

The Concept of Community in Modern Society

MANUEL A. CAOILI*

This article is an argument for the need to maintain a community where strong solidary ties may be developed and consequently free man from the insecurity, anxiety and isolation that haunt him in a complex and highly urbanized society. From an initial discussion of the essential and distinguishing characteristics of a community as a social structure, it proceeds to analyze how the scientific study of social units as a reaction to the political and social disorganization which came with industrialization, has consequently resulted in more systematic studies of three issues regarding man's relationship with society: 1) his integration as a basis for social order; 2) his continuing struggle to maintain freedom vis-a-vis the growing power of the state and formal organizations; and 3) the implications of these for the democratic way of life.

The article foresees the reconciliation of the ideals of community, democracy and freedom in the decentralization of state power to local authorities and the organization of various interest groups which can neutralize this power, promote personalized ties and represent diverse interests as well.

I

There are varying conceptions of the idea of community. These can be seen from the various definitions used in community studies.¹ Despite the multitude of definitions, however, four perspectives of the community may be recognized. From the qualitative approach, a community is a "place to live." Ecologically, it is

viewed as a "spatial unit." From the ethnographic approach, it is "a way of life," and from the sociological approach, it is "a social system."²

Sociological studies tend to incorporate these different views in their definitions of community. Community is used to refer to "any area of common life, village, or town, or district, or country, or even wider areas."³ The area of common life includes economic, social and cultural realms. As a consequence of living a common life men develop distinctive common

* Assistant Professor, U.P. College of Public Administration

¹ George A. Hillery, for instance, analyzed 94 different definitions of community in his paper "Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement," *Rural Sociology*, Vol. XX, No. 2 (June 1955), pp. 111-123. Cited by Colin Bell and Howard Newby, *Community Studies: An Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1971), pp. 27-30.

² Robert Mills French, *The Community: A Comparative Perspective* (Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1969), p. 3.

³ R. M. MacIver, *Community: A Sociological Study* (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1917), p. 23.

traits — manners, traditions, modes of speech, values, sentiments — which make for some degree of social coherence. Thus, the bases of community may be summed up as locality and community sentiment.⁴

A more complex definition of a community is that it

... is first of all a global society of local unity type embracing an indefinite multiplicity of functional spheres, social groups and other social interactions, joint bonds, and value concepts. Further, apart from numerous forms of inner relationships... it will also, and as a matter of course, have its own tangible institutional and organizational structure... The community is... a term of a superior order to family, neighborhood, profession, etc., because it includes all these phenomena and groups within itself (together with many others, for instance, social classes) ...⁵

The above definition emphasizes three important elements of community: local unity, social interaction and common bonds. It also points to the need to distinguish the concept of community from those of association and society. In making such distinctions, contemporary sociologists continue to rely on Ferdinand Tönnies' influential theory of community. In his famous book, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (usually translated as *Community and Society*), published in 1887, Tönnies uses the term *Gemeinschaft* to refer to community.⁶ In *Gemeinschaft* human relationships are characterized by strong emotional ties, ascribed

status, specific and harmonious roles, cultural homogeneity, and strong moral and spiritual bonds, all of which contribute to solidary relations and stability of social life.⁷ *Gesellschaft*, which is variously translated as "society" or "association" refers to large-scale, impersonal and contractual ties. The distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* can thus be considered as corresponding to the concepts of organization based on "natural will" and one based on "rational will."⁸

In much of contemporary sociological literature, *Gesellschaft* is used to refer to society. Thus the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* (community-society) dichotomy has been used to denote social development from traditional, rural, simple community to modern, urban, complex and industrial society. The concept of society is used in a broader sense to denote "every willed relationship of man to man."⁹ More specifically, society is defined as "a system of usages and procedures, of authority and mutual aid, of many groupings and divisions, of controls of human behavior and of liberties.... It is the web of social relationships. And it is always

⁵ Rene Konig, *The Community*, tr. from German by Edward Fitzgerald (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), pp. 26-27.

⁶ Konig points out that the use of this concept in the modern sense involves some confusion in meaning with another German term *Gemeinde* (local community). See *Ibid.*, Ch. II.

⁷ Bell and Newby, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

⁸ D. D. Raphael, *Problems of Political Philosophy* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1970), pp. 32-33.

