

DISCUSSION

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Community: toward a variable conceptualization for comparative research

In Lancashire, wrote William Cobbett in 1817, 'every hamlet is a village, every village a town, and every town a city'.² Sheer size and a shocking rate of growth were perhaps foremost in the minds of contemporaries who thought about changes in community during the Industrial Revolution. They were followed immediately by reflections on the moral and political significance of the new developments. In the nineteenth century, the dimension of the social was just being discovered and, together with the economic, related to politics and public policy. A great deal has been made of the language of class which came to dominate European political debate. At least as widespread, and perhaps even more important in early-nineteenth-century England (and somewhat later on the continent), was a language of community. The language had an old heritage, and had reached a prior centrality in Puritan social thought with the doctrine of the commonweal and the theology of the new covenant. Although the Levellers and others of the seventeenth century had extended the discussion of community from political to social criticism, this usage did not take off until the period of the Industrial Revolution.

It was in reflection on the dramatic changes wrought in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the concept of community took the shape in which we receive it today. It bears, as a result, a number of connotations specific to its historical context, which have led at least one social historian to suggest recently that it ought to be abandoned.³ The concept also refers to some real and important phenomena. It is thus important that we refine it, rather than abandon it. That is the purpose of the present essay.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thought about community was rooted, for

¹ The author would like to express his gratitude to Thomas Laqueur and to the editors and manuscript reviewers of *Social History* for helpful comments on an earlier version of this article. (See Bibliography for full references.)

² *Political Register*, 12 July 1817.

³ Macfarlane, 'History, anthropology and the study of communities'; also Calhoun, 'History, anthropology and the study of communities: some problems in Macfarlane's proposal'.

the most part, in the contraposition of ideas of country and city.⁴ This simple opposition, however, does little justice to the complexity and variety of communal life before, during or after the Industrial Revolution. The early social investigators struggled to invent the sociological categories with which to think about the impact of the numerous social changes going on about them. They could thus ask about the significance of the reduction of social relations to a cash nexus, or wonder what the impact of fluctuations of trade would be on different sorts of community.⁵ It was possible to ask these questions about social organization only as observers had available to them a variety of cases which they could compare. Travel, communication and the accentuation of real differences were thus all important to the ability to look at variations in communal organization. The conceptualization and the language never became well defined, however. Although the notion of community came into widespread usage as a result of concrete change and variation, it rapidly lost its comparative dimension and became for many authors a static category, referring, rather loosely, to a geographically or administratively bounded population, not to a set or variety of social relations.⁶ Curiously, as social history has rediscovered the community in recent years, it has remained stuck in this static and invariant conceptualization.

Earlier, 'community' had been the term with which to describe that way of life held inviolable from the immemorial past, but always just on the point of vanishing. The language of community grew up as a demand for more personal and more moral relations among people as well as a descriptive category. Community was moral in that people were not expected to be, in this view, perfect in and of themselves, but rather more perfect as they were better integrated into webs of social commitments, rules and relations. Community was far more than a mere place or population. It was the destruction of this social morality which alarmed the early defenders (and idealizers) of community about 'urban' or 'modern' life. As an early Victorian lover of 'the rural life of England' wrote:

The state of morals and manners amongst the working population of our great towns is terrible – far more so than casual observers are aware of. After all that has been done to reform and educate the working class, the torrent of corruption rolls on . . . Where the rural population, in its simplicity, comes in contact with this spirit, it receives the contagion in its most exaggerated

⁴ Discussed brilliantly from literary sources by Williams in *The City and the Country*.

⁵ The former a question which led Carlile to the Church and Engels and Marx to a more socialized notion of alienation, and visions of the creation of a more effectively social man. The latter a question which the *Manchester Guardian* could hold to be obviously answered by 1831: commerce means cycles of distress and prosperity (11 June) and Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class* could see as central, for crises resulting from competition would not only undermine the capitalist

system, but reorganize the society as they furthered the polarization and equalization of the population.

⁶ Thus, while Maine's idea of 'the village community' had been very much a statement of contrast, for Lipson, writing in 1949, the word 'community' could be used with seemingly unchanged meaning in 'the manorial community' and 'the town community' as well. See Maine, *The Village Community East and West*, and Lipson, *The Growth of English Society*.

form – a desolating moral pestilence; and suffers in person and in mind. There spread all the vice and baseness of the lowest grade of the town, made hideous by still greater vulgarity and ignorance, and unawed by the higher authorities, unchecked by the better influences which there prevail, in the example and assertions of a higher caste of society. . . . The evil lies deeper than the surface; it lies in the distorted nature of our social relations.⁷

If such critics sometimes seemed to criticize the cities as such, it was because they had no notion of cities being any other way, and little or no abstract notion of community by which to penetrate to the underlying characteristics with which they were really concerned.

In order to proceed with comparative studies of community, social history needs to return to some of the earlier concerns about difference and change in social life, and not merely attempt to reconstruct. We need to develop a conceptualization of community which allows us to penetrate beneath such simple categories as city, village, town, country, to see a variable of social relations. We need to ask what community, as a model of social organization, is and does. Then we shall better be able to study communities and the actions of community members.

In the following pages we shall develop such a conceptualization, first with attention to preceding usages and its theoretical context, and then more tersely, with attention to systematic presentation. Then we shall briefly explore the implications of this view of community for considerations of authority and collective action.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

As we have suggested, community may be conceived as both a sociological variable and a morally valued way of life. Nisbet notes:

Community begins as a moral value; only gradually does the secularization of this concept become apparent in sociological thought in the nineteenth century.⁸

Even as secularized, however, the concept has remained ambiguous. The relationship between community as a complex of social relationships and community as a complex of ideas and sentiments has been little explored. Nisbet tends to fuse the experiential quality of community with the social relationships on which it depends. In this, he is an accurate follower of the tradition of 'communal' criticism of modern society and human alienation:

By community I mean something that goes far beyond mere local community. The word, as we find it in much nineteenth- and twentieth-century thought encompasses all forms of relationship which are characterized by a high degree of personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion,

⁷ Howitt, *The Rural Life of England*, 201–2. correctly reverses the temporal order, 'Community', 12.

⁸ *The Sociological Tradition*, 18. G. D. Mitchell makes the same distinction but in-

and continuity in time. Community is founded on man conceived in his wholeness rather than in one or another of the roles, taken separately, that he may hold in a social order. It draws its psychological strength from levels of motivation deeper than those of mere volition or interest, and it achieves its fulfilment in a submergence of individual will that is not possible in unions of mere convenience or rational assent.⁹

'Community', in such a usage, becomes more an evocative symbol than an analytic tool. We must ask what connection there is between 'personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion, and continuity in time'. We must ask under what circumstances man is to be 'conceived in his wholeness' rather than in one or another of his roles, and why he should be motivated to submerge his individual will to the fulfilment of community. In order to answer these questions we need a more complex view of community in which we seek elements and relations among elements rather than listing attributes. In the pages which follow we shall develop such a view based on the structuring of social relations.

