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Tönnies

Community and Civil Society

Edited by

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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*

EDITED BY

JOSE HARRIS

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JOSE HARRIS AND
MARGARET HOLLIS



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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.

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

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 physiology, and the institutions, structures and practices of everyday life.

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 Schleswigan 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

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,

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*

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

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.

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

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,

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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*, *Wesenville* 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

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

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 Lassalleian '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

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

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

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.

Chronology of Tönnies's life and career

- 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.

Chronology of Tönnies's life and career

- 1933 Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. Tönnies stripped of his honorary professorship at Kiel, academic pension and personal library by local Nazi administration.
- 1935 A major conference at Leipzig in honour of Tönnies's eightieth birthday. Eighth edition of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Publication of his final work, *Geist der Neuzeit*.
- 1936 Death of Tönnies.

A note on the texts and further reading

Eight German editions of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* were issued during Tönnies's lifetime. Those used in preparing this translation were the first edition (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag (R. Riesland), 1887); the second edition (Berlin: Carl Curtius, 1912); the fourth and fifth editions (Berlin, Carl Curtius, 1922); and the eighth edition (Leipzig: Verlag Hans Buske, 1935). The 1887 edition was published in Roman print, but the 1912 and subsequent editions were printed in the old Gothic style; and similarly many Latinate spellings of German words employed in 1887 were 'Germanised' in the 1912 edition. For readers who wish to pursue the text in German, the most easily available version is the reprint of the eighth edition published by Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (Darmstadt: 1979, reprinted 1991); however, this appears to contain certain misprints of Tönnies's text. An earlier English translation by Charles P. Loomis was published under the title *Fundamental Concepts of Sociology (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)* (New York: American Book Company, 1940), re-issued as *Community and Association* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), and then as *Community and Society* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957). A concise and lucid summary of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, written in French apparently by Tönnies himself, appeared as 'Notions Fondamentales de Sociologie Pure', in *Annales de l'Institut International de Sociologie*, vol. 4 (1900). This summary, and many of Tönnies's most important shorter works were collected in F. Tönnies, *Soziologische Studien und Kritiken*, vols. I–III (Jena: G. Fischer, 1925), which included the text of his 1881 *Habilitationsschrift* (vol. I, pp. 1–32). A German edition of Tönnies's complete works, including *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, is being prepared under the editorship

of Lars Clausen, Alexander Deichsel, Cornelius Bickel, Rolf Fechner and Carsten Schluter-Knauer. One volume of this edition (containing Else Brenke's bibliography of Tönnies's works) has so far been published (*Ferdinand Tönnies. Gesamtausgabe Band 22. 1932–1936. Geist der Neuzeit. Schriften. Rezensionen*, ed. Lars Clausen (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998)).

Other works by Tönnies most relevant to his political thought, and to his related social, historical and philosophical concerns, are as follows:

'Anmerkung über die Philosophie des Hobbes', *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie*, vol. 3 (1879); vol. 4 (1880) and vol. 5 (1881).

Thomas Hobbes. The Elements of Law Natural and Politic, ed. F. Tönnies (London: Simpkin Marshall and Co., 1889, reprinted Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928, and London: Frank Cass, 1970).

Thomas Hobbes. Behemoth or the Long Parliament, ed. F. Tönnies (London: Simpkin Marshall & Co., 1889, reprinted London: Frank Cass, 1969).

'Neuere Philosophie der Geschichte: Hegel, Marx, Comte', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 7 (1894).

Thomas Hobbes. Leben und Lehre (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1896, re-issued 1912 and 1925).

'Philosophical Terminology. I, II and III', trans. Helen Bosanquet, *Mind*, n.s., vols. 8 and 9 (1899–1900).

'Eugenik', *Schmoller's Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung and Volkswirtschaft*, vol. 29 (1905).

'Hobbes Analekten. I und II', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 17 (1904) and vol. 19 (1906).

Die Sitte (Frankfurt: Ruetten und Loening, 1909). (English edition, *Custom. An Essay on Social Codes*, trans. A. Farrell Borenstein, (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961)).

Der englische Staat und der deutsche Staat (Berlin: C. Curtius, 1917).

Karl Marx, Leben und Lehre (Jena: Erich Lichtenstein, 1921) (English edition, *Karl Marx. His Life and Teachings*, trans. Charles P. Loomis and Ingeborg Paulus (Ann Arbor: Michigan State University Press, 1974)).

Kritik der öffentliche Meinung (Berlin: Springer, 1922).

'Hobbes und das Zoon Politiken', *Zeitschrift für Völkerrecht*, vol. 12 (1923).

In addition to the translated works mentioned above, useful selections from Tönnies's writings in English translation can be found in *Ferdinand*

Toennies, *On Sociology: Pure, Empirical and Applied. Selected Writings*, ed. Werner J. Cahlman and Rudolph Heberle (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971); and *On Social Ideas and Ideologies*, by Ferdinand Tönnies, ed E. G. Jacoby (New York: Harper and Row, 1974). Details about his intellectual biography and background are contained in Tönnies's contribution to Raymund Schmidt (ed.), *Die Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen*, vol. I (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1923), pp. 203–42; Ferdinand Tönnies, *Friedrich Paulsen, Briefwechsel 1876–1908*, ed. Olaf Klose, E. G. Jacoby and Irma Fischer (Kiel: Ferdinand Hirt, 1961); E. G. Jacoby, *Die moderne Gesellschaft im sozialwissenschaftlichen Denken von Ferdinand Tönnies. Eine biographische Einführung* (Stuttgart, F. Enke, 1971); Ferdinand Tönnies, *Harald Höffding, Briefwechsel*, ed. Cornelius Bickel and Rolf Fechner (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1989).

There is a large secondary literature on Tönnies as a theoretical sociologist, of which the best-known work is Werner J. Cahlman (ed.) *Ferdinand Toennies: A New Evaluation, Essays and Documents* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983), a collection that includes the famous 'Note on *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*' by Talcott Parsons. Recent writing in German indicates a revival of interest in more 'political' and 'philosophical' aspects of Tönnies's thought; but writing in English about his affinities with Hobbes, Spinoza, Hume, Ferguson, Kant, von Stein, Schopenhauer, Marx, Nietzsche, and Gierke, remains relatively scarce, as does commentary on his relation to developments in natural science, to orthodox and modernist theology, and to Roman, natural and 'positivist' theories of law. Works that address or touch upon some of these wider issues, from often widely conflicting angles, include the following:

E. G. Jacoby, *Die moderne Gesellschaft* (cited above).

Arthur Mitzman, 'Tönnies and German Society 1887–1914. From Cultural Pessimism to Celebration of the Volksgemeinschaft', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 32 (1971).

Arthur Mitzman, *Sociology and Estrangement. Three Sociologists in Imperial Germany* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1973)

John Samples, 'Kant, Tönnies, and the Liberal Idea of Community in Early German Sociology', *History of Political Thought*, vol. 8 (1987).

Cornelius Bickel, *Ferdinand Tönnies. Soziologie als skeptische Aufklärung zwischen Historismus und Rationalismus* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991).

Lars Clausen and Carsten Schlüter (eds.), *Hundert Jahre 'Gemeinschaft*

und Gesellschaft'. Ferdinand Tönnies in der internationalen Diskussion (Opladen: Leske und Budriche, 1991).

Lars Clausen, Carsten Schlüter and Rolf Fechner (eds.), *Ausdauer, Geduld und Ruhe*. Aspekte und Quellen der Tönnies-Forschung (Hamburg: Rolf Fechner Verlag, 1991).

Cornelius Bickel and Lars Clausen, *Tönnies in Toronto*, papers from the Toronto meeting of the American Sociological Association, 1997 (Kiel: Christian Albrechts Universität Soziologische Arbeitsberichte, 1998).

Useful works of reference for the understanding of Tönnies's technical terminology and intellectual background are:

J. and W. Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* 16 vols., 1854– (new edition, Leipzig: Hirzel, 1965–).

H. G. Heumann, *Handlexicon zum Corpus juris civilis. Nach dem Quellen bearbeitet* (Jena: Carl Hochhausen, 1846, and revised editions, 1895 and 1907).

