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CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE
HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

TÖNNIES
Community and Civil Society

Ferdinand Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (first published in 1887) is a classic of social and political theory in the later-modern period. It focuses on the universally endemic clash between small-scale, kinship and neighbourhood-based 'communities' and large-scale competitive market 'societies'. This theme is explored in all aspects of life – in political, economic, legal and family structures; in art, religion and culture; in constructions of 'selfhood' and 'personhood'; and in modes of cognition, language and human understanding. Tönnies is best known as one of the 'founding fathers' of modern sociology, but the present work lays greater emphasis on his relationship to European *political* thought and to developments in philosophy since the seventeenth-century scientific revolution, particularly the legacies of Hobbes and Kant. It can be read at many different levels: as a response to developments in Bismarckian Germany; as a more general critique of the culture of modernity; as a theoretical exercise in social, political and moral science; and as an unusual commentary on the inner character of 'democratic socialism'. This new translation and introduction make Tönnies's classic but difficult work accessible to English-speaking readers interested in social and political theory, intellectual and social history, language and cultural studies, and the history of economic thought.

JOSE HARRIS is Professor of Modern History and Leverhulme Research Professor at the University of Oxford.

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FERDINAND TÖNNIES

*Community and
Civil Society*

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Acknowledgements

When *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* was first published in 1887, reviewers remarked that it would require an encyclopaedic knowledge of European thought from pre-classical times to the present to understand fully its wide-ranging frame of reference. The editor and translators of this volume cannot pretend to that range of knowledge. They are, however, very grateful to friends and colleagues who have helped in identifying some of Tönnies's obscurer quotations and allusions, or have commented on his use of scientific, mathematical and legal terms. They include Peter Dickson, Stephen Enchelmaier, Joerg Filthaut, Jim Harris, Adrian Hollis, Jill Hughes, Caroline Humfress, Michael Leask, Colin Matthew, Matthew Kempshall, Habbo Knoch, Graham Nelson, Robin Osborne, Richard Parish, Marjorie Reeves, Hanna Lund, Berndt Weisbrod and Nicholas Boyle. Anne and Howard Glennerster gave invaluable help in tracking down copies of the different editions of the text. Martin Bulmer gave particular support and encouragement at the early stages of the project. Jose Harris would like to mention a particular debt to Robert Holton who, in Glasgow several decades ago, first roused her interest in Ferdinand Tönnies by suggesting that *Gemeinschaft* was to be found close at hand in some of the most unlikely settings of advanced 'modernity' (a comment which proved to be an authentic 'Tönniesian' insight). Thanks also to staff in the Bodleian library, the British Library, the British Library of Political Science, and the Warburg Institute for help in obtaining the different editions of the text and other works by Tönnies. The Philosophy Library and the Taylor Institution in Oxford proved to be rich repositories of mid-nineteenth-century works in both German and English in editions used and cited by Tönnies. We should also like to acknowledge generous financial assistance from the British Academy and the Leverhulme Foundation.

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General introduction

The inclusion of a classic text of theoretical sociology among a series of works on political thought may seem something of an anomaly. Much of the argument of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* concentrates on human beings as social animals in their various daily habitats, with only secondary or oblique reference to the over-arching structures of political power. Nevertheless, the case for scrutinising Tönnies's early master-work through the lens of political theory is a strong one. *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* was composed during the 1880s, at a moment when it was still (just) possible for a European intellectual to aspire to familiarity with, if not total mastery of, all different aspects of the natural, social and humane sciences. Although Tönnies himself was to spend a lifetime promoting academic 'sociology', there is no evidence to suggest that either in 1887 or later he saw his work as being confined within a single disciplinary sphere. On the contrary, he conceived of both sociology and political theory as part of a cognitive continuum that embraced geometry at one extreme and narrative history at the other; and throughout his life he insisted that the true inventors and masters of theoretical sociology were Hobbes and Hume. Both disciplines were simply particular applications of 'philosophy', entailing problems of logic and epistemology comparable with those encountered in, say, linguistics, mathematical physics or the theory of law.

Moreover, in relating political behaviour to psychology, social structure, economic processes, natural history, law, religion and language, Tönnies was recognisably engaging in an exercise pursued over many earlier generations by philosophers who had written conjointly about both society and politics, from Plato and Aristotle through to Hegel and J. S. Mill. Like them he sought to explain political structures, not as idiosyncratic historical accidents, but as phenomena and fields of meaning

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visibly or invisibly linked to all aspects of human life. And like them he was concerned not just with analysing specific institutions but with devising a general logic and methodology for the social and moral sciences. In so doing Tönnies incorporated into his work many central themes from traditional political theory, and fused them with certain philosophical, political and ethical concerns of his own day. These included questions about ‘personhood’ and ‘subjectivity’, the impact of global capitalism upon national and civic institutions, the rise of class-based social stratification, the interaction of law with culture and social structure, the ever-advancing ‘sovereignty’ of public opinion, and the relevance to the study of *social* behaviour of models derived from biology and atomic physics. Tönnies’s answers to these questions were conceived in conjunction with, and as a thematic counterpoint to, his research into the scientific, mathematical and legal theories of Thomas Hobbes. Although his conclusions were in certain respects very different from those of Hobbes, his central concern, no less than that of the author of *Leviathan*, was to discover how solipsistic human beings could create a viable social order, and even live together in some degree of amity and mutual satisfaction.

Finally, of crucial interest for political thought at the outset of the twenty-first century, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* is, if not the definitive text, then certainly a seminal text, for theories of ‘community’ and ‘civil society’. Tönnies made certain claims for, or assumptions about, the nature of ‘community’ which challenge and subvert a number of widely diffused sentiments of the present day. He believed that community was necessarily ‘exclusive’, and that it embodied conceptions of ‘rationality’, ‘property’ and ‘individuality’ which were fundamentally different from those of market-oriented ‘civil society’ (including civil society run on socialist or quasi-socialist lines). On the other hand, he also linked defence of community to a cause that would now be identified with the philosophy of F. A. Hayek: namely, the critique of legal positivism and a deep antipathy to the “*unstoppable trend of all rationalising legislative law*”. Without denying Tönnies his reputation as one of the three ‘founding fathers’ (along with Durkheim and Weber) of European sociology, there is therefore every reason to include his work in a library of volumes on the history of political thought.