Even when one leaves such explicitly normative statements about community aside, there is still a variance in the proportion of attention given to 'experiential' vs. 'structural' aspects of community. In Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* dichotomy, the emphasis is on the *a priori*, assumed nature of community in opposition to the optional nature of association.¹⁰ The latter draws on the conscious choices of relatively independent individuals. *Gemeinschaft*, on the other hand, is a subjective community of 'inner' relations:

Being together, so to speak, is the vegetative heart and soul of *Gemeinschaft* – the very existence of *Gemeinschaft* rests in the consciousness of belonging together and the affirmation of the condition of mutual dependence which is posed by that affirmation.¹¹

Weber took up the same view, defining the communal relationship as based on subjective feeling, as opposed to the rationality of the associative relationship.¹²

Such an emphasis on the inner qualities of community life tends to discount the importance of the social bonds and political mechanisms which hold communities together and make them work. This discounting incidentally allows the proponents of idealized community frequently to underestimate the restraint which real community requires, the sacrifices that it demands, and the fears which enforce them. It is based in part on an artificial separation of rationality from irrationality, in which the individuality of actions is by assumption linked to a notion of effectiveness in the concept of rationality (in this case Weber's *Zweckrationalität*). In other words, Weber opposes the subjective to the rational, rather than to the

⁹ Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition*, 48.

¹⁰ *Community and Association (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)* is Tönnies's classic work, giving the widespread nineteenth-century dichotomy its most influential shape.

¹¹ Tönnies, 'The concept of *Gemeinschaft*',

69.

¹² Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 126. Weber was more optimistic than Tönnies about the possibilities for extreme rationality in social relationships. He also tended to focus on small, generally diadic, units of relationship.

objective. He assumes a distinction between that communal orientation to action which is based on the feeling of actors that they belong together, and the societal orientation which is based on a rationally motivated adjustment of individual interests.¹³ This distinction does not take account of the possibility that individuals pursuing their rational self-interests will not provide collective goods.¹⁴ While it would be in the interests of each of the individuals to provide a share of the costs of the collective goods, characteristics of the collectivity may make it irrational for any of them to do so barring some form of selective incentive or coercion. A community may act as the source of the selective inducements to participate in collective action – quite without depending on the individual's sense of belonging. It may produce collectively rational (useful) results which individual rationality would not have done. But it does not seem meaningful to say that the provision of collective goods by a community is irrational from the point of view of the individuals.¹⁵ We might better say that the significance of individual rationality varies depending on the extent to which the individual acts as a member of a community. It may be reasonable to separate the subjective from the objective, but it seems unreasonable to hold that 'rationality' is exclusively identified with the latter. The same is true of community: the experiential dimension is not independent of the structural; the sense of belonging to a community is directly founded on the social relationships through which one does belong to a community.

We can bring the significance of the above comments into clearer focus by emphasizing that community (and, for that matter, society) must be seen as variable. Organization is the crucial factor which may make a community (or a society) out of a mere aggregation of people.¹⁶ Organization, further, comes through the social relationships of the people in question, and the relations among those relationships (a phrase on which we elaborate below). While everyday usage may allow us to oppose individuality to community as polar opposites, this cannot be admitted in theory or analysis. It stems in part from conservative objections to the increasing independence of individual actions from communal constraints, especially during the period of the Industrial Revolution. It suggests, misleadingly, the possibility of an asocial individual. Yet, in part, the opposition itself was coined to argue that man could not be properly human outside the bonds of community. The critique of alienation was that man, by attempting to act as a mere individual, was reduced to a sub-human existence as an appendage of an alien world, to which

¹³ Weber, 'Class, status and party', 183–4.

¹⁴ See Olson, *The Theory of Collective Action*.

¹⁵ It may well be considered *non-rational* from the point of view of the dynamics of individual decision-making. For extended discussion of these issues, see Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action*.

¹⁶ It was in this sense that Sorokin distinguished integrated social units from mere spatial aggregations or congeries, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, 2–19. He was, perhaps,

oversanguine in thinking that there was 'no need to stress that fact that the degree of functional interdependence is everywhere not the same' (7). It has rather too often been taken as a postulate, or at least a 'functional imperative'. See also MacIver's repeated emphasis of the same idea in *Community: A Sociological Study*, perhaps the most elaborate sociological treatment of the concept if, unfortunately, not on a secure organizational foundation itself.

state he was reduced by his one-sided economic life. To be a full individual, one had to be both a part of the web of moral relations and multi-faceted.¹⁷ It was not necessary that the human individual be an alienated or isolated individual: this was the essence of the critique which reached its fullness in Hegel and Marx, uniting elements of both the enlightenment and the conservative anti-enlightenment. What might better be held to be the opposite of community is de Maistre's 'l'esprit particulier', which implies men wilfully opposing themselves to the community and to their social nature.¹⁸

We have argued against defining community in terms of the members' sense of belonging. This is not to suggest that such subjective attitudes are not important, but rather that they will not get us very far as analytic constructs. We need to ask what action the parties to communal relations will be likely to take. Will any given population aggregate be able to secure the cooperation of its members in some undertaking to secure a collective good? Will it require external coercion or do the relations of community act as a self-regulatory mechanism on the 'rational' decisions and actions of the members? People may feel that they belong in a wide variety of social contexts, but these self-identifications do not always modify their action, let alone produce collective action. What is important about 'sense of belonging' is not someone's identification of membership in a bounded collectivity, but his modification of his consideration of alternative courses of action on the basis of the communal relations to which he belongs. If he takes certain concrete relations for granted as immutable, then this consciousness does act to limit the range of options he considers, and to constrain his action in favour of the community. If, for example, a worker, unsure of whether or not to join his fellows in a strike, feels that he must necessarily live out the rest of his life among them (like it or not) then his decision will be far more constrained than if he regards these relationships as mere consequences of a coincidence of residence or employment which he might alter at any time.

When we study society or community it is with the relationships among social actors that we are concerned. Obviously, these relationships spread beyond the bounds of specific localities, polities, linguistic groups, and all the other devices which we impose to give limits to our studies. Thus, in Fortes's words:

For the concept of society as a closed unit . . . we must substitute the concept of society as a socio-geographic region, the elements of which are more closely knit together among themselves than any of them are knit together with social elements of the same kind outside that region. We must substitute a relative and dynamic concept for an absolute and static one.¹⁹

¹⁷ This two-sided treatment of individualism is prominent in Hegel, where the *Bildungsprozess* of the cultivation of full human individuality is the positive pole and the mere individuality of alienated economic life the negative. It is in personality, will, that immediate individuality is transcended. See para-

graphs 39 and 40 of *The Philosophy of Right*. See also Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, 294-9.

¹⁸ De Maistre, *Du Pape*, vol. III, ch. II. See also Lukes, *Individualism*, esp. Part One on the semantic history of 'individualism'.

¹⁹ Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 231.