⁹ MacIver, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁴ R. M. MacIver and Charles H. Page, *Society: An Introductory Analysis* (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1949), pp. 8-11.

changing."¹⁰

An association is defined as a group organized for "the pursuit of a specified common purpose or set of common purposes"¹¹ or "for the pursuit of an interest or group of interests in common."¹² An association differs from a community in that it is deliberately organized towards the attainment of particular interests or purposes while the latter is "natural" and involves the totality of social life. In this sense, "an association is partial, a community is integral."¹³ The state can thus be viewed as a special form of authoritative association within the community. The relationship between the different concepts that have been previously defined, i.e., community, society, association and state can be more clearly seen in the following:

The completest type of community is the nation, and when a nation is allowed free expression it creates an autonomous State. Within the State there are established, corresponding to the narrower communities within the nation, the local governments of district and town. The State and its subdivisions are associations, organized *forms* of society. Communities must create associations which pursue these interests in specific ways. And the State is the greatest of associations because it upholds, in its specific political way, the greatest recognized complex of common interests, those of a determinate community.¹⁴

It is evident from the above dis-

inction that for the individual, the community and association represent the more tangible aspects of his social relations. It is through the community and association that an individual is first introduced to a variety of human relationships outside his family. The state and the society tend to remain as abstraction for most individuals.

The concept of community continues to be an essential subject of study among social scientists and philosophers. They have focused on the place of community in modern industrial society and democratic state. Among the questions raised are: Is there still community today in the sense of solidary relations based on strong moral and spiritual bonds, and intimate social interaction in a given geographic area? How does the community function in a predominantly urban, industrial society? What role does it play in the contemporary democratic state, i.e., in safeguarding individual freedom and guaranteeing effective participation in the political process while at the same time promoting efficient public administration? This paper examines some of the salient views that have been expressed on these various issues and their relevance in a rapidly changing world.

II

The quest for community has been increasing since the nineteenth century. Philosophical concern with the problem was due primarily to the radically changed character of social, economic and political relations,

¹⁰ MacIver and Page, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹¹ Raphael, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹² MacIver and Page, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹³ MacIver, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

brought about by the Industrial, French and American Revolutions. Industrialization had propelled the movement of large numbers of people from the villages to the urban centers of production. Socio-economic relations that were formerly based on kinship and customary reciprocity in the local communities were now governed by impersonal rules laid down by rational, impersonal organizations such as the factory and the state bureaucracy. Mutual cooperation for the achievement of common goals was replaced by intense competition for the fulfillment of individual needs and desires. Coupled with the breakdown of the traditional social structure was the collapse of the old political order in France and the American Revolution. Individualism and democracy became the dominant themes of political philosophy.

The attendant problems of social and political disorganization evoked varied intellectual reaction. On one hand, there was an increased preoccupation with the scientific study of society. The prevailing methodology was positivist. It was premised on the belief that it was possible to discover general "laws and principles" governing society by applying the methods of the natural sciences in the study of social problems. The operation of these social "laws" was deemed necessary for the welfare of society and hence these laws ought to be followed by men. This philosophy led to considerations of the primacy of social aggregates over individuals. Society was thus glorified and even deified

by many philosophers of the century.

The intellectual concern with society, on the other hand, gave rise to greater contemplation on the problem of achieving social and political order. Two strands of thought developed along this line — the need for community and organization. For many social and political philosophers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, membership in the community or similar groups was necessary for: 1) the social integration of the individual and, hence, the achievement of order in society; 2) the preservation of individual freedom from the power of the centralized state or large organizations; and 3) the survival of democratic society. There was thus an attempt to restate the importance of community, i.e., the need for more intimate, affective and solidary relations among individuals than those found in urbanized, industrialized society.¹⁵

Early organization theorists developed an alternative view of the problems at hand. They emphasized the importance of formal, rational organizations not only for their industrial-technological advantages but for their integrative and social control functions as well. Recent organization theorists, however, have also become enthused with the communitarian ideal in their stress on the value of informal, natural groups within formal organizations, for the greater

¹⁵ Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1960), pp. 359-363. The following paragraphs are derived from Wolin's discussion of Rousseau's ideas.

morale and productivity of workers.

Rousseau pioneered in theorizing about the need for community to solve the problems created by the new social and political order.¹⁶ He rejected the view that society represented man's highest achievement and that it was an essential condition for the development of morality and rationality. In his view, society had engendered human alienation and suffering. The personal ambition and intense competition fostered by the socialization process ran counter to man's authentic or natural self. Society had created an imbalance between human needs and desires. Consequently, men were forced into relations of interdependence to satisfy socially created desires which were often unrelated to human needs.

