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History, anthropology and the study of communities: some problems in Macfarlane's proposal¹

In a recent paper, Alan Macfarlane advertises a new approach to the study of communities in which 'a combination of the anthropological techniques and the historical material could be extremely fruitful'.² Unfortunately, he fails to make clear just what the approach he advocates is, and with what problems and phenomena it is intended to deal. He thus exacerbates rather than solves the methodological and conceptual problems which face social historians who would study community. The present paper is primarily polemical in intention. It is in agreement that community can be the object of coherent and productive study by historians and social scientists, working together and/or drawing on the products of each other's labours. It argues, however, that Macfarlane's conceptual apparatus is seriously problematic, and does not constitute a coherent approach. I have outlined elsewhere what I consider to be such a coherent approach.³ It makes community a comparative and historical variable.

Macfarlane dismisses the concept as meaningless at the beginning of his paper, but then finds it necessary to reintroduce it in quotation marks in the latter part – without ever defining it. He introduces several potentially useful anthropological concepts, but vitiates their value by both a misleading treatment and the implication that they are replacements for, rather than supplements to, the concept of community. In the following I attempt to give a more accurate background to and interpretation of these concepts, and to correct several logical and methodological errors in Macfarlane's presentation. The various concepts and techniques which he proposes can indeed be meaningful and useful, but require greater attention to level of analysis and theoretical context. I suggest, finally, that the concept of community has *not* been 'superseded' because it *does* refer to something we *do* want to understand.

¹ This paper was written while the author was in residence at St Antony's College, Oxford, where he had the benefit of numerous conversations on its subject matter and especially the detailed comments of Thomas Laqueur, which he gratefully acknowledges.

² Macfarlane (1977), 637. Anthropology and history

have actually had a much longer history of inter-relationship than Macfarlane seems to realize, from the disciplinary origins of the former, through Evans-Pritchard among others, to the creation of the 'new social history'.

³ See Calhoun in *Bibliography*.

I

Macfarlane treats concepts as holes in the ground to be filled in with data. In the first place, he does not distinguish between concepts and propositions. In the second place, he does not distinguish between the analytic use of concepts in tackling particular problems, and the mere discovery that there are data to which a given concept can be applied. The result is that, in Macfarlane's view, historians are the possessors of great banks of 'information' and 'material' over which they preside while waiting for 'sociological questions' and 'anthropological techniques'.⁴ The programme which he advocates transgresses the reasonable limits of naivety⁵ in the borrowing of tools from another academic discipline. It involves concepts torn from their theoretical moorings, so that they do not even provide a coherent language, let alone a major help in analysis. This is largely because of two related errors, one methodological, one strictly logical.

The logical error is the fallacious assumption that naming is the same as explaining. Thus Macfarlane suggests a programme of taking concepts and then finding data to fit them. At one point he takes up the concept of the 'action-set' and tells us happily that English court records are full of 'case studies', so that 'every baptism, marriage and burial where several names are given will give one a fragmentary action-set, just as each land transfer, will, or deed likewise does so'.⁶ Given that most concepts can find some application anywhere, this tells us very little. Macfarlane does not indicate any problems which the finding of action-sets in court records will help us to solve. We are simply told to find action-sets – when we ought to be told to differentiate among them – find their characteristic form in social order, discover how they work or analyse one or more to understand some important event. Macfarlane is more concerned, however, that we use historical material 'to test and refine sociological concepts'.⁷ This is nonsensical, a category mistake. The only way in which concepts can conceivably be tested is pragmatically; we may evaluate their performance in the solution of particular problems, the analysis of particular situations.

The methodological error is the neglect of the importance of asking questions, as opposed to merely proliferating a method. Macfarlane proposes, however erratically, a set of tools for historical research. He wishes to select the 'best' from among these tools, but he does not consider that such an evaluation is dependent on application. In other words, a workman must select his tools with some task in mind. The way in which the historian and/or social scientist chooses and formulates his problems is thus of fundamental importance. How he will do so is in large part the product of the theoretical approach with which he works, either implicitly or explicitly. When there is no theory to order the selection and formulation of problems (not to mention their solution), the result is not pure empiricism but chaos.⁸ Theory is necessary to provide order to any

⁴ Macfarlane (1977), 637, 641.