One of Tönnies’s explicit aims as a theorist was to bring analytical philosophy ‘down to earth’ and to clothe it in history, culture, psychology and

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It is therefore unsurprising that many aspects of his own background can be detected in his writings. Like many of the greatest analysts of human society, Tönnies came from the geographical periphery of the civilisation whose characteristics he was trying to explain. He was born in 1855 among the marshlands of east Schleswig, in a timber-built manorhouse where parents and children co-habited with servants and animals – and whose continuous piecemeal re-building over many generations was to become a symbol for Tönnies's mental picturing of an 'organic' human community. His father was a substantial cattle-breeder with merchant-banking and bill-broking interests as far afield as Hamburg, his mother the descendant of a long line of Lutheran pastors. While he was still a small child the duchy of Schleswig was annexed to Prussia, which in 1870 was to become the nucleus of Bismarck's newly proclaimed German empire. When he was ten years old, his father's banking business brought a move to the neighbouring town of Husum, where Tönnies attended the local grammar school and received an intensive education in Greek, Latin, and classical German literature. A fellow pupil was the son of the great Schleswigian genre poet, Theodor Storm, and Tönnies was to become the intimate friend and disciple of the poet himself. Many traces of this childhood – the polarity of 'Gothic' and 'classical' themes, the cultural tension between locality and large-scale empire, the easy familiarity with the semi-technical languages of both agriculture and commercial finance, the moral passion and rhetorical fervour of the preacher – are all to be found in the argument, style and imagery of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Throughout his life, from the early days of the Bismarckian empire through to the Nazi *Machtergreifung*, Tönnies was to bring to social analysis both the universalist frame of reference of an enlightenment intellectual *and* the more homespun perspective of the provincial backwoodsman. In this latter guise he came only painfully to terms with metropolitan mass culture, the psychic anonymity of advanced 'modernity', and the intricate and often brutal realities of state and imperial power.

Nevertheless, though illuminating, the influence of Tönnies's background can be overstated. Despite strong attachment to their 'homeland', neither the young Tönnies nor his family showed any signs of resenting the absorption of Schleswig into the larger German Reich; and their family fortunes certainly flourished in the explosion of economic modernisation that German unification brought in its train. Tönnies's

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university education was varied and cosmopolitan, involving study at Strasbourg, Jena, Berlin, Leipzig, Heidelberg, Kiel and Tübingen. He received his first doctorate from Tübingen, in Hellenic philology, at the age of twenty-two (an even earlier attempt having been rejected by Berlin). As a student he developed an omnivorous interest in such fast-moving areas of intellectual enquiry as form-criticism, evolutionary biology, astronomy and atomic physics; and he devoured the arguments of Lange's *History of Materialism* 'with great joy'. In his autobiography he recorded that he soon rejected the orthodox theology of his forebears, eventually replacing it by a form of ultra-modernist quasi-mysticism that sought 'advance from the religion of the Son to the religion of the Spirit . . . whom with the Apostles I gladly call the Holy Spirit' (an oblique reference to Joachim of Fiore, the twelfth-century visionary whose prophecies of the 'third age' attracted widespread interest among secular thinkers of Tönnies's generation). His intimate friend over many years was a fellow Schleswigian, Friedrich Paulsen, who was to become a professor at Berlin; but Paulsen's influence carried Tönnies, initially at least, not in the direction of the culture of his homeland, but towards the social-democratic politics of Ferdinand Lassalle, the seventeenth-century scientific revolution, and the epistemological theories of Hume and Kant. Between 1878 and 1914 Tönnies paid many visits to England and in 1905 spent several months in the United States of America; and although he was horrified by the conjunction of plutocracy, poverty and political hypocrisy that he found in those countries, he was nevertheless to become a warm admirer of their constitutional liberties. Much of his professional life was to be spent in Kiel, at the centre of one of Germany's most heavily urbanised industrial heartlands.

All of these newer, modernist, influences were to be abiding points of reference throughout Tönnies's career; and his emergence as a theorist of, and seeming apologist for, the culture of small-scale traditional communities appears, initially at least, to have been hesitant and largely accidental. Perhaps in response to his failure in Berlin, he resolved after taking his first doctorate to shift his interests from classical literature to philosophy, particularly the study of mind, epistemology and scientific method. Under the influence of Paulsen he began work on the pre-Kantian 'rationalist' tradition, in the course of which he stumbled upon the Molesworth edition of the English and Latin works of Thomas Hobbes. In 1878 he paid the first of several highly productive research visits to England, where he worked on Hobbesian materials located in the British Museum,

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St John's College, Oxford, and the country seat of the Duke of Devonshire, Hardwick Hall. During two and a half months of intense intellectual excitement, Tönnies uncovered manuscript versions of several of Hobbes's works that appeared to have been ignored by scholars since the late seventeenth century (among them *The Elements of Law, De Corpore*, a presentation copy of *Behemoth* and several lesser fragments). The following year he published four short articles on these manuscripts in a German philosophical quarterly, commenting particularly on Hobbes's contributions to geometry, mechanics and the theory of perception. At this stage in Tönnies's career he appears to have been planning both a work on Hobbes as a technical philosopher, and a wider study that would synthesise the competing 'rationalist' and 'empiricist' traditions of the European enlightenment.

His research on Hobbes might have seemed the obvious subject for Tönnies's *Habilitation* thesis, required to qualify him for a chair in a German university. Instead, however, he opted to extend his advanced studies into a rather different field – a decision that he was to recall in his autobiography as 'one of the many failures of my life'. The reasons for this change of priorities are not wholly clear. It may have been linked to his fear that mere archival scholarship was a 'hobby for amateurs', not 'real science'; a proper understanding of Hobbes's place in the history of thought required a vast programme of further reading and mastery of a wide range of theoretical issues – all of which necessarily delayed the writing of a major scholarly work. Tönnies was already studying Adam Smith, Ricardo and Marx (as exemplars of a particular strand of enlightenment thought) during his fruitful trip to England in 1878. The following winter a growing interest in Hobbes's *political* ideas led him into 'rationalistic natural law' and the writings of Pufendorf, Rousseau and Kant – which in turn led him on to modern Roman law, to the 'historical' reaction of Savigny, Gierke and Maine, and to the rising tide of contemporary writing (American and antipodean as well as European) on anthropology, ethnology and sociology. From the late 1870s he was also working on Spinoza, from whom he derived many of the ideas about will, nature and sense experience that were to become central to his own understanding of human behaviour. In the sphere of politics, he was irritated by the continual debates on 'individualism versus collectivism' that dominated much popular discussion of the 1880s and revolved around an antithesis of a merely ideological kind which he regarded as trite and misleading. Out of this powerful cocktail came the 'sketch' of *Gemeinschaft und*

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Gesellschaft – counterposing two fundamentally contrasting models of human social organisation – which Tönnies presented to the philosophy department at Kiel as part of his *Habilitation* process in 1881.