For Rousseau, interdependence meant personal dependence and inequality. Society was thus in a state of war. He argued that the solution to the ills of society lay not in a return to nature nor the destruction of social interdependence but the creation of a different society. Such a society should make men develop strong solidary ties in order that each member would become dependent on the whole society, i.e., the "general will." In this way, men would be released from personal dependencies. The community must be designed to allow the full development of human potentiality, to satisfy man's feelings and to fulfill his emotional needs. Thus (in Wolin's words) the "quest for personal identity was to be fulfilled by the creation of a corporate community, a

moi commun, where each simultaneously discovered himself in closest possible solidarity with others. . ."¹⁷

The communitarian values which Rousseau had advocated were similarly propounded by Emile Durkheim, one of the first modern sociologists. Durkheim criticized the excessive emphasis on individualism of early nineteenth century economic, social and political theories. He attributed the problems of social disorganization to the intensely competitive and egoistic relations among individuals in industrial, urbanized society. He dwelt on the adverse consequences of the lack of social cohesion and normlessness or anomie in modern society. The intimate personal relations characteristic of community life had been replaced by casual contacts among individuals. Appropriate norms or morality to guide individual behavior and restrain egoism and desires were absent. The psychological result was intense insecurity and anxiety for individuals which led them to self-destruction or suicide. Thus, as in Hobbes' state of nature, violence pervaded modern society.¹⁸

Durkheim's solution to the problem of social disintegration was the creation of group solidarity and social cohesion through the reintroduction of occupational guilds and corporations.¹⁹ Borrowing this idea from

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 368-373.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 404-405.

¹⁹ Irving M. Zeitlin, *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), pp. 238-251.

Henri Comte de Saint-Simon, Durkheim argued that these revitalized and modernized groups were necessary to integrate individuals into society and provide them with a new morality. Social morality would be embodied in the group or "collective conscience." Like Rousseau's community, Durkheim's group was considered "a moral person," capable of "containing individual egos" and "of maintaining a spirited sentiment of common solidarity." Coercion employed on its behalf was legitimate as it was in the service of morality, not wealth or strength.²⁰ The functional interdependence of these occupational groups in Durkheim's theory of the division of labor would result in organic solidarity for industrial society, in contrast to the mechanical solidarity of earlier periods.²¹ The consequent specialization of functions arising from the division of labor would at the same time allow the free development of individual capabilities.

Parenthetically, it may be noted that Durkheim's prescription for solving the problems of social order is quite Hegelian. In his account of German civil society, Hegel regarded guilds and corporations, the estates and classes, associations and local communities to be indispensable as these institutional ties give substance to the individual personality. They also serve to mediate individual mem-

bership or citizenship in the State.²²

Durkheim was aware that the presence of secondary groups in society would create political problems. While the individual would be saved from anomie and loneliness, he was in danger of being oppressed by the group to which he belonged. There was, therefore, a need for a higher authority to curb the powers of these groups and to prevent them from totally absorbing their members. Such an authority would be the state or political society which is "formed by the coming together of a rather large number of secondary social groups, subject to the same one authority which is not itself subject to any other superior authority duly constituted."²³ Durkheim also realized that the power of the state if left unchecked could endanger individual liberty. In this context, the conflict of social forces represented by the various groups would serve to counterbalance or restrain the despotic tendencies of the state and safeguard individual freedom.²⁴ It can thus be seen that Durkheim attempted to solve both problems of social and political order in modern society.

In a more recent work, de Grazia analyzed the problem of order in the political community using Durkheim's concept of anomie and its re-

²² George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory* (3rd ed.; London: George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd., 1963), pp. 658-661.

²³ Quoted in Zeitlin, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

²⁴ Reinhard Bendix, "Social Stratification and the Political Community," in Peter Laslett and W. G. Runciman (eds.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Second series; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), pp. 209-210.

²⁰ Wolin, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

²¹ Zeitlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-252.

lations to belief-systems.²⁵ For de Grazia, the political community embraces all other communities. It is held together by systems of religious and political beliefs which embody ideas concerning the relationships of citizens to one another and to their rulers. Without such belief-systems or "fundament of commonness," no political community can exist. The study of anomie involves the examination of the ideological factors that weaken or destroy the bonds of allegiance which make the political community. The weakening or breakdown of these bonds affects the ties of all lesser associations within the community.

Anomie can be simple or acute. Psychologically, it is characterized by the individual's feeling of "a painful uneasiness or anxiety, a feeling of separation from the group or of isolation from group standards, a feeling of pointlessness or that no certain goals exist."²⁶ It can occur both in times of depression when expectations are so frustrated and in times of unusual prosperity when expectations are so satiated. In both cases, a sense of confusion results, a loss of orientation, a sense of getting nowhere. Thus anomie can have an adverse effect on the individual's potentialities. The manifestations of anomie include mental disorder, war, the proliferation of political associations, mass movements, etc.

²⁵ Sebastian de Grazia, *The Political Community: A Study of Anomie* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Supplementing Durkheim's study of anomie with findings of psychological and anthropological research, de Grazia traces the roots of human anxiety and insecurity to early childhood experiences common to individuals. Children experience feelings of anxiety, helplessness and isolation in the face of threats of withdrawal of affection by adults. Such threats are often employed to transmit moral and cultural values to children. A body of moral beliefs performs the psychological function for the child of defining the proper ways of "obtaining protective assurance and they designate the beings of superior power, the environmental regulators who alone can provide that assurance. . . ."²⁷ As a child grows into adulthood, such belief-systems evolve to include ideas of people, about their relationship to one another and to their rulers. They serve to bind individuals within the political community.