⁵ Devons and Gluckman (1964).

⁶ Macfarlane (1977), 637.

⁷ Macfarlane (1977), 640.

⁸ Chronology may be used to lend a minimal structure without implying too much in the way of

assumptions. None the less, very little of even self-proclaimed empiricist history could be done without some implicit or *ad hoc* assumptions about the way in which people behave, the nature of social bonds, etc.

research, and to enable it to penetrate beneath the surface of 'facticity'. It provides for a systematic definition of the elements under analysis, and a consistent treatment of their connections to each other. It encapsulates the results of comparisons in propositions about the connections of its elements. Although it must rest on unproven assumptions, it allows for the testing of propositions within its assumptions. An agglomeration of definitions, no matter how huge, does not make a theory. And concepts within a theory take their meaning, and their utility, not just from formal definitions but from their relationship to the theory as a whole. Macfarlane neglects theory in all the aspects we have listed. Further, he lifts concepts out of theoretical contexts without care even for their relationships with each other.

Concepts are designed to aid in analysis, not to substitute for analysis. Macfarlane in the course of his paper tosses them out by the handful. At one point, he lists four from a common lineage: 'social drama, case study, quasi-group and action-set', but does not notice that these are of different orders.⁹ The first two describe analytic procedures, the second two refer to constituent elements. Greater attention to the context from which the concepts were borrowed could have helped Macfarlane to avoid this confusion. The four concepts listed above come from a relatively unified approach to problems of social continuity and change. They are rather less new, less settled, and less exclusive than Macfarlane suggests. The developers of these concepts were seeking solutions to theoretical, methodological and empirical problems. Max Gluckman was 'pater' to this family of innovators.¹⁰ The approach which he pioneered in anthropology was that of identifying and analysing key social situations in order to understand better the overall social order and the direction of its change.¹¹ The new approach was intended to deal with a number of problems, many of which stemmed from structural-functionalist theory. Among these was the tendency to minimize conflict, assuming that particular strife was integrated at a more inclusive level or over a longer duration. The possibility of both structural contradictions and structural change due to internal struggles was neglected. Equilibrium was assumed to be self-regulating, rather than regulated through the agency of members of the society. Furthermore, the attention to functional integration meant that the society was treated as relatively static.¹²

⁹ Macfarlane (1977), 637.

¹⁰ The family is commonly referred to as the 'Manchester school'. It includes the large number of anthropologists who either studied with or were closely influenced by Gluckman and his colleagues. The broadly senior generation includes, among others, Turner, Mitchell, Barnes, Colson, Cunnison, Epstein, Marwick, Worsley, Van Velson, Watson and Kapferer. Almost all the group did fieldwork in central and/or southern Africa. Lusaka, because of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (now Institute of African Studies in the University of Zambia) was something of a second family seat.

¹¹ The first major publication using this approach was Gluckman (1940-1); another classic is Mitchell

(1956).

¹² Others had certainly realized the static implications of structural-functional analysis. Radcliffe-Brown suggested it as a replacement for conjectural history, but as complement, not alternative, to sound historical argument (the point is made in many places; the opening pages of his 1941 presidential address are among the clearest). By the 1940s a number of criticisms had been levelled at the extreme functionalism of Malinowski, including several by leading anthropologists who were in later years to be tarred with the same brush: Evans-Pritchard, Fortes, Leach, Firth, Nadel (the last two being among Malinowski's closest followers) and others.

These theoretical problems were compounded within the empirical context of African sociology by a tendency to ignore the impact of colonialism on the peoples being studied. This impact was particularly manifest to Gluckman and his associates working in Central and Southern Africa. An important reason for this was that they did not deal primarily with acephalous societies subject only to relatively loose political controls, but on the contrary with highly developed states and sometimes empires. These societies had known histories and could in no way be assumed to be in equilibrium.¹³ Moreover, large-scale political and economic changes were taking place, largely as a result of colonial rule, which undermined the functional integration of the more traditional social orders. All these factors came together to suggest the need for a (partially) new approach to (largely) new problems. Gluckman, here taking his lead from Radcliffe-Brown, suggested that a new mode of argument was needed as well. Generally, ethnographers had been content to make their points by 'apt illustration', a technique much too familiar to historians.¹⁴ Gluckman proposed situational analysis as an alternative, and gave an example in his treatment of the structural implications of the opening of a bridge in Zululand.¹⁵

