
Chapter Seven □ A MODEL FOR UTOPIA?

The Bruderhof is a community based upon obedience and brotherly love. Some visitors respond to it with ecstatic admiration; others shudder in horror; still others – and I am one – come away with truly mixed feelings. Certainly, in a world gone cold from lack of human contact, movements like the Bruderhof have, at the very least, some important lessons to teach. Or can they be portents for the future of Western society? Evaluating the potential significance of the Bruderhof model must begin with a theme that has run implicitly through this book – the conflict between community and freedom.

1. Freedom versus Community

Modern Western man is the product of a half dozen generations that have rebelled against the restrictions of community (family, church, village) in search of freedom. The desire for freedom has not disappeared in the present generation, but many of its members have come to feel that they want to have their cake and eat it too. Those that have tried freedom by itself and found it too lonely have started creeping tentatively back to warm their hands a bit at the tribal campfire. Herman Schmalenbach has suggested that this natural enough desire for the best of both worlds is technically impossible. He argues that modern man really hungers for communion, rather than community, and that if he ever found true community he would not be able to tolerate it:

To the peasant, emotionality is to be avoided because it gives psychic

processes too much autonomy. Often a peasant is considered sparse and dour in his emotional expressions. He is even said to lack feeling for nature. On the other hand, people argue that he not so much lacks feeling as words for its expression. Actually, peasants probably do 'have' extraordinarily few of these feelings by way of conscious experience. This is not because they do not have them at all, but because, being unconsciously *tied* both to community and to nature, emotional experiences do not articulate a peasant's relations to the world around him.

It is really strange that given these facts one should think of community as something both represented among peasants and based on feeling. This simply constitutes a sentimentalizing of peasantry. Urban people are prone to such distortions. They reflect the restlessness of the person who lives his life in urban society. Actually they are an expression of a desire for communion. Such a desire tends to combine a wish for belongingness with a high valuation of peasantry, of community, and of nature. In itself it does not, of course, constitute community . . . instead, it confuses community with communion.¹¹¹

Communion, then, might be viewed as a way of reconciling the values of freedom and community. But communion, based as it is on feelings, which are unstable, is not a viable form. The Bruderhof itself gives evidence for this in the facts that emotional orientations were purged from the community after the Sannerz (communion) period, and that emotional outbursts still constitute one of the community's biggest problems. Of course, it is possible to choose this alternative merely by sacrificing a third important human value: stability. As we shall see, many hippies have done just this. Always holding on to freedom, they gratefully accept communion experiences when and where they occur, just as freely passing on when the communion cup has been drained. But even hippies, with increasing age or the birth of children, begin to think about the prospects of incorporating the value of stability as well.

The problem might be left at this impasse, except for one curious fact: alienated Western man does not feel that he really possesses community, but the members of the Bruderhof feel that they really possess freedom. We must consider then whether there is more than one kind of freedom and, if there is, whether all of

them are equally incompatible with community. Whatever else he may possess, the Bruderhof member emphatically does not have the freedom of individualism. We must consider the possibility that the problem stems from confusing individualism with freedom.

James S. Coleman has called individualism in Western society 'one of the most important long-term secular trends since the Middle Ages'. As with any social trend, in being carried to an extreme it has given rise to a need for its antithesis. Coleman says:

The 'problem of youth' in many countries today, and particularly in the United States, seems to me to be a problem of *egoisme*, in Durkheim's sense, a problem of too-great individualism, of the absence of a collective identity to which to bind oneself. The popularity of the euphoric drugs appears to me to be an attempt at escaping from this . . . I think the magnetism of Kennedy lay in the fact that he offered a basis for collective identity and for sacrifice of the self in a larger cause.¹¹²

Individualism is the form in which Western man has sought his freedom. But it seems undeniable that community, which means bonds, obligations, and mutual interdependence, is fundamentally incompatible with individualism. There are, of course, other units that can experience freedom besides the individual. A chain gang, escaped from its guards, is free to go wherever it chooses, as long as the men all move in tandem. But we are too close in time to the slogans of fascism and Nazism to be anything but dubious of any brand of freedom whose ultimate referent is not the individual.

Modern Western society has only faint memories of an individual freedom which is not individualistic – echoes from feudal society and the monastic tradition. But the concept is very much alive in other cultures. The Pueblo Indians of New Mexico are an example. Frank Waters formulates it in a novel about a Pueblo Indian educated at a white school, who is caught between two worlds. His friend, a Pueblo traditionalist, gives him advice:

You see, it is like this. I am mortal body and I am immortal spirit; they are one. Now on this earth I am imprisoned for a little while in

my mortal body. This gives me no discomfort; I have learned its needs and limitations and how to supersede them.

Now I, in this mortal body, am imprisoned also in a form of life – that of my tribe, my pueblo, my people. Nor does this give me discomfort; I have learned its needs and limitations also and how to supersede them. For as my body blends into my tribe, my pueblo, so this greater form blends into the world without – the earth, the skies, the sun, moon, stars, and the spirits of all

Now if I quarreled with my body, my spirit would not be free. Now if I quarreled with my greater body, my spirit would not be free. But by existing harmoniously in each, I am free to escape them for my greatest need – to become one, formless and without bounds, inseparable from the one flowing stream of all life

Now you, my friend, have your mortal body also, and are at peace with it. You too have a greater body, your form of life. It is not mine, for our old ways you reject; nor is it the Government's, the white man's, for you reject it also; but one you must have. Who knows which is best? They are all the same. All are merely shells of life. But they must be lived within harmoniously to be free. For only when there is no sense of imprisonment in form is the substance of spirit able to overflow and become one with the flowing stream of all life, everlasting, formless and without bounds.¹¹³

The problem of finding a way to reconcile freedom and community has become urgent in the most advanced Western nations (the United States, England, Germany) – the post-industrial societies. The most dramatic manifestation of this problem has been the revolt of youth. But underlying causes for the urgency can be found in the collapse of three of our basic institutions: the city, the neighborhood, and the family.

2. Post-industrial Society

For a long time, mankind's greatest concern was with getting enough of the material necessities to stay alive. Most of the world is still preoccupied with this problem but, during the last two hundred years, it has been solved, at least in principle, by the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution is really a series of revolutions: the bureaucratic organization of labor, the

introduction of power machinery, and the successive development of mass production, automation, and cybernation. In no nation on earth has this revolution been completed, but in some nations (particularly in Western Europe and North America) it is far enough along so that the production of material goods has ceased to be the major problem.

Such nations have been called post-industrial societies. The United States is one. Although there is a great deal of poverty in the United States, this is the result of social, cultural, and political problems, not lack of economic capacity. Many of these social, cultural and political problems are themselves the result of disruptions brought about by the industrial revolution. These disruptions have affected every level of life and have led to what Maurice Stein has called, 'the eclipse of community.'¹¹⁴

Under ideal circumstances a sense of community can be found on three different levels. A man has pride in the achievements of his city. He is involved in the affairs of his neighborhood. He is nourished by the love of his family. At all of these levels, he encounters restrictions on his freedom. Post-industrial man has gained an unprecedented degree of freedom, but he has lost his sense of community on all three of these levels.

In America today, about 70 per cent of the population lives in areas designated as urban, and this figure is steadily increasing. Yet few people can be found who speak with pride of their cities. On the contrary, a mood of despair prevails. The largest cities, such as New York, seem to exist in a state of constant crisis, from which nobody has even suggested a credible plan of escape.

Every social order needs legitimation – reasons why people feel they ought to cooperate with, or at least tolerate, the system. But just when society in general, and post-industrial societies in particular, are committing themselves to a basically urban way of life, the legitimacy of the city itself has come under serious question. People have been living in cities for about five and a half millennia.¹¹⁵ For most of that time, the legitimation of the city was political. People felt the need for mutual protection. This function was primary on the American frontier even in fairly recent times. The city had walls. The city was a fortress.

The rise of the modern state made the need for communities to protect themselves obsolete. But, at the same time, it created a new legitimacy based on economic interdependence.¹¹⁶ People of all ages and social classes could see clearly that their social environment was a system of interlocking economic functions. The industrial revolution created a great deal of inequality, and cities bred many types of rebellion. But the rebellion was, with few exceptions, against the rebels' place in the system, not against the system itself.