Anomie within the political community is the result either of conflict between prevailing belief-systems or the deterioration of internalized belief-systems among individuals. Often it is manifested by rebellion against existing political order, the proliferation of mass movements, riots, etc. Gaetano Mosca's study on the Polish nobles illustrates the separation of the ruler from the community. Mosca generalized that: "When the elementary needs of life are to an extent satisfied, what mostly contributes to creating and maintaining

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

friction between rulers and subjects is not so much difference in possession of material goods as membership in two different environments."²⁸ Thus although the Polish nobles in the middle ages exploited the peasants in many ways, the latter never rebelled against the former. The serfs willingly supported the nobility with their labor and produce. This situation remained for as long as the nobles lived in the same community as the peasants and shared the common culture, i.e., spoke their language, wore the same type of clothes, had the same manners and superstitious beliefs. However, from the time the Polish nobles adopted French culture — language, style of dresses, manners, etc.—the peasantry and the nobility became two separate peoples. The serfs became reluctant to support the nobility and often revolted. This was despite the fact that part of the nobility's recently acquired French education had resulted in more humane treatment of their subjects. The changed lifestyle among the nobility had convinced the community that their lords had deserted them and hence they could no longer rely on them for protection from enemies, defense of their faith, etc. These changed circumstances brought about a deterioration of the peasants' belief-systems, and nurtured their sense of isolation and alienation from the ruler of the community. Thus, acute anomie became manifest in the breakdown of the political community.

De Grazia relates an analogous case

of political estrangement between the "captains of industry" and the workers which took place in the United States during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Acute anomie was prevalent in the series of serious labor conflicts in 1877, 1886 and 1894. These were the popular reaction to an era marked by lavish, conspicuous spending on the part of the rich Americans to acquire the trappings of upper class European culture and the stamp of aristocratic ancestry.²⁹ Extensive publicity of the pompous social gatherings that the rich indulged in created resentment and disunity among the middle and working classes. Popular discontent was aggravated by vast immigration from Europe which was viewed as threats to the jobs and positions of the American working class. Moreover, the growth of trusts and absentee ownership marked the end of the old, familiar and intimate employer-employee relations that had formed the basis of inter-class solidarity. People felt leaderless and protectionless, without a system of beliefs to direct their actions.

The situation was anomic as could be seen in the mass support of third-party movements, nationalist clubs, various proposed panaceas, bomb threats and bloody riots. Proof of the separation between the upper class and the masses could be seen in a propaganda of the era:

Wall Street owns the country. It is no longer a government of the people, by the people and for the people, but

²⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 75.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 115-122.

a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street and for Wall Street... Our laws are the output of a system that clothes rascals in riches and honesty in rags. The parties lie to us, and the political speakers mislead us... the people are at bay, and the bloodhounds of money who have dogged us thus far beware!³⁰

Progressive legislation from 1896 to 1912 marked the end of the era of rebellion although these did not greatly benefit either labor or small business. What seemed to have brought about stability to the political community was the tendency of the big businessmen to return to the simple attire and manners of the rest of the population.

What de Grazia stressed in the examples cited above is the importance of the co-operative ethic in the human mind which is needed for orderly community life. This is usually embodied in the common religious and political belief-systems. The psychological importance of political belief-systems is especially relevant to the problem of democracy, for the "ways of cynicism is death, death to the democratic community no less than to any other."³¹

It may be noted from the foregoing example of social and political philosophy that community is viewed in terms of solidary relations — social unity and equality — based on adherence to common moral and social values or belief-systems. Such values are determined in modern society by social collectivities or functional

groups to which individuals belong rather than the geographic units such as neighborhoods in the past. In any case, the concept of community raises the issue of authority versus individual freedom and democracy.

IV

Organization has been proposed as an alternative to community in solving the problem of social and political disintegration in the contemporary world. Organization theory was in fact born in the aftermath of the French Revolution. For many organization theorists, social harmony and political stability could be achieved not through the return to communitarian living but the establishment of rational organization. Such organization would provide for a new structure of power and order. It would also bring about material prosperity for the society because of the functional superiority of rationally interrelated collective effort over individual skills. Industrial organization requires the hierarchical arrangement of tasks in a descending order of complexity. There would be a rational division of labor and specialization of functions. Those who possessed relevant expertise at the top of the hierarchy would direct the work of others at the lower levels of the organization.