Macfarlane takes up the work of the Manchester school through two principal offshoots: network analysis and the extended case study method. He is misleading in his treatment of the origins of both, and their significance in the history of anthropology.¹⁶ Of more concern to us in the present context is his sloppiness in the use of the conceptualizations themselves. There is not space here to deal with either of these approaches (or branches of a common approach) in detail. Rather we shall simply note by examples that sense cannot be made of them in the manner in which Macfarlane presents them. A great deal more is needed for analytic purposes than isolated concepts. This is especially important since Macfarlane not only wants to use these concepts, but

¹³ This did not necessarily mean that equilibrium models could not be used to study change in these societies. Gluckman much later (and in a rather different frame of mind) gave a partially successful defence of the equilibrium model in the study of social change (1968).

¹⁴ Macfarlane's approach would also seem to be one of illustrations, though with quantity rather than aptness, as justification. Macfarlane mentions Gluckman only once; the mention is doubly ironic, however, he does not notice that Gluckman pioneered the approach which he advocates, but includes him in a dismissal of the old guard of structural-functionalism.

¹⁵ Gluckman (1940-1). Other new approaches to abstraction were being developed at the same time, with Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer* (1940) the most important study. The publication of *African Political Systems* (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (eds.), 1940) was a landmark in this development. Unfortunately the Manchester school never produced a comprehensive statement of the theoretical work behind their analyses, but this is not because there was none. They preferred to leave the theory implicit in their

empirical studies, though we may hope it will someday be abstracted and evaluated. Two brief discussions, both putting more emphasis on people than ideas, are in Kuper (1975, ch. 6) and Arrighi (1976, esp. pp. 22-35). It should be noted that there was a shift in Gluckman's work away from the structural study of conflict and change, and that he was closer to 'classical' structural-functionalism at the end of his career than at the beginning.

¹⁶ Thus, Barnes did not 'introduce' the concept of the social network, but rather gave it pride of place and advertisement. Fortes (1949), among others, had earlier developed much of the same line of analysis and, in broad outlines at least, the same concept. Radcliffe-Brown had in 1940 made it central to his conceptualization of social structure. The explicit methodology of network analysis was more of an innovation; in the long run it has led to considerable intermingling with sociometry. Similarly, as we shall see, Turner's conceptual and theoretical apparatus has a longer genealogy, with both Gluckman and Fortes prominent in the parentage. His later work on ritual is more distinctive.

wants to argue that they effectively replace other concepts: notably group and community. Some of the newer concepts may, as he claims, have greater precision. This virtue comes, however, in large part from the fact that they do not refer to the same phenomena.¹⁷

In any case, Macfarlane must be considered a dubious judge of precision. Witness his treatment of Turner's notion of the 'social drama'. He quotes as *definition* Turner's characteristically metaphorical *description*: 'a limited area of transparency on the otherwise opaque surface of regular, uneventful social life. Through it we are enabled to observe the crucial principles of the social structure in their operation, and their relative dominance at successive points in time.'¹⁸ 'This approach', says Macfarlane, 'made it possible for social scientists to study minute processes over time, rather than taking a timeless cross-section at a higher level.'¹⁹ Had social scientists and writers in general never done this before? Were Maitland's analyses of shifting legal practices not of this nature? What of the English medievalists? How many times did Cobbett undertake the analysis of a social drama in order to show the changes in English social structure? What, indeed, of Gluckman? Turner's 'social drama' approach was a direct outgrowth of Gluckman's analysis of social situations. The crucial elements of the approach, present in both authors' work, are the selection for minute examination of a critical event, and its analysis through reference to both contemporaneous social relationships and important historical developments. Be it said also, neither author ignored the 'old fashioned' structural analysis of the society in question. Turner, with his excellent ethnographic data, was able to pursue problems which had been set previously in numerous other contexts; notably the contrary pulls of personal relationships and lineal descent groups.²⁰ Changes in the alignments of individuals and groups were enacted in social dramas, resolved in rituals of continuity.

