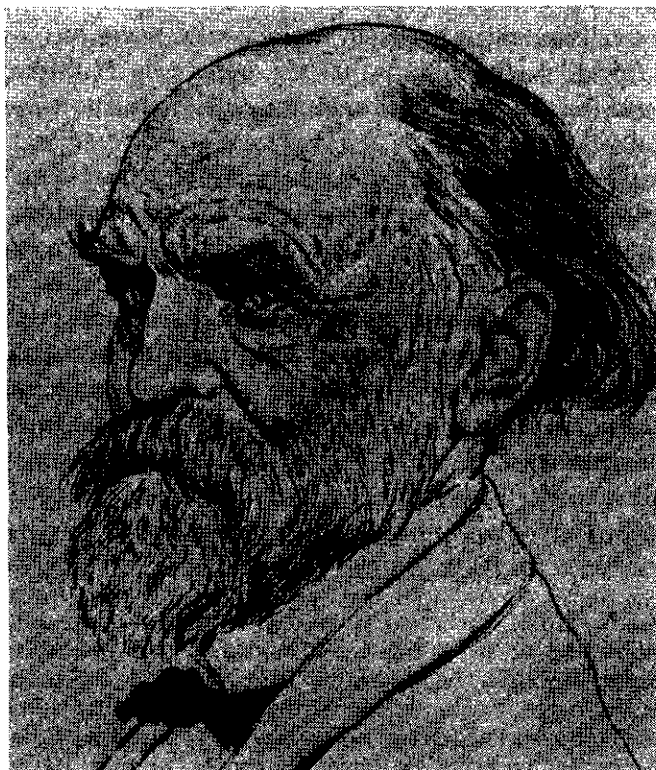


THE CLASSIC PHASE OF POSITIVISTIC ORGANICISM

There has been a somewhat unfortunate tendency to define the organismic theory in such narrow terms as to obscure the extent of its theoretical assemblage of ideas. For example, in many works "organicism" is confined to the persons sketched in the previous section. Comte, Spencer, and Ward are treated as a sort of preorganismic type of theorist and the organismic school proper is dismissed as if it terminated with Worms, de Greef, and Novicow. However, this is to shift attention away from precisely those organicists who left the most decisive mark on sociology. The organismic framework is shared not only by Comte, Spencer, and Ward but also by such persons as Tönnies and Durkheim. Both of the latter thinkers restylized and developed organismic ideas in a manner that gave them long-range importance for sociology, having influences into the present.

Ferdinand Tönnies. Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936) was born on a farm in Eiderstedt on the coast of Schleswig-Holstein. He received his doctor's degree from the University of Tübingen in 1877, and became a lecturer at the University of Kiel in 1881, where he remained until ousted by the Nazis in 1933. The most influential of Tönnies' works was his *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887),

FERDINAND TÖNNIES



Courtesy of the Ferdinand Tönnies Institute, New University, Kiel

translated into English as *Community and Society*; it is the only one of his works generally appreciated in America, although in his later works he applied the influential concepts first developed in *Community and Society* to various social phenomena, among which might be singled out his study of folkways and mores in *Die Sitte* ["Custom"] and of public opinion in *Kritik der öffentlichen Meinung* ["Critique of Public Opinion"].⁹ Among empirical studies

⁹Only two of Tönnies' books are presently available in English translation: *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Leipzig: 1887; Berlin: K. Curtius, 1926) has been translated by Charles P. Loomis and published, first, as *Fundamental Concepts of Sociology* (New York: American Book Company, 1940) and, later, as *Community and Society* (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1957); and *Thomas Hobbes Leben und Lehre* (Stuttgart: F. From-

conducted by Tönnies was the review of the social situation of the longshoremen in Hamburg and other ports after the strike in Hamburg, the study of relationships between socioeconomic conditions and ideological phenomena in Schleswig-Holstein, and the study of cyclical changes in marriage rates and the sex ratio.

Tönnies divided sociology into three disciplines: (1) pure sociology, (2) applied sociology, and (3) empirical sociology. *Pure* or general sociology aspires to develop a system of concepts of "normal" or ideal types essential for the description and understanding of empirical phenomena. *Applied* sociology consists in the application of these concepts to contemporary and historical phenomena. As with Comte, sociology is the study of history. This discipline studies society dynamically and developmentally. *Empirical* sociology pro-

mann, 1925), the third revised edition of a study first published in 1896, has been translated and published under the title *The Elements of Law, Natural and Political* (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1928). Important works which are not available in English include: *Die Sitte* (Frankfurt am Main: Rütten & Loening, 1909); *Marx: Leben und Lehre* ["The Life and Teachings of Marx"] (Jena: E. Lichtenstein, 1921); *Kritik der öffentlichen Meinung* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1922); *Soziologische Studien und Kritiken* ["Sociological Studies and Critiques"] (Jena: G. Fischer, 1925-1926); and *Einführung in die Soziologie* ["Introduction to Sociology"] (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1931). An excellent review of Tönnies' sociology is Rudolf Heberle's "The Sociological System of Ferdinand Tönnies: 'Community' and 'Society'", in Harry Elmer Barnes, ed., *An Introduction to the History of Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 227-248. A Tönnies revival has been led by Werner J. Cahnman. See Werner J. Cahnman and Rudolf Heberle, *Ferdinand Toennies on Sociology: Pre, Applied, and Empirical* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971). And Werner J. Cahnman, ed., *Ferdinand Tönnies, A New Evaluation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973). Among reprints of Tönnies' work and new translations in the 1970s are: *Custom: An Essay on Social Codes*, trans. A. Farrel Borenstein (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1971); *Community and Association*, trans. Charles P. Loomis (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974); *Karl Marx: His Life and Teaching*, trans. Charles P. Loomis and Ingeborg Paulus (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1974); *On Social Ideas and Ideologies*, trans. E. G. Jacoby (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