Theodor Mommsen, *The Digest of Justinian* (1870), English translation, ed. Alan Watson, vols. I–IV (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

J. C. Bluntschli and R. Bradter, *Deutsches Staatswörterbuch*, 11 vols. (Stuttgart and Leipzig: Giesecke und Durient, 1857–70).

Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch. (Wörterbuch der älteren deutschen Rechtssprache), 7 vols. (Weimar: L. Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1914–83).

A note on translation

Even a hundred years ago Tönnies's friend, Friedrich Paulsen, complained of his 'horrible sentences', while to many modern Germans he is 'the Great Unreadable' because his constructions require a command of German grammar that has largely fallen into disuse. Tönnies's style favours the traditional periodic German sentence, long, convoluted, with many subordinate clauses branching off one another. This is possible in German because the language has genders and inflections, so that it is clear to which word a relative pronoun is referring. This feature of his writing we have not attempted to retain, and the long sentences have been broken up in accordance with English usage. Another of Tönnies's preferences was for constructions which balance two halves of an argument, e.g. both . . . and; not only . . . but also; on the one hand . . . on the other hand; x stands to a as y stands to b ; and so on. In many cases this feature has had to be greatly simplified in order to avoid confusion in English.

Tönnies used many archaic words and grammatical structures, influenced no doubt by older authors from his wide reading and by his own Schleswigian background. Although the 1887 edition was published in Roman print, the 1912 edition was printed in the old Gothic style, as were all subsequent editions before that of 1979. Similarly, many Latinate spellings of German words employed in 1887 were 'Germanised' in the 1912 edition. At the same time Tönnies employed many technical terms from mathematics, physics, and the biological sciences – sometimes with direct reference to, but more often as analogues of, or metaphors for, processes in the social and political spheres. He also made frequent use of terms derived from financial markets or commercial law. These terms often have both a specialist and a more general application, and it is some-

times difficult to determine whether the stricter or looser sense is implied. Another feature of Tönnies's prose is a certain rhetorical quality, which draws upon both the arts of the Protestant preacher and the more formal devices of classical rhetoric. This partly reflects the origins of the work, in his *Habilitationsschrift* for the university of Kiel, which he would have been required to defend orally before the assembled faculty.¹ But it also suggests that, like his master Thomas Hobbes, Tönnies was torn between the view that correct scientific knowledge was self-evidently true, and the sense that it needed support from the arts of exposition and persuasion. One rhetorical device which we have not been able to preserve is his use of alliteration. This occurs most conspicuously in Book Two where he highlights his points by choosing key words that begin with the same letter, or with the same unstressed syllables *Be-* or *Ge-*. It is impossible to replicate this exactly in English, though we have attempted to convey some echo of the technique being employed.

As our aim has been to make Tönnies's thought available in comprehensible English, we have used the idiom of the present day, including everyday and even occasional slang expressions. We have not, however, tried to expunge all traces of Tönnies's own style – rather, where possible, we have tried to retain it. Where it is excessively complicated we have aimed (so far as is consistent with the meaning) to 'improve' upon his style by making it simpler and more incisive; but where he writes with great feeling and powerful imagery, we have attempted to preserve these and not water them down into more prosaic terms. A further difficulty has been that, because of the complexity and allusiveness of Tönnies's language, there are many points at which several (sometimes widely varying) readings are possible. This has usually been soluble in terms of context; but on occasion we have been forced to make an informed guess about what Tönnies was trying to say, and to plump for the reading that seemed most plausible. This has seemed preferable to the alternative of glossing over the difficulty, and rendering opaque German into even more opaque English. Another problem has been that very different emphases can be squeezed out of Tönnies's text in the many cases where the German vocabulary is more limited than the English. To take an obvious example, it makes a great deal of difference in a work of social and political

¹ Though there seems to have been some doubt about whether he actually did this. Tönnies as a young man was a very tongue-tied speaker, had failed his earlier thesis-examination in Berlin on this account, and may have chosen Kiel because it was more relaxed about oral presentation.

theory whether the word *Volk* is rendered as tribe, nation, common people, lower classes or simply as 'people in general'. And when Tönnies maintains that men are *klüger* than women, a great deal turns on whether this means that men are more intrinsically intelligent, more judicious and prudent, or simply more worldly-wise and cunning. In all such cases, an attempt has been made to capture the overall drift of the original text. One of the most difficult phrases to unpack has been the second half of the sub-heading to the first edition: *Abhandlung des Communismus und des Socialismus als empirischer Culturformen*. The simple-sounding *als empirischer Culturformen* is in fact only intelligible in the context of Tönnies's 1887 introduction, where he sets out his objective of reconciling the cognitive methods of Kant and Hume. Tönnies used the word *empirisch* interchangeably with *historisch* to mean 'empirically observable in concrete historical facts', while he used the word *Form* in the Kantian sense to mean something which is known *a priori*. He also used the word *Cultur* to mean, not just 'culture', but a whole way of life, social system or overall civilisation (cultural, social, economic and political). A translation of the sub-title that captured all these resonances would therefore have to read something like: 'An Essay on Communism and Socialism as concrete Historical Embodiments of Two Different Abstract Conceptions of Civilisation'. Since this sounds impossibly pretentious we have settled for the more limited phrase: 'An Essay on Communism and Socialism as Historical Social Systems'.

Unless a translator is an expert in the subject of the work being translated, he or she is dependent on collaboration to grasp refinements of meaning, to decipher technical terminology, and to ensure that the translation makes good sense in terms of subject matter and context. In the case of this partnership, Margaret Hollis has provided the linguistic input, unravelling the complicated sentences, which Jose Harris has then revised in order to draw out Tönnies's philosophical interests and his political, social and economic thought. Neither could have done the work without the other, so we regard ourselves as joint translators of this fascinating work and trust that our efforts will bring it before a new generation of readers.

Glossary

Tönnies was very insistent on clear definition of terms, to such an extent that his articles in *Mind* (1899–1900) defended the use of artificial, ‘invented’ language so as to rescue science from the snares of inherited usage. This view co-existed awkwardly with his penchant for complex and often archaic words and expressions that were richly enmeshed in multiple layers of meaning. Moreover, having defined terms in a certain way, he sometimes forgot that he had done so and slipped back into more casual or traditional usage. Many of his key terms have to be translated in different ways according to context. The most important of these are his two antithetical pairs of concepts: *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*; and *Wesenwille* and *Willkür/Kürwille*.

Neither *Gemeinschaft* nor *Gesellschaft* necessarily has the precise meaning that Tönnies’s usage implies. In ordinary German *Gemeinschaft* covers a range of possible meanings, from semi-mystical ‘communion’ to simple sharing or partnership; while *Gesellschaft* often refers to a club, association, social gathering or business firm. However, Tönnies’s own use of the two words reflects his conception of an antithesis between *Gemeinschaft* as small-scale, ‘organic’, close-knit Community, and *Gesellschaft* as large-scale, impersonal, civil and commercial Society. Except on occasions when Tönnies himself clearly uses the words to imply something different, ‘Community’ and ‘Society’ are the terms adopted here. The alternative sometimes suggested for Tönnies’s use of *Gesellschaft*, i.e. ‘association’, seems (even though occasionally appropriate) far too weak a word to convey his full meaning, which is that *Gesellschaft* is (potentially at least) an all-embracing, global civilisation. We have also at many points left the two terms *untranslated*, on the

ground that both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* have evolved over the course of the twentieth century into socio-political concepts whose resonance transcends the boundaries of the German language.