As black a picture can be painted of Macfarlane's discussion of network analysis. This, too, is a potentially useful tool for historians as for other social researchers. But Macfarlane presents it less as a tool to be used in answering questions than as a question. ('Are there networks?' 'Yes, these.' 'Oh!') Networks *can* productively be analysed for themselves. That is, we can learn a great deal about the social organization of a population from the characteristics of the networks which link its members. The mere *existence* of networks tells us little. Density, stability over time, multiplexity of bonds, centredness, polarization, stratification, size: all these are variable characteristics of social networks, and each can be revealing. (Think: in a crisis, would the people on whom you called for aid all be strangers to each other?) Often, the network is considered not

¹⁷ To take one of the potential 'replacements' which Macfarlane cites: if Mayer intended the concept of 'quasi-group' to replace that of 'group', he certainly gave it a misleading name (Mayer, 1966).

¹⁸ Turner (1957), 93; quoted by Macfarlane (1977), 636.

¹⁹ Macfarlane (1977), 636.

²⁰ In Turner's case the personal relationships

were those of the family; the Ndembu being matrilineal and virilocal. The major theoretical innovations which enabled Turner to put his data to good use came from numerous sources. In addition to Gluckman, Fortes was especially important. His (1945, 1949) ethnography of the Tallensi dealt with some of the same issues, also with exceptionally good data, though for a patrilineal society.

for itself, but as part of the explanation of an event or series of events. In this it is a methodological elaboration of situation analysis. As we have suggested, historical analysis developed this approach much earlier, albeit less self-consciously and less rigorously. Indeed, we can even see the basic ideas in play in the situations being analysed. Consider the Grevilles (relatives and friends) as early network analysts, playing the possibilities of family 'connections' to the hilt in the parliamentary politics of the late eighteenth century – and with diminishing success into the nineteenth. Their analytic scheme as well as their practice influenced the writing of history.

It is commonsense to trace the connections of social actors to the events in which they participate. Network analysis adds some rigour, systematicity and standard terms. In a wide range of events it is the 'action-sets' of those who are mobilized which are determinant, rather than the alignments of corporate groups. Network analysis not only provides concepts to deal with fluid and changing social alignments, it also provides a way of discovering the significance which more formal groups may have. Thus in a relatively complex society people may be members of a number of formal groups and less formal aggregations such as neighbourhoods. It is difficult to decide how socially important any of these may be without some study of the events for which they can mobilize their members and the constraints which they can impose on their members' behaviour. Perhaps even more important for the study of community is the question of how, and how much, they tie their members to each other. Can and do members depend on each other's support in the pursuit of objectives which are not those of the formal group? Some answer to this sort of question is to be found in analysis of the networks which people mobilize for various purposes.²¹

We are brought back to the previous question: in what sense, or to what extent, do these lines of analysis allow us, as Macfarlane suggests, 'to replace the ideas of "group" and "community"'?²² Briefly: in no sense, not at all. The concepts are not equivalent: they cannot simply be traded. In order to see why not, and better to understand the relationships among the concepts, 'community' must be explored in more detail.

II

The term 'community' has led a rather harried existence with both ideological and analytic elements intertwined throughout. The concept has roots in antiquity, and under

²¹ Barnes (1954) and Mitchell (ed.) (1969) are key landmarks in the development and spread of network analysis. Barnes (1972) and Mitchell (1974) are reviews of the literature. White and his colleagues have made some interesting progress towards integrating network analysis with sociometry and role theory. They have had more success in the former regard than the latter (White, *et al.*, 1976; Boorman and White, 1976). Boissevain's work is over-ambitious, and needlessly confusing to the uninitiated (1974). Boissevain and Mitchell (1973) is not a very successful collection.

Leinhart (1977) is more adequate.

²² Macfarlane (1977), 636. In fact, Macfarlane suggests a 'tendency' for this replacement to take place, one which I do not detect. He also suggests that it is a good thing. In fact, neither Turner nor Mitchell has dropped 'community' or 'group' from his lexicon. Turner has advocated a 'process-theory' which assails rigid usages of both these terms and others, and which unfortunately overestimates the extent to which a new approach has been created in the place of structural-functionalism.