Norton Long has given an interesting picture of the city or town during the industrial period:

The local community can be usefully conceptualized as an ecology of games. In the territorial system a variety of games goes on: banking, newspaper publishing, contracting, manufacturing, etc. The games give structures, goals, roles, strategies, tactics, and publics to the players. Players in each game make use of players in the others for their particular purposes. A banker uses the politician, the newspaperman, or the contractor in his game and is, in turn, used by them in theirs. The interaction of the games produces unintended but systematically functional results for the ecology. An over-all top leadership and social game provide a vague set of commonly shared values that promotes co-operation in the system though it does not provide a government.¹¹⁷

Although Long's model neglects the importance of power and of external influences, it nevertheless gives the flavour of the industrial city. The walls have come down. The fortress has been replaced by the sprawling playground.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the influential Chicago School of Sociology gave a convincing account of this type of city as a harbinger of freedom. Lewis Wirth, a member of this school, wrote:

. . . The city has thus historically been the melting-pot of faces, peoples, and cultures, and a most favorable breeding-ground of new biological and cultural hybrids. It has not only tolerated but rewarded individual differences. It has brought together people from the ends of the earth *because* they are different and thus useful to one another, rather than because they are homogeneous and like-minded

Similarly, persons of homogeneous status and needs unwittingly

drift into, consciously select, or are forced by circumstances into, the same area. The different parts of the city thus acquired specialized functions. The city consequently tends to resemble a mosaic of social worlds in which the transition from one to the other is abrupt. The juxtaposition of divergent personalities and modes of life tends to produce a relativistic perspective and a sense of toleration of differences which may be regarded as prerequisites for rationality and which lead toward the secularization of life.¹¹⁸

Cities of today still conduct themselves as if they were ecologically functional game networks. But it is difficult to see the economic necessity of, say, New York City in the post-industrial age. The extreme population density of industrial-age cities was due largely to the concentrative logic of steam power.¹¹⁹ But the logic of electricity is decentralization. Industries that are mobile enough thus tend more and more to move away from cities, leaving behind the characteristic urban problems of a decaying downtown and a dwindling tax base.

At the same time, as Marshall McLuhan has shown, electricity provides instant long-range communication; the automobile and the airplane provide instant long-range mobility. Post-industrial Americans come to consider their entire region, nation, or even continent the 'local ecology of games'. Loyalty to the primary community breaks down as people are freed from the economic necessity of living in one particular place, and begin to choose homes on the basis of cultural, climatic, or other considerations.

The democratic system itself is in danger of breaking down under these circumstances, at least locally. Coleman has shown that democracy is a system very well suited for an ecology of games. Representative assemblies are actually meetings where the diverse but interlocking interests of various constituencies can be discussed by the constituent representatives, where bargains can be made, and where compromises and alliances can be agreed upon. Coleman's work on local fluoridation controversies has indicated that this process does not work as well in communities without complex networks of interlocking interests. There is much more likely to be bitter community polarization, and the losing side is more likely to bear a permanent grudge.

Cities like Los Angeles, whose population exhibits a high rate of geographical mobility and relatively little economic interdependence, even try to substitute bureaucracy for democracy in the governing process. The top bureaucrats are still *chosen* democratically, but, increasingly, the democratic *process* of bargaining and horsetrading is eschewed as irrational or even condemned as corrupt. At the same time, the crime rate, always dependent on the proportion of rootless in the population, soars in such cities. Los Angeles has one of the highest crime rates in the nation.¹²⁰

Under these circumstances, people respond according to their means. Those who can afford to, flee, either to the suburbs or, increasingly, to walled, guarded, and privately maintained sub-communities within the city itself (a regression to the age of the fortress town). It's heartbreaking to see the lengths to which people will go to protect their stereo equipment. Those who know that they will never be able to escape resign themselves or rebel. But there is a novel strategy to rebellion in the post-industrial city. Consciously or unconsciously, the rebel senses that there is no longer any good reason for the city's existence. He seeks, not to restructure it, but to bring it to a standstill or burn it down. More and more people feel that this would improve their lives.

Not only the city as a whole, but the neighborhood as well, has disintegrated as a source of community. I am using the term neighborhood in a very inexact sense to cover a variety of small geographic clusterings of people. What I say about the neighborhood will in general hold true for the suburb, the small town, and the village.

For many people, the neighborhood or home town has given way to the community of interest. With the automobile and the telephone, it is probably easier for people of common interests to find one another, and spend time together, than ever before in history. Such communities of interest are a kind of intentional community, but they fall short of satisfying the human need for communal relationships. For one thing, an individual characteristically belongs, not to one, but to a number of different communities of interest. Since relationships between members of such

interest groups tend to be segmental and transitory, their members tend to avoid becoming deeply dependent on one another. Another problem stems from the fact that communities of interest often have no physical center or boundaries. Spread out all over a city or even a region, this sort of community lacks any sense of permanence beyond the motivations of individual members. Under such circumstances, one would not expect to find the kind of friendship or belonging that comes from the sharing of pains and pleasures over a long period of time. One frequently does find in them the lonely, confused, and silently desperate – those for whom the major problem seems to be finding some way to order their lives, that is, to rid themselves of some of the surplus freedom with which their senses have been overwhelmed.

The neighborhood cannot compete with the community of interest. Here as nowhere else we see the dilemma of freedom versus community. There was certainly much that was stultifying about the neighborhood, home-town, and village life of previous generations. Privacy and the opportunity to develop individual differences were hard to achieve. The psychological deficiencies characteristic of traditional societies – superstition, narrowness, and intolerance – were common. It would be difficult to wish for the return of such communities.

Yet here is the paradox: for all their narrowness these were real communities, while communities of interest are not. Although it would be unrealistic to expect a suburban couple interested in Balkan folk dancing to play bridge with their next-door neighbors on Wednesday nights instead of driving fifty miles to be with a folk-dance group, it is important to realize that a sense of integration of life is lost by their failure to do so. (This sense of integration would be difficult to achieve in a suburb in any case because of the separation of work and leisure.) The *Bruderhof* illustrates that there is a particular joy and satisfaction inherent in sharing all of life's activities with the same group of people – working with them, playing with them, raising children with them, and making decisions with them. It is questionable whether this joy and satisfaction is worth sacrificing for the freedom to pursue one's particular interests.

Denied community at the level of the city and the neighborhood, post-industrial man can still turn to his family. He may, if he is lucky, be able to find love in his family, but he won't be able to find community. There aren't enough people. Gary Snyder writes:

The modern American family is the smallest and most barren family that has ever existed. Each newly-married couple moves to a new house or apartment – no uncles or grandmothers come to live with them. There are seldom more than two or three children. The children live with their peers and leave home early. Many have never had the least sense of family.

I remember sitting down to Christmas dinner eighteen years ago in a communal house in Portland, Oregon, with about twelve others my own age, all of whom had no place they wished to go home to. That house was my first discovery of harmony and community with fellow beings. This has been the experience of hundreds of thousands of men and women all over America since the end of World War II. Hence the talk about the growth of a 'new society'. But more; these gatherings have been people spending time with each other – talking, delving, making love. Because of the sheer amount of time 'wasted' together (without TV) they know each other better than most Americans know their own family. Add to this the mind-opening and personality-revealing effects of grass and acid, and it becomes possible to predict the emergence of groups who live by mutual illumination – have seen themselves as of one mind and one flesh¹²¹

Snyder's vision of intentional community is that of the tribe (a huge extended family). He wants the vanished extended family to be recreated, only this time on the basis of fellowship rather than kinship.

This is easier said than done. A closer look at the American family indicates that it is not merely barren, but positively destructive of community, and destructive of community-building potential in the children that it rears. In order to see how this is so, we must first take a brief look at the American family in cross-cultural perspective.