Tönnies's two 'wills' were linked to the distinction between *der Wille* and *die Willkür* made by Kant. In Tönnies's usage, as in Kant's, although the exercise of will may be relatively unreflective and spontaneous, it is always conscious and in some sense 'rational': thus (despite Tönnies's interest in Schopenhauer) it never makes sense to talk of will as 'blind', 'instinctive' or 'sub-conscious'. *Der Wille* is etymologically linked to *Wahl* = choice, and includes wish, desire, forethought, purpose, determination. *Der Wesenwille* was a term invented by Tönnies, and derives from *wesen* = being (etymologically related to 'was' and 'were'). The adjective/adverb *wesentlich* = essential(ly) or basic(ally): so that *Wesenwille* means the intelligence at the basis of all existence. In the 1887 edition *der Wesenwille* was contrasted with the already existing term, *die Willkür*, which was replaced in the 1920 edition by the 'artificial' term *der Kürwille* (a change made by Tönnies partly to render his work more 'scientific', but also to get away from the sense of *Willkür* as meaning nothing more than 'arbitrary'). Both *Willkür* and *Kürwille* conveyed the sense of 'free will' or 'free choice', and corresponded to the Latin term, *liberum arbitrium*. 'Arbitrary' had traditionally meant something like 'not subject to any higher human power' (e.g. in Tönnies's text, the selection of a ruler became arbitrary when it *ceased* to be determined by lot, fate or the gods, and became dependent on the rational choice of electors, such as *die Kurfürsten*, or prince-electors, who chose the Holy Roman Emperor). There are many echoes in the text of the long and complex history by which 'arbitrariness' as an attribute of freedom had become transformed into an attribute of 'absolute' political authority. Previous editors have translated these terms in a variety of ways. Loomis's edition of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* rendered *Wesenwille* as 'natural will' and *Kürwille* as 'rational will'; Werner Cahlman's translation of Tönnies's 'Zur Einleitung in die Soziologie' translated them as 'essential will' and 'arbitrary will'; while Tönnies himself in an exposition of his work in French referred to them as *la volonté naturelle* and *la volonté factice* (i.e. natural and artificial will). In the present translation we have usually rendered *Wesenwille* as 'natural will', but occasionally as 'essential' or 'spontaneous' or 'intuitive' will where these variants seemed appropriate. The obvious difficulty with translating *Kürwille* as 'arbitrary' will is that in ordinary speech 'arbitrary' has come to mean just the reverse of 'rational'.

The parallel difficulty with translating *Kürwille* as 'rational will' is that, as mentioned above, Tönnies viewed all will as in some sense rational (in that 'rationality' took many forms and was just as much present in *Gemeinschaft* as in *Gesellschaft*). The rationality of *Kürwille*, in the sense of 'calculation of rational self-interest', was something quite distinct from the *vernünftige Wille* which Tönnies saw as constituting the spirit of a well-ordered commonwealth. In this translation, 'rational will' has been used in contexts where *Kürwille* referred to calculation of means in relation to ends. But we have also translated it as 'artificial will', 'arbitrary will', 'free choice', or 'rational choice' where these alternatives seemed more appropriate.

Animal Tönnies's term for the conscious, pain/pleasure registering sphere of the human constitution, but below reflection/rationality.

An und für sich used by Tönnies in a rather casual way to mean 'basically', 'intrinsically', 'in the abstract' (there is little sign of his using the term in the more portentous way that scholars detect in the writings of Marx).

Begriff idea, concept, term, understanding (e.g. according to my understanding). (*Begrifflichkeit* = terminology).

Bestrebung used by Tönnies to indicate the selfish ambition that characterises 'rational economic man'. It is linked to *Streber*, the pushy, self-seeking type, and contrasts with *Ehrgeiz*, meaning ambition in the sense of a noble 'desire for honour'.

Bewußtheit a term borrowed from Schopenhauer to denote the heightened self-consciousness that Tönnies associated with 'rational will'.

Bewußtsein ordinary human consciousness, in the sense of awake or alert.

Einheit normally used to mean unity or a 'unit'; also used by Tönnies to mean a self-contained 'system'.

Form used by Tönnies to indicate an *a priori* category, but also in a more practical sense to mean something like 'process'.

Geist intellect, spirit, ghost.

geistig spiritual, intellectual; relating to the life of the mind.

Gemeinwesen commonwealth, public affairs; sometimes translated as 'community' in the sense of a 'political community'.

Gemüt no exact equivalent in English, since it refers both to the activity of the mind, and to feelings or emotions. Translated here as either 'heart and mind' or 'mind and soul'.

Herrschaft used by Tönnies sometimes to mean legitimate lordship or

- authority, sometimes mere physical domination (as opposed to *Würde*, which has overtones of ‘hallowed’ authority).
- Idealbild* used by Tönnies interchangeably with *Normalbegriff* and *typisches Exemplar* to mean an abstract model or ‘ideal type’.
- Ideell* hypothetical, imaginary, related to the world of ‘forms’.
- Leistung* achievement, service. In compounds often means ‘efficiency’.
- Mental* mental, relating to the mind. Comes above ‘animal’ and ‘vegetative’ in Tönnies’s threefold construction of organic life.
- Natur* covers all the meanings of ‘nature’ in English, from the natural world to the nature of a person or thing.
- Naturell* basic disposition or temperament.
- psychisch*: no exact English equivalent (not psychic, psychical, or psychological!). Translated here as ‘relating to the human psyche’.
- Stadt* town or city. Tönnies’s usage covers the Greek polis, the free city of the mediaeval German empire, and any urban community that has a composite organic life (as opposed to the atomistic ‘big city’ or *Grossstadt*).
- vegetativ* Tönnies’s term for the reflex physiological activities of the human constitution, below the level of awareness of pleasure/pain.
- Vernunft* reason in the philosophical sense, as in Kant’s *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. But ‘vernünftig’ = reasonable, showing common sense.
- Verstand* reason in the sense of intellectual understanding, common sense. *verständlich* = (a) sensible; (b) showing understanding, sympathetic.
- Wissenschaft* in a broad sense, knowledge; in a narrower sense, science (including in German such disciplines as economics and history as well as physics, chemistry, etc.).

A note on the text

In the translation that follows all footnotes are added by the editor, Tönnies’s own references to sources being incorporated in the text. In the main body of the text all italics (other than those used for non-English words) indicate an emphasis in the German original. Double quotation marks and round brackets were included by Tönnies himself. Single quotation marks and square brackets have been added by the editor in order to emphasise a point or to clarify meaning.

Community and Civil Society

A translation of Ferdinand Tönnies

*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: an Essay on Communism and
Socialism as Historical Social Systems (1887)*

re-issued as

*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: fundamental Concepts in
Pure Sociology (1912, 1920, 1935)*

‘According to Xenocrates, the reason for the invention of philosophy is to remove the disorderly element in the affairs of life’ (Galen, *History of Philosophy*, c.3).

Tönnies's preface to the first edition, 1887

The conflict between the historical and the rationalistic point of view has in the course of the nineteenth century penetrated into every area of social or cultural studies.¹ It coincides from the outset with the attack of empiricism and critical philosophy on the established system of rationalism as it was exemplified in Germany by the Wolffian school of thought.² Coming to terms with these two methods is thus of major significance for my attempt at a *new analysis of the fundamental problems of social life*.

It is a paradox to say that empiricism, even though it may have carried the day, is also the formal consummation of rationalism. Yet this is nowhere more obvious than in the epistemology of Kant which, while claiming to synthesise the opposing positions, in fact contains equal amounts of modified empiricism and modified rationalism. This admixture had already been evident in the pure empiricism of Hume; for even he does not investigate whether there can in fact be any such thing as universal and necessary knowledge with regard to facts and causality. Instead he deduces the impossibility of such knowledge conceptually, in the same way as Kant later imagined that he could deduce its reality and thus its possibility. Both are proceeding in a rationalistic manner to achieve opposite results. Hume took for granted empiricism with regard to perception,

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp-Smith (London: Macmillan, 1993 edn), pp. 606–7, 655–6.