various labels has been particularly significant in most ages of disrupted social life since. Its modern roots are to be found in the tradition of pastoral poetry, in the puritan theory of the commonwealth, and in the nineteenth century's musings on the social changes of the industrial revolution. It is in the last of these that current usage was most definitively shaped.²³ 'Community' evokes values of togetherness, the warmth and security of relationships among people. It also denotes certain kinds and patterns of social relationships and ways of life which are constantly changing. Community does not disappear though it may vary in extent or kind. Leaving the normative statements of writers on community aside, there is still a variance in the proportion of attention given to 'experimental' v. 'structural' aspects of community. In Tonnies's *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* dichotomy, the emphasis is on the assumed nature of community in opposition to the optional nature of association. 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.²⁴

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 also allows the proponents of idealized community frequently to underestimate the restraint which real community requires, the sacrifices which it demands, and the fears which enforce them. Anthropology can offer historians one corrective to such false visions; historical research itself should offer another. Equally important, if analysis is to proceed, is some rigorous understanding of the object of study.

Macfarlane manages to complete his entire paper without ever offering a definition of community, or even any descriptive suggestions. His casual glance at the literature convinces him that the concept is too imprecise, means too many different things to different people.²⁵ 'It would seem', he suggests, 'that it is impossible to agree as to what a "community" is.'²⁶ The fact that a number of varying concepts have been used under the common label does not, however, invalidate any of them. Macfarlane takes this as

²³ As Nisbet and Williams have in their different ways argued. See, for example, Nisbet (1953 and 1966), Williams (1958 and 1973).

²⁴ Tonnies (1925), 69. The classic work is Tonnies (1887). The conceptualization achieved widespread acceptance in German social thought of the period, and has continued greatly to influence the contrasts we draw. Weber took up the same view, defining the communal relationship as based on subjective feeling, either affectual or traditional, as opposed to the

rationality of the associative relationship (1925), 126. Weber was of course more confident than Tonnies about the possibilities for extreme rationality in social relationships. He also tended to focus on small – generally diadic – units of relationship.

²⁵ Most of his few citations to the large sociological literature seem, in fact, to have come from two survey texts.

²⁶ Macfarlane (1977), 633.

'perhaps the most fundamental of all criticisms' of community.²⁷ But this is a criticism only of the word. Although Macfarlane dismisses the concept(s), he does not show that they are empty of empirical reference. His list of substitute concepts simply omits many of the phenomena dealt with by the various concepts of community. One result is that he cannot even bring himself, in the end, to let go of the word.

A large part of the difficulty stems from the existence of two grammatical usages of the term. We may speak of 'a community' and of 'the phenomenon of community'. The same is true of many terms which characterize relationships, including 'society'; they have both particular and general referents. Many writers, including Macfarlane in his critique, have proceeded by taking what they intuitively understand to be 'a community' – frequently a village such as Hooton Pagnell or Winston Magna – and then worrying about what it is that makes this a 'community'. Macfarlane concludes that it is only the myth of lost community which pervades modern industrial society that leads analysts to find 'communities'. He suggests that in reality people take action in, and on the basis of, other kinds of social groupings. The object of his attack, it would appear, is the tendency to idealize some notion of community and then attribute it to particular instances. But Macfarlane merely turns this duality of social ideal and social reality on its head; he does not escape from its clutches. He does not, for example, consider that there could be real variations in the extent and kind of community organization. Ironically enough, this means that *he* does not see community in historical perspective, as a phenomenon undergoing change, but rather as a rigid category.²⁸

Organization is the crucial factor which may make a community (or a society) out of a mere aggregation of people.²⁹ Macfarlane simply takes any limited aggregation of people and attaches the label to it without attention to its internal organization. Clearly, though, he would like to take account of changes over time, if only he knew changes in what. Thus he first tells us, as we have noted, that the belief in stable, tightly knit communities is a myth. A few pages later he suggests that there are or were some places where 'permanent, rigid groups' existed.³⁰ Neither statement is substantiated. More importantly, Macfarlane is just looking at attributes here, not coming to grips with a phenomenon. This, perhaps, is the reason why he ignores the historical dimension in Turner's work at the same time that he commends certain of Turner's concepts to historians. What Turner studies are the ways in which people knit themselves together,

²⁷ *Ibid.* The concept is, in part, obviously a straw man. But it is not even a very clear straw man in Macfarlane's paper.