This early draft of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* contained some intimations of the growing despondency about the cultural erosion of his homeland that had been gestating in Tönnies since his return to Schleswig after 1877, poignantly nurtured by the poetry and personal companionship of Theodor Storm. He became increasingly convinced at this time that, despite many outward trappings of continuity, the traditional culture of households, villages and small-scale civic communities was dying. It was being inexorably swept away by the rise of mass marketing, limited liability, and large-scale business corporations (trends to some extent exemplified in the commercial interests of his own family). Over the same period Bismarck's repression of the Social Democrats, coupled with his own scepticism about the inflated hopes of future reform harboured by supporters of Crown Prince Frederick, induced in Tönnies a growing disenchantment with the much vaunted achievements of the new imperial German Reich.

Nevertheless, for several years there was little outward sign that the themes sketched out in Tönnies's *Habilitation* thesis would become the core of his life's work and the basis of his reputation as a major social theorist. In 1884 he returned to England to collect further material for his study of Hobbes. During this visit he signed a contract with an English publishing house for publication of *The Elements of Law* and for a new scholarly edition of Hobbes's *Behemoth*. He was also greatly flattered by the interest expressed in his work by the editor of the recently founded journal *Mind*, George Croom Robertson. Tönnies showed Robertson his German articles on Hobbes, and was delighted to be introduced both to his intimate domestic circle (Croom Robertson was uncle to the brilliant Llewellyn Davies family) and to Frederick Pollock, the great English jurisprudentialist and authority on Spinoza. Two years later, however, his English publisher unexpectedly withdrew from the Hobbes contract – an event that coincided with publication of Croom Robertson's own volume on *Hobbes*, which made substantial use of the newly identified manuscripts, but with only scant and somewhat disparaging reference to their discovery and use by Tönnies.

Tönnies wrote a complimentary review of Croom Robertson's *Hobbes*; but his correspondence with Paulsen shows that he believed it had been "scooped out" of his own research without proper acknowledgement and

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that, together with the termination of his contract, it had seriously damaged his own prospects as a budding Hobbes scholar. The gloom and melancholy of his writings of this period may indeed have been connected, as many commentators have assumed, to his despondency about the fate of traditional north-German culture, but their immediate trigger was Tönnies's acute sense of betrayal at the hands of his English publishers and his erstwhile English patron. One positive outcome of the Croom Robertson episode, however, was that it demonstrated the dangers of excessive delay in publication. The result was a period of intensive revision of Tönnies's *Habilitation* thesis. The greatly amplified version was rushed out in the summer of 1887 as the first edition of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, published with the provocative sub-title 'An Essay on Communism and Socialism as Historical Social Systems'.¹

Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft was to be issued eight times during Tönnies's lifetime, the final edition appearing in 1935 shortly before his death. Tönnies himself was to spend much of his career explaining to readers, and to himself, what the argument of the book was all about; and certainly it is a work that at many points conveys many possible meanings. Yet for an essay in social and political analysis that was pondered over by its author for nearly fifty years, during an epoch that spanned the regime of Bismarck through to the Third Reich, the actual text was altered surprisingly little. The biggest changes came in the second edition of 1912, when the radical-sounding sub-title of 1887 was replaced by the more neutral phrase 'Fundamental Concepts in Pure Sociology'. But even then, apart from a slightly more optimistic account of the position of women, the changes made were largely verbal rather than substantive or methodological. *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* was and remained a work of precocious immaturity. Immensely ambitious in scope, inspired by a comprehensive vision of a common human destiny, and steeped in erudition from many disciplines, it was nevertheless frequently tortuous and obscure in the exposition and knitting together of its central arguments.

It was also an enterprise with several quite separate core themes or narratives that did not always slot easily into each other. At the most obvious level the work aimed to provide a systematic, atemporal framework for analysis of the major building-blocks of any human society – i.e. individual and group psychology; social and economic relationships; art, religion and culture; and the structure and operation of politics and law. At a

¹ On the multiple difficulties involved in rendering this sub-title into English, see 'A note on translation', p. xlii.

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second more tentative level, and one that was to generate much misinterpretation, the study sketched out a theory of general historical change – a theory that aimed to encompass *both* the two grand cycles of European history from Hellenic times to the present, *and* the transition from past ‘communism’ to some kind of ‘socialist’ model of society in the near or distant future. And at a third, less conspicuous (though in Tönnies’s view more fundamental) level, it was an essay in the logic of the social and moral sciences, designed to reconcile the competing theories of perception and epistemology that had riven European philosophy since the early seventeenth century. At each of these three levels, Tönnies’s analysis was organised around a series of conceptual binary opposites; it hinged upon abstract concepts, or what he termed ‘normal types’, which in the realm of theory were mutually exclusive, but which co-existed and interacted with each other in the ‘real’ historical world.

In the text of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* these different arguments were unravelled over the course of three books. Although each book was packed with detail (about physiology, perception, social structure, economic and legal history) the methodology was predominantly analytical and dialectical rather than empirical; i.e. it was designed, after the manner of Kant, to identify (and where necessary to reconcile) certain necessary truths about the character of all human societies. Book One dealt with the contrasting socio-economic and administrative arrangements found in small-scale ‘Communities’ and in large-scale market-based ‘Civil Societies’. Book Two dealt with the two contrasting types of human intelligence and rationality (i.e. the human ‘will’) which Tönnies saw as corresponding to these two rival modes of social organisation; while Book Three dealt with their contrasting institutions and underlying principles in the spheres of politics, government and law. Tönnies himself subsequently believed, however, that his points might have emerged more clearly if he had reversed Books One and Two; and in summarising his argument it may be helpful to the reader if that reverse order is adopted here, and the discussion of human psychology is considered *before* the account of social structure and institutions.