Behind this conception lies the segmentary lineage system with its sliding scale of identification by contraposition. Thus, two Tallensi, say, who meet may distinguish their respective identities primarily in terms of the largest descent categories into which they do not both fall. Conversely, they will emphasize their commonalty primarily at the lowest level (smallest group) in which they share membership.²⁰ We do the same, though much less systematically. To the European I am an American; another American may express an interest in my state; if a fellow Kentuckian asks me where I am from, I will name the town in which I grew up. There are, however, many dimensions of possible identification by contraposition in modern society, one of the most important of which is class. This is a major way in which our society is 'less systemic' than societies whose organization is dominated by the single system of kinship. It should also be noted that there is choice in identification. I have, for example, lived in other places than Kentucky, but choose that to represent 'home'. There is room for such manipulation in kinship systems as well, though generally less. Much depends on the information available to actors, but not all. Known fictions are sometimes willingly maintained to the point where truth is difficult to judge.

The communal may be regarded as a specialized sub-set of the social. In the connotations of everyday usage, community suggests a greater 'closeness' of relations than does society.²¹ This closeness seems to imply, though not rigidly, face to face contact, commonalty of purpose, familiarity and dependability. All these connotations are suggestive, and none is negated by our usage. We may gain greater incisiveness, however, by distinguishing community through the self-regulation of its patterns of organization, and then analysing how its constituent relations work to permit this freedom from specialized and/or external control. As the maintenance and functioning of a pattern of social organization either weakens, or comes to be enforced by external or specialized agency then the population aggregate so organized becomes less a community.²² In other words, community may be stronger or weaker, and a pattern of sociation may be more or less communal. This usage allows us to integrate numerous assertions of everyday discourse. Thus, the need for police power is related to the inability of communities to maintain order. Towns fail to provide public goods because their citizens lack a sense of communal responsibility – i.e. either they view their membership of the collectivity as contingent, optional, or they perceive that it is

²⁰ Fortes also emphasized the evanescence of lineage segments, called into action as required by actors' motives and circumstances, well before the 'process theorists' who would sometimes claim and are often attributed with great innovation (see for example, Turner's preface to the 1970 edition of *Schism and Continuity in an African Society*). See Smith, 'On segmentary lineage systems', on the political aspects of the contraposition of segments.

²¹ See the quotation from Nisbet, above, pp. 3-4.

²² Some similarity to Parsons's notion of a latency or pattern maintenance function will be noted. Making the distinction between community and society in this way, however, helps us to place attention on both integration and specialized coercion, and the contexts in which they are respectively most important. Parsons tends to ignore much of the role of power in maintaining patterns of social organization. See Giddens, "'Power" in the recent writings of Talcott Parsons', and Lukes, *Power*, esp. 26-33.

to their advantage to attempt to be a free rider, even if everyone else will do the same and the goods will not be provided. The inefficiency of American bankruptcy laws is discovered as creditors become increasingly impersonal and social pressures cease to discourage default. Similarly, the law of contract proliferates in correspondence to the ineffectiveness of informal, but communally enforced, agreements.

Collective goods and collective responsibility are closely related in community organization. Many, and especially long-term, collective goods are only likely to be provided by communities, that is, by collectivities whose members are strongly tied into relationships which constrain them to act in the interests of the whole. Such members also bear a responsibility to and for the whole. The manner in which they are accountable is an indication of the extent to which the collectivity is communal. Thus, Moore distinguishes 'legal' and 'moral' obligations in terms of the nature of the normative response to violations: legal obligations are those in which specific performance or repair may be immediately achieved through physical force. Moral obligations are those in which the sanction of social pressure is used to obtain performance.²³ Legal obligations generally require a greater apparatus of collective decision making, as they involve consciously concerted and formalized penalties. They tend to give rise to specialized agencies of enforcement, or, in societies characterized by armed self-help, to elaborate and formalized feuds.²⁴ Moral obligations are essentially the stuff of community. Although in most societies legal sanctions may exist for repeated failure to conform to moral ones, it is impossible to enforce moral sanctions outside the realm of fairly dense and/or highly significant social relationships. As these disappear, legal sanctions must take the place of moral. During the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, a great many public hostilities involved the attempt of local communities to enforce moral obligations with great traditional weight behind them on those who no longer felt the social pressure of community to be any sanction. Merchants and other middlemen, especially those trading in foodstuffs, were likely to be attacked for 'forestalling and engrossing' and other violations of communal norms of fair pricing. Local magistrates might sympathize with the moral claims of the crowd, but the law was to the advantage of the merchants. It did not, in any case, allow local authorities to be very active, though they could informally give licence to the actions of the crowd. Similarly, the 'immorality' of many a manufacturer was his withdrawal from a web of communal relationships which would have guaranteed his behaviour in accordance with communal norms and opinion. This is particularly evident, for example, in the Luddite risings of the 1810s.²⁵ Conversely, an illegal trade union was dependent on moral sanctions over its members.

²³ Moore, 'Legal liability and evolutionary interpretation: some aspects of strict liability, self-help and collective responsibility', 91.

²⁴ In societies of the latter sort, groups must have clear boundaries and generally are likely to have strong mechanisms for ensuring responsibility on the part of their members – up to and including expulsion for bringing the hostilities to bear on the other members of a collectively responsible grouping. See Moore,

'Legal liability...', 89–90.

²⁵ See, for example, Peel, *The Risings of the Luddites*, 127, noting that small masters might join in rebellion against larger ones who withdrew from the community. The decline in the 'normality' of family relationships can also be seen as largely a matter of communal constraints and the availability of options outside the bonds of moral relations. See Anderson, *Family Structure...*, esp. 172–9.

The importance of self-regulation is evident in anthropological treatments of the differences between state and stateless societies. Hocart is a relatively early example:

We cannot go on without a central government because our society is so vast and complex that some coordinating system is needed, for each one has to cooperate with thousands whom he never sees, or even hears of. There are societies where everyone is related to everyone else; they have no need for a coordinating system. They work by mutual understanding As a matter of fact we vastly exaggerate the importance of government in our own society. . . the vast, silent, daily work of men and women . . . is the real life of a nation. That daily routine is self-organized.²⁶

In this account, Hocart reflects on the contrast which has made the Industrial Revolution a key *animus* in sociological thought. The very terms of social action seem to have changed from the predictable and well-understood nexus of community life to the large-scale and uncertain affairs of political society. The interconnections of people and groups have become weaker (although this is partly due to the increasing size of population aggregates) and this has resulted in relative social disorganization. The control of this less communal society has become the object of political power and formal governmental institutions.

We find here an echo of the debate which took place in varying forms and intensities from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries about the customary and in some cases formally legal rights of the vestiges of medieval corporations, of crafts and communities.²⁷ The defence of these traditional collectivities and organizations came to be identified with conservative ideology but this was not a necessary connection. There was as much of the 'radical' or 'populist' in some of the claims based upon communities and crafts. The 'attack' on the traditional institutions was largely the intellectual counterpart of the material growth of centralized state power; it would eventually include much of early 'liberal' thought. It was in the context of this debate that social theory began to be created out of political and moral philosophy.