Anthropologist William Stephens, looking at America as one society among hundreds, both primitive and advanced, throughout the world, concludes that the American family is a very odd duck:

From time to time, throughout this book, I have referred to the peculiarities of American family customs: the fact that we sometimes give deference to our females, that we allow free courtship and mate choice, that we have practically nothing in the way of patterned kin behavior, that American husbands and wives do not observe public avoidance customs, that the American nuclear family tends to be isolated from larger kin groupings, and so forth. Child rearing is another one of those areas in which the United States is rather deviant. In regard to a number of child rearing issues, it seems that practically the whole world 'does it one way', whereas we 'do it another way'.¹²²

According to Stephens, there is some evidence that the severity of childhood socialization is associated with the complexity of a culture's economy. For instance, he observes that among primitive societies, kingdoms, which generally have more complex systems of economic production and distribution than do non-kingdoms, also are stricter in child rearing, particularly in the area of sex restrictions. Stephens makes the following remarks about American child-rearing, cautioning that there is some doubt about the validity of the data:

How do we in the United States compare with the rest of the world, vis-à-vis severity of socialization? It looks as if we are rather harsh parents For oral training, America was rated somewhat more severe than average. For toilet training, America and the Tanala of Madagascar were rated the most severe. For sex training, we ranked more severe than about three fourths of the sample. For severity of independence training, we are about average For socialization of aggression we rated more severe than average. Finally, as far as overall severity of socialization is concerned: the Dobuans were rated next more severe, and forty-four other societies were rated less severe

. . . in the more simple and clear-cut area of mere body contact with the mother – being carried by her, lying next to her, feeling her skin, sucking at her breast – the American infant is undoubtedly 'deprived' compared with infants in most other societies.

For one thing, in most societies the infant sleeps next to its mother for several years after birth. In forty-five of sixty-four societies . . . the nursing infant customarily sleeps by its mother's side¹²³

Stephens does not mention another significant area in which the American family (or, to be more accurate, the post-industrial

Western family) is unusual. In almost all societies the family functions economically as a unit of production; in America it is merely a unit of consumption. Far fewer children are born in the average American family than in families in almost all less advanced societies. But these few children experience a childhood which, for sheer length, is unmatched by anything in the world. Due to the increasing length of education, it has become common to defer the two traditional indicators of entrance into adulthood, marriage and employment, until well into the twenties. Other societies, such as Ireland, which defer marriage even longer than does the United States, at least confer vocational adulthood at a very early age.

Stephens goes on to speak about the most important way in which the post-industrial family is unique: its almost total isolation from a surrounding kinship network. Here the same factors that helped to destroy the city, ease of mobility and preoccupation with individualism, have helped to create a dangerously vulnerable family situation. The slightest jar of fate – death, an illness, sometimes even an argument – seem capable of shattering it. The child characteristically grows up insecure, lonely, and emotionally overheated. Stephens says:

Here we come to an area in which our society is strikingly deviant. In all the societies in my ethnographic notes, with the lone exception of the Copper Eskimo, the people ordinarily live within residential kin groups that are larger than the nuclear family. A married couple lives either with or near the husband's kin . . . or they live with or near the wife's kin

Our society is unusual for the relatively high frequency of isolated nuclear households; because the nuclear family is usually isolated from other kin, the job of caring for the young children is left largely in the hands of the mother Talcott Parsons points out that the isolated nuclear family, as opposed to larger kin-groupings, constitutes a small, 'tight,' social-interaction system. It is an all-your-eggs-in-one-basket situation. Mother – and how mother feels – is very important, because she is the only mother you have; there are no surrogate mothers in the form of aunts, grandmothers, or older cousins. When mother becomes angry or estranged, there is no place to go, no one else to turn to.¹²⁴

It is not surprising that this family situation breeds certain

anti-communal character traits. Prolonged adolescence has, at least until recently, implied a high degree of sexual repression. The need to continuously defer gratification to a future time, for education, for marriage, or for independence, tends to create an alienation from here-and-now reality, a skill at going out of contact with the world and retreating inward. This leads to the numbness to stimuli which we have already seen is an important survival technique in the post-industrial city.

Deferred gratification also makes a man vulnerable to manipulation by external authorities. The more one has sacrificed for the sake of some future reward, the more one is vulnerable to threats that this future reward will be taken away. It also encourages people to think of their lives in terms of careers. They are then haunted by the fear of getting bad marks on their 'permanent records' which, they are taught in school, will follow them through life.

The manipulatable child is also made manipulative through another quirk of the post-industrial family. Stephens' argument is that kinship isolation, neolocality, and relatively small families result in a 'tight' family with a high degree of emotional involvement. But we have also seen that the isolated nuclear family is quite unstable and thus breeds emotional insecurity. It is plausible that this combination fosters the need for continual reaffirmation of love which is so characteristic of our society, and probably has helped to sustain the romantic love myth as well. But this need for love continually reaffirmed naturally creates a need to manipulate others.

Society, as we have defined it, is based on reciprocity, and the city of industrial society was an ecology of games. The post-industrial family rears good game players for the industrial age. This is a cultural lag. But community is based, not on reciprocity, but on the feeling of belonging together. In our society this feeling can no longer be based on kinship or ancient territorial proximity. Both of these are too dependent upon the accident of birth to be satisfying to members of a free and mobile society. Two alternatives are the folk nationalism engendered by fascism or the global brotherhood based on something like Eberhard

Arnold's cosmic perspective or Gary Snyder's 'mutual illumination'. To use Martin Buber's term, community requires an I-thou perspective, that people see each other as subjects rather than as objects. This non-manipulative, immediately involved attitude is the antithesis of the game perspective engendered by the American family.

Ironically, some of the same factors which make it difficult for the post-industrial child to enter into communal relationships also create in him an unusually strong need for community. Everyone desires a sense of immortality through membership in some collectivity whose span is greater than the normal human lifetime. The extended family is just such an immortal unit. A single death, which ordinarily disrupts a nuclear family completely, has little effect on the solidarity of the extended family. Furthermore, there is a progression of generations. Under normal circumstances, by the time the grandparents have all died off, the parents have already become grandparents themselves, and so on, endlessly.

If a member of an extended family were deprived of community on the level of neighborhood and city, he could withdraw into his family for solace. In fact, this is what Confucius advised the wise man to do during times of trouble in ancient China. But the post-industrial man has no such consolation. This cool, detached, sensually and sexually dull, manipulating, and manipulative individual earnestly desires community and involvement. But of what sort of community and involvement is such a person capable? Only that of the herd, that of the mass, which is that of nationalism. The nationalistic frenzies of various modern states may be partly explained by this need. I think we are going to begin to find that Nazism is not an isolated political phenomenon confined to a particular historical epoch, but actually a characteristic aberration in the transition from industrial to post-industrial society.

The hippie movement may be seen as a revolt against every aspect of this personality complex. Hippies emphasize sensual and sexual awareness, living in and for the present rather than the future, spontaneity, treatment of people as ends rather than

as means to ends, and desire for community on the level of the primary group rather than the nation-state. This may explain why the need for tribalism is a major theme of hippie life and literature.

3. The Hippie Response

I estimate that there are currently about a thousand rural hippie communes in North America, and at least twice that many urban communes. I have personally visited close to a hundred of these in the last five years. In 1965, there were probably not a hundred on the entire face of the continent. Most intentional communities existing at that time were relics of a previous era – groupings of religious fundamentalists, utopian socialists, or Quaker conscientious objectors. Today, only five years later, America is in the midst of a flowering of communitarian experiment unequalled in its history, even at the time of the great utopian movements of the Owenites and the Fourierists in the early nineteenth century. These five years have been years of rapid change for American society. From the point of view of the communitarian movement, the most significant change of the past five years has been the exposure of society to the widespread use of psychedelic drugs.

Of course, drugs alone cannot account for the rise of the hippie and communitarian movements. Many theories have been advanced tracing connexions to such things as the breakdown of the modern family, the insecurity of the nuclear age, widespread exposure to electronic devices such as t.v. and the computer, progressive education, etc., etc. Such writers as Marshall McLuhan, Gary Snyder, and Buckminster Fuller are probably right in speaking of a general trend toward retribalization in our society. And this trend would probably have occurred eventually even without the spread of drug use. In attributing the rise of the present-day communitarian movement to the use of drugs, I am therefore speaking not of an ultimate cause but of an immediate cause – a ‘triggering mechanism’.

There are two major ways in which drug use triggered the

development of communes. One was through the institution of the *crash pad*. The other was through the fostering of the psychological experience of *communion*. Crash pads are simply dwelling units, usually urban but occasionally rural, in which a varying number of people live and cooperate in obtaining the necessities of life. Crash pads have generally attracted young and drifting people of both sexes – teenage runaways, drop outs, and those whose primary life concerns have become drug-inspired mystical, emotional, or artistic pursuits, and who, therefore, have reduced economic functions to a minimum. A crash pad may be distinguished from a true commune by the totally utilitarian attitude of the members toward its structure. Although the residents of a crash pad may become very attached to one another, each individual (or couple) remains primarily concerned with his own ‘trip’, and the collectivity is valued only as a means to the furthering of basically individualistic ends.