These ideas were embodied in the works of a pioneer theorist of organization, Henri Comte de Saint-Simon. Saint-Simon believed that the *industriels*, i.e., scientists, artists and industrialists represented the skills needed to maintain industrial society.

³⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 119.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

He argued that for the benefit of society, the *industriels* should be allowed the fullest possible development of their skills and the unrestricted pursuit of their own ends for their "particular interests are perfectly in accord with the common interest."³² Saint-Simon was aware that the requirements of organization conflicted with the principles of equality popularized by the French Revolution since the former necessitated authority, hierarchy and subordination while the latter denied all three. However, he believed that it was possible for industrial society to develop a compromise with equality. Through the science of production, the material needs of the masses could be greatly satisfied. Since the masses desired neither liberty nor literal equality but only the improvement of their material conditions, such an accomplishment would guarantee their loyalty to the system. Moreover, they would be motivated to produce more efficiently.

In some respects, Saint-Simon's organization theory resembled Rousseau's rationale of the general will as forcing men to be free. Saint-Simon spoke of scientific "principles" of organization based on the "nature of things" and were therefore "necessary" and "true." As such, conformity to the dictates of organization would free men from personal rule and authority. Moreover, human energies would be redirected from the constant struggle to dominate each other to the goal of dominating

nature.

Saint-Simon's ideas of organization were soon taken up by other writers. Even Karl Marx, who criticized capitalism for its dehumanization of the worker, expressed admiration for the productive power of industrial organization:

Not only have we here an increase in the productive power of the individual, by means of cooperation, but the creation of a new power, namely the collective power of the masses. . . . In modern industry man succeeded for the first time in making the product of his past labor work on a large scale gratuitously, like the forces of nature.³³

The ideas of industrial organization were soon found to be applicable to all types of large-scale enterprise — governmental, educational and social. Fascination with scientific organization has continued well into the twentieth century in the works of such men as Frederick Taylor whose scientific management movement brought further refinements to organization principles and methods. These ideas have been critically reformulated in behavioral terms by such theorists as Herbert Simon, who has viewed organization as a means to channel man's irrational behavior for rational purposes.³⁴

Even as writers on organization continued to revel in their newly-found solution to the problem of social order and political stability, serious doubts about its effectiveness in promoting community were being

³³ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 379.

³⁴ Herbert A. Simon, *Administrative Behavior* (New York: MacMillan, 1957).

³² Quoted in Wolin, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

expressed. Industrial cooperation had been viewed by Saint-Simon as a means of promoting human happiness by the satisfaction of desires. To other writers, industrial cooperation had demanded subordination but did not bring about solidarity. The Utopian Socialists, for example, attempted to integrate the problems of power, desire and community in their writings. Charles Fourier in his works included such communitarian values as *harmonisme, regime harmonien, harmonie sociale*. His model society was based on the idea that the universe is operated by passions and attraction. He called for the establishment of communities that would take into account the nature of human passions in the organization of work groups, arguing that natural attraction and gratification of the passions would automatically ensure industry and peace.³⁵ Fourier merely succeeded, however, in creating an organization of egos and desires.³⁶ The theory of industrialism was interpreted by others as merely a mask for collective egoism and, therefore, could not satisfy the need for human solidarity and belonging.

The writings of Durkheim on anomie and suicide revealed the failure of industrial society to create a sense of community and solidarity. Stability of authority was thought to be necessary for social order and harmony. Durkheim's proposal to revive occu-

pational groups, his concept of division of labor, functional interdependence and the necessity for a new morality, i.e., "collective conscience" incorporated the ideals of community, solidarity and organization of authority. Others like de Bonald and de Maistre proposed the maintenance of small groups, a system of authority over individuals at every level of society to bring about order, e.g., family, neighborhood, religious groups, occupational groups, provinces, etc.³⁷

On the other hand, there was a noticeable shift from concern with the economics of production, ownership and division of labor in organization theory to the analysis of the social implications of economic behavior and institutions. Acquisitiveness (profit motive) and the pursuit of individual interests were attacked for their social destructiveness. This theme can be found in the writings of Durkheim, Marx, de Bonald, Hegel, Carlyle, Lenin, etc.³⁸

The establishment of many communes and utopian communities in the United States during the nineteenth century may be viewed as practical attempts to transcend the problems of community and organization in industrial society. Such communes expressed religious or moral, economic-political and psychological critiques of existing social order. They were founded on the basis of commitment to common religious, moral values, social solidarity and the co-

³⁵ Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 35.

³⁶ Wolin, *op. cit.*, pp. 395-396.

³⁷ Zeitlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-55.