The theory of the state which was developed during the rise of European absolutism was largely concerned with the question of how political authority was to be separated from the community. The absolutist states had to oppose local authorities and self-regulating communal systems. In this context, it was no longer possible to speak with much clarity of an undifferentiated 'political community'. Federalists, like Althusius, attempted to defend decentralized society from the growth of such absolutist states. In the course of their defence, they laid part of the groundwork for a theory of social relations and community in opposition to a more purely political theory focusing on power and conscious control. Though positive jurisprudence was the most direct heir to the legacy of Althusius and the other federalists, they left their mark also on social theory, especially in France,

²⁶ Hocart, *Kings and Councillors*, 128-9.

²⁷ For some partial outlines of this long debate and the early growth of social theory, a complete history of which remains to be

written, see Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Age and Natural Law and the Theory of Society*. On the material growth of the states see Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*.

and on the popular imagination. The reality of the state helped to point attention to the very decentralized pattern of social organization it was disrupting.

An analysis in this vein was current during the Industrial Revolution. In England, writers from Cobbett to Coleridge recognized and bemoaned the loss of older self-regulatory mechanisms of community. Their historical perspective was telescoped, however, and they tended to attribute rather more, and more recent, vitality to the traditional English community than seems justified. Those who would use 'before and after' contrasts of community and dissociation need to have their perspectives broadened, in general, by an 'elsewhere' criterion. But even traditional or tribal societies do not form an ideal type exemplifying total self-regulation. Beyond the most fleeting of communal experiences,²⁸ some regulatory mechanisms must be developed. In many tribal societies, kinship systems perform this function, and may knit together millions of people in some degree. The more concerted the action which a group attempts, however, the more elaborate must be its external or specialized regulatory mechanisms. Its communal nature will be proportionately sacrificed. A corollary of our definition of community, thus, is that new, ordered and directed actions will be difficult to sustain for any substantial period of time on the basis of communal bonds. Conversely, the ability to alter the order or direction of action is limited by the necessary conservatism of the communal bonds, if any, on which it is founded.

A community, in this usage, is able to pursue only implicit and/or traditional ends, or to respond to external threats to its ability to follow its traditional way of life. This is important, for from communal bonds comes a great deal of the potential strength of motivation for social action. Different types of social organization thus yield different capabilities for social action. On the one hand, there is the development of analytic capabilities and mechanisms for social decision making and intentional organization. On the other hand, there are the stronger, but less consciously directed, bonds of community, which may provide for much longer-term co-ordination of social activity. There is a partial contradiction between the focus with which a social aggregate can attack a problem, and the strength and endurance of motivation which underpins its attention. In a community, the manifold immediate connections among people – social actors – may be quite conscious, but

this does not mean, of course, that each member of a society is conscious of such an abstract notion of unit. It means that he is absorbed in innumerable, specific relations and in the feeling and the knowledge of determining others and of being determined by them.²⁹

It is largely in these specific relations and determinations that community exists. Clearly, such community cannot everywhere equally obtain, and other mechanisms for social integration must exist, if indeed there is to be any social integration. In a large or dispersed set of people, or one divided into relatively non-interacting sub-groups:

²⁸ Turner's 'communitas', if one does not accept his wilder assertions of its maintenance over long periods of time. See *The Ritual*

Process, esp. chapters 3 and 4.

²⁹ Simmel, 'How Is Society Possible?', 7.

mechanisms of association must make up for the loss of community character; techniques of communication will make the wide-range coordination of behaviour possible; and administrative machinery will enforce it; and idea systems will sustain the awareness of belonging together which can no longer spring from proximity and familiarity.³⁰

In many kin-based societies, the local community and the wider network of formal kin relations are counterposed. Thus, among the Nuer, villages on the borders of clan territories may interact much more frequently with, and develop strong ties to villages which are formally parts of other clans. Each village still remains bound in formal terms to its own clan, but is tied in numerous specific relationships to its neighbour. Evans-Pritchard says the formal bonds must dominate, but we may assume, I think, that there is a considerable amount of play in the relationship.³¹ Similarly, one kind of kinship tie may be counterposed to another. Among the Tallensi, patrilineal kinship groups are at alternate genealogical levels unified by common or distinguished by differing matrilineal kin. This is a key dynamic in the social individualization of young men, who usually receive their first personal property from a kinsman of their mother. A similar process works at the larger level of the fission of lineage segments.³² Thus, even relatively stable societies provide for a considerable amount of flexibility, and leave room for political manipulation.

The more distant and less frequently actualized the ties among actors are, the more important external regulations and political power become. Where people are only loosely connected to each other, they may choose to prolong a conflict or abandon the community which proposes a solution they do not like – unless prevented by material power. The self-regulation of community is dependent on dense, multiplex bonds.³³ These are bonds of many strands, so that actors linked in one context or through one institution are also linked in and through others. This makes it more difficult for one actor to cross another in any specific context than it would be if there were only that single dimension to their relationship. An effect of this is to force people to accept resolutions to conflicts and give weight to 'public opinion'. The pressure of community consensus can even be used, where community is strong, to violate formal ideological precepts, such as those of kinship systems. Thus, in response to scarcity of land and other resources, communities (and, within them, families) may find ways to expel members, and thus maintain themselves in spite of normative cultural constraints. Among the Chagga of Tanzania, for example, middle brothers suffer most often from witchcraft accusations (through the complaints of their brothers' wives against their own wives). Despite rituals of communal solidarity, the victims are forced – or at least made sufficiently uncomfortable that they choose – to leave.³⁴ The

³⁰ Nadel, *The Foundations of Social Anthropology*, 154.

³¹ Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, esp. 122–3.

³² Fortes, *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*; Fortes has developed a general statement of this in his (contested) notion of complementary filiation in *Kinship and the*

Social Order.

³³ The term is Gluckman's; there is further discussion below.

³⁴ This outcome depends, of course, on there being somewhere for them to go, and thus on the present growth of the urban Tanzanian economy. See Moore, 'Selection for

organization of community is based on particular ties among social actors, even in kin-dominated societies. There is always an imperfect fit between the narrower social field of community and both the formal and informal overall organization of society.

Community, as a pattern of social organization and as a culturally defined way of life, depends on a fairly high degree of stability. The bonds of community are indeed bonds: they tie social actors to each other and to their own pasts. Communal bonds are loaded with the expectations which both 'co-actors' and the interested public bring to their evaluations of social interaction. These expectations derive from broad cultural rules and both localized and widespread traditions. Thus each social actor develops a reputation as well as playing a role. 'Tradition', as anthropologists have often noted, is malleable and is not infrequently developed for or adapted to the demands of a new situation by enterprising persons.³⁵ In seeking this they draw upon both broader cultural patterns for the construction of traditions, and their own social resources (including, for example, obligations which their fellows may have toward them). The malleability of tradition is wholly relative. It can nowhere be totally absent, or the practices and ideas of communities and societies would become brittle and fail to adapt to changing conditions. On the other hand, where tradition's real links with the past become almost totally lost, it is unlikely to be the source of any enduring consensus. Actual social practice and tradition are constantly interrelated and mutually determining, though the weight of determination may vary.