Tönnies’s portrayal of the physical basis of ‘will’ (in Book Two) closely followed Spinoza in treating all conscious human activity, ranging from reflex muscular movements through to high-level mental abstraction, as ultimately grounded in ‘pleasure’. In describing the actual content of will, however, his account was more deeply indebted to the ethical and cognitive theories of Kant. All expressions of the will lay somewhere upon an

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axis between, at one extreme, a mode of consciousness that was ‘natural’, spontaneous and unreflecting (what Tönnies called *Wesenwille*), and, at the other extreme, a mode of consciousness that was artificial, deliberative and geared to pre-meditative ‘rational calculation’ (what Tönnies in his first edition called *Willkür*, and changed in 1920 to *Kürwille*). At all points on this axis the exercise of will was linked to the idea of ‘freedom’; but whereas with ‘natural will’ freedom entailed unself-conscious fulfilment of a function or duty within a predetermined social context, ‘rational will’ implied detached and unlimited choice and absolute ‘self-sovereignty’ (a secular variant of the unconditioned, ‘arbitrary’ free will of Augustinian Christianity). Both forms of will were in Tönnies’s view latent in all human beings; but each was more typical in some categories of individual than in others. Thus rational, calculative will as a ‘normal type’ was more predominant in men than women, in adults of both sexes than children, in city-dwellers than villagers, in traders than creative artists, in intellectuals rather than ordinary folk, and in practitioners of the ‘tectonic arts’ rather than among poets and musicians – although none of this was to deny that there were many aberrations from these norms, such as male poets, small-town businesswomen, and intellectuals who transcended the boundaries of their calling. More fundamentally, these different kinds of will entailed, in their more extreme forms, the emergence of two totally different types of human psyche. The exercise of ‘natural will’ fostered development of the human ‘self’ (a mode of identity wherein human ‘subjects’ were in harmony with their habitats and closely identified with, rather than differentiated from, other human beings). By contrast, the exercise of ‘rational will’ led to development of the human ‘person’ (whereby human ‘subjects’ created or invented their own identities, were abstracted and estranged from their natural selves, and perceived other people and the external world as mere things or ‘objects’). The perfect ‘flower’ of *Wesenwille* was the man or woman of spontaneous creative genius (‘naïve’ in the sense used by German Romantic poets) whereas the ‘typical exemplar’ of *Kürwille* was the shrewd and self-conscious ‘rational actor’, taking on a ‘role’ and assuming the ‘character of a person, like a mask held up before the face’.

Tönnies’s twofold construction of the human psyche was closely intertwined with his account of social and economic organisation, set out in greatest detail in Book One but forming a continuous thread throughout the whole narrative. The contrast here was between an ‘organic’ Community (*Gemeinschaft*), bound together by ties of kinship, fellowship,

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custom, history and communal ownership of primary goods; and a 'mechanical' Society (*Gesellschaft*), where free-standing individuals interacted with each other through self-interest, commercial contracts, a 'spatial' rather than 'historical' sense of mutual awareness, and the external constraints of formally enacted laws. In Community individuals developed their identities within the wider, co-existing, whole, whereas in civil and commercial Society individual identity was ontologically prior to that of the wider group, attachment to which was merely secondary and instrumental. Communities were both grounded in, and fostered the growth of, intuitive 'conscience' and natural will, whereas Societies were both grounded in, and fostered the growth of, 'self-consciousness', rational calculation and arbitrary will. Such dichotomies could be detected in all spheres of existence, from economic relations through to the deepest structures of human thought. Thus in Community material production was primarily for 'use' not 'gain', and was tied to communal allocation of all but the most trivial of goods and services. Art and religion were inseparable from the routine practices of domestic, vocational and civic life; and knowledge and practical skills were transmitted by inheritance, experience and example. In Society, by contrast, all personal ties were subordinate to the claims of abstract individual freedom. Both property and labour were transformed into abstract marketable 'commodities', their 'value' measured by a yet more abstract commodity in the form of money. Production migrated from the self-governing workshop into the mass-production factory; art was banished into auction rooms and museums; religion – once the heart-beat of daily life – became deistic, doctrinal and dead; while knowledge and 'advice' was acquired by hiring an expert. In Community reason itself took the form of shared practical reason ('common sense' in its literal meaning), whereas in Society reason meant either private computation of profit and loss, or individual intellects grappling with 'abstract universals'. In Community, not just work but life itself was a 'vocation' or 'calling', whilst in Society it was like a 'business' organised for the attainment of some hypothetical 'happy end'.

Such dichotomies necessarily spilt over into the realms of politics, jurisprudence, rights and law, which Tönnies termed the 'commonwealth'. These themes were addressed most explicitly in Book Three of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, though there were recurrent earlier references. As with the different forms of will, Tönnies was anxious to insist that attributes of both 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft' were latent and co-existent within all political and legal orders at all periods in history. In

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both micro and macro social arrangements there was an analytical distinction to be made between mere heaps of contiguous individuals, and collectivities which had acquired a common political ‘personality’. In a Community, however, collective personality evolved incrementally over time in a manner largely invisible to the social observer, whereas in a Society its origin would be clearly marked by some specifically constitutive historical event.

In both cases the framework of law was a man-made, ‘positive’ thing, although in Communities law emerged from common experience and shared work, whereas in large-scale pluralist Societies it was the product of juristic and administrative rationality and formal legislation. In a Community conflict was kept at bay by a subliminal shared morality, reinforced by feelings of stigma and shame, whereas a Society was policed by ‘public opinion’, ‘politeness’ and ‘good manners’. In a *Gemeinschaft* system, political authority was rooted in a primordial division of functions deriving from sex, childbirth, fighting and physical strength – the patriarchal authority of the male head of household surviving and being legitimised by customary law long after its rationale in force or necessity had declined. As a Community developed, patriarchal authority would be supplemented by, and often dovetailed with, other forms of authority based on further specialised functions – those of the military leader, priest, judge and skilled occupational group. Such roles gradually gave rise to the characteristic public institutions of advanced *Gemeinschaft* communities – manorial and borough courts, self-governing religious and occupational guilds, chartered corporations, and a public assembly based on capacity for military service. Within such a functional and hierarchical system Tönnies acknowledged many dangers of oppression and domination – dangers that in a perfectly-integrated community would be offset by shared religious values, reciprocal networks of rights and duties, artistic and liturgical celebrations of kinship and common ancestry, and powerful legal limitations on both personal freedoms and private property. Where such arrangements were absorbed into larger polities they were often crushed or crowded out by alien domination, serfdom and predatory professional armies. But where they survived as ‘civic commonwealths’, as in the Hellenistic polis or the Germanic ‘free cities’ of the later middle ages, then they constituted *Gemeinschaft* in its highest and purest form: a form that still endured in certain residual institutions and practices within the atomised, competitive, imperialist cultures of the late nineteenth century.