The crash pad is significant for two reasons. The first is that, for the overwhelming majority of hippies who eventually become involved in communal living, crash pad experiences have provided the first taste of this sort of life. In some cases, whole crash pads have actually made the transition and become true communes. In other cases, subgroups of crash pad populations have ‘discovered their tribe’ and gone on to found communes. But in the majority of relevant cases, it has simply been that crash pad living has whetted an individual’s desire for something deeper, and started him out on a search which eventually led him to life in a commune. The second reason for the significance of the crash pad to this study is that, unfortunately, the popular conception of what communal living is like has largely been formed through the observation of crash pads. For this reason, mention of communes conjures up visions of glassy-eyed kids staring off into space, of sexual promiscuity and group marriage, and of almost total lack of economic enterprise. Anyone familiar with contemporary communes knows how absurd this picture is, but most communes are very difficult to become familiar with. They tend to be closed, secretive, and inconspicuous, whereas crash pads tend to be just the opposite. Naturally, therefore, journalistic coverage of com-

munal living has tended to draw its material from observation of crash pads rather than communes.

Drugs have influenced the formation of communes indirectly through the proliferation of crash pads. But drugs have also had an important direct role in the development of communes through the fostering of experiences of communion. Very often, in reconstructing the history of a particular commune, one finds repeated reference to a mystical event which occurred early in the group's life together. Often this takes the form of a group acid trip. Sometimes drugs are not involved at all but, even in these cases, images and ideas from the drug culture are heavily drawn upon.

What is this mystical, semi-mythical event? It is the shared realization that this group of people 'belongs together', 'is together', is a true family, brotherhood, or tribe. This experience, often accompanied by personal ego-loss and a melting (or exploding) absorption into a communal ego is, of course, a commonly reported psychedelic vision even among those not communally oriented, and is often, as in the Bruderhof, part of a non-drug-induced religious experience.

In a certain sense, drugs can provide a functional equivalent to religious experience, at least in the early stages of the life of the commune. The communion experience evokes a style of life together very similar to that of the Bruderhof in its communion stage at Sannerz. Drug experiences may even carry the group further, to a stage analogous to that experienced by the Bruderhof at Rhön, which I have called charismatic community. At this stage, Eberhard Arnold was able, through the contagion of his cosmic perspective, to transform the communal *eros* into *agape*, thus leading the group to a form of true community, which was, however, still dependent upon him. Psychedelic drugs, by dulling the intensity of direct emotional contact while at the same time inducing a cosmic perspective, can sometimes transform the erotic emotionality of a commune into *agape*. The members stop thinking, 'You are my brother because I love you,' and start thinking, 'I love you because you are my brother.' This is true community, but just as at the Bruderhof Rhön stage, it is extremely unstable because dependent on an external force.

The commune movement can be understood in part as a reaction against the city and the family. Urban people, from teenagers to men and women in their forties and fifties, become disgusted with city living but feel that they lack the skills and resources to make the transition to rural life alone. At the same time, communion experiences have given them insight into the positive values of community living. Having been made aware, through such experiences, of the spiritual and emotional poverty of the nuclear families in which most of them were raised, they are reluctant to settle down to a conventional life and start their own nuclear families. Perhaps, through the ferment of the movement, coming together in crash pads, at meetings, or even through advertisements, a group of people discover that they are a tribe. Their next problem is to gain access to some land and move out of the city.

The geographical areas in which communes are densely clustered (New England, New Mexico, Southern Oregon, Northern California) have in common the availability of relatively cheap arable land which nevertheless does not lend itself to use by huge mechanized commercial farming enterprises. As the small independent farmer is squeezed out of business, those of his holdings which cannot, for topographical reasons, be incorporated into large agricultural industries, are snapped up by communitarians. The land is obtained in various ways. Sometimes it is owned by one of the members, who decides to allow others to live there, perhaps retaining formal ownership, perhaps relinquishing it to a board of trustees. Sometimes a rich patron buys land for a commune. Sometimes the founding members themselves save up enough money for a down payment on a piece of land before they drop out. Some communes find ways to obtain the use of land without buying it – by squatting, camping out, establishing mining or homesteading claims on some of the still available public land, or even by renting.

The commune that forms on this land is almost always very loosely structured at first. There is a shared relief at being out of the city. It is common to find members of such communes boasting about how long it has been since they were last in a city. The

number of people in a commune varies; some have only six or eight members, others over a hundred. Many of the more accessible ones seem to stabilize around a population of about twenty-five adults. Often there is a rapid turnover of the peripherally involved around a small stable nucleus, as at Sannerz. Also as at Sannerz, there tend to be many visitors. Rather than the formal surrendering of all private property that is the rule at the Bruderhof, there is an informal pooling of resources. Reacting against the fragmentation and abstractness of the urban economy, commune members try to get into cooperative primary occupations such as building, crafts, and gardening.

The garden is the economic focus of most communes. As yet, few communes have been able to set up viable craft enterprises or other businesses, although many are trying to do so. Communes typically have intensely cultivated and, on the whole, amazingly successful gardens which yield huge quantities of many different varieties of vegetables, melons, fruit, berries, and grains. Garden produce provides the nucleus of the commune's daily food supply. Through canning, drying, and other means of storage, home-grown food is available year round.

Typically, when a commune is first set up, nobody knows anything about farm skills. Armed with how-to-do-it books and government pamphlets, the communitarians proceed in the best traditions of frontier pragmatism, making many mistakes while learning. By the second or third year, they will have become seasoned agriculturists who can command the respect of, and talk on equal terms with, the neighboring farm population, and even teach them something about organic methods of farming.

Hunting and gathering activities often supplement garden cultivation. Gary Snyder writes:

A few of us are literally hunters and gatherers, playfully studying the old techniques of acorn flour, seaweed-gathering, yucca-fiber, rabbit snaring, and bow hunting.¹²⁵

A commune member sometimes disappears for a day, arriving home around evening laden with small game, berries, mushrooms, or edible roots. This a form of communal recreation which also

provides important supplements to what might otherwise prove a monotonous diet. In this one respect at least, taking psychedelic drugs is a definite aid to the communal economy, helping to provide both the frame of mind and the sensitivity to small details in nature necessary for such projects.

When additional money or supplies are needed by the commune, various members will venture to nearby towns and neighboring farms in search of wage labor. In the larger communes, a source of income not to be neglected derives from the steady influx of visitors and new members. Dropping out of urban society, they bring with them clothing, staple foods, luxury items, and cash.

None of this would be a sufficient economic basis for community, if the life style did not involve the radical reduction of what is considered necessary. A pioneer willingness to tolerate what most of us would consider a near-subsistence and highly monotonous diet, to make do with few luxuries or labor-saving devices, to wear only second-hand or homemade clothing, enable this peculiar economic system to work within the American economy of abundance. The pioneer simplicity of living is accompanied by pioneer self-reliance and diversification of skills. Much of the activity of commune members involves the cultivation of such skills as carpentry, plumbing, mechanics, and canning. A wide range of commune-oriented publications (of which the *Whole Earth Catalogue*¹²⁶ and the *Green Revolution*¹²⁷ are the most notable) offer practical advice on how communitarians with little or no money can make much of what they need and want out of materials at hand. The rudiments of a distinctive communitarian technology have emerged, of which geodesic dome architecture, organic gardening, and homeopathic medicine are examples.

Freedom is a much more central value in the contemporary commune than in the Bruderhof. The communes cherish the joy of brotherhood, but do not focus their lives completely on it. Three motivations seem about equally important in the early careers of commune members: escape from the city, reconstitution of the extended family, and the opportunity to be free. An

emphasis on freedom creates a form of communal organization which is different in certain respects from that of the Bruderhof. Members come and go as they choose with little or no rancor or guilt. Nobody would think of asking anybody else to make a permanent commitment to the life. Commune members generally work hard, but the choice of hours and tasks is strictly voluntary, as is the pooling of money and resources. The predominant philosophy is a type of anarchism.

Communitarian anarchism, strictly speaking, is not pure anarchism, but a blend of anarchism and antinomianism. Anarchism can be defined as the belief that the individual is capable of regulating himself in the absence of any external authority, and the belief that there is no such thing as good authority, that authority by definition is subversive. Antinomianism, on the other hand, is the belief that, through grace or enlightenment, one is freed from the constraints of moral law.