In the preceding pages we have given an introduction to the concept of community, and considered some of its general characteristics. In the process, we have begun to elaborate a systematic view of community which ought now to be more systematically presented. This view sees community as made up of relationships among social actors, and relations among these relationships. That is, it focuses our attention on the ways in which specific social actors are linked to each other, and on the aggregate characteristics of these links within a bounded population. This relational level of analysis is the basic one at which we see community in operation. It is the foundation upon which our discussions of other characteristics of communities must be based; it is the objective aspect of community, which can be analysed more or less in and of itself, but without which the subjective aspect cannot be understood. We have now to spell out this conceptualization in greater detail.

failure in a small social field: ritual concord and fraternal strife among the Chagga, Kilimanjaro, 1968-9.'

³⁵ This is in contrast to Weber's use of the term which assumes that real continuity with the past is critical: 'The social psychology of world religions', 296. Sociologists who devote

much attention to tradition have generally followed Weber on this (cf. Shils, 'Tradition'). For the contrary view, see Yalman, 'Some observations on secularism in Islam', 139 and Colson, *Tradition and Contract: the problem of order*, 76.

THE CONCEPT SYSTEMATICALLY SUMMARIZED

Characteristics of relationships

There are three orders of communal bonds: those based on familiarity, specific obligations and diffuse obligations. A relationship may but need not be limited to one of the three orders of bond. All three are generally involved in making any particular community as communal as it may be, but in varying proportions. Taken by themselves, familiarity offers the least indication of community, diffuse obligation the most. The influence of familiarity is great, however, helping even to distinguish the strength of various diffuse obligations. We have a certain investment in the familiar, even when it is not what we might choose. Thus simple frequency of interaction and the built-up familiarity and predictability which it entails can be a major factor in strengthening a social relationship.³⁶ A more significant, more binding, sort of relationship is that which carries specific obligations. At the first level, both economic interdependence and co-membership of formal organizations form this order of bond. Such relationships imply relatively clear and usually clearly stated and/or contractual obligations between or among their parties. Such relationships may, however, be either more or less a part of a broader system of moral, or in Parsonian language, 'diffuse' obligations. Contractual obligations are attendant on the social relationships themselves.³⁷ Where community pressures enforce the 'sanctity of contract', it should be emphasized, this is not a characteristic of the contract but of the membership of its parties in the community. Thus, kinship, and in most societies, friendship, are relations identified and sanctioned by public opinion as well as the immediate investment and agreement of the parties.³⁸ Bonds of kinship and friendship not only link particular parties to each other, but involve each specific relationship in a wider network of social relations, in which the whole is governed by more or less commonly accepted principles. They thus provide for long-term social bonds which are not dependent on continuing reactivation for all of their binding force.³⁹ These are bonds of quite a different order from familiarity or immediate interest.

³⁶ In Blau's primitive theory of social structure, differential rates of interaction are made the primary (almost exclusive) foundation of a conceptualization of social structure: 'Parameters of social structure', and *Inequality and Heterogeneity*. The latter is considerably subtler, with the content of interaction allowed back into analysis, through the back door. It is summarized in 'A macrosociological theory of social structure'.

³⁷ There is a close, but not quite exact, relationship between this distinction and that which Moore has drawn between legal and moral obligations. Her distinction is based solely on the kinds of sanctions which can be used to enforce obligations, not on the content of the obligations themselves. See pp. 9-10 above, and Moore, 'Legal liability and evolutionary interpretation...'

³⁸ This is dealt with in Fortes's notion of the 'morality of kinship' (the fullest general discussion is in *Kinship and the Social Order*), for which some writers have unjustly taken him to task. Worsley, 'The Kinship system of the Tallensi: a revaluation', advocates a rather crudely materialist alternative view of Fortes's Tallensi data.

³⁹ Compare this with the entirely short-term and individualistic criteria of social interaction which Blau considers (see n. 32 above). A good discussion of the long-term importance of kinship relations, in particular as they are morally sanctioned, is to be found in Bloch, 'The long term and the short term: the economic and political significance of the morality of kinship'.

Characteristics of networks of relationships

Central to this increase in the strength of social bond is the embeddedness of the particular relationship in a set of relations among relationships. If the bond between individuals is taken as unitary, a network and not a population becomes the focus of analysis. The network, a set of social relationships, may be characterized by various properties: crucially, density, multiplexity and systematicity. The first two are essentially arithmetical properties; where appropriate boundaries can be drawn it is, at least in principle, possible to compute comparable measurements. Systematicity is a structural, essentially geometrical, property for which qualitative variations are apparent but quantitative measurements difficult. The general phenomenon described by all three concepts is the implication of a relatively wide range of potential actors in the activities of a smaller number. Thus, it is impossible fully to account for or make sense of any particular kin relationship taken in isolation from the broader context of kin relations. The content and strength of the relationship between child and parent does not depend just on idiosyncratic factors and cultural definition. It also depends on the density, multiplexity and systematicity of the networks of which it forms one constituent link: family, kinship system, collection of friends, community. One may define a network by any mechanism which yields a set of relationships, just as one may bound a population by any arbitrary convention. What most matters analytically is the description of the network, not its mere existence.⁴⁰

Density is the most elementary of such analytic description. It is simply the extent to which all possible links among the parties to a network are in fact present. Considering only dyadic relations, there are ten possible links in a five-person network. Obviously, in general, the smaller a population the more likely it is to have a relatively high density of social relationships. It becomes possible 'for everyone to know everyone else'. Thus, in the West Riding village of Cleckheaton in the early nineteenth century, children are reported to have relieved the monotony of repetitive tasks by reciting the name of every inhabitant of the village as they went along.⁴¹ In some very small towns, one might not only *know* everyone else but be related by kinship to many or most. There are indeed still towns in England and America where three or four surnames account for a majority of the inhabitants. One of the effects of high density is to make it likely that each of those with whom one has a relationship will also be related to the others. One's friends are each other's friends. This clearly imposes certain constraints on – and grants certain strengths to – the friendship relation.

The second of the relations among bonds is that of multiplexity. This refers to

⁴⁰ Bear in mind that we are concerned here not with an exhaustive list of concepts with which to analyse networks, but with the construction of a definition of community. Our treatment of community is linked to network analysis in taking social relationships as its fundamental unit. For one attempt to give an exhaustive list of criteria for comparing net-

works, see Mitchell, 'The concept and use of social networks'.

⁴¹ Peel, 'Old Cleckheaton'. Blau's recent work demonstrates the power which such matters of numerical analysis as size and relative density of relationships may have in sociological analysis. See n. 32 above.