² Christian Wolff, the early eighteenth-century philosopher who became a privy councillor at the court of Prussia. A key figure in the German enlightenment, he disseminated the ideas of Descartes and Leibniz by translating them into the idiom of scholasticism. Largely ignored in late nineteenth-century Germany, he was admired by Tönnies for having defended ontology against empiricism and making possible the emergence of Kant (Ferdinand Tönnies, 'Philosophical Terminology. II', *Mind*, n.s., 8 (1899), pp. 470–1).

as though knowledge were the product of objective qualities and circumstances working upon the *tabulam rasam* of the human mind; whereas, according to Kant, knowledge, like thinking itself, is essentially the product of subjectivity, even allowing that things do exist and do have an effect. Correspondence with truth, in Kant's terms, will depend on the nature of the instruments for gathering knowledge. When we get beyond intuitive forms and categories of understanding, these instruments are just complexes of ideas, especially – in cases where it is a question of recognising facts – the association of perceptions and images with names and opinions. When, on the other hand, we seek the *causes* of given effects, we have to presuppose certain conceptions about the nature of agency (beings, things, forces) and their way of working if we are going to sort out what is necessary or certain from what is possible.

According to the empiricism of Hume, however, such certainties can be attained only through an acquired knowledge of regular sequences in time. Thus all connections of a similar kind will be interpreted at first as random but ultimately as necessary, i.e. as causal, because they are confirmed as habits by dint of frequent repetition. In this way causality is removed from things and transferred to the human [observer], which is exactly what Kant does when he terms it a category of understanding [*Verstand*]. Kant, however, rejects the explanation proffered by Hume, that it stems purely from individual experience. Kant's conception, that causality precedes all experience, does indeed point the way to an explanation in greater depth. For the psychological law discovered by Hume has to be reinforced by, and even grounded in, the idea of a mind or intellect coming into existence from a seed and endowed with certain innate powers and tendencies. Physiologically speaking, it is only the human cerebral cortex which distinguishes human thinking from the random activities of animals. The cortex requires precise co-ordination of received impressions to develop its growth, and also a positive relationship between these particular sensations and the entire inner state of sensory experience. That inner state is the absolute *a priori*. It can scarcely be imagined except as something embracing within itself the totality of existence in hazy, general relationships, some of which will gradually become clearer through the development and activity of the brain and sense organs, i.e. of the comprehending intellect. Every experience that follows, like every other activity, occurs by means of the whole being working with the organs which have been previously developed for the purpose. From here there is an infinite regression leading back to the

beginnings of organic life, which in turn should be described in psychological terms as the bodily encapsulation of a certain sensory experience. Everything we do or have done to us (which is simply the other side of doing), and thus life itself, is experience, just as all experience means doing something or having something done to us. All activity involves organic change; it leaves some traces, which either reinforce existing trends in growth and development, or point in a different or contrary direction. These traces are what we think of as *memory*, especially in the shape of the accumulated impact of already formed sense impressions, which in turn can only be produced by memory.

Every possible alteration in an organ is essentially conditioned by its existing overall state, that is, the extent to which it is inclined and likely to accept or resist the change. This is why, in the second book of this work, I shall show how pleasure, habit and memory are simultaneously both the same and different, as basic variants of will and intellectual power with regard to *all* mental activity. My study will also include the problem of the origin and history of human *understanding*. Thus it is simply an interpretation, partly in the spirit of Spinoza and Schopenhauer, and partly also by means of the biological theory of evolution, which both clarifies and is clarified by these philosophical issues: it is an interpretation of the mode of thought with which Kant has indeed defeated Hume. Because Kant's view is correct it demonstrates not only the fact that, but also the reason why, we are able to think of something that exists as 'causing' and something that happens as having been 'caused'. These are functions which exist from earliest times, indeed from eternity, and are rooted in the structure of our understanding. The fact that it cannot be otherwise is a necessity on which our feeling of *certainty* is based, because for something to 'happen' and to 'happen according to its own nature' is one and the same thing, in line with the formal principle of identity.³

But if we human beings form a natural 'thought community' (in that causality, like the sense organs, is integral to us, and we then invent names to signify cause and effect), it follows that distinctions with regard to these processes can arise only from thinking – i.e. deciding *which* subjects are the causative factors, and thus do the actual causing (τὰ ὄντως ὄντα). On this matter peoples, groups and individuals part company, although most continue, in their myths and poetry, to share the habit of portraying nature as an active agency in the shape of men and animals. Linguistic

³ i.e. that more complex versions of the same thing include the less complex ones.

forms show evidence of this, although the distinction between passive objects which have to be moved and active ones which can move by themselves, is something which thought can grasp at an early stage. On the whole what prevails is an intuitive sense of all nature as a living thing, and of all action as the product of free will; gods and demons share in it along with visible actors. But once the world and all its destinies are put into the hands of one single God, who created them from nothing, sustains them according to his good pleasure and gives them laws and ordinances which make their entire development seem regular and necessary, all subordinate wills and freedoms in nature are lost, even the free will of mankind. Those tendencies which cannot be ascribed to the impact of some other 'moving cause' are seen only as inexplicable inclinations and forces. Even the *liberum arbitrium indifferentiae*, that image of such enigmatic power and mysterious quality, may be reconstituted, not so much as a fact of experience but as a necessary assumption, in order to exonerate the omnipotent and omniscient God from the responsibility of violating his own rules.⁴

This entire way of thinking, like the concept of a single divine will, belongs to an outlook whose principles are opposed to religious belief and popular ways of thought, even though it bears traces of its origins in these sources. These principles develop until they have a life of their own and seem to be quite independent of their origins, converging with similar principles which have from the beginning operated independently in the areas natural to this way of thinking. This is the realm of *scientific* thought. In its earliest and purest form it has nothing to do with the causes of phenomena, let alone with the desires of men or gods. Starting with the arts of comparing and measuring sizes and quantities, that all-purpose ancillary skill, the art of counting, is developed, i.e. adding and subtracting, multiplication and division into equal parts. What makes it possible for these operations to be done so easily in the head is that an organised system of names for them already exists for this purpose and no variation of detail in the objects perceived interferes with the system-

⁴ *Liberum arbitrium indifferentiae*. Tönnies is referring to St Augustine's doctrine that free will, if truly free, must include freedom to sin, and that God's 'foreknowledge' of that sin does not make Him the 'cause' of it (St Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will* (Indianapolis: Bobs-Merrill, 1964), book two, s.II, and book three, ss. IV-V). As will appear in the argument of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, the idea of the *liberum arbitrium* was a key element in the shaping of Tönnies's own concepts of *die Willkür* or *der Kürwille* ('arbitrary' or 'rational' will) which he saw as the psychological core of competitive market Society.

atic combination of equivalent units in whatever way may be required. If mastering such a system requires the support of certain concrete objects, the person doing the calculating will take objects which are if possible identical and which are easily observed and manipulated; and if these are not available he will make them up and ascribe to them these characteristics. Lots of things exist in nature that are in their observable qualities to a greater or lesser degree *similar*, with the perfect degree of similarity being termed *identity*. And although that presumption of identity and calling it by a *name* is natural, as names come to be created in a self-conscious and arbitrary fashion, this process will become artificial and contrived. Natural differences will be disregarded and deliberately either discounted or effectively cancelled out for the explicit purpose of creating something that can be treated as a well-nigh perfect identity.

Moreover, all scientific thinking, such as calculating, *requires* identity for the purposes of measuring, since measurement must demonstrate either equality or a general principle, of which the comparison in question is a particular case, i.e. an exact *ratio* which serves as a yardstick or standard. Thus scientific equations are the standards to which actual relationships between actual objects are referred. They help to save brainwork. Something that would have to be worked out from scratch, over and over again in countless cases, is calculated once and for all in a single prototypical example and then just has to be applied. In relation to the prototypical case all actual cases are either the same as it, or have a determinable relationship to it and consequently to one another. Thus all general or scientific concepts, statements or systems are like tools, by means of which an item of knowledge or at least a reasoned conjecture may be arrived at for particular cases. Using them means substituting the particular names and overall conditions of the given case for those of the hypothetical general case: that is how the 'syllogism' works. This procedure can be seen at work in many different ways in all applied science (i.e. thinking according to first principles). In all pure science we have the reference to a system of names (a terminology) which is represented in the simplest way by the system of numbers (i.e. as thinking about the principle of identity, or measuring one thing by another). For all pure science concerns itself exclusively with those constructs of thought – such as the quantity or size of an object (where it is simply a question of calculation), or the infinitesimal point, the straight line, the plane without thickness, the proportions of bodies – by which relations between spatial phenomena may be determined.