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As a system of politics, *Gesellschaft* shared many of the outward forms of *Gemeinschaft* – such as representative assemblies, specialised public functions, and a framework of positive law – but their underlying essence was quite different. The isolated, suspicious, welfare-maximising ‘rational actors’ of *Gesellschaft* could never hope in themselves to comprise a united ‘natural’ personality; but the functional imperatives of commerce decreed that each of them needed some higher power to enforce the rules of contract against their fellow citizens. The result was the creation of an ‘artificial person’ – either a prince or an assembly, or a mixture of the two – who, like the board of a joint-stock company, was invested with the powers of the individual ‘mandators’ and represented their rights and interests, both against external parties and in disputes with each other. Such, in Tönnies’s view, was the essence of the role of the state in competitive market Society. This role had been both induced and legitimised by the modern revival of Roman law, with its emphasis on free contract, its indifference to the very existence of communities and corporations, and its remorseless undermining of local particularism, archaic practices and all forms of popular historic ‘custom’.

Paradoxically, however, the very minimalism of this system – created simply to serve the interests of owners of private property – contained within itself the seeds of something quite different. By appropriating to its own purposes the system of positive law, the state itself was turned into the expositor of ‘what the law shall be’. By eliminating all lesser and rival sources of authority, the state came increasingly to be coterminous with Society and with the ‘idea of Society as a single all-embracing rational subject’. By using coercion to secure freedom of contract, the state implicitly created precedents for other kinds of sovereign intervention in the balance of market forces and the distribution of economic power. And by destroying *Gemeinschaft* and universalising the mental outlook of arbitrary rational will, the modern state was inadvertently opening up a Pandora’s box of boundless and ungovernable popular desire. Such trends, Tönnies argued, increasingly foreclosed upon any return to *Gemeinschaft* arrangements of the traditional kind; but they also imposed intolerable strains and contradictions upon the stability of *Gesellschaft* as a *political* system. On the outcome of these tensions Tönnies was pessimistic, sybilline and vague. They might provoke an attempted working-class seizure of power; they might result in a system of nationally based state socialism, dominated by technocratic elites and big business; or they might lead to the emergence of an all-encompassing ‘world state’, based

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on some kind of ‘socialist’ *Gesellschaft*. All of these eventualities threatened to bring crashing down with them much more than the system of private commercial contract. As with the eclipse of the Roman empire, Tönnies concluded, ‘the entire civilisation has been turned upside down by a modern way of life dominated by civil and market Society, and in this transformation civilisation itself is coming to an end’.

Few theorists of society have been more omnivorous in their reading than Tönnies, and none more ambitious in their attempts to synthesise many different disciplines. The text and successive introductions to *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* listed the contemporary theorists to whom he felt particularly indebted. Pride of place was given in the first edition to Sir Henry Maine, Otto Gierke and Karl Marx, while warm mention was made of August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Albert Schaeffle and Adolph Wagner. Other nineteenth-century authors cited included the anthropologists Bachhofen and Morgan, the legal theorists Savigny and Ihering, the economic historians Rodbertus and Roscher, and the English psycho-physiologists, Romanes and G. H. Lewes. For guidance on scientific method Tönnies looked back to earlier theorists, particularly Hobbes, Spinoza and Hume; and on ethical issues he referred frequently to classical writers, among them Aristotle, Plato, Cicero and Seneca. There were traces of many other influences not mentioned by name, among them Nietzsche, Clerk Maxwell’s *Matter and Motion*, and the Lamarckian school of evolutionary biology. An important influence not specifically cited in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* but acknowledged by Tönnies elsewhere was the political scientist, Lorenz von Stein, whom he saw as an important transmitter of Hobbesian thought, and as one of the first to identify ‘Society’ as a major new socio-cultural phenomenon of the early nineteenth century. An important background source was Theodor Mommsen’s 1870 edition of Justinian’s *Digest*, which used the Latin terms ‘*communio*’ (*Gemeinschaft*) and ‘*societas*’ (*Gesellschaft*) to distinguish collective from individual property ownership under Roman law in a way that exactly corresponded with Tönnies’s own usage. And the fact that Tönnies was so closely acquainted with many Roman law sources and texts suggests that a hidden backcloth to his work was the impassioned debate on the proposed codification of German law that was taking place in academic and political circles throughout the 1880s. Another key authority was the Scottish enlightenment theorist Adam Ferguson, whose dualistic vision of ‘civil society’ – as both the prerequisite of peace and prosperity and the harbinger of psychic atomism, corruption and

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moral decline – closely prefigured Tönnies’s own characterisation of large-scale *Gesellschaft*.

All of this might seem to suggest that as a theorist Tönnies was simply a grand synthesiser of other people’s ideas; and certainly there were many points where *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* closely followed the argument and terminology of some other writer. What he himself saw as the fundamental gist and inner structure of his argument – the link between two different kinds of will and two different conceptions of human freedom – was deeply rooted in the accounts of pure and practical reason advanced by Immanuel Kant (although Kant was curiously unmentioned by name except in Tönnies’s 1887 preface). More explicitly, his depiction of modern industry clearly echoed Book One of Marx’s *Capital*, while his analysis of the historical transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* was closely illustrated with quotations from Gierke and Maine. Yet Tönnies’s use of and dependence upon earlier authors was in some respects deceptive. He was by no means indiscriminately eclectic, as can be seen from the fact that he deliberately rejected or ignored certain major theorists whose ideas might have been expected to engage with his particular concerns. And there were many respects in which his account of society, politics and history differed quite radically from that of authors whose works he most admired. Such differences were sometimes spelt out and sometimes glossed over (including some tinkering with the texts of his cited authorities, so as to bring their accounts more closely into line with his own!).

These points cannot be dealt with in detail here, but a few examples may suffice. One obvious omission was any reference to J. S. Mill, whose *A System of Logic* was widely regarded in late nineteenth-century Europe as well as in Britain, even by those who disagreed with it, as a classic exercise in scientific and ‘sociological’ method. Tönnies was certainly familiar with Mill’s writings, but dismissed his theories as ‘flabby’ (he appears *not* to have known the work of Mill’s defeated antagonist, William Whewell, whose approach in *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* was in many respects in tune with his own.) Another rejected authority was Hegel, in whose works ‘all historical insight, as well as any theory of real relationships between individual will and social groups is blotted out’ (preface to 1912 edition). A more surprising exclusion was Charles Darwin, whose name appeared only once in the text of 1887, and was removed altogether in 1912. The reasons for this seem to have been twofold. One was that, while Tönnies had no fundamental objection to

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Darwin's *biological* theories, he did strongly object to their over-literal application to the social sciences – a trend already apparent in some quarters in Germany in the 1880s, and in full spate a quarter-century later. In Tönnies's view (not always made clear in the textual thickets of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* but spelt out in other writings) the 'organic' character of a social institution did *not* lie in its biological traits but in the binding nature of the intrinsically 'sociological' relationships that held it together. The conception of either Community or Society as a physical 'body' was merely a powerful analogue, nothing more. A second objection was that, at least in the context of *social* organisms, Tönnies preferred the 'inheritance-of-acquired-characteristics' model of evolution advanced by Lamarck, Spencer and to some degree by Darwin himself, to the 'random-mutation' model espoused by many second-generation German Darwinians. Whatever might be the case with *biological* mutations, it appeared to Tönnies manifestly clear that, through the medium of *social* evolution, the results of practice and habit *were* transmissible, and that acquired skills and outlooks *were* passed on from mothers and fathers to daughters and sons.

