclusion is that utopian communes, no less than other kinds of social orders, produce discontents—if not among their founders, then among their succeeding native-born generations. While consistent with the views of Freud (for whom it is in the nature of civilization to produce discontents) and the Buddha (for whom it is in the nature of human nature to produce discontents), this conclusion is at odds with the view of classical utopian theorists who believed that a communal social order would preclude the production of discontents.

The second conclusion is that native-born members of utopian communes are discontents because their individualist motivational dispositions are stronger than their collectivist dispositions. Thus, the native-born members of the kibbutz (sabras) are discontents because, typically, they prefer individual over collective possessions, privacy over togetherness, personal over group interests, and personal freedom over social equality.15 The hypothesis suggested by this inquiry is that if the constellation of individualist motivational dispositions of native-born commune members—their enculturation with collectivist values notwithstanding—is stronger than their collectivist constellation, then it would seem to follow that the strength of the individualist constellation is most likely a characteristic of human nature.16 To be sure, under specifiable historical conditions, the relative strength of these constellations is reversible, as is evidenced by the founders of these kibbutzim; nevertheless, the hypothesis is supported by the fact such a reversal is rarely, if at all, characteristic of succeeding generations. This hypothesis is at odds with classical utopian theory, as well as the regnant social science theory, for which human nature is wholly culturally determined.

In concluding, I would note that if this hypothesis is correct, then not only is it the case that utopian theory, when put into practice, has not fared very well but also it most
likely never will. Nevertheless, we might want to ponder Karl Mannheim's view that the utopian vision not be abandoned:

The complete disappearance of the utopian element from human thought and action would mean that... [just] when history is ceasing to be blind fate, and is becoming more and more man's own creation, with the relinquishment of [the utopian vision] man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it. [1976:236]

MELFORD E. SPIRO Department of Anthropology, University of California at San Diego, La Jolla, CA 92093-0532

NOTES

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1. For a magisterial history of utopian thinkers, see Manuel and Manuel 1979.

2. It is ironic that while virtually all literary utopias, beginning with Plato's "Republic," have been urban, virtually all actual utopian communes have been rural.


4. Following initial fieldwork in Kiryat Yedidim, I have made seven subsequent trips, ranging from a week to a month. Additional data were acquired from visits from, and correspondence with, members of the kibbutz, the 1967-68 fieldtrip of Leslie and Karen Rabkin, and articles in its biweekly newspaper. Data for the kibbutz movement more generally were acquired from books and journal articles, visits of a few days each to four other kibbutzim, seven one-week visits to another kibbutz, as well as continuing correspondence with one of its members, and articles in Hashavua and Hadaf Hayarok, the weekly newspapers of the two major kibbutz federations.

5. Whereas only 30,000 Russian Jews migrated to Palestine during this period—among whom no more than a few hundred founded kibbutzim—850,000 migrated to the United States.

6. For a comprehensive description, see Spiro 1956.

7. For a detailed description, see Spiro 1958:chs. 2-11.

8. This emphasis is consistent with Kanter's finding that "communalism and familialism are antagonistic principles. ... There is an inverse relationship between strength of community and strength of family" (1973:282).

9. Unless otherwise indicated, statistical data presented in this article were compiled by the Institute for Kibbutz Research of Haifa University, as reported in the two kibbutz newspapers cited in note 4.

10. For a detailed account of this story and its implications for contemporary gender and feminist theory, see Spiro 1996.

11. For a full report, see Spiro 1958:chs. 8-11.

12. It is perhaps of some epistemological interest to note that at the time of my fieldwork, when I took cultural determinism to human thought and action would mean that... [just] when history is ceasing to be blind fate, and is becoming more and more man's own creation, with the relinquishment of [the utopian vision] man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it. [1976:236]

13. Whether the same set of conditions accounts for the development of this constellation elsewhere cannot be established without a systematic comparative investigation.

14. For a compendium of contemporaneous accounts of the communities period of Kiryat Yedidim by the participants, see the remarkable Kelilatenu (Shadmi et al. 1988). For a retrospective account, see Horowitz 1970.

15. Because the maximization of equality varies inversely with the maximization of freedom, any society that is committed to both of these values is confronted with an existential dilemma: How much freedom is it willing to give up in order to achieve a maximum of equality and fraternity and, conversely, how much equality and fraternity is it willing to give up in order to achieve a maximum of freedom? The founders of the kibbutz and of other utopian communities chose to give up a large measure of freedom in order to maximize equality and fraternity, whereas the sabras—like classical liberals—have made the reverse choice.

16. Christian, unlike secular, utopians agree with this hypothesis, albeit in a religious version. The Bruderhof, for example, believe that a constant struggle between good and evil exists in the world, that man alone is too weak to combat his selfish instincts, and that greater forces are required to keep him on the straight and narrow path. The role of the commune is to assist man... in his inner struggle between good and evil. [Oved 1996:310]

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