⁴² Gluckman, 'Les rites de passage', 28.

the extent to which individuals who are linked in one type of relationship – say kinship – are also linked in other types, co-residence, co-religion and economic interdependence, for example. Each kind of bond implies another social context in which the same parties are co-actors. The responsibility for meeting the claims of one relationship is enforced by the other strands which also tie its parties together. As Gluckman has noted:

Because men and women in tribal society play so many of their varied purposive roles with the same set of fellows, each action in addition is charged with high moral import.⁴²

Such 'moral import' forces people to look beyond the immediate instrumental considerations which might otherwise determine their actions. The same is true of

... those many situations in modern life where we find 'pockets' of social relations which resemble those of tribal society in that there are 'groups' whose members live together in such a way that their relations in one set of roles directly influence their performance of other roles.⁴³

We might alternatively say that the roles played by people in such multiplex social networks are not fragmented into so many separate social dramas as are those of most of us.⁴⁴

The last important relationship among bonds may be called systematicity or corporateness. This involves the linkage of individuals to social groups, and the ordering of groups in some unifying system of incorporation. Thus, in a segmentary society, kinship will make a person a member of an entire hierarchy of corporate groups, the smaller of which are components of the larger. The actions of an individual member may implicate the whole; accordingly, the corporation has strong powers of coercion over the individual.⁴⁵ One effect of such systematicity is to provide social actors with determinate identities. Such identities are constraints on the range of possible actions open to either party in any interaction.

In the small corporate groups of pre-industrial societies, and in their relationships with one another, disputes between individuals are far more likely to be disruptive to the social fabric than in impersonal, large-scale societies. In part, this is inherently so because of the small numbers, but it is the more so because of the way in which structurally determined partisan commitments spread the effects of what start as individual disputes.⁴⁶

⁴³ Gluckman, 'Les rites de passage', 43.

⁴⁴ Thus it is an illusion to think, as some modern social scientists and planners have done, that it is equally plausible to create community with or without propinquity (cf. Webber, 'Order in diversity: community without propinquity'). These writers neglect the importance of multiplexity and focus their attention entirely on single-purpose relationships.

⁴⁵ Corporations are 'publics' in Smith's

sense: each is 'an enduring presumably perpetual group with determinate boundaries and membership, having an internal organization and a unitary set of external relations, an exclusive body of common affairs, and autonomy and procedures adequate to regulate them'; 'A structural approach to comparative politics', 94.

⁴⁶ Moore, 'Legal liability and evolutionary interpretation...', 74.

Corporateness thus increases the motivation of a population to settle its internal disputes. Systematicity also involves the existence of common principles which establish and order social relationships. It is thus guaranteed that as far as such a system is in operation, any set of social actors may readily establish their relationships to each other.

Through bonds and networks of these kinds, social actors are knit together into communities. They are not discrete and wholly independent individuals – *homo oeconomicus* – but social persons subject to innumerable constraints on their individual autonomy and in return receiving collective supports. As social persons, their behaviour can involve other social persons, involuntarily, in a stream of actions, either through interpersonal bonds or as members of corporate groups. For these reasons:

Communities...do not leave their members free to go their own way and explore every possible avenue of behaviour. They operate with a set of rules or standards which define appropriate action under a variety of circumstances. The rules, by and large, operate to eliminate conflict of interests by defining what it is people can expect from certain of their fellows. This has the healthy effect of limiting demands and allowing the public to judge performance.⁴⁷

It is in this sense, as well as in that of accumulated esoterica and personal familiarity, that the community is a culturally defined way of life. It holds its members to a set of rules and standards which allows them the intensity of their interaction. These norms may also govern patterns of consumption and production in favour of longer-term continuity, like a far more effective 'invisible hand' than any which has ruled since *laissez-faire* became self-conscious theory or policy.

COMMUNITY AND AUTHORITY

A central question regarding community life is how obedience to rules and standards is enforced when social pressure proves inadequate. A corollary to this question is how changes in communal life and public opinion are collectively legitimated. We have stressed in our preceding discussion the relative absence of specialized agencies of coercion or regulation in communities. That is, there are no independent chiefs or bureaucracies capable of enforcing laws or announcing changes in them. In accordance as these are absent, however, there must be some method for expressing communal opinion. In tribal societies such mechanisms, particularly divination, are often bound up with ancestor worship. Reverence for ancestors expresses a reverence for the community, as ancestors symbolically represent lines of collective affiliation in lineage-structured societies. The ancestors are made the repositories of authority over the affairs of the living, but evidence of the supernatural power of ancestors can only be had after the fact, generally through divination. In divination, though the diviner himself may command a certain amount of respect, he must generally produce a divination which is in

⁴⁷ Colson, *Tradition and Contract*, 52.

accord with the general body of public opinion and fitting to the normal pattern of divination for his report to be accepted. Failing this, he or other diviners may be asked to repeat the entreaty to the spiritual world until the signs offered are in accord with present social constraints and standards. In other words, the ancestors have all formal authority, but no intentional power. They 'act' to express the will of the community, and thus act with a great deal of moral and social strength.⁴⁸ But the range of possible actions which the ancestors may sanction is limited; ancestral authority cannot readily be used to support a new concerted collective action, but may order the activity of the members of a community over extended periods of time and sanction the defence of this social order.

We may understand the notion of 'moral economy' in a similar sense. E. P. Thompson has recently brought it into currency to refer to the slowly evolved but carefully maintained community consensus on many fundamental issues which ordered and legitimated responses to the upset of the community's way of life. Thus, food riots in pre-industrial England were not blind or instinctive responses of base and hungry creatures. They were indeed responses to crises, but:

The men and women in the crowd were informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights or customs: and, in general, that they were supported by the wider consensus of the community. On occasion this popular consensus was endorsed by some measure of licence afforded by the authorities. More commonly, the consensus was so strong that it overrode motives of fear or deference.⁴⁹

Two particularly interesting questions are raised by this passage. One concerns the relationship of community, consensus and the taking of collective action; the other involves the relationship of authority and power to community. Taking the latter first, we are immediately confronted with a problem of terminology. Authority is not the same as power; furthermore, those who speak with authority may speak also with a varying proportion of private or sectional motives and a

⁴⁸ This is not to suggest that the ancestors are necessarily very democratic – elders may have a greater ability to shape public opinion. They are, after all, apt to be at the centre of networks of social relations, and it is relations out of which community is made and therefore through which the authority of the community is exercised. See Calhoun, 'The Authority of Ancestors among the Tallensi of Northern Ghana', esp. chs. 1, 6 and 9.