Even towards his favoured authorities Tönnies's approach was more critical and selective than has often been supposed. He drew heavily upon Maine for the notion of 'contract' as the hidden agency that transformed settled Communities into modern civil Societies. Yet he did not share Maine's view that such a movement was inherently favourable to human individuality and personal freedom. In particular his account of the status of women was markedly different from that of Maine. He criticised Maine's dismissal of the view that in a pre-*Gemeinschaft* phase of history human relations had been matriarchal; and he certainly differed from Maine's belief that women's position had been uniformly advanced by the rise of contractarian Society. In Tönnies's view quite the contrary was the case: women had been robbed of status, dignity and function by being thrust into the market-place, and forced to adopt the 'roles' and wear the 'masks' of men. There were similar differences of emphasis between Tönnies and Gierke. From Gierke Tönnies derived one of his most powerful themes – that the 'modernist' revival of Roman law had been an all-powerful theoretical engine for discrediting and subverting customary and intuitive ways of life and thought. Concealed within Tönnies's extensive quotations from *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht* were a number of minor modifications to Gierke's text which made it appear that traditional village life had been even *more* exclusively 'communitarian' than Gierke

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himself had suggested. With respect to nineteenth-century practice, however, Tönnies's critique of Gierke was just the reverse: in private letters and later in published works, he accused the great legal historian of constantly discerning signs and portents of contemporary communitarian re-awakening that were really nothing more than invented pastiches of an irrecoverable past.

Even more important than Tönnies's relation to Gierke and Maine was the use he made of Marx and Hobbes. When *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* first appeared it was interpreted in many quarters as a Marxian work. Its account of economic history closely replicated Marx's analysis, not simply in general outline, but in more technical matters, such as the nature of the labour contract, the expropriation of surplus value, the impact of mass-production techniques upon the human psyche, and the compulsive systemic expansionism of large-scale capital. In his 1887 introduction, Tönnies declared himself 'happy to draw attention' to Marx's name and criticised those who had dismissed his teaching as 'utopian' or 'immoral'. Nevertheless, both in the various editions of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, and in Tönnies's other writings and activities, there were many features that distinguished his views from those of the author of *Capital*. One of these was Tönnies's deep scepticism about how far the 'contradictions' of global capitalism could conceivably be resolved by so blunt an instrument as proletarian revolution. Another was that, despite his criticism of the nostalgia of Gierke, Tönnies himself was to spend much of his life actively fostering 'communitarian' developments within market Society – through the Ethical Culture movement, consumer and producer co-operatives, and 'guild socialism' (all of them, by Marx's standards, mere tinkering with Utopia). There were also more technical differences in their understanding of economics and history. Tönnies placed much more emphasis than Marx upon the contract-proffering small trader as the catalyst of change and much less on 'division of labour' (he believed specialisation of functions had characterised small communities for centuries, and had reinforced rather than subverted close neighbourhood ties). And, although Tönnies has often been criticised for clinging too closely to the Marxian (and Ricardian) 'labour theory of value', the 1912 edition certainly acknowledged other approaches; while Tönnies's later monograph on Marx (1922) quite explicitly argued that Marx's account needed to be supplemented by the theory of marginal utility. A perhaps more profound difference was that Tönnies (in theory if not always in practice) was committed to the view

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that the job of the social and political scientist was to uncover the ‘healthy’ working of a social system or body politic (i.e. the forces that held it together as a functioning ‘unity’). Marx, on the other hand, was clearly much more interested in conflict and social pathology (i.e. in the forces that made systems fall apart).

Tönnies’s introduction to the first edition of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* did not identify Thomas Hobbes as one of his guiding mentors; but Hobbes appeared frequently in the text and in prefaces to later editions, and there can be little doubt that he was to a large extent the *éminence grise* of the whole enterprise. Nevertheless, although not explicitly made by Tönnies himself, a distinction needs to be drawn between his debt to Hobbes as a technical philosopher, and his more specific treatment of Hobbes’s social, political and legal theories. Mention has already been made of Tönnies’s earlier engagement with Hobbes’s work (later to result in an ambitious study which portrayed ‘the philosopher of Malmesbury’ as the fulcrum of several centuries of European intellectual history). Despite his undoubted interest in Hobbes’s political ideas, and his claim that Hobbes was a pioneering sociologist, Tönnies’s earlier and more fundamental concern was with Hobbes as a logician, epistemologist and theorist of science and mathematics. He saw him as the toppler of Aristotelian theories of nature and matter, the champion of nominalism against linguistic mysticism, the inventor of truly ‘scientific’ political science, and the forerunner of that combination of *a priori* analysis and concrete empiricism that he himself strove to emulate. Hobbes, in Tönnies’s view, was the inventor of the conceptual ‘ideal type’ (or *Normalbegriff*), which enabled the theorist to pare down human nature, power structures and social practices to their bare essentials, like geometrical figures. As heir and interpreter of Hobbes’s *philosophical* legacy, Tönnies insisted that knowledge of mere facts about history was pointless, except as demonstrating or illuminated by some analytical model or theorem. It was Hobbes’s example that lay behind his claim that the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, *Wesenwille* and *Kürwille*, were simply analytical tools designed to explicate the general character of social organisation and human psychology: they were not normative judgements about behaviour, nor were they factual descriptions of particular events, systems or personalities.