ceeds by inductive empirical methods utilizing the concepts of pure sociology as basic orientation devices. In his own work, Tönnies approached these areas by way of the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* dichotomy which he made famous.

All the facts of society and social relationship are viewed by Tönnies as products of the human will. "Social relationship or bond implies interdependence, and it means that the will of the one person influences that of the other, either furthering or impeding, or both. . . . The collective will can remain the same for an indefinite period, but it can also from time to time undergo change by renewed acts. . . . Such a collective person consists of single persons."¹⁰

The organismic core of Tönnies' thought could not be more clearly formulated. All interaction is at bottom the expression of acts of will. The result of acts of will is the development of a collective will. This collective will is very like a person. Fundamental to Tönnies' whole view is the concept of different types of will.

The simplest way of approaching the problems of Tönnies' sociology is through the interrelationships involved in exchange or barter. When we barter, two objects are involved in such a way that each is a means to the other considered as an end. An act of barter or exchange consists in carrying out an interrelationship in such terms. One can imagine an entire system of social life in which all acts are carried out in this manner. In contrast, there are situations in which one's motives to satisfy one's aims and desires take the form of satisfying those of another person or of groups. Such a volition, of this latter type, rests not on a calculation of means and the appropriateness of means to ends; rather, it is unconditional, like the love of a mother for an infant. Such unconditional relationships are not necessarily positive. Between man and woman, love may turn to hate, which becomes a kind of inverted love. Thus we have two kinds of social relationship, resting on two types of human willing. In the first case, we can speak of a

¹⁰Tönnies, *Fundamental Concepts of Sociology*, pp. 9-10.

rational will (*Kürwille*), in the second, of a natural will (*Wesenuille*).¹¹

The simplest and most general unit of social life is the *social relationship*. Sociology as a special science is interested in the products of social life. These social products result from human thinking and exist only for human thinking. Social relationship is the most elementary of these things. Social relationships cannot be other than the embodiments of one of the two fundamental forms of the human will — *Kürwille* or *Wesenuille*. One total complex of social relationships (society) may differ from another as a result of the type of will predominant in it. In terms of the kind of will involved, two ideal types (also called "normal concepts") of society are possible. A society or total complex of social relationships which embodies the rational will is called a *Gesellschaft*; a complex embodying the natural will is a *Gemeinschaft*. A collective has the character of a *Gemeinschaft* insofar as its members think of the grouping as a gift of nature created by a supernatural will. On the other hand, to the degree that consciousness of authority arises from class relationships, the collective tends to assume the characteristics of a *Gesellschaft*.

Social entities of lesser scope than the entire society may be characterized in similar terms. The corporation is a social body or union. It can emerge from natural relationships, as does the kinship group, the gens, or the clan. Common relation to the soil tends to associate people, and the neighborhood may be the product of such an association. On the other hand, in the development of the state — the mightiest of all corporate bodies — or in the development of the characteristic corporations of capitalistic, middle-class society, the original qualities of the *Gemeinschaft* may be lost.

Tönnies thus distinguishes three main types of social units: social relationships, groups, and societies. All of these units are characterized by their volitional components. However, the manner in which these volitional components differentiate

total societies has attracted greatest interest, for from this base Tönnies developed his famous contrast of societal types, tracing out multiple lines of contrast through such things as the dominant social relationship, theory of personality, central corporate group, and many others. The accompanying table shows some of the more interesting contrasts which Tönnies developed — or, in some instances, summarized from his predecessors — to compare *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* societal types.

Tönnies believed that the mentality basic to the *Gemeinschaft* is characteristic of the woman, and operates through sentiment. The mentality basic to the *Gesellschaft* is characteristic of the man, and operates through intention. The first appears through the mind and consciousness, the second through calculation and conscious behavior. Moreover, the same contrast appears between youth and old age, and the common people and educated classes. The *Gemeinschaft*, thus, is typical of the woman, the young, the masses. The *Gesellschaft* is typical of the man, of old age, and of the educated classes.