⁴⁹ Thompson, 'The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century', 78. The reader should be aware that Thompson is unclear to the point of contradiction when he considers this moral economy in temporal perspective. On the one hand, he wants to show it developing; on the other hand, he feels it being stolen from traditional workers' communities by the onset of capitalist relations

of production and consumption. The passage quoted in the text is a description of the eighteenth-century crowd given in protest against those who would call it a 'mob'. Among this latter number we must count an earlier Edward Thompson: 'It is, indeed, this collective self-consciousness, with its corresponding theory institutions, discipline and community values which distinguishes the nineteenth-century working class from the eighteenth-century mob.' (*The Making*, 463) Generally, I think one is safer to follow Thompson's developmental assertions – though not to the end – than his romantic belief in the virtues of the past. See also R. Williams, *The Country and the City*, 131, on the active community of workers' protest movements as opposed to the mutuality of the oppressed.

varying amount of power. As we shall see, it is communal consensus as to what is right which confirms the voice of authority. 'Right', in this context, may refer interrelatedly to the right which may invest a particular social actor with authority, and the rightness of his actions. Who were 'the authorities' of pre- and early industrial England? Thompson seems to have in mind 'men of substance', landowners and particularly magistrates. The extent to which these men spoke with authority as opposed to exercising material power is open to question. If the former, they must have been spokesmen for the principles which ordered the whole web of social relationships, and their words enforced less by the active exercise of power than by the sanctions implicit in the multiplex relations of community members. To fail to follow authority is to fail to maintain one's place in the web of social relations of which it is a part. But clearly, in the early years of English industrialization, it was necessary on occasion to back up the word of authority with economic sanctions and public bloodshed – in other words with power. The local 'authorities' were not always voicing the consensus of the community, and the implicit sanctions were not always working.⁵⁰ Community itself was changing, but perhaps more important its place in the overall structure of social relationships was changing. The ties of the landed élite to the rest of the population underwent shifts, generally a weakening, even in the small rural parishes.⁵¹ At the same time, the extent to which there was an inclusive hierarchy of social groups, ordered by common principles, was called into question.⁵²

There are, of course, always exceptions to the rule of authority; man is not completely socialized. No society is so completely free of contradictions, either, that the breaking of customary rules is not normal, and does not require the active exercise of power if it is to be kept in check. Authority is, however, weakest at the joints of corporate and/or communal organization. It is, crudely, when those who are most socially important to an individual support his violation of authority that power is most likely to be necessary. Feuds thus occur in ancestor-worshipping societies, despite the existence of overarching common authority. Similarly, crises of authority occur where counter-balancing and cross-cutting ties are absent or weak, and a social split develops in what had hitherto been a more unified community. Such a crisis of authority is what made for the extension of the death penalty and then the campaign for reform of the criminal justice system in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century England.⁵³ Resistance to the rule of

⁵⁰ We parallel, again inexactly, Moore's distinction of legal from moral obligations cited above (see 9–10 above). In fact, this is a return under yet another guise of the contrast between social orders based on status and contract.

⁵¹ The accelerated building of great houses, the increasing proportion of absentee landlords, the growing importance of clerical (and thus non-native) magistrates, and the centralization of landholdings, all are aspects of this growing apart. Perhaps none was more important than the simple increase in the scale of local populations, especially those which

turned to outwork and/or factories. Industrial discipline was also increasingly impersonal and a multitude of other factors could also be adduced.

⁵² This question is reflected in the contrast between 'interests' and 'classes' often drawn to distinguish the units of social organization at a large scale before and after industrialization. Perkin, for example, has made much of this contrast in *The Origins of Modern English Society*.

⁵³ Radzinowicz, *A History of English Criminal Law*, vol. 1.

law was not new, but it was intensified, and the traditional bridges across the 'ranks' of society became increasingly hard to maintain. As Hay has described the eighteenth century:

The fabric of authority was torn and reknit constantly. The important fact remains, however, that it was reknit readily. The closer mesh of economic and social ties in rural society, the public nature of those relationships compared to the complexity and obscurity of much metropolitan life, allowed the creation of an ideology that was much more pervasive than in London.⁵⁴

In the nineteenth century, many of the landowners on whom the traditional system of authority depended worked to maintain their political positions at the expense of close ties to their communities.⁵⁵ Perhaps more important, the proportion of the total population which lived in the more traditional communities shrank rapidly, if unevenly. In the new industrial districts new ties had to be formed; traditional communal bonds did not support an established system of authority, and before a new paternalism was forged (to the extent it ever was) power was especially important.

The regulation which some magistrates attempted to provide was not the self-regulation of an integrated community, but an order imposed by external agency. Other magistrates who opposed the encroachments of market relations frequently tolerated or encouraged the actions of crowds against grain dealers and other middlemen. This sort of authority, however, allowed magistrates to give licence rather more than to take action. As defenders of a way of life and a set of values, they might implicitly or explicitly approve of actions against middlemen, but they had little or no power to move against these engrossers and forestallers themselves. To the extent that the role of the middlemen and other shifts in the relations of production were new, the magistrates were made ineffective by the very conservatism of their own authority. They were slow to realize the threat to their way of life, and slower still to adopt 'popular' solutions, but this can only partly be attributed to personal failings. The intrinsic limitations of authority were also involved:

As a regulatory capacity, authority is legitimated and identified by the rules, traditions, and precedents which embody it and which govern its exercise and objects. Power is also regulatory, but is neither fully prescribed nor governed by norms and rules. Whereas authority presumes and expresses normative consensus, power is most evident in conflict and contraposition where dissensus obtains.⁵⁶

Such power as the magistrates had came from the central government, and this put them in an ambivalent position. On the one hand, their authority depended on their status in the local community, and the congruence of their activities with

⁵⁴ Hay, 'Property, authority and the criminal law . . .', 55.

⁵⁵ F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, 183;

Mingay, *The Gentry*, 177.

⁵⁶ Smith, 'A structural approach to comparative politics', 104.

public opinion. On the other hand, their power obliged them to represent interests sometimes contrary to those of their local communities.⁵⁷

On the local level, the authority of magistrates enabled them to carry out proceedings which were backed by the apparent opinion of the community. In general, this meant proceedings against particular individuals who transgressed against the laws. The community might either support the specific laws or at least the general right of King and Parliament to establish such laws and magistrates to enforce them. This did not necessarily mean that the community members individually felt compelled to follow these laws.⁵⁸ Unpopular laws (or interpretations of the law), moreover, might engender opposition as well as disobedience. Herein entered the difficulty. To put down popular opposition always meant to act against the community, not simply against members of the community. It made it obvious that, far from being representatives of the community, and of public opinion, the magistrates were acting on behalf of external interests, and were using external powers. Magistrates were increasingly called upon to enforce certain abstract rights (such as that of selling commodities at the price one chooses) against the weight of custom. Not infrequently a large domestic army was needed to back up the magistrates as these attempted to enforce laws which lacked authority in local communities.⁵⁹

The crucial issue here is the breakdown of the structure of hierarchical incorporation which knit local communities into the society as a whole. The authority of the law in the eighteenth century was maintained in part by the collaboration of the interlinked levels. Thus suspects might be apprehended locally, tried by visiting justices (representing national authority) and convicted. After conviction, local authorities might petition regional or national ones in order to obtain a commutation of the sentence by royal mercy.⁶⁰ In this way, local notables both upheld the law and alleviated the sufferings of the members of the community (upon the satisfaction of certain criteria of worthiness, not the least

⁵⁷ This ambivalence also characterized African village headmen under British colonial rule. Generally headmen were less likely to have inherited a wealth which set them and their families apart as a social class than British landowners were. None the less, it is interesting to speculate as to the extent to which the British government followed a less explicit policy of indirect rule over its domestic population well before it formulated its approach to colonial governance. See, on headmen, Barnes, Mitchell and Gluckman, 'The village headman in British Central Africa', and Gluckman, 'Inter-hierarchical roles'.