²⁸ One could say 'ideal type', but for the absence of definition, and therefore of ideal. Macfarlane operates with a sort of crude intuitionism, apparently feeling sure that he knows a 'community' when he sees one (adding the quotation marks for safety). Like many people who reason in this way, he assumes that his intuition has some sort of empirical validity. The result is that he cannot analyse the phenomenon of community, or use the concept of community in the

analysis of the social relations of a population. All he can do is point to villages, towns, or other aggregates of people and say: 'That's one!'

²⁹ It was in this sense that Sorokin distinguished integrated social units from mere spatial aggregations or congeries (1957, 2–19). He was, perhaps, oversanguine in thinking that there was 'no need to stress the fact that the degree of functional unity or functional interdependence is everywhere not the same' (1957, 7). It has rather too often been taken as a postulate, or at least a 'functional imperative'.

³⁰ Macfarlane (1977), 631–2, 637.

and, suffering rents in the fabric, reknit in varying patterns of continuity and change.³¹ This was Marx's object of study as well, though he was macrosociological *par excellence* while Turner focuses on the minute analysis and interpretation of events.³² Macfarlane is aware that network and situational analysis and their attendant concepts were developed to deal with shifting, impermanent social relations. He does not, however, grant that, short of permanence, the range of variance in social stability is vast. The kinds of communal, societal, or externally imposed organization which may produce stability also vary widely. Community may be either more or less relevant a unit of analysis in any given society, at any given time.

III

Historians and anthropologists have often been tempted to assume a certain inevitability and obviousness about the phenomena which they study. Both theory and comparison work to minimize such assumptions. They help to make the process of abstraction more systematic and to point up problems for analysis. In addition, they suggest possible solutions to be considered. In the second part of this paper we have tried both to make a case for the importance of community and to offer some arguments for a theory of community founded on comparison. Our view sees community as made up of social relations, and calls for the study of those relations, and of their macrosocial organization, of which community may be a greater or lesser part. We have had very little to say about empirical research methods. This is in part due to simple lack of space for the detailed treatment which would be required. More fundamentally, it is because we are convinced that meaningful discussion of methods must follow on the selection of an object of study. Social history is in some danger of falling subject to a tyranny of facts in which methods for accumulating facts rather than problems for analysis govern the conduct of research. Blame for mindless empiricism is not to be laid at the door of statistics; it is with the failure to use them, and other available research techniques, to answer significant questions that we must be concerned.

Community, as a word, has been an important nexus of significant questions at least

³¹ This continues to be an important problematic in Turner's studies of rituals and symbols, his development of 'process theory' and indeed his historical analyses of pilgrimages and religious orders (1967, 1969, 1974). The essays, much influenced by both Gluckman and Turner (in Moore and Myerhoff (eds.), 1975), also shed light on these issues.

³² Marx was, in fact, an important inspiration to both Gluckman's and Turner's attempts to deal with social contradictions and changes in social organization. In the later work of both, and most of their followers, these earlier interests and their Marxist roots became much less clear and were sometimes lost. At Manchester, Gluckman came to see the functions

of conflict with greater clarity than its effects in producing change. In America, Turner became more involved with experiences of 'communitas' and less with the development and change of communities. Turner's later concern with the dialectical transformation of consciousness has, interestingly, influenced social historians more than his and Gluckman's earlier work on the transformation of society. It was, in fact, partly notions of the dialectic which led to the early emphasis on situations of crisis. Several of Godelier's essays in Marxist anthropology reveal something of a return to the problems which interested the Manchester school in the 1950s. See, for example, 1977.

since the industrial revolution. As a phenomenon it has always been and is everywhere at the heart of the questions people ask about their own lives and their own societies. Either its weakness or its strength is likely to play a key role in determining the personal and social struggles which people take up. In the great theories of society, community sometimes appears under that name and sometimes under another. It is not always seen in the way we have set it out here, but it is always seen. Without it we must lose a great deal of the great theories. No statistics, no conceptual precision could compensate us for that loss. Even in our less elaborate frame of theoretical reference we must wonder what social history would look like with community cut from its heart. Fortunately, neither statistics nor conceptual precision require us to forgo the study of community. Let us, then, continue to give our attention to concrete social relationships, more abstract forms of relation, and the social structure which orders them. This is history, anthropology, sociology; it is the study of community and communities; it is the attempt to understand society.

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