The anarchist strain has little or nothing to do with the classical anarchism of the nineteenth century or the political and philosophical anarchist thinking of today. It is a naïve anarchism, a *sui generis* response to specific conditions of post-industrial society. In part, it is a rebellion against the phony freedom of this society, a freedom which encourages the mind to explore and challenge without limits, but prevents people from following up their thoughts with the appropriate actions.

A curious element of this anarchism is the inability or unwillingness to distinguish between authoritarianism and authoritative-ness. When I visited a number of communes in the company of a highly experienced organic farmer, we found that many commune members resented and would not accept his advice on quite elementary but serious mistakes they were making in their first attempts at vegetable gardening. They accepted and loved this man as a person, but mistrusted any knowledge not gained through their own trial and error. Some communes have had to suffer epidemics of hepatitis or dysentery because of a stubborn unwillingness to adopt fundamental health precautions that had not grown out of their own experience.

It would be difficult to trace the roots of this attitude that

authority, in and of itself, is evil. Certainly it has a lot to do with the erosion of the traditional sources of civic and church authority in post-industrial society. It is common for young people to grow up without a single model of good authority. Nowadays, when people speak of 'the authorities' they are generally referring to the police or the national government, neither very dear to the hearts of young communitarians. Respect for scientific authority went poof at Alamogordo.

The peculiar form of the American family also contributes to this attitude. The ability to distinguish between good and bad authority requires the ability to establish a critical distance from the authority. This is difficult to do in the isolated nuclear family, where the two parents serve simultaneously as the major sources of authority and the major sources of love. It is too psychologically threatening to be critical in such a relationship one is driven either to totally accept or to totally rebel. This problem is compounded by an unfortunate interpretation of modern educational psychology whereby authority tries to mask itself as encouragement to the child to be self-motivated in directions which the parent or teacher think proper. Many children 'feel through' this technique, even if they do not see through it, and come away with the suspicion that all authority is inherently sneaky. Finally, in the American family as a unit of consumption rather than a unit of production there is little reason why the parents should have more authority than the children. Certainly the factors which market researchers have shown to determine the typical housewife's choices among products in a supermarket are in no significant way superior to the factors which motivate five-year-old children.

Antinomianism, the other strain of communitarian anarchism, has been a recurrent theme in Western history. Nathan Adler says:

The Gnostics believed that through their spiritual exercises they achieved union with the Holy Ghost and sin was no longer possible for them. They were therefore absolved of obligation to the moral law

Recurrent generations of 'flower children', the 'innocent', the

'guileless', the 'pure in heart', who do not speak with the forked tongues of the adult world and its Establishment, arise in ages of anxiety and transition. Burned at the stake by the Dominicans, impaled on Turkish swords, the Gnostic movement returns in new cults with new names. The underground stream runs and rises in occult rites and Kabbalah, in witchcraft, and in its secular form as a Romantic movement.¹²⁸

The antinomian strain in communes, in most cases, comes from the psychedelic experience. The individual 'sees' that moral codes are games, that all morality is relative and arbitrary, and that the ultimate force behind all morality is not authority but love. Intuition is very important in the commune. Love is seen as an active force, holding things together and, in so far as a member is judged, it will not generally be so much by his actions as by his vibrations. Adler says:

The antinomian fears diffusion and depersonalization

In this situation, and with such needs, the physical, the visceral, and the concrete are of greater moment than the abstract, the generalized and the cognitive. The antinomian personality values most the immediate and the vivid, the uninhibited and the outrageous. Feeling, texture, touch, warmth become more important than central modes which are more likely to make for a discrete self differentiated from objects. Visual modes are manipulated and distorted by drugs and by fasting so that the discrete components melt, merge and fuse.¹²⁹

Neither anarchism nor antinomianism alone provide a sufficient basis for the communitarian life style. Anarchism does not prepare one for the strong feelings and unconscious energy released by the collective behavior experience. Pure antinomianism tends to the decadent; it does not foster the tough pragmatic frontier spirit which is so necessary for the creation of a new life style. Antinomianism is fit for ringing out the old; anarchism for ringing in the new. Together they blend to create a golden age in the commune – for a little while.

Most communes start out with no restrictions on behavior. Everyone is allowed to do his own thing at all time. It is expected that the gentleness, love, and compassion engendered by mystical drug experiences (or in other ways) will prove adequate substitutes for the moral and legal constraints which all other societies

have found necessary. The initial experiences are often encouraging and exhilarating. This first stage is one of discovering that many of the previously accepted boundary safeguards of our society are in fact unnecessary. In the cases of some taboos generally accepted in our society, this merely means that their reasons for being are not discernible in terms of the immediate negative consequences of breaking them. Pooling all money and sharing one another sexually are examples of such attempts at boundary erasing. After a while, however, the strains inherent in such situations begin to reassert themselves. Work may slow down, jealousies may arise, or people may start spending more and more time away from the commune. At the same time, as the commune grows older, it may begin to give its attention to complex tasks such as starting a school, expanding housing facilities, or developing a business enterprise. Increased strain on one hand, and more complex tasks on the other, eventually lead most communes to abandon their absolute anarchism in favor of some more restricted alternative.

Ephemeral as it is, the brief golden age of complete anarchism on a commune is inspiring to experience. To me it seems a brief foretaste of how the human race may someday be able to live. Visiting a commune early in its history, one often feels that a new age has already dawned for mankind. Superhuman labors are accomplished with no apparent strain. Money is simply kept in a pot to which anyone can go and take what he needs. Mothers, fathers, and childless people cooperate in taking care of children, resulting in liberation for both parent and child. Portents of later conflicts are visible, but usually not disturbing. One can sense a mild tension between parents and non-parents, and between those who are thinking of the commune as a long-range home and those who are living there from moment to moment.

The first cracks in the tranquil pattern often center around the sense of family. The basic conflict between freedom and community, between anarchism and tribalism, manifests itself here. This is illustrated in an incident that happened at Dawn commune. (All names of communes in this chapter are fictitious.) Dawn commune began when its founding members shared an

ineffable spiritual experience which made them feel that they belonged together. A new couple arrived at the commune around a month later. There was little or no opposition to their joining. Most members, as anarchists, felt that membership was open to anyone who cared to come. But the new couple could not fit in. They had not shared the communion experience, and so, in a sense beyond anyone's control, they were not a part of the family. They were also unwilling or unable to think of themselves as part of the family and they soon left. At other communes, when this same problem has occurred under different circumstances, the original family has sometimes been capable of broadening its conception of 'family' to include certain, but not all, prospective members.

As time passes, the strains become more severe. Perhaps the commune has received some publicity in the media and is now overrun with visitors; perhaps there are sexual jealousies; perhaps somebody has stopped working or somebody else has been inspired to guide the group in a certain direction. People leave, new people take their place, and after a while the original members may start to feel that 'their' commune is changing in an undesirable direction. A power struggle similar to the great crisis of the Bruderhof may occur.

For many communes, the initial communion experience serves as a talisman against discord as long as it lasts. But such communion experiences, especially if drug-induced, tend to fade over time, and periodic attempts to revive the spirit with group acid, mescaline, or peyote trips usually have, at best, mixed success. Legalism then enters the life. One evening, the members of Dawn commune were just finishing dinner. They took their meals seated on two long benches at either side of a long table. A couple who had formerly been in the commune suddenly came into the house and politely asked those seated at one side of the table to stand up. Then they calmly picked up one of the benches and, before the unbelieving eyes of the commune members, carried it out of the house, loaded it onto their truck, and drove away. These two people had constructed the bench, and therefore felt entitled to it. At the time the bench was built, everyone had been

working on the principle of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need'. But since this had never been made explicit, there was nothing the commune could do.

Overpopulation is another common problem in communes. Many communes maintain an open-door policy in accord with their anarchist philosophy. But after the strenuous pioneering phase of the community's history is over, and certain amenities have been established, the commune may find itself overrun with a parasitical breed of city hippies too immature to pull their own weight in an unstructured community. When this happens, often there is a split among the old membership, between those who have faith in the transforming powers of anarchism and those who want to kick the loafers out.

Most contemporary communes eventually find themselves stumped by this basic dilemma – the conflict between freedom and community. They do not want to give up either anarchism or the warm sense of family. The Bruderhof experience teaches that this type of family feeling is possible if the self dies and is reborn. Many communes recognize this in speaking of the necessity of ego transcendence. But the old self – the grasping, jealous, isolated ego – refuses to die of itself, and few commune members have the determination or the faith to kill it.