⁵⁸ Indeed, people did *not* feel compelled to obey the law for authority's sake in all circumstances. But they were surprisingly willing to grant the authorities the right to punish them if they were caught. Thus, popular literature's

frequent contrasts between 'French Tyranny' and 'British Liberties' suggested that a fault of the former system was its attempt at preventative action. The Englishman had the liberty of stealing game and getting hanged if he were caught.

⁵⁹ Simultaneously, magistrates found that they had little if any ability to take recourse against employers who refused to obey the injunctions of the bench: they had no power to bring to bear. See Halévy, *England in 1815*, 336.

⁶⁰ See Hay's illuminating article on 'Property, authority and the criminal law...': Radzinowicz's *A History of English Criminal Law* remains the most important general work; see vol. 1, ch. 4 on commutation of the death penalty.

of which was being well integrated into the web of social relations). In the course of thus managing the ambiguity of their position, they were able to demonstrate to the locals that they had the ear of the people at court (either directly or indirectly). Such a process still obtains at a local level and within many institutions. Nationally, it is attenuated beyond all recognition. If one writes to one's MP to get a wrong redressed, one generally writes as just 'a constituent', not as someone 'personally very well known to...' – a standard eighteenth- and nineteenth-century locution. Other 'rationalized' mechanisms have taken the place of personal connection in seeing that most transactions between local and national levels are accomplished (though of course one's standing in the social hierarchy may influence the performance of bureaucrats). During the period of the Industrial Revolution, however, the older hierarchical organization of authority underwent its crisis without an effective substitute being provided. This is one of the factors which caused community to be reorganized along class lines in Britain.⁶¹

As the fissure of class distinction began more and more to be recognized, and as demographic and other factors made self-regulating working-class communities possible, the identification of the bonds of community shifted. The corporate system into which people were most strongly linked did not cross the major lines of class. Friendly societies, trade unions and political unions linked workers primarily to each other. At the same time, the growth of working-class collective action depended on the social integration of working-class communities.⁶² Hierarchical splits existed within the ranks of the workers as well as between them and other sections of society; in addition, social and geographical mobility, long hours of work, and active oppression of corporate groups all worked against the sociation of workers. A traditional localism gave way to a somewhat greater consciousness of commonality within a class, at least for a time. In the end, of course, workers did not achieve either a fully autonomous social organization or dominance in English society. It is also clear that this was the aim of only a minority of workers, even of those workers actively engaged in collective social and economic struggles.

Societies which have had revolutions have shown much more complete and autonomous community among the 'masses' and much less hierarchical inter-linkage between classes than existed in England. This is an important reason why 'wars of national liberation' are more common than wars against wholly indigenous rulers (let alone exploiters). In part, this is a matter of the clearer identification of 'them' and 'us' afforded by alien rule. In this way, the more alien and separate a ruling class becomes, the more vulnerable it becomes. But there is another

⁶¹ Workers certainly tried to make the old system work at least as often as they pushed for anything new. Petition after petition flowed into parliament expressing their grievances. Parliament seldom considered these petitions, let alone took positive action. On a few occasions, workers had statute law on their side (such as the Statute of Artificers, 42 Eliz., cap. 63); parliament then suspended or repealed

the laws.

⁶² As Foster notes, 'The effective practice of illegal unionism demanded more than just the elaboration of a mass of institutional supports. It compelled the formation of a labour community.' *Class Struggle...*, 48 (original emphasis). It is one of the merits of Foster's book to give serious attention to this issue.

important factor. Wars of national liberation generally pit a hierarchically inclusive, corporate society, a highly systemic society with strong community foundations, against an external power.⁶³ War within a class society is a very different matter. A class very seldom has the social strength and community basis of a traditional society, nor does it have the economic and intellectual self-sufficiency a more 'complete' society may have. This is particularly true in highly mobile societies of advanced industrial capitalism. The social foundations for a revolution, and for a social and political organization to follow it, are not inherited from earlier stages of class society, as they are from pre-colonial society. Would-be revolutionaries must struggle to build such social foundations, and against extraordinary odds.

Widespread agreement that some particular political (or social) change ought to be effected is not enough to mobilize people in favour of that change. Concerted collective action depends on more than consensus, for individuals are interested in many goods; and collective goods, like others, have costs. If people are to co-operate in some costly undertaking, they require some assurance that everyone will contribute his share.⁶⁴ A collective good (one which can only be enjoyed in common with some aggregate of people) will generally only be provided under one of two conditions: either one actor's anticipated benefits from the collective good must outweigh his costs, therefore making it worthwhile for him to provide the good by himself, or there must be coercion or selective inducements to ensure the contributions of the entire collectivity.⁶⁵ Coercion is generally treated as an application of external force. It is apparent, however, that community, in the way in which we have defined it, may also provide the coercion or inducements necessary to ensure collective action. Community, indeed, may even mobilize people for collective action over long periods of time, in pursuit of highly uncertain goals and at high personal costs. The amount of external force required to achieve the same ends would be vast, if even then the intentional application of force could achieve the same combination of strength and flexibility as community.

Community is a matter of long-term co-operation. Many of the results of this co-operation are not conscious goals in the minds of participants. More exactly, many actions may fit these 'goals' without being explicitly instrumental. At particular junctures people may decide to pursue one or another task of societal development; practices they consider as instrumental may later be taken for granted. At the simplest level, we all need to limit the range of possibilities which we take into consideration when choosing an action. Habit is by no means the least important way in which this is done; cultural rules are another; social constraints on the availability of information add to the limitation.⁶⁶ The efficiency of habit and culture clearly depends on the familiarity of situations and events. Community both depends on this familiarity and helps to produce it. Being able to predict the

⁶³ This is, obviously, a matter of degree, as many would-be nations are rent by deep schisms.

⁶⁴ Less assurance is required, of course, as there are fewer good alternatives available to the individual. This is better described, perhaps, as a reduction in the (opportunity) costs.

⁶⁵ See Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*.

⁶⁶ Thus, Simon has stressed the limited nature of rationality in his important discussions of the necessity for 'satisficing' rather than maximizing in decision-making. See *Administrative Behaviour*.

behaviour of those with whom one must deal is one of the social advantages of community membership. This ability comes not only from long observation of particular persons, but from the systematicity of the communal organization, and the multiplicity of communal relationships. The former provides for collective definitions of relationships and the obligations they entail and expectations they justify. The latter increases people's investment in particular relationships, and causes them to be much more influenced by the wishes of others. For these reasons, it is inaccurate to see people in communities taking action solely as individuals (as much microeconomic theory and both psychologistic and economic exchange theory do). Moreover, members of communities often desire that benefits should accrue to large social units with which they identify – kinship and descent groups, for example. If we fail to look at community, and instead look only at individuals, including individuals collectively described as action sets or social networks, a very significant part of social life must elude our analyses.

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