³⁸ Wolin, *op. cit.*, pp. 402-409.

operative ethic in economic production.³⁹

The communes offered individuals with an attractive alternative to the anomic, dehumanizing and impersonal existence in industrial society. They provided their members with a sense of belonging, warm personal relations, equality of effort, benefit and participation in decision-making. The varying lengths of existence of these communes — from 33 to 184 years in the nine successful ones and six months to 15 years in 21 unsuccessful ones⁴⁰—however, attest to the practical difficulties of achieving the goals of community and organization, on one hand, and individual fulfillment and collective good, on the other. As membership in these communes increased, the sense of community often gave way to the need for organization and efficiency. The promotion of the collective welfare tended to be made at the expense of individual freedom. This can be seen in such community practices as abstinence, austerity, mortification, confession and mutual criticism. The communes actually served individuals as retreats or havens from industrial, mass society, rather than as intermediate groups that facilitated their integration and adjustment to the mainstream of social life.

More recently, there is a growing attempt among writers on organization to treat large corporations, factories and other organizations as “social systems” and administration as

“social integration.” The attempt to imbue formal rational organizations with communal values and solidarity can be seen in such concepts as “informal organizations,” “worker morale” and “human relations” in organization theory. This is particularly evident in the works of Elton Mayo and Philip Selznick.⁴¹ Thus organization theory, which began as an alternative to community in solving the problems of order and social cohesion in industrialized, urbanized society, has become a synthesis of both concepts.

V

Contemporaneous with the problems of social disorganization brought about by the growth of industrial, mass society was the rise of the centralized, territorial state, which threatened to extinguish individual freedom and democracy. The problem of the distribution of political power in relation to the need for community has thus been a continuing concern for social and political philosophy. Rousseau's concept of community provided for safeguards to individual freedom against any *personal* authority or power. The community was to be structured in such a way that the individual would be dependent on impersonal things or entities. This is so because: “Dependence on things, being non-moral, does no injury to liberty and begets no vices; dependence

³⁹ Kanter, *op. cit.*, Chs. 1 and 2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 246-248.

⁴¹ Elton Mayo, *The Human Problems of Industrial Civilization* (New York: MacMillan, 1933); Philip Selznick, *Leadership in Administration: A Sociological Interpretation* (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1957).

on men, being out of order, gives rise to every kind of vice, and through this master and slave become mutually depraved."⁴² The paradox of Rousseau's community lies in its requirements of independence in mutual dependence, in the idea of the general will which could force men to be free. Such a perspective threatens to obliterate the individual freedom it seeks to protect.

The modern theory of constitutionalism offers another solution to the problem of freedom and democracy. Constitutional writers have argued that the systematic organization and distribution of governmental authority could limit the exercise of political power and thus prevent its abuse. A "constitutional" political system would be able to achieve this goal by specifying legal procedures for vesting authority among the various office holders; defining limits on the exercise of power; providing for institutionalized procedures to insure the responsibility and accountability of officials; and incorporating a system of legal guarantees for enforcing the rights of citizens. These assumptions and ideas of constitutionalism have been evident in the writings of Kant, Harrington, Montesquieu and Hume.⁴³ By a "government of laws, and not of men," constitutionalists hoped to eliminate personal, arbitrary exercise of power and thereby guarantee individual freedom. As in the case of early organization theory, constitutionalism seeks to

solve the problems of order in modern states by applying scientific laws and generalizations to control human actions. It seeks to depersonalize politics by establishing uniformities in political behavior.

It is quite obvious that constitutionalism is no guarantee that individual freedom, community and democracy can be safeguarded. In the final analysis, constitutions are interpreted and enforced by men. What is needed to make constitutional government serve the ends of the community is the development of a common culture.

A common culture as a way of life is basic to the idea of democracy and freedom. As Williams puts it:

A common culture is not, at any level, an equal culture. Yet equality of being is always necessary to it, or common experience will not be valued. A common culture can place no absolute restrictions on entry to any of its activities: this is the reality of the claim to equality of opportunity...⁴⁴

A community of experience is thus an important element in the development of common culture. Such community of experience is also necessary for the effective communication among the different members and classes of a given society. Speaking of the English community, Williams points out that inequalities of various kinds still divide the community and thus make effective communication difficult or impossible. Prejudice against the "masses," distrust of the majority or the "public"

⁴² Quoted in Wolin, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 389-393.

⁴⁴ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958), p. 317.

in decision-making and discussion, ideas of "working class culture" are given as examples of the basic failure in communication within the society. This problem could be partly solved by educational projects, the feeding of new information or publicity drives to transmit the values of equality and promote a community of experience.

The contemporary idea of community in England, according to Williams, involves the idea of service and the idea of solidarity. The idea of service to the community has been incorporated in the training and practices of the professions, the ethics of the public and civil service. However, the idea of service, as used in the training of upper and lower civil servants is divisive of society for it alienates the working class from the upper classes of society. As an alternative to solidarity, the English working class have been offered the idea of individual opportunity via the social ladder. This idea, however, runs counter "to the principle of common betterment which ought to be an absolute value" and "it sweetened the poison of hierarchy . . . of merit as a thing different in kind from the hierarchy of money or birth . . ." ⁴⁵ These examples of social and economic inequality would tend to show that communitarian democracy may prove to be divisive in a given society.