Unwilling to undergo a complete transformation of self, most commune members, nevertheless, eventually conclude that some modification of absolute anarchism is necessary if the commune is not to dissolve in chaos. The modifications attempted fall into three broad categories. One is segmentation either of the commune itself into a number of smaller 'families' or sub-communes, or of the life into communal, cooperative, and individualistic areas. A second type of modification can be called contractual anarchism. The community members make agreements with one another and then expect them to be kept. The third type of modification can be called consensual anarchism. The community actively seeks to find solutions satisfactory to everyone, refusing to override even a one-person minority.

Freedom Ranch, one of the earliest and longest-lasting of contemporary communes, illustrates both varieties of segmenta-

tion. This community was deliberately set up as an experiment in anarchism. Its two hundred acres of land are held in trust for the community by a nonprofit corporation whose articles of incorporation specifically state that anyone may come and live there and that no one may be forced to leave for any reason. Many different kinds of people settle at Freedom Ranch. Some are hermits, loners, or individual families desiring to live in relative isolation; others are intensely gregarious communitarians. Some are energetic and highly competent at farm skills; others are totally lost outside an urban environment. Some are altruistic, others parasites. As a result of this diversity, Freedom Ranch has generally had a small central community centered around the main house, a couple of peripheral communities composed of two or three families, and a number of other residents only marginally associated with any of these sub-communities. Periodic attempts to bring the entire group together on some basis have all failed. Land maintenance and care of animals are communal activities at Freedom Ranch. Gardening and building are cooperative enterprises (private voluntary arrangements in which each person agrees to take on specific responsibilities). Finances and child care fall into the domain of individual concern. Meal preparation is generally a communal function but, during the annual summer invasion of city hippies, has often temporarily passed into the cooperative or the individual sphere.

Homestead Community was originally set up on a basis identical to that of Freedom Ranch (anybody can come, nobody can be made to leave) except that the land remained in the legal ownership of one individual. This one individual was committed not only to permitting anyone to stay, but also to making everyone welcome. Problems similar to those at Freedom Ranch developed and, in addition, there was violence, over-crowding, drunkenness, and conflicts with neighbors and the authorities (both health and police). No limitation on anarchy was ever attempted on the original site of Homestead Community. But another large parcel of land was opened up on a similar basis, and gradually most of the serious and competent communitarians moved there. The second site was deliberately built with

no communal kitchen and no communal shelters. Thus, those not capable or willing to provide their own food and shelter were effectively screened out of the community, without compromising the ideal of total anarchism. Much voluntary cooperation is engaged in at Homestead, as at Freedom Ranch. It might be argued that those groups which rely upon segmentation exclusively are not really communities at all. But the need to screen out incompetents and the need to compromise between tribalism and individualism are problems faced by all communes.

Dry Creek Community is an example of a commune that felt it necessary to employ segmentation in only one area of life – that of privacy of domicile. The Dry Creek people found it relatively easy to work communally, to pool all economic resources, and to have meals and other communal functions together. But all members felt a need for a place where they could retreat from the rest of the community. As a result, Dry Creek gave high priority to the building of individual shelters, allowing farming and other communal activities to be relatively neglected.

Segmentation seems to work well in communities that have no common goal beyond living together. As communes take on more complex goals, the need for more complex forms of integration soon becomes apparent. It is not enough to eliminate those aspects of communal living in which harmony does not occur spontaneously. A certain amount of harmony and coordination must be maintained constantly, somehow, without infringing upon the freedom of the individual. Toward this end, some communities have modified their initial absolute anarchism into what may be called contractual anarchism. Basic anarchism assumes that men are responsible in intention and responsible in action. Contractual anarchism makes only the first of these assumptions. Thus it permits freedom in entering into contracts, but it demands that contracts, once entered into, be carried out.

Sylvan Hills is an example of a commune employed in a type of contractual anarchism. It consists of around twenty people on forty acres of land, who engage in commercial crafts and manufacturing as well as farming. Certain jobs need to be done on a regular basis. Lists are posted describing these jobs. There is no

compulsion for anyone to sign up for any particular job or any particular number of hours (although great social pressure would be brought upon anyone who did no or very little work). Once signed up for the job, however, the person is expected to do it with no excuses. If he protests curtailment of freedom, he will be told that he freely entered into the contract, and that next time he should not sign up for a job he does not wish to do.

Another commune known as Astar attempted a similar system. But their organizational structure was a good deal more complex than that of Sylvan Hills (manufacturing, printing, and running a large ranch), and it was soon discovered that the same methods didn't work. A few people had an overview of the community and thus assumed their fair share of the responsibility, but most members simply couldn't grasp the totality of the communal operation. This led to certain people giving orders, with consequent hard feelings and rebelliousness. So another innovation was adopted. On a rotating basis, everyone was made dictator of the community for a week. During this time, the dictator had the responsibility of bearing in mind all work that had to be done, and assigning jobs to each person. It was felt that, after serving a week as dictator, each person would have an overview of what needed to be done and a sense of his fair share. The commune could then revert to straight contractual anarchism. This never occurred because the commune disintegrated in the middle of the experiment. The approach was nevertheless an interesting one.

The most extensive use of contract is made by Mandala Commune. Mandala also exhibits a most ingenious use of segmentation, dividing its year into two six-month seasons. During the summer, Mandala functions as a highly structured commune, relying heavily on the institution of contract. Mandala has never tried to be an anarchistic commune. Many of its members have come to it with previous experiences in less structured communes which have disillusioned them with anarchism. The prospective member must agree to the commune's basic contract as soon as he arrives. This contract requires him to work a forty-hour week, attend communal meetings twice a day, abstain from drugs and certain foods, and abide by the communal bylaws. Other con-

tracts may subsequently be made. The entire commune may contract to keep silent for a day. Or an individual may make a contract, with another person or with the group as a whole, to abstain from smoking, or lose weight, or keep his temper. This heavy reliance on contract places many restraints on the individual during the summer season. But, during the winter season, much of the structure is abandoned, and Mandala becomes a commune very similar to Homestead. This is a use of segmentation that solves the problem of freedom versus community by emphasizing each for half the year. It also assures that only competent, self-reliant individuals will be able to live at Mandala, since they have to be responsible for their own support for half of each year. In a similar vein, I have often thought that the Bruderhof could solve many of its problems by insisting that every member take a sabbatical leave every few years and support himself for a while in the outside world, without being under the stigma of exclusion. This would prove to both the community and himself that he was a member because he wanted to be, not because he needed to be. At Mandala, members return to structured community each spring with a sense of freshness and expectation which the Bruderhof is able to achieve only through periodic crises.

The most widely used means of normative structuring is the search for consensus. Communes carry out this search in meetings similar to the Bruderhof's Brotherhood meetings or Quaker business meetings. The usual procedure, as in the Bruderhof, is for the members to discuss a matter thoroughly until everyone is agreed on a course of action. If unanimity cannot be reached, the matter is tabled. I know of no commune that makes its decisions by majority vote. I have seen several instances, however, of commune members unanimously agreeing to abide by the will of the majority on a single particularly urgent problem.

The search for consensus does not compromise a position of anarchism, because a single veto is enough to prevent any decision from being made. As with contractual anarchism, once a decision is made, everyone is expected to abide by it. This procedure might be called consensual anarchism. I have seen a

number of cases in which one or more members of a commune refused to attend or, attending, refused to cooperate with meetings for decision making. These absolute anarchists felt that, even with the guarantee of veto power, the pressure of 'public opinion' at meetings was so strong that individual freedom was dangerously compromised. At Dawn Commune, one member went so far, for a while, as to deliberately veto every decision that was proposed, on the theory that the commune did not have the right to make decisions.

The occurrence of such decision-making meetings is one of the most universal elements of contemporary communes. I observed them in Earth Mother Community, in Hobbit Hole, in Geodesic Village, in Dawn, in Dry Creek, in Astar, and in Mandala. In all of these communities, the form was virtually the same: everyone sat around in a circle; there was a moment of silence to begin, and then the discussion. These discussions were remarkable for the ability of the participants really to listen to one another. At Hobbit Hole the tone was combative; at Geodesic Village, urbane and witty; and at Mandala, psychoanalytic and spiritual. But in all of them the process was essentially the same: deeper and deeper probing into meanings and motivations until a common ground was found. An extremely important latent function of such meetings was the fostering of communal solidarity. It was often noticed and reported that the more difficult the decision was to make, the closer together the discussion brought the community members. Only at one commune did I see a meeting which had the opposite effect – it demonstrated that there was not any real underlying consensus among the members, and that therefore the community was doomed to failure.