It has already been observed that having developed the contrast between the *Gemeinschaft* and the *Gesellschaft*, Tönnies applied it to the societal subunits — social relationships and social corporations or groups. In the case of the corporation, the social body is thought of as a person possessing a rational will to which it can give validity through functionaries. But in any case, all three categories of social entity (*Wesenheiten*) were thought to be determined primarily either by *Wesenuillen* or *Kürwillen*. The same scheme was applied to social norms and values. The main classes of norms distinguished by Tönnies are order, law, and morality. The kinds of social will by which they are created are *gemeinschaftliche* (including unanimity or concord, custom, or religion, the last based on faith in supernatural powers) or *gesellschaftliche*, based on convention, legislation, or public opinion. *Order* is the most general and complex of norms, based primarily on concord or convention. *Law* is the complex of norms enforced by judicial decision; it is created by either custom or intentional

¹¹In making this contrast, Tönnies seems to have had Wilhelm Wundt's contrast between *Zweckwille* and *Triebwille* partly in mind.

Social Characteristic	Societal Type	
	GEMEINSCHAFT	GESELLSCHAFT
DOMINANT SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP	Fellowship Kinship Neighborliness	Exchange Rational calculation
CENTRAL INSTITUTIONS	Family law Extended kin group	State Capitalistic economy
THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE SOCIAL ORDER	Self	Person
CHARACTERISTIC FORM OF WEALTH	Land	Money
TYPE OF LAW	Family Law	Law of contracts
ORDERING OF INSTITUTIONS	Family life Rural village life Town life	City life Rational life Cosmopolitan life
TYPE OF SOCIAL CONTROL	Concord Folkways and mores Religion	Convention Legislation Public opinion

"legislation." *Morality* is the complex of these norms the interpretation and application of which are the work of an imaginary judge (God or conscience); the norms of morality are sanctioned either by religion or public opinion.

The public opinion of a country or nation is an expression of group will and not, as popularly conceived, a conglomeration of contradictory views. Public opinion as politically valid opinion must be distinguished from local or apolitical opinion. Public opinion can be more or less fixed, fluid, or gaseous, depending on the issues involved.

The idea of developing conceptions of contrasting types of society was by no means new in Tönnies' day. There is no value in reviewing early forms, for dualistic constructions of human society are as old as mythology. Tönnies himself was familiar with a number of them. The eighteenth-century rationalists had advanced the idea of the

origin of society in a contract and the rational agreements this implied. An extreme form of the rationalistic and contractual conception of society was expressed by Thomas Hobbes, with whom Tönnies was thoroughly familiar. The opponents of eighteenth-century rationalistic conceptions, among them the romantic conservatives of the nineteenth century, developed organic conceptions of the state. Tönnies specifically intended in his typology to represent the Hobbesian concept of society in the *Gesellschaft*, the romantic concept in the *Gemeinschaft*.

A somewhat similar set of ideas was familiar to Tönnies from Henry Sumner Maine. In his *Ancient Law*,¹² Maine traced, by means of the law, the development of ancient society. On the basis of the

¹²Henry Sumner Maine, *Ancient Law* (London: 1861). References here are to the 1906 edition (New York: Henry Holt).

evidence of Roman law, Maine advanced the patriarchal theory of society — the idea that in antiquity society was organized into households in which the eldest male was supreme, having dominion extending to life and death over his children and slaves. Maine believed that one can trace, in Roman legal development, the gradual decline in the authority of the father. Thus, for example, first the son was freed from the father's influence — a phenomenon attributable to the Roman army and civil administration, which required that the state receive the primary loyalty of its servants. Under later systems even the woman gradually achieved freedom. In ancient society, thus, Maine urges, the individual's life chances were fixed by his status in the family. The patriarchal origin of society allowed little room for the idea of contract. In its earliest form one family could contract with another only in the most ceremonious of manners. But in time contractual relationships spread to wider and wider spheres. "If then we employ Status . . . to signify these personal conditions only . . . we may say that the movement of the progressive societies has hitherto been a movement *from Status to Contract*."¹³

These distinctions, too, were taken up into Tönnies' typology. Moreover, he was not only familiar with Wundt's contrast of mentalities in *Zweckwille* and *Triebwille* and Hegel's conception of the development of history as the evolution of the human spirit from the ancient world, in which only one (the despot) is free, to modern situations, where all are free, but with the contrast of societal types employed by Comte and Spencer. Comte believed that society evolved through three major types: theological, metaphysical, and positivistic. The metaphysical, corresponding to the eighteenth century, was little more than a transitional type. Spencer, on the other hand, reduced the major types to two: religious-militaristic and modern industrial-peaceable. All these and many other conceptions of contrasting social types were familiar to Tönnies. However, he did far more than merely summarize. He pulled together all the

main ideas into a systematic form. He developed the notion of an underlying integral mentality. He systematized the contrasts. He identified them with social development. The organismic character of the system is all-pervasive, but this is not its only important property. So long as one employs simply an over-all conception of society, organismic or not, made up of little-differentiated parts, analysis cannot proceed far. But a dichotomous typology made up of carefully itemized elements can, however crude, at least serve as a device for comparative review. It is for this reason that all modern societal typologies — such as Durkheim's distinction between "mechanical" and "organic" solidarity, Park's "sacred-secular" distinction, Redfield's "folk-secular" distinction — take Tönnies' conceptualizations as a starting point.

¹³*ibid.*, p. 165. (Italics in the original.)