The inequality of resources — economic as well as social — militates against the idea of equality of political participation among citizens of

democratic political systems. Moreover, the rise of large communities — what Dahl calls the megalopolis — further reduces opportunities for citizen participation in the processes of decision-making in government from voting to city planning. ⁴⁶ Such practical limitations on political participation only serve to heighten citizen apathy and alienation from the political community. This in turn further weakens the sense of community in modern society for —

Community is the product of people working together on problems of autonomous and collective fulfillment of internal objectives, and of the experience of living under codes of authority which have been set in large degree by the persons involved. But what we get in many sections of the country is a kind of suburban horde. There is no community because there are no common problems, functions and authority. These are lacking because, under a kind of "rotten borough" system, effective control is vested elsewhere — in boards, councils, and offices of countries, districts, or adjacent cities. ⁴⁷

It would seem, therefore, that the solution to the problem of state power versus community and individual freedom is to decentralize public administration and strengthen the powers of local governments. This involves a basic change in the philosophy of modern public administration which was derived from the nine-

⁴⁶ Robert A. Dahl, *After the Revolution?: Authority in a Good Society* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970).

⁴⁷ Robert A. Nisbet, *Community and Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. xv.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 330-331.

teenth century's rationalist approach to an atomized, disorderly society. Strengthening the powers of local authorities would make them effective channels of community decision-making and self-help. This, however, involves the problem of deciding on the optimal size — in terms of area and population — of local units in order to increase citizen interest and substantial participation in the government of their community. Small-sized local governments would tend to be more democratic as citizens would have closer ties among themselves and more interest and information about community problems. There would thus be greater opportunities for effective citizen participation in local decision-making. Large-sized local governments would be more economical and efficient from the administrative point of view. However, they may also be less democratic and less responsive to community needs as they become more remote from the citizens. They would thus limit citizen interest and participation in community affairs. This is often the case with metropolitan governments.

A further guarantee of individual freedom and democracy in local as well as national government is the existence of organized groups and associations representing diverse interests of citizens. Such groups would foster free competition for political influence and power within the local community and further counterbalance the centralization of power in the state. At the same time, they would give individuals a sense of pur-

pose, belonging and effective participation, thus diminishing their sense of alienation and apathy in mass society. Any weakening of these groups would leave the totalitarian tendency of state power to remain unchecked. This was actually the view adopted by Hegel, Durkheim, and the pluralist (writers of the nineteenth century. Proudhon, for example, counseled: "Multiply your associations and be free." As Nisbet writes:

Only through its intermediate relationships and authorities has any State ever achieved the balance between organization and personal freedom that is the condition of a creative and enduring culture. The relationships begin with the family and with the informal social groups which spring up around common interests and common cultural needs. Their number extends to the larger associations, labor unions, universities and professions. They are the real sources of liberal democracy.⁴⁸

The pluralist solution to the problem of community and freedom is not without pitfalls. As has been shown by Michels' famous study,⁴⁹ associations and groups are not immune to bureaucratization and oligarchical tendencies. As such they may become undemocratic and unresponsive to the needs and wishes of their members. To counter Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy, the concept of intraorganizational community relevant to colleges, factories, professional asso-

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁴⁹ Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, Trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: Collier Books, 1962).

ciations and neighborhoods has been proposed by Wolfe.⁵⁰ Intraorganizational community can serve to give people identity and become a means of making democratic theory applicable to non-governmental institutions.

The concept of intraorganizational community tends to recognize the fact that community in modern urban, mass society may not necessarily coincide with geographical, administrative areas (except perhaps in ghettos and slums) as in pre-industrial society. The increased mobility of population, the growth of large urban areas, the emphasis on role specialization and individual privacy have tended to erode the affective ties and shared interests that once bound individuals together in a community. Membership in the same occupational, professional, religious and ethnic groups that often cut across local boundaries seems to have influence in creating a sense of community among individuals today than simply neighborhood or residential propinquity.

The concept of "People's Organization" in local communities developed by Alinsky⁵¹ incorporates the idea of intraorganizational community. In his campaign to promote dynamic community participation, Alinsky recognizes the functional interrelation-

ships between various organized groups and the local community in mediating individual membership in the bigger society and the state. The People's Organization is composed of representatives of all interest groups or agencies within the community. It serves as a forum for the discussion of common problems, issues, and alternative solutions to problems, and thus helps to create a community consensus. The participation of all community groups serves as a check against any oligarchical tendency in the People's Organization. This also helps to keep alive the need for community cooperation and participation as the organization is based on multiple interests and issues represented by the various groups. Each group comes to realize that it needs the support and cooperation of other groups to promote its own interests. Consequently, individuals learn the need for bargaining amidst conflicting group interests, compromise and consensus. Such experiences enable them to develop broader perspectives and deeper understanding of social and political life not only in their community but also in the larger society.