In the same way imaginary happenings in *time* are taken as types or models of real happenings, such as the fall of a body in a vacuum; its speed as a measurable unit of space moving through unspecified time, and whether this speed is constant or varying, will be calculated according to certain prior assumptions.⁵ Application becomes ever more difficult depending on how far the purely hypothetical and general case differs from the concrete and particular ones, and on their variety and irregularity. From observing separate bodies which through motion make a momentary connection in space we get the *scientific* concept of *cause* as a quantity of work performed (which is contained in the motion). This is equal to, and thus interchangeable with, another quantity – the effect – in line with the principle of the identity of action and reaction. This is an idea which can only be fully grasped, when all connotation of objective reality and creative power has been removed from the concept of *force*, which it originally embraces.⁶ Thus the great system of pure mechanics comes into being, with all the concrete sciences, above all physics and chemistry, as its applications.⁷

Meanwhile alongside and contained within this scientific view of causality there develops what we might call the *philosophical* view, which emerges as both its ultimate culmination and its critique. It is an organic as opposed to a mechanical view, a psychological view as opposed to a physical one. Moreover, according to this view, nothing except creative force exists; it is the real and permanent unit of a system of universal energy conservation from which all its particular manifestations are necessarily derived. All the other laws of nature serve the life

⁵ A reference to the different views of Aristotle and Newton, as to whether such a body would gather speed, or travel always at the same pace.

⁶ A reference to the mechanistic view that life itself was explicable only as a conjunction of chemical and physical forces, a view challenged in his own day by ‘vitalist’ theories of biology (‘Philosophical Terminology. Part II’, pp. 481–2).

⁷ Tönnies’s argument in this section, and in sections on physics and mechanics throughout *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, closely follows James Clerk Maxwell, *Matter and Motion* (1876) (reprinted London: Routledge and Thoemmes Press, 1996). He appears also to have read Clerk Maxwell’s *Encyclopaedia Britannica* articles on ‘Atoms’ and ‘Attraction’ (reprinted in *The Scientific Papers of James Clerk Maxwell*, 2 vols. ed. W. D. Niven (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1890), pp. 445–91). Tönnies’s debt to Clerk Maxwell is recorded in his autobiographical sketch in *Die Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1922), p. 218. Another major source on science in relation to philosophy was William Lange, *History of Materialism and Criticism of its Present Importance* 3 vols., second edition (Marburg, 1873–5), which Tönnies read in 1878 ‘with great joy’ (Ferdinand Tönnies, Friedrich Paulsen, *Briefwechsel 1876–1908*, ed. Olaf Kloze, E. G. Jacoby and Irma Fischer (Kiel: Ferdinand Hirt, 1961), p. 17).

principle of the universe, in the same way as the laws derived from mechanics serve the life principle of every living part – of an individual or species – which is realised in them. The more that science becomes on the one hand universal, while on the other extending its methods to the organic world, the more it must become in this sense philosophical. A philosophical view of nature which is simple and necessary in its general outline can, however, descend to multiple and relative-cum-accidental truths, depending on how much it has absorbed the principles of science. It has to demonstrate life and its forms by means of *types* which are at least derived from concrete generalities (or conceptions), since all life consists of development from the general to the particular.⁸

All science, and thus all philosophy that takes the form of science, is *rationalistic*. Its objects are matters of thought – mental constructions. But all philosophy, and thus all science that takes the form of philosophy, is *experiential*; meaning that all ‘being’ must be seen as dynamic, and all existence as subject to movement and change; while ‘not-being’ or nothingness (τὸ μὐδόν) must also be seen as part of true reality, hence in a thoroughly dialectical manner.⁹ The empirical and the dialectical methods require and complement one another. Both are concerned simply with tendencies which meet, struggle and combine, but ultimately can be understood only as psychological realities – indeed, are familiar to us as such. For we recognise the human will as our own and that the destinies of human lives make up the sum of these wills, even though always strictly limited by the rest of nature. Both methods are confirmed above all in general and individual human psychology. The facts of general psychology are synonymous with historical and contemporary culture, i.e. with human life together and all that it creates.

Mere history – just as a collection of facts – is neither science nor philosophy. But it is both together, in so far as the principles of human life may be found in it. It is a bundle of events which can be interpreted only in a very vague way as regards its beginning and end. We know almost as little about the past as we know about the future. What we experience as the ‘present’ we must first observe and try to understand.

⁸ One of the basic principles of the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, invoked by Tönnies at many points (below, pp. 134, 213).

⁹ Despite Tönnies's limited admiration for Hegel (above, p. xxii), this passage appears to draw directly on Hegelian thought (see John W. Burridge, ‘Hegel's Conception of Logic’, in F. C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 194–6).

But a great many of the serious and estimable studies which have ventured into this area – which like nature itself is both plain to see and yet utterly mysterious – are diminished in value because of the difficulties of approaching it in an unbiased and theoretically rigorous manner. The researcher is too close to the matters under observation. Much effort and practice are required, perhaps even a natural bent for cold reasoning, to study the facts of history with the same detached attitude with which a natural scientist pursues the life processes of a plant or animal. And even a learned and critical public does not as a rule want to be told the view of an author about how things are, how they came about, and how they will turn out; they would much rather hear how he thinks they *should* be. We are used to seeing facts organised according to certain premises, and this may be up to a point inevitable, but people fail to see that deliberate avoidance of this pitfall is what forms the scientific habit of mind. We expect and almost encourage the opinionated and violent rhetoric of an interested party instead of the calm and composed logic of the unbiased observer.

Thus in modern *social science*, and especially in Germany, a struggle is being waged about the implications of underlying theory. We may well accept this as being a reflection of conflicting currents in debates on policy and legislation, through which the representatives of rival interests and classes may claim with greater or lesser sincerity to speak on behalf of opposing convictions and doctrines (what might be called the ‘technological’ principles of politics). These differences may sometimes come from a deeper source in the moral sensibilities and inclinations of those who represent them, but even so, like other passions, these feelings should not be allowed to distort an objective view of things. It seems to me, moreover, that (to take the most outstanding example) the relevance of the antagonism between the doctrines of *individualism* and *socialism* for a theoretical understanding of the real facts of modern industry and commerce, is as about as great as the relevance of the struggle between allopathic and homeopathic medicine to the science of physiology. Instead we should free ourselves from the mists of all such traditions. We must situate ourselves completely outside the things we are examining and observe bodies and movements as if with telescope and microscope. Within the sphere of *civilisation* these matters are as distinct from each other as the orbits of the heavenly bodies are from the parts and life processes of an elementary organism in the world of *nature*. On the one hand they are examined on a gigantic and universal

scale, on the other in minute and specific detail. From the universal point of view, history itself is nothing more than a part of the destiny of one planet – a chapter in the development of organic life, made possible by the gradual cooling of the Earth. Looked at in detail on the other hand, history is concerned with the environment and conditions of my own daily life – everything to do with human activity that takes place before my ears and eyes.

Empirical and dialectical philosophy attempt to focus on all these different perspectives simultaneously. In both philosophies the necessities of life and the passions and activities of human nature are fundamentally the same. The analytical disciplines also refer to them in general terms, but mainly without any specificity of time or place. They assume that all individuals are entirely separate and striving for their own advantage in a rationalistic and arbitrary way. These disciplines have thus taken it upon themselves to determine not only the abstract laws governing the relations and connections between these individuals and their wills, but also the changes in their material conditions that are brought about by commercial contact. The discipline dealing with the *formal* consequences of such relationships is pure jurisprudence (or natural law), which may be compared to geometry. The discipline which copes with their material nature is political economy, which is similar to abstract mechanics. In their applications both disciplines are concerned with the conditions of social reality; but they are much more effective in understanding and dealing with these conditions in cases where, over the course of civilisation, human relationships and business affairs have become more complex and highly developed.