Tönnies was to reiterate this claim throughout his life, but it nevertheless raised certain problems about the argument of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* and its interpretation. For, as indicated above, Tönnies’s narrative seemed to go much further than simply suggesting that both

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models were latent in all historical situations, like angles in topography. On the contrary, it explicitly suggested that – twice over in two long cycles of human history – communitarian arrangements had been eroded and ultimately destroyed by the rise of market Society, fuelled by theoretical developments in Roman law. This process had led to the collapse of ancient civilisation, and was currently bringing about the collapse of its modern equivalent. All of this makes it difficult to accept his claim that *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* was nothing more than an exercise in analytical social science; and, despite Tönnies's discipleship of Hobbes as a pure philosopher, it opens up some important substantive differences between them in terms of social and political thought. Moreover, in these latter spheres there were signs that Tönnies's rejection of pre-Hobbesian classical notions was far from complete, a view confirmed by his later treatment, in his 1896 monograph on Hobbes, of the contrasting political theories of Hobbes and Aristotle.

The chief explicit references to Aristotle in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* came in Tönnies's portrayal of small-scale communities as a natural outgrowth of the autochthonous household 'Oekonomie'. There were, however, many other implicitly Aristotelian allusions: most notably in Tönnies's reluctance to see commerce as adding anything of genuine 'worth' to exchange values, his particular dislike (despite his family interests in this sphere) of trading in money, his idealisation of the self-governing polis, and his frequent resort when analysing both social and physical organisms to a dichotomy of 'form' and 'substance'. Moreover, in many of his deviations from Hobbes there were certain oblique echoes, if not of Aristotle himself, then of an older tradition of political thought of which Aristotle was the exemplar. The most obvious was the very striking contrast between Tönnies's vision of the *concordia* that naturally evolved in a properly functioning *Gemeinschaft*, and the negative portrayal of pre-contractarian social relations in chapter XVII of *Leviathan* ('in all places, where men have lived by small families, to rob and spoil one another, has been a trade').

A second major difference between Tönnies and Hobbes lay in their treatments of the underlying thrust of social relations in advanced commercial Society. Tönnies's account of the setting-up of an 'artificial' sovereign power to replace private violence by public enforcement of contract, although much less detailed than Hobbes's account, nevertheless seemed superficially to mirror very closely that of his mentor; and in the revised edition of 1912 he referred specifically to 'Hobbes's people' as

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being identical with ‘their descendants in my *Gesellschaft*’. In fact, however, the impact of state and Society upon the inhabitants of Tönnies’s *Gesellschaft* was in many respects the exact opposite of what was envisaged in *De Cive* and *Leviathan*. Whereas in Hobbes’s system, artificial social and political institutions tamed and civilised naked human aggression, in Tönnies’s system they fostered and unleashed it. Whereas Hobbes’s men and women moved out of isolation into sociability, in Tönnies’s account they moved in the opposite direction. Whereas Hobbesian citizens wore their ‘masks’ as a sign of political representation, in *Gesellschaft* the mask served, at best as a fig-leaf for commercial calculation, in its more extreme form as an artificial substitute for the human inner self or ‘soul’. And while Hobbes envisaged that an ‘absolute’ political authority was the precondition of autonomous, pluralist, relatively free social institutions, to Tönnies it seemed that it must inevitably lead to the wholesale swallowing-up of ‘Society’ by the state. In all of this there was an underlying assumption that ‘natural’ social relations were beneficent and normal, while artificial ones were predatory and pathological: a distinction that bore all the hallmarks, not of the ‘mechanistic’ outlook of the scientific enlightenment, but of Aristotelian and mediaeval scholastic roots.

When it first appeared in 1887 *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* was largely ignored by the academic philosophers to whom it was primarily addressed. It sold only a few hundred copies and singularly failed to secure for Tönnies the university professorship to which he aspired. His hopes of such a post were further undermined by the Prussian government’s disapproval of his support for the 1890s’ Ethical Culture movement and his supposed links with the Social Democratic party (although Tönnies in fact disliked many features of Lassallean ‘state socialism’ and was eventually to join the SPD only as an act of personal defiance against Nazism in 1932). He was to remain a *Privatdozent* in Kiel until his mid-fifties, while continuing to carry out research on many different fronts; he completed his major study on Hobbes, wrote seminal articles on the philosophy of language and ‘social signs’, and increasingly ventured into empirical sociological studies. Not until 1912, when the re-issue of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* for the first time attracted widespread recognition, did he obtain the senior chair at the university of Kiel that had so long eluded him. After the First World War Tönnies’s writings became increasingly well known in Europe and North America, and *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* acquired the status of a canonical text of

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classical sociology, although in Britain Tönnies continued to be known chiefly as a ‘political scientist’ and interpreter of the ‘English school’ of political thought (*New Statesman*, 15 July 1916).

Despite its belated fame, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* continued to baffle and elude readers as much as it had done when first published. In his preface to the first edition Tönnies had claimed that the most important conclusion to be drawn from his work was that fashionable clichés about ‘individualism *versus* collectivism’ were meaningless: instead there were simply two distinct forms of ‘individualism’, the unself-conscious kind, which was created by and naturally flowed from *Gemeinschaft*, and the self-conscious kind which fostered and was manufactured by the culture of *Gesellschaft*. This was not, however, how the book’s message appeared to its readers, many of whom persisted in interpreting it either as an essay in Romanticism and mediaevalism or as a political tract. In defending himself against charges of utopian anti-modernism, Tönnies was consistently to maintain that the dichotomies he had identified were not time-specific or mutually exclusive, and that contrasting types of institution – and contrasting attributes within a single institution – would always co-exist in any historical setting. Thus a parliament or assembly might be the creation of a specific ‘artificial’ act, but it would at the same time be composed of people who were linked together to a greater or lesser degree by ties of kinship, neighbourhood, history, language and culture. Similarly, a human individual would simultaneously experience some degree of both *Wesenwille* and *Kürwille*, spontaneity and calculation, ‘selfhood’ and ‘personhood’, kinship ties and market forces. The crucial question in any ‘empirical’ setting was not whether a particular individual, institution, idea or action belonged to ‘Gemeinschaft’ or ‘Gesellschaft’, but where they were positioned on the continuum between the two. In this respect, Tönnies’s application of ideal types to real historical settings anticipated and closely resembled the methodology later developed by his famous contemporary Max Weber. The affinity with Weber was also apparent in his insistence that interpreting empirical data logically required the prior adoption of certain analytical categories, in a manner suggested by Kant. Thus in analysing social and political phenomena both abstract reasoning and the ‘stuff’ of everyday history were, in Tönnies’s view, not mutually contradictory but necessary and complementary.