Decision-making meetings are not the only places in community life in which the search for consensus is carried on. This search is a continuing process which sometimes is suddenly manifested in a single dramatic act. Riverside is a community of around fifty people. In its early days, it was basically a segmental community, but always a good deal more structured and communal than Freedom Ranch or Homestead. With only eight acres of land, the members lived quite close together, so a great measure of

consensus was needed despite the absence of any communal industry. Once I saw some Riverside members gathered in the dining room listening to records. The record player volume was up very high. A girl came in from the kitchen and turned down the volume. Some people grumbled but nobody said anything and the girl went back to the kitchen. Five minutes later the volume was up high again. The girl came back in and the whole pattern was repeated. Five minutes later, again the volume was turned way up. This time the girl came in with a knife and cut the wire. Without a single word being spoken consensus was reached. Nobody in the community questioned the right either of the listeners to turn up the volume or the girl to cut the wire. Each had been 'doing his own thing'. But the girl had registered the intensity of her feelings by her act, and when, a while later, the record player was repaired, the volume was kept low.

Despite incidents like this, Riverside Community was never able to achieve a degree of consensus satisfying to its members while located on its original site. Eventually two major groups branched off from Riverside, and the rest of the community disintegrated. One of the groups formed a spiritual community, led by a charismatic leader who imposed a degree of consensus from above. The other formed a wilderness community, high in the mountains, where it was possible only for the most hardy and woods-wise to survive.

The various techniques that I have discussed can only be described as moderately successful. Seven of the eleven communes mentioned have disintegrated (Sylvan Hills, Dawn, Hobbit Hole, Astar, Dry Creek, Homestead, and Riverside) with an average life span of slightly less than two years. An eighth, Geodesic Village, still exists, but all of its original members have left under duress. A wave of publicity in the mass media brought a sudden onslaught of visitors to Geodesic Village. Some of these visitors decided to stay. They soon outnumbered the original members and a consensus on a conception of community soon emerged which was very different from anything the founders had envisioned or could happily live with.

Segmentalized communes generally last the longest. They are

based on a quite rational strategy of not forcing community, but letting it happen only in those areas of life in which it occurs naturally, letting it grow organically. People whose main objectives are living in the country and having congenial neighbors can be content in a segmental commune. But those who desire a strong sense of family, or who want to commune to do something (start a school, become economically self-sufficient, promote a political or religious doctrine) usually find segmental communes unsatisfactory.

Communes based on contractual anarchism or consensual anarchism, or – what is most common – some mixture of the two, encounter a fundamental problem. These techniques are very practical modifications of absolute anarchism to meet the reality demands of communal living. But both still adhere to the fundamental anarchist assumption that men, as they are, can regulate themselves, love each other, and live together harmoniously, if only placed in the proper environment. Evidence from the Bruderhof indicates that this is not true, that people carry the remnants of the old society within themselves, and that these old selves must be left behind for community to be possible. Evidence from communitarian history and from contemporary communes seems to bear this out. I watched the Hobbit Hole Commune, which practiced both contractual and consensual anarchism very well, disintegrate before my eyes. None of the members wanted this to happen, but strong jealousies and hatreds rose up which went far deeper than anything that could be dealt with through contract. The search for consensus might have reached the root of the problems, but, under stress, each person was too concerned with guarding his own right of veto to help search for the higher unity that always lies beyond apparent discord.

As the golden age of the communion experience fades, anarchism becomes more than ineffectual; it becomes oppressive. It can even become a means of exploitation. Anarchy without mutual concern favors the tyranny of the strong over the weak, and the tyranny of the least committed over the most committed. At Army Surplus, a now defunct urban commune of the early hippie era, the strong and competent males lorded it over the

weaker males and the females. Life was not very pleasant at Army Surplus without these men around to fix things, eject unwanted visitors, gather food, and score dope. In the early days, and during the occasional recurrent periods of communion, they performed these services freely and graciously. But during times of discord one became aware of an implicit threat – that if things did not go in a way which was pleasing to these members, they might withdraw from active participation in the commune, or even leave. It is significant that the men at Army Surplus were generally anarchists, while the women were democrats. The women, especially those with children, were more committed to the commune and were less free to leave it. They felt more willing to abide by the will of the majority, even if opposed to it, as long as some common decisions could be made. The men, freer to leave when things got bad, were less willing to so bind themselves. There is a type of Gresham's Law which operates in anarchist communes, whereby the less committed gradually drive out the more committed. An example of this was seen at Earth Mother Commune, located in an area with severe winters. Serious communitarians, especially those with families, foresaw the need to weatherproof buildings and accumulate a supply of firewood. But they were unable to get any cooperation on these projects from those whose commitment did not go beyond the summer, and thus were forced to leave and seek community elsewhere.

Many communes eventually reach some sort of compromise between anarchism and the need for structure. But a few do a surprising flip from anarchism to authoritarianism instead and place themselves under the power of some charismatic leader. This dramatic reversal cannot be explained entirely by the need for structure. It very likely has something to do with the dangers inherent in releasing feelings which has been long repressed.

Psychedelic drug experiences and other experiences of communion liberate great quantities of feelings from the unconscious. Many people are not prepared to handle this energy. A few fall victim to uncontrollable violent or self-destructive urges, but most merely panic and seek some way of regaining rational

control. Situations occur which would be ludicrous if they were not so sad. After heroic efforts to break away from the city, find a tribe, and build community, the communitarian panics at simple manifestations of the very community he is seeking: 'I'm so freaked out. I feel like you people are all inside my head and I'm inside yours.' Experiences which are commonplace to many primitive people are totally alien to him. He reacts in terror, often resorting to mystification in an attempt to regain mastery rather than admitting that he doesn't understand. Most communes lack an interpretive framework like that of the Bruderhof with which to explain such phenomena in terms of commonly shared beliefs. In desperation, the communitarian may give blind support to a guru and adopt an ascetic Eastern discipline of enlightenment. The guru may become the commune's charismatic leader. If so, he will fulfil a dual function: making 'mystical' experiences of communion comprehensible and restraining the commune members from what many of them unconsciously fear most, their own unbridled freedom

With or without a charismatic leader, those communes that have survived the conflict between freedom and family have become increasingly aware of the need for an interpretive framework, both to explain collective experiences and to give the commune a vocabulary and a common set of values. Much spiritual search, often eclectic, is associated with the movement. Some communes have taken up a Christian mythos, although it seems extremely doubtful that this will ever become widespread in America. Interest in Oriental religions is much more common. Although these emphasize ego-loss, I see little in them to support the idea of community. However, I am told that this is a blind spot of mine. Concern with native American Indian culture and religion seems to me to be the most likely path for Americans to true community. If it happens this way, tribes will develop in which *agapic* brotherhood is traced, not through God the Father, but through earth the mother.

4. *The Bruderhof as a Model*

In the light of the problems that we have been discussing, what can we say about the relevance of the Bruderhof model to post-industrial society? It seems very doubtful that the Bruderhof could ever be a widespread model in the naïve sense of wide-scale adoption *in toto*. Nevertheless, there are important lessons to be learned from the Bruderhof experience, both for the communitarian movement and for the larger society.

One use of the Bruderhof as a model for the communitarian movement is in demonstrating some of the hidden costs of tribalization. To the cynical, the fate of contemporary communes is always the same old story – young idealists starting out in a burst of enthusiasm to create a better world, and ending, sadder but wiser, with their dreams in ruins. The Bruderhof is a counter example, but one that shows that the observations of the cynic contain a germ of truth.

The only reason it is not possible to create a new society out of the materials of the old is that people will not release their death grip on the old. The story that one hears from communes that have disintegrated is always the same. Emotional garbage which had been thought buried safely, deep beneath the ground, comes seeping into the communal drinking water with poisonous results. Two lessons might be drawn from this – one, that men are basically evil and incapable of living together harmoniously, or the other, drawing support from the Bruderhof model, that the costs of commune formation are greater than has generally been anticipated. The Bruderhof would say that the cost is nothing less than the death of the old self, to make room for the birth of the new.