Community organization as such becomes a vital tool to combat citizen apathy and alienation. The citizen is encouraged to become more informed and active in community and national politics as he experiences the reality of political power in collective action. This has been observed by Alinsky in his various experiences in community organization. The activities of the various People's Organizations served

⁵⁰ Alan Wolfe, "Conditions of Community: The Case of Old Westbury College," in Philip Green and Sanford Levinson (eds.), *Power and Community: Dissenting Essays in Political Science* (New York: Pantheon, 1969), p. 215.

⁵¹ Saul D. Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946) and *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Random House, 1971).

to educate individuals about their political rights, obligations and the nature of the society and state of which their community was merely a part. They learned, for example, about decisions made or inaction by national officials which often caused many of their local problems as well as events beyond their community that was bound to affect their own lives. They learned to coordinate their community efforts with those of other communities in order to more effectively influence specific policies for their mutual protection and benefit. Within this context, it can be seen that community organization and citizen participation became effective weapons to combat the problem of an unresponsive local as well as national bureaucracy.

The power of community organization can offset the inequality of resources — economic, political and social — that often obstructs equality of political participation among citizens in a democracy and prevents the equitable allocation of national resources for various sectors of society. A novel concept recently developed by Alinsky is the organization of "Proxies for People" in various communities to influence the socio economic and political policies of large corporations in the United States.⁵² It is based on the idea that individuals can pool their stockholders' proxies together and use them to effectively participate in corporate decisions that impinge on such common problems as

environmental pollution, discriminatory employment policies and others. These are issues that many people are concerned with but have felt powerless to act on because of the enormous economic and political resources at the disposal of private corporations. The Proxies for People movement offers a potent community weapon against the concentration of economic and political power in private corporations of a given country. Collective action, based on a community of interests, can help to safeguard individual rights and freedom as well as preserve democracy from the totalitarian powers of a corporate state and society.

VI

The ideals of community, democracy and freedom concern the fullest development of individual potentialities for creativity, diversity of interests, and a psychologically satisfying life shared with others. From the evidence presented, it seems that these ideals are difficult to reconcile with the realities of economic inequality and sense of isolation characteristic of modern, industrial, mass society.

A strong community may provide individuals with psychologically and socially satisfying lives, free from the insecurity, anxiety and sense of isolation that pervade urban society. However, it also tends to be illiberal or totalitarian, demanding individual conformity to hallowed customs and traditions. It can promote stability in social and political relations but

⁵² Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-183.

also stunt individual creativity and self-expression. This has been observed in the various communes and utopian communities established in the United States during the nineteenth century. Moreover, while such communes may have provided a satisfactory solution to the quest for community or solidary relations, they failed to help their members to realistically adjust to the broader society. Communes also seem to suit only certain personalities. A return to community through communes does not, therefore, provide a realistic alternative to the problems of order in mass society and democratic politics. It merely results in a withdrawal or retreat from present problems.

In one sense, the pluralist solution to the problem allows for diversity in community. Membership in groups or associations would mitigate the sense of social isolation and alienation of individuals from the remote centers of political power. In another sense, the advantages of pluralism can be negated by the rise of large bureaucratized groups that can be authoritarian to their members and only serve to heighten the inequalities in social, economic and political power.

A more realistic alternative to community, democracy and freedom would be the decentralization of public administration and strengthening of local authorities side by side with the organization of various interest groups. This would result in a dispersal of bureaucratic and political

power in a state and bring decision-making closer to the experience of individuals. Individuals would be encouraged to have more active interest and participation in local and national politics as they come to realize their collective power to influence governmental decisions. Such participation would ultimately serve to educate the general population on individual rights and duties, governmental processes and help to develop responsible citizenship.

The organization of groups in a locality and their federation into a community organization is needed to provide avenues of communication and to create solidary relations among individuals especially in large metropolitan areas. Such a set-up helps to create real communities in many existing administrative and political subdivisions of modern states.

Community in the sense of shared values, ways of life, and communication and social interaction among diverse interests in a given locality is necessary in modern democracy. It serves to balance the narrow needs and interests of individuals and groups in its area with those of the general society. It is a vital link in the hierarchy of authority in a state, combining the advantages of both functional as well as geographic representation of interests. It safeguards individual liberty from the totalitarianism of groups as well as the state. It is a necessary training ground for citizen participation and thus helps to preserve democracy and individual liberty.