Nevertheless, up till now all “organic” or “historical” opinion has been hostile to both these disciplines. My study attempts both to encompass the jurisprudential and economic approaches and to keep them subordinate. But I have been able to do this only sketchily, like many other things. The complexities of my subject are overwhelming. Relevant structures of thought must be examined to see, not so much whether they are correct, as whether they are fitted to the task. This, however, can only be proved by the exposition which I am about to offer, and I hope that I shall be up to it. I will not be held responsible for erroneous interpretations nor for crackpot practical applications. People who are not used to thinking conceptually should refrain from passing judgement in such matters. But this sort of restraint is no more to be expected than any other kind in the present day and age.

I could easily write a special chapter about the *influences* to which I owe the development of my thought. In the social sciences themselves these are many and varied. Some of the most important names crop up in occasional quotations. I would like to mention, however, that the great sociological works of A. Comte and Herbert Spencer have been my constant companions on the way. Both have their weaknesses, Comte particularly in dealing with the prehistoric foundations, Spencer in general historical outlook; and both present the development of mankind in too one-sided a fashion as directly dependent on man's intellectual progress (though Comte in his later work comes to see things more profoundly). I would further like to mention that I have been a fervent disciple of the tireless efforts of Messrs A. Schaeffle and A. Wagner, and continue to be so. But though both of them agree with the deep political insights of Rodbertus, neither of them, so far as I can see, seems to recognise as he does the pathological aspect of the development of modern Society. Mere goodwill on the part of theorists and legislators can do nothing more than modify such development.

Moreover, I will not conceal the fact that my study has been most profoundly influenced – stimulated, instructed and corroborated – by three distinguished authors, all very different from each other. (1) Sir Henry Maine (the author of *Ancient Law*, *Village Communities in the East and West*, *The Early History of Institutions*, *Early Law and Custom*) is a philosophical legal historian with the broadest horizons. My only regret, in reading his illuminating comments, is that he unjustly opposes the extraordinary insights offered on the prehistory of the family, community life, and all such institutions by authors from Bachofen's *Matriarchy* through to Morgan's *Ancient Society* and beyond. Otherwise I give him credit for his optimistic view of modern conditions. (2) Otto Gierke (the author of *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht*, 3 volumes, and also of *Johannes Althusius* and several articles in periodicals). Gierke's learning never fails to fill me with admiration, nor his opinions with respect, even though I never encounter in his writings what I consider to be the most important point of view – the economic one. (3) In this latter respect the most outstanding and profound social philosopher is Karl Marx (in *A Critique of Political Economy* and *Capital*). I am happy to draw attention to his name, since he has never been forgiven, even by clever people, for the allegedly utopian fantasy which [in reality] he took pride in demolishing completely. (The fact that a thinker has taken part in active workers'

movements is no concern of his critics; if they think that was immoral, who pokes his nose into *their* immoral acts?)

The overall conception, which I for my part would like to extract from all this is as follows. The natural, underlying constitution of civilisation (though now lost to us) is communistic, while the contemporary and developing constitution of the future is socialistic. This view in my opinion is not strange to genuine historians when they understand these matters most acutely, even although the 'detective' who unmasked the capitalist method of production was the only one who was able to make it fully clear. I see in all this a hanging-together of historical facts which is as natural as life and death. I may enjoy life and lament the fact of death; joy and sadness disappear when I contemplate the divine plan. I stand entirely apart from everyone else in my terminology and definitions. But one thing is easy to understand – there is no *individualism* in history and civilisation, except of the kind that flows from *Gemeinschaft* and remains conditioned by it, or else of the kind that gives rise to and sustains *Gesellschaft*. These opposing relationships of individual man to mankind in general are the very heart of the matter.

Since I regard this idea as my own I need not fear any criticism of the central theme of this deeply imperfect work. Personal communications from readers, known or unknown to me, will be better appreciated by me if they have been moved or stimulated by a sympathetic attitude. Much can come of this – for me, at least, reward for my labours and fresh stimulus. For it remains true, however hard one struggles for truth, that:

all opinions about things belong to the individual, and we know only too well that our beliefs depend not on reason but on the will, and that people understand only what is appropriate for them and what they can recognise. In knowledge as in action prejudice settles everything, and prejudice, as its name indicates, is a judgement made before an examination of the facts. It is an acceptance or rejection of things which are in sympathy or not in sympathy with our nature; it is a happy impulse of our being towards both truth and falsehood, towards everything with which we feel in harmony (Goethe, *Theory of Colour*, polemical section WW, 38, p. 16).¹⁰

¹⁰ Goethe, *Zur Farbenlehre, Polemischer Theil* (1810), in Goethe, *Werke*, 53 vols. (Weimar edn: H. Bohlau, 1887–1919), Abth. II, Band 2, p. 18. This was the work in which Goethe controversially attacked Isaac Newton's account of visual perception and argued that colour was determined by the eye of the beholder as well as by the objective properties of matter.

As regards Book Two, I ought to say that, proceeding systematically, it would have been better placed *before* Book One; but I have deliberately chosen this order. The books complement and explain each other. Finally I must add, as I have promised to do, that a first draft of this work – of which, however, hardly a trace remains – was presented in 1881 to the Arts Faculty of Kiel University as my *Habilitation* thesis.

Husum in Schleswig-Holstein

Ferdinand Tönnies

Book One

A general classification

of key ideas

Deus ordinem saeculorum tanquam
pulcherrimum carmen ex quibusdam
quasi antithetis honestavit.

God has graced the course of the ages
with the charm of a most beautiful
piece of music, fashioned out of
seeming opposites.

(Adapted rather than directly quoted
from several passages in Augustine,
City of God, bk. XI, chs. 1 and 18).

The argument

The wills of human beings interact in many different ways. Every such relationship is reciprocal – on the one side active or assertive, on the other passive or acquiescent. These interactions are of such a kind that they tend either to support the mental and physical well-being of the other party or to destroy them – they are either positive or negative. My theory will concentrate on investigating only relationships that are based on positive mutual affirmation. Every relationship of this kind involves some kind of balance between unity and diversity. This consists of mutual encouragement and the sharing of burdens and achievements, which can be seen as expressions of people's energies and wills. The social group brought into existence by this positive relationship, envisaged as functioning both inwardly and outwardly as a unified living entity, is known by some collective term such as a *union*, *fraternity* or *association*.¹ The relationship itself, and the social bond that stems from it, may be conceived either as having real organic life, and that is the essence of *Community* [*Gemeinschaft*]; or else as a purely mechanical construction, existing in the mind, and that is what we think of as *Society* [*Gesellschaft*]. If we look at the ways in which these two terms are applied we shall see that they are conventionally used in German as synonyms. Up till now they have been confused in technical terminology, being employed interchangeably. So a few observations at the outset may establish their contrasting usages.

¹ *eine Verbindung* – translatable as union, association, connection, combination, alliance, etc. Elsewhere in the book Tönnies uses the word specifically to mean the kind of holistic organic bonding that he attributes to *Gemeinschaft*, but here it is used in a more general way to cover groups in both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

All kinds of social co-existence that are familiar, comfortable and exclusive are to be understood as belonging to *Gemeinschaft*. *Gesellschaft* means life in the public sphere, in the outside world. In *Gemeinschaft* we are united from the moment of our birth with our own folk for better or for worse. We go out into *Gesellschaft* as if into a foreign land. A young man is warned about mixing with bad society: but ‘bad community’ makes no sense in our language. Lawyers may use the term ‘domestic society’² when they are thinking of such a relationship merely in its social and public aspects, but ‘domestic *community*’ with its infinite effects upon the human soul will be understood intuitively by anyone who has ever experienced it. In the same way an engaged couple recognise that in entering into marriage they are embarking upon a total community of life (*communio totius vitae*); but a ‘society of life’ would be a contradiction in terms.³ You can ‘keep someone company’, but no one can offer another person ‘community’ in that casual way. You may be received into a religious community; but religious *societies*, like other bodies set up for whatever purpose, exist only for some extraneous goal, such as serving the state or to promote some theory. We have a community of language, custom, belief; but a society for purposes of business, travel, or scientific knowledge. Commercial partnerships are of particular importance; but even though a certain fellowship and community may exist among business partners, we would hardly speak of a ‘commercial community’. And it would sound quite revolting to make the linguistic compound ‘joint-stock community’. On the other hand community of ownership certainly exists, as in the case of fields, woods and pasture. No one would describe the common ownership of property between man and wife as a ‘society of property’.⁴

Thus many differences between the two concepts become apparent. In

² *die häusliche Gesellschaft* was the term used to define a three-generational household unit, made up of a married couple, elderly parents and children, under the Prussian Natural Law Code of 1794 (*Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch (Wörterbuch der älteren deutschen Rechtsprache)*, 7 vols. (Weimar: L. Böhlau Nachfolger, 1914–83), vol. IV, p. 503).