Both in the 1880s and later, however, these themes were often obscured by the fact that throughout *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* so many levels

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of argument were so densely and to some extent discrepantly packed together. When Emile Durkheim reviewed Tönnies's book in 1889 he entirely missed the point that it was intended as an analysis of social organisation in general, rather than of a historical shift from a 'solidarist' past to a 'mechanistic' future; and the reader unfamiliar with the wider corpus of Tönnies's work is more than likely to share Durkheim's confusion. Such difficulties were not dispelled by Tönnies's own recurrent attempts to make his position clearer. Despite his protestations of objectivity, the very language that he used to defend his ideas often suggested that he was very far from being indifferent to the value content of his two models and to their respective historical fates.

These ambiguities were almost certainly rooted in the fact – inescapably conveyed by his own life and works – that Tönnies's inner sentiments and convictions were in many respects much more complex, dualistic and difficult to harmonise than he himself cared to admit. Thus he was an arch-rationalist with a penchant for spirituality, a 'universalist' with a deep attachment to the culture of his homeland, a devotee of positivistic natural science who none the less deplored the corrosive impact of scientific culture upon intuition, custom and older forms of knowledge. On a more practical plane, his lament for modern woman (forced into market relations that were "alien and terrible to her basic nature") co-existed with the hope (alluded to in the 1912 edition) that modification of gender roles *might* help to reconstitute more harmonious social relations in the long-term future. And in his career as a social reformer Tönnies's commitment to schemes for the re-making of *Gemeinschaft* was in latent conflict with his underlying conviction that *Gesellschaft* was irreversible and could not "jump over its own shadow". Such tensions can be scarcely more than hinted at here, but they may be detected in many further spheres – in Tönnies's views of logic, language, politics, culture and the very nature of human history.

The result has been that admirers, critics and antagonists have found what they wanted to find in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, and even as an acknowledged classic it has been far more often referred to than read. Thus, over the course of more than a century, the book has been interpreted both as an exemplary text of nineteenth-century materialism, and as a paean to mediaevalism and anti-modernism; as an essay in enlightenment universalism, and as an exercise in racism and socio-biology. Having been initially viewed as a communist tract, it was taken up in the 1920s by groups promoting militant ultra-nationalism (a link accidentally

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fostered by Tönnies's dedication of his post-First World War edition to the 'youth of greater Germany'). In North America in the 1930s it was interpreted both as an essay in consensual structural functionalism, and as a precursor of social phenomenology; whereas in post-Second World War West Germany it was to be identified as part of the heritage of 'cultural despair' that had fostered National Socialism. In more recent times its authority has been cited for 'green politics', for theories of 'communitarianism', for 'idealist liberalism', and for the current resurgence of debate about 'civil society'. At the start of the twenty-first century its arguments may appear to some readers quaintly antiquarian – to others as perhaps even more pertinent to the culture of global capitalism than when it first appeared in 1887. The book is presented here to English-speaking readers in no single political guise, but as an immensely rich, ambitious, difficult, and thickly textured work that defies one-dimensional understanding. It invites, not crude type-casting, but much closer historical attention to its affinities with, and re-working of, many earlier themes and narratives in political and social thought. Its very imperfections and ambiguities mirror the dark labyrinth of a complex and peculiar epoch of European intellectual history.

Chronology of Tönnies's life and career

- 1855 Born, 26 July, Oldenswort in the duchy of Schleswig.
- 1864 Danish annexation of Schleswig, followed by Prusso-Austrian invasion and absorption of Schleswig-Holstein into Prussia.
- 1865 Tönnies family moved to Husum, where his father took up merchant banking.
- 1867 Tönnies entered the local grammar school, studied Greek, Latin and German classical literature.
- 1870 Franco-Prussian War; creation of German empire. Tönnies met Schleswegian poet and folk-hero, Theodor Storm, who became a life-long influence.
- 1871–7 Studied at the universities of Strasbourg, Jena, Leipzig, Berlin, Kiel and Tübingen. Gained doctorate in Greek philology at Tübingen. Became a close friend of Friedrich Paulsen, an admirer of Kant, Lassalle and Hobbes.
- 1878 First visit to England. Worked on Hobbes' manuscripts at the British Museum, Oxford and Hardwick.
- 1879–81 Published 'Remarks on the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes', in *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie*.
- 1881 An early version of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* submitted as his *Habilitationsschrift* at university of Kiel.
- 1887 First edition of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (sub-titled 'An Essay on Communism and Socialism as Historical Social Systems').
- 1889 After prolonged delay, Tönnies's editions of Hobbes' *Elements of Law Natural and Politic* and *Behemoth* published in English.
- 1890 Failed to obtain a university professorship; became a *Privatdozent* at Kiel.

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- 1892 Helped found Society for Ethical Culture, the vehicle for his life-long involvement in various co-operative, social reform and self-improvement movements.
- 1893 Offered a university chair, on condition that he gave up Society for Ethical Culture, which he refused.
- 1894 Marriage to Marie Sieck, daughter of a Protestant minister from the Schleswegian town of Eutin. Five children born over the next ten years.
- 1896 First edition of *Thomas Hobbes. Leben und Lehre*. Tönnies's support for Hamburg dock strike compounded his difficulties in gaining a university chair.
- 1899–1900 Tönnies's prize essay on 'Philosophical Terminology' published in an English translation by Helen Bosanquet in *Mind*.
- 1904 Visited America for International Arts and Sciences Congress at St Louis. Contacts with sociologists of the Chicago school.
- 1908 House guest of Max and Marianne Weber during the International Philosophy Congress at Heidelberg.
- 1909 First edition of his book on *Custom (Die Sitte)*. With Weber and Georg Simmel a founder member of the German Society for Sociology. Tönnies was to be president of this body for most of his life.
- 1912 Second editions of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (now subtitled 'Basic Concepts in Pure Sociology') and of Tönnies's study of Hobbes (re-titled *Thomas Hobbes. Der Mann und der Denker*).
- 1913 His first permanent chair, a professorship of 'economic political science', at the university of Kiel.
- 1917 Publication of *Der englische Staat und der deutsche Staat*.
- 1920 Third edition of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*.
- 1921 Publication of *Marx, Leben und Lehre*.
- 1922 Publication of *Kritik der öffentlichen Meinung*.
- 1923 Autobiographical sketch published in *Die Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellung*.
- 1925 Tönnies's major writings collected in *Soziologische Studien und Kritiken* (3 vols.). Third edition of *Hobbes*.
- 1931 Publication of *Einführung in die Soziologie*.
- 1932 Joined the Social Democratic party to support resistance to the rise of fascism.