The Bruderhof model also has something to teach society as a whole about the nature and function of the collective behavior experience. Collective behavior, like fire, can be a valuable tool of society if it is properly understood and respected. Emile Durkheim points out the curious fact that primitive people seem to have a better understanding of the importance of this

phenomenon than we do, sometimes even sacrificing the functions of their precarious economies to engage in the rituals of collective behavior.¹³⁰ Western culture has tended to treat this phenomenon at best as a curiosity, at worst as a dangerous aberration. It has either been unaware of the existence of the unconscious or felt that it was inherently an uncontrollable and malignant force. The Bruderhof, through its controlled utilization of the collective behavior experience, has demonstrated that it need be neither.

If the hippie movement illustrates some of the problems of premature release of unconscious forces, the larger society shows the problems resulting from their over-long repression. A half century after Freud, there has still been no evolution of institutions in Western societies to take into account that the unconscious even exists. The school system is still largely predicated on the concept of man as a rational actor and the child as a blank slate. Cities and towns, as we have seen, have essentially disqualified themselves as possible objects of civic pride (a valuable collective behavior experience), resulting in a dangerously absurd need, on the part of many people, to vent this pride at the level of the nation state.

One result of our widespread cultural ignorance and fear of the collective behavior function is that our society lacks institutions through which mutually manipulative behavior can be temporarily abandoned. Other societies have found it important to have fiestas, saturnalia, and carnivals to provide for periodic psychic regression, release of energy, and renewal. In our own society, Christmas is supposed to serve this function but it has gotten curiously mixed with economic functions. Occasional fads and panics carry some of the weight. Among the middle class, encounter groups have tried to satisfy this need. Perhaps it also helps to explain the character of contemporary college rebellions. One need not discount the serious purpose of these rebellions to notice that the form they often take – mass frenzy, which dies down as suddenly and rapidly as it flared up – serves the important residual function of providing young people with much needed collective behavior experiences.

Societies that ignore the need for the collective behavior experience run the risk of exploding. War abroad and fascism at home provide supreme opportunities for the venting of unconscious energy. We may someday find that adequately channeled collective behavior experience is as essential for the mental health of society as getting a good night's sleep with a good quota of dreams is for the mental health of the individual.

Another value of the Bruderhof model to the larger society is that it illustrates that joy and economic productiveness are not necessarily incompatible. A basic assumption of Western culture that needs to be challenged is that cold-hearted people bring home the most bacon. This may have been true during the developmental phase of our economy, but the needs and circumstances of the post-industrial era are quite different. Many traditional objections to the intentional community as a type of organization thus need to be re-examined. Theodore Caplow discusses some of these traditional objections to what he calls 'utopian communities':

What are the disadvantages of utopia? Why, in the face of repeated demonstrations that segments of society are perfectible, is there so little interest in perfectionism?

The first disadvantage is that of scale. A utopia cannot be very large, if its members are not to have competing affiliations. The utopian formula is applicable only to small settlements, although these may combine into larger federations

Another drawback is that the time and energy spent by the utopian organization on its own maintenance is disproportionate to its resources. The rituals, the convocations, the ceremonies, the long indoctrination, the punishment of minor deviations, the conservation of obsolete methods and ideas, are all very costly

Aside from the direct costs of internal maintenance, utopian organizations tend to be inefficient because achievement is not stressed. The problem of maintaining integration and voluntarism at very high levels takes precedence over problems related to achievement. Utopian experiments in urban factories have been short-lived and rather pathetic.

A utopian organization needs an overwhelming incentive. It is misleading to discuss our utopias in terms of structure alone. Their

members are animated by a powerful faith – in perfectionism, in the mystical body of Christ, in Zionism, in the Moravian Creed. They subordinate themselves to the organization for the sake of a goal that takes precedence over any other¹³¹

Let us consider these objections, one by one.

It is certainly true that smallness of scale is essential to the communitarian model. Caplow points out that the only way of surmounting this difficulty is to establish federations of small colonies. But elements of post-industrial technology begin to make such federations feasible. There is a decentralist logic to the widespread use of electricity as a means of energy. Electrical devices such as the telephone and the television provide for easy instantaneous communications linkups. This naturally leads to a situation in which people begin to spread themselves out more evenly over the available land surface, and in which these people can easily link up in any conceivable combination for easy communication. In chapter two I spoke of how the Bruderhof horrified its more traditional Hutterian associates by running up enormous long-distance phone bills each month. The Bruderhof had learned about the value of this innovation, while the Hutterians had not. This is not to suggest that the world of the future might be comprised of millions of communes all linked together by the wires of A.T.&T., but only that such communes, or institutions very much like them, may involve a larger proportion of the population than is involved at the present time.

Caplow's second objection is to the amount of time and energy needed by intentional communities to maintain their infrastructures. The Bruderhof model certainly bears this out, but it also demonstrates that this time and energy is a major source of gratification to the members, and cannot be considered 'wasted' except from the narrowest cost-accounting perspective. In post-industrial societies, necessary labor for survival commands very little of the average person's time and energy. This labor must, of course, always be given first priority in the design of any social system, but, beyond that, it is a matter of taste whether it is preferable to devote oneself to the economic pursuit of various

luxuries and to 'leisure time' activities, or to 'the rituals, the convocations, the ceremonies, the long indoctrination', etc. of communal life.

The same factors bear on the third of Caplow's objections, that of low economic efficiency. We have seen that the Bruderhof factory does operate at a low level of efficiency but with a high level of quality control. Again it seems a matter of choice whether to strive for an economy of maximum efficiency and huge surpluses, or for an economy of greater craftsmanship.

On the final point, the need for an overwhelming altruistic incentive, Caplow is simply incorrect. We have seen that the Bruderhof provides an immediate and very personal incentive, one that 'costs' the community nothing because it is inherent in the collective life of the group itself. If people desire community, they need only restructure their own lives and perspectives. There is no need for an incentive to be provided for them.

I believe that the chief difficulty for a wider application of the Bruderhof model is none of those discussed by Caplow, but lies in the fact that the collective behavior experience and the re-socialization process, both of which are essential to the model, put individuals in touch with very intense and often long buried primal feelings, often with disastrous results. The discussion of the Bruderhof's crisis indicates some of the dangers, many of which appear in the hippie movement in connexion with the use of psychedelic drugs. In both cases, people are put in contact with very deep and very real feelings which they are not equipped, or only partially equipped, to handle, and which they must therefore obscure in a cloud of mystification.

Neither community nor society, unmixed, seem responsive to the needs of modern man. In traditional community, people are in touch with their basic feelings but enslaved to them through ignorance and superstition. The transformation to society is a long process of liberation through understanding. However, in the course of this liberation, contact with the feeling basis of life itself somehow gets lost. Intentional community, at least as exemplified by the Bruderhof, re-establishes contact with feeling life and, because man is still not capable of dealing with it, re-

enslaves him. Since it is not normally possible to erase knowledge, this re-enslavement is accomplished not through ignorance and superstition but through mystification and distortion.

There is a need, not for a simple return to community, but for a return and a new liberation. A liberation is needed in which the mind is used, not to insulate people from their feelings, but to give them an understanding of how to preserve them while living in and meeting the challenges of the world. In this sense, communitarianism seems a highly promising evolutionary and experimental movement.

It may be that there is no possible solution to the problems posed by the conflict between community and freedom. I may be accused of naïve optimism in assuming that there is. But, of course, no one really knows. Intentional community is essentially a search, an adventure, and can be valued in and of itself, regardless of whether it is ultimately successful. The most famous intentional community in American history, Brook Farm, was a failure. Years later, Nathaniel Hawthorne, who was one of the early participants, and who could hardly be called an optimistic character, reminisced in a novel about the experience:

The better life! Possibly, it would hardly look so, now; it is enough if it looked so then. The greatest obstacle to being heroic is the doubt whether one may not be going to prove one's self a fool; the truest heroism is, to resist the doubt; the profoundest wisdom, to know when it ought to be resisted, and when to be obeyed.

Yet, after all, let us acknowledge it wiser, if not more sagacious, to follow out one's day-dream to its natural consummation, although if the vision has been worth the having, it is certain never to be consummated otherwise than by failure. And what of that? Its airiest fragments, impalpable as they may be, will possess a value that lurks not in the most ponderous realities of any practicable scheme. They are not the rubbish of the mind. Whatever else I may repent of, therefore, let it be reckoned neither among my sins nor follies that I once had faith and force enough to form generous hopes of the world's destiny – yes! – and to do what in me lay for their accomplishment; even to the extent of quitting a warm fireside, flinging away a freshly-lighted cigar, and travelling far beyond the strike of city clocks, through a drifting snow-storm.¹³²