³ *Communio totius vitae*: not a term commonly used by Roman lawyers, but *communio* implied an indissoluble partnership. Tönnies may have had in mind early Roman marriage laws, before the erosion of restrictions on divorce under the later Roman republic and the empire. *Societas vitae*, on the other hand, was a term in Roman law (T. Mommsen, *The Digest of Justinian* (1870), English trans. Alan Watson, vols. I–IV (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), vol. II, book xxv, p. 733).

⁴ *eine Güter-Gesellschaft* = a contract-based property partnership which could be dissolved by agreement of the parties. Again, not a standard Roman law term, but it had been used in the Roman law-based code of Baden in 1808 (*Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch*, vol. IV, p. 1327).

the most universal sense we could speak of a Community that is *inclusive* of all mankind, such as the Church claims to be. But ordinary human 'Society' we understand simply as individuals living alongside but independently of one another. In recent times there has been talk, in academic discussion, of the 'Society' of a country as opposed to 'the state'; and we shall make use of this conception here, though its meaning only becomes fully apparent in terms of a more deep-seated contrast with the 'Community' of the common people. Community [*Gemeinschaft*] is old, Society [*Gesellschaft*] is new, both as an entity and as a term. This has been recognised by an author whose teaching of political theory is otherwise more notable for its broadness of range than for deep penetration. "The entire concept of Society in the social and political sense", states Bluntschli (*Staatswörterbuch*, IV), "has its natural basis in the habits and the outlook of the *third estate*. It is not really an idea referring to the whole people, but merely to the concept of the third estate . . . it is the latter's notion of 'Society' that has become the source of collective prejudices and trends, while at the same time becoming the vehicle of their expression . . . Wherever urban culture flourishes, 'Society' also appears as its indispensable medium. Country people know little of it."⁵ On the other hand, everyone who praises rural life has pointed to the fact that people there have a stronger and livelier sense of Community. Community means genuine, enduring life together, whereas Society is a transient and superficial thing. Thus *Gemeinschaft* must be understood as a living organism in its own right, while *Gesellschaft* is a mechanical aggregate and artefact.

2

Everything that is 'real' is organic,⁶ in the sense that it must be seen in conjunction with the whole material world, which governs its nature and

⁵ J. G. Bluntschli and R. Bradter, *Deutsches Staatswörterbuch*, 12 vols. (Stuttgart and Leipzig: 1859), vol. IV, p. 247. By the 'third estate' Bluntschli and earlier users of the term meant, not the mass of the people, but those with a stake in civil society, i.e. the *bürgerlich* class.

⁶ Almost certainly meant as an echo of Hegel's 'alles Wirkliche ist vernünftig' (F. Tönnies, 'Neue Philosophie der Geschichte: Hegel, Marx, Comte', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 7 (1894), p. 487). In this second paragraph (and at many later points in the book) Tönnies abruptly switches from treating human relations as purely social arrangements to discussing them as though they were 'bodies' and 'forces' in the natural world. The reader should bear in mind his claim, not always crystal clear in the text, that his biological and mechanical models were not literal but analogical.

movements. Thus the power of magnetic attraction in all its many forms makes the universe, as our consciousness apprehends it, into a single whole.⁷ The action of this whole expresses itself in the movements by means of which two bodies change their relative positions. But in order to be observed and considered scientifically, a whole must be carefully defined if it is to be of any significance; and each whole of this kind will be seen to consist of smaller wholes which have a particular direction and speed of movement in relation to each other. Attraction itself remains either unexplained (as a remote cause), or is thought of as a mechanical response to external contact, although happening for no known reason. Thus, as we know, masses of matter divide up into identical molecules which attract each other with greater or lesser magnetic force and which in their aggregate state form bodies. The molecules are split into different (chemical) atoms, whose difference remains to be explained by further analysis of various arrangements of the same atomic particles. Pure theoretical mechanics, however, assumes the existence of infinitesimal centres of force as the source of specific actions and reactions – an idea that comes very close to something like ‘metaphysical’ atoms.⁸ The total sum therefore cannot be altered by any disturbance in the constituent parts. For all practical purposes, however, the physical molecules are treated as being indistinguishable from the body of which they form a part. All true masses may be expressed in terms of specific gravity or measured by reference to quantities of other stable substances. But the moving units that compose the whole are merely hypothetical concepts required for purposes of scientific analysis. Strictly speaking, only the ultimate units, the metaphysical atoms, are the proper units of measurement – somethings which are nothings, or nothings which are somethings! – and here one must be mindful of the merely relative significance of all concepts of size.⁹

Nevertheless, although this may be an anomaly from the viewpoint of mechanics, bodies do in fact exist beyond these combinable and combining particles of inanimate matter. These bodies appear in every respect to be natural totalities, which function as a whole in relation to their parts: that is to say, they are organic bodies. We human beings, trying to understand what is going on around us, belong to bodies of this kind. Each of us has, apart from an indirect knowledge of all possible bodies, an imme-

⁷ cf. Clerk Maxwell, *Matter and Motion*, particularly pp. 1–35.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 50–1.

⁹ Lange, *History of Materialism*, vol. II, pp. 386–9; Clerk Maxwell, *Scientific Papers*, vol. II, pp. 451–84.

diate knowledge of his own body.¹⁰ We are driven to the conclusion that some kind of 'conscious' life is bound up with *every* living body; and that through this conscious life the body has an objective existence in the same way that we know that we ourselves exist.

However, objective observation teaches us no less plainly that the whole is not merely the sum of its parts; on the contrary, the parts are dependent on and conditioned by the whole, so that the whole itself possesses intrinsic reality and substance. Human power can produce only inorganic things from organic raw materials, splitting them up and combining them again; and in much the same way both objects and concepts are hammered into a coherent shape by the process of scientific analysis. Phenomena can be brought to life by an original outlook and creative imagination, or by folk belief and inspired poetry; and this creativity, this use of the imagination, also occurs in science. But science has to treat living things as dead objects in order to grasp their interconnections. It translates all states and forces into motions, and represents all motions as amounts of work performed, i.e. as energy expended. It does this in order to understand everything as part of a uniform process and to measure things against one another as though they were interchangeable. This is valid in so far as the assumed uniformity really exists, and certainly the field of possibilities is in theory unlimited; the goal of theoretical understanding, and other related goals, is thus achieved.

But the inexorable processes of organic growth and decay cannot be understood by mechanical means. In this area concepts themselves are part of reality – living, changing and developing, like the inner core of an individual being. If science comes into play here it changes its nature, drops its analytical, rational stance for an intuitive and dialectical one – and turns into philosophy. Moreover the present study is not concerned with genuses and species; we are not considering people with regard to race, nation or tribe as *biological* units, but in the *sociological* sense. We are therefore looking at human relationships and connections either as living entities, or conversely as artificially constructed ones. One finds a counterpart and analogue to this dichotomy in the theory of the individual *will*; so the task of the second part of this study will be to present the problem in its *psychological* aspects.

¹⁰ cf. A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, (1818), trans. E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1969), vol. I, pp. 104–5.

The Theory of *Gemeinschaft*

I

In tune with the argument so far, the theory of *Gemeinschaft* is based on the idea that in the original or natural state there is a complete unity of human wills. This sense of unity is maintained even when people become separated. It takes various forms, depending on how far the relationship between *differently situated* individuals is predetermined and 'given'. The common root of these relationships is the all-embracing character of the sub-conscious, 'vegetative'¹ life that stems from birth: human wills, each one housed in a physical body, are related to one another by *descent* and kinship; they remain united, or become so out of necessity. This direct mutual affirmation is found in its most intense form in three types of relationships: namely, (1) that between a mother and her child; (2) that between a man and a woman as a couple, as this term is understood in its natural or biological sense; and (3) that between those who recognise each other as brothers and sisters, i.e. offspring at least of the same mother. While the seed of *Gemeinschaft*, or the bias of human minds towards it, is to be seen in any relationship of kinsfolk, these three are of special importance as containing the seeds which are strongest and most readily nurtured. Each of them is significant in its own special way.

