"I don't much like the word community," Jacques Derrida said in an interview; indeed "I am not even sure I like the thing" (PdS, 366/Points, 355). No wonder: "I have always had trouble vibrating in unison" (PdS, 358/Points, 348).¹

I do not deny or even doubt that we all need a certain community, that we are all nourished by our communities. But before we close down our suspicions about this word, before we close in upon ourselves in self-affirming celebration of who "we" are, before hastening to feel better about the bottomless truth of "our" "tradition" and "our" "community," I want to rehearse Derrida's equally bottomless dislike for this word. For his salutary distrust of this word provides an indispensable precondition for coping with the aporetics of community, with its unavoidable necessity and its undeniable violence.

After all, a communitas is a military formation, referring to the common defense we build against the other, the fortifications built around the city: munire, to fortify ourselves, to build a wall, to gather ourselves together (com) for protection against the other; to encircle ourselves with a common wall or barrier that protects the same from the incoming (invenire, invention) of the other, that keeps the same safe from the other. In that sense, community, that sense of community, is everything that deconstruction resists. For deconstruction is through and through l'invention de l'autre, the affirmation—viens, oui, oui—of the
tout autre (Psy., 58–61/RDR, 59–62), and so everything that is done in deconstruction takes aim at this wall of defense that community throws up against the other.

Still, the deconstruction of community would never amount to its simple destruction, to razing communal walls. “Deconstruction, let’s say it again, is not destruction or demolition” (PdS, 224/Points, 211), but rather the recognition or affirmation of “another” community, “an open ‘quasi-community’” (PdS, 362/Points, 351), beyond the community of identitarian fusion, one that is permeable and porous, its powerful sense of self-identity having been shaken loose:

Nevertheless I would like to speak of another “community” (a word I never much liked, because of its connotation of participation, indeed, fusion, identification: I see in it as many threats as promises), of another being-together than this one here, of another gathering-together of singularities, of another friendship, even though that friendship no doubt owes the essential to being- or gathering-together. (Sauf, 38/ON, 46)

One wonders what such a “community of singularities” would look like. It would no doubt be a nontotalizing community, a community which recognizes that we do not need to have everything in common, that our differences communicate, but they communicate in such a way as to recognize the abyss or gulf of singularity, the idiosyncrasy of the singular, the irreducible, untranslatable idiomatic quality of the singular. The quasi law of such a community might be something like what Levinas calls the relation without relation, the relation in which the relata absolve themselves from the relation.2 The whole idea of such a holism would be to think of the world as a loose or vague whole—and here I am picking up on a Peircean image suggested by Edith Wyschogrod—an underdetermined, open-ended, quasi system that lacks programmable effects, in which things maintain a constant interaction, in which there are no atoms of individuality, no separate substances.3 One could imagine an undecidable system, a vague, quasi community, that would communicate only in the sense of being interactive or relational, of containing non-isolable elements or moments, that would together make for a loose ensemble, at best a kind of quasi system inasmuch as it would be underdetermined, a whole that would not be so sufficiently ordered as to produce predictable, foreseeable results, but would always be vulnerable to chance and surprise from what is outside the community. Might we speak of a quasi-transcendental field, a field of anonymous, underdetermined relations or relationalities that release unforeseeable, unpredictable effects, like sparks from a roaring fire? Would that not be all the community we could tolerate?