A) The relationship between mother and child is most deeply rooted in pure instinct and *pleasure*;² and at the same time the shading over from

¹ *vegetative* – the term applied by Tönnies to the sphere of organic life below the level of either sensation or thought, such as digestion or blood circulation.

² *der Gefallen* = pleasure, liking, preference. The term is linked in this paragraph with *die Gewöhnung* (custom, habit) and *das Gedächtnis* (memory) to form one of Tönnies's favourite rhetorical triads.

a physical to a purely spiritual³ relationship is here at its most apparent, particularly at the very beginning. The relationship implies a long duration, because the mother is responsible for the nurture, protection and management of the child until it is capable of nourishing, protecting and managing itself. As this happens, the relationship loses its element of necessity, and separation becomes more likely. This tendency can, however, be counteracted by other factors, such as by growing *accustomed* to one another and sharing *memories* of the joy they have given each other, or else by the gratitude of the child for all the trouble the mother has taken on its behalf. These direct mutual connections are reinforced by others which link the pair with matters outside themselves – pleasure, habit, and memory unite them with things in their environment which from the beginning were agreeable, or which became so; for example, familiar, helpful, loving people, such as the father may be, if he lives together with his wife, or the brothers and sisters of the mother or the child, and so on.

B) The *sexual instinct* does not make permanent co-habitation necessary; to begin with it leads less to equal partnership than to one-sided subjugation of the woman, who, being by nature weaker, can be reduced to slavery and a mere object of possession. Thus the relationship between a *married couple*, regarded independently of family networks and related social forces, must be maintained chiefly by accommodation to each other, if the relationship is to be moulded into one of permanent mutual affirmation. Contributory factors already mentioned understandably play their part here, particularly the relation with children they have produced together, as well as the sharing of household and possessions.

C) Between *siblings* there is no such fundamental, instinctive liking and natural recognition of one another as there is between a mother and her child, or between partners of the opposite sex. The husband–wife relationship can, of course, *coincide* with the brother–sister one, and there is good reason to believe that this was frequently the case among many tribes at an earlier period of human history. We must remember that wherever and whenever descent was reckoned on the mother's side, the corresponding generations of cousins were described and regarded as brothers and sisters. This was so common that the restricted meaning of the term *Geschwister*,⁴ as in many other cases, dates from a much later outlook. Through similar developments among the most important ethnic groups,

³ *geistig* = spiritual, mental, intellectual, psychological.

⁴ *die Geschwister* = siblings, brother(s) and sister(s).

marriage between brothers and sisters came to be eliminated; where exogamy was practised this meant no marriage with blood relatives, although more distant relatives might be permitted to marry. As a result, the love between siblings can be regarded as the most 'human' of relationships between human beings, even though it is based essentially on ties of blood.⁵ It is evident in this case, that in contrast to the other types of relationship, instinct is at its weakest, and instead *memory*⁶ seems to play the strongest part in creating, maintaining and consolidating emotional ties. When children of the same mother live together and remain together, they are almost bound to connect their individual recollections of happy impressions and experiences with the characters and activities of the others (if we discount all the causes of enmity that may work in the opposite direction). The more this group is threatened from outside, the more bonding together will be likely to occur, because circumstances impose the need to stick together, to fight and act collectively. The *habit* derived from this co-operation makes life together easier and more cherished. At the same time we can expect the highest degree of *similarity* of character and abilities among brothers – even though differences in intelligence and experience, in so far as these are purely human factors, may well be accentuated.

2

Many other, more remote connections are woven in with these most intimate and basic types. The relationship between *father* and children combines and exemplifies them most fully. This resembles the primary (i.e. maternal) type of relationship in its most important aspect, namely the organic basis which keeps the reasonable being in contact with the offspring of his own body; but it differs from it because the instinct [in fatherhood] is of a much weaker nature and more like that between man and wife. For that reason it is more likely to be experienced simply as power and authority over subjects or dependants. A husband's affection for a wife does not cover as long a timespan as a mother's for a child, but it is no less intense; a father's love for a child differs from a mother's in being less intense but lasting just as long. If a father's love exists in any strength it resembles the love between brothers and sisters because of its

⁵ i.e. human as opposed to purely 'natural'.

⁶ *das Gedächtnis* = memory or recollection, but often used by Tönnies to mean something rather broader, like a shared 'frame of reference'.

'mental' [rather than physical]⁷ character. But it clearly differs from that relationship because of the *inequality* of the parties involved, especially in age and intellectual powers. Thus fatherhood is the clearest foundation for the concept of *authority* within the community. This authority is not, however, to be used for the advantage of the authority-holder, but to complete his part in procreation by seeing to his offspring's training and education and sharing with them his own experience of life. The growing children will gradually respond to this and a genuinely mutual relationship will develop. The first-born son has a natural advantage here; he stands nearest to his father and steps into his place as the father grows older. The full authority of the father is implicitly passed on to the first-born right from his birth, and so the idea of life being constantly renewed is exemplified in the uninterrupted succession of fathers and sons. We know that this pattern of inheritance is not the original one, since patriarchy seems to have been preceded by matriarchy and rule by the mother's brother. But masculine domination at work and in battle proved stronger, and through marriage the fact of paternity became established as a certainty; thus paternal authority has become the universal pattern for civilisation. Even where collateral succession (the system of "Tanistry"⁸) takes precedence over primogeniture, this indicates the continued power of a previous generation – the brother who succeeds takes his right not from his brother but from their common father.

3

In any form of co-existence, depending on general circumstances, some kind of division and sharing of duties and pleasures will be present or will develop and work reciprocally. In its most obvious form it is found in the first of our three primary relationships. Here the pleasure greatly outweighs the effort involved. The child has the benefit of care, nourishment and instruction; the mother has the delight of possession, and later she enjoys the benefit of obedience and finally of sensible, practical assistance. To some extent a similar reciprocal arrangement operates between a man and his female companion, based primarily on difference of sex and only secondarily on difference of age. The difference between the sexes as

⁷ Tönnies's phrase is 'ihre mentale Natur'. His point seems to be that enduring fatherhood stems from normative ideas rather than instinct.

⁸ i.e. the election of the eldest and worthiest kinsman of a dead lord, rather than automatic descent to an eldest son.

regards their physical *strength* is expressed in the division of labour. In defence of their common property it falls to the wife to take charge of valued possessions and to the man to ward off enemy attacks. His job is to hunt for food, hers to preserve and prepare it. Where any other work is required, and where younger or weaker members of the family are to be trained up for it, we can usually expect and find that the man's energies will be turned outwards to fighting and to training his sons, while the wife's will be directed to domestic life and the female children. True assistance and promotion of each other's interests are to be found in their purest form among *siblings*, because they are usually directed towards communal working together. Apart from sex differences, distinctions of *intellectual* ability will emerge most powerfully here, as has already been mentioned. This will depend on whether planning and brain-work are needed, or execution and manual labour – the former implying some form of leadership, the latter obedience and willingness to follow. It has to be recognised that all such distinctions work in accordance with nature, despite the fact that these basic tendencies, like any others, can be modified, cancelled out or reversed.

4

These relationships in general show how human wills mutually direct and assist one another, so as to maintain a balance of power. Anything, however, which gives more power to one party's will must be correspondingly balanced by greater vigour and effectiveness. Ideally, whoever gets the greater profit *from* the relationship should be putting more *into* it, that is, should be employing greater or more unusual abilities; while those who get less should be those who contribute less. Even though effort and taking trouble may well be, or may come to be, a pleasure in itself, any expenditure of energy means that slackening off will necessarily follow – putting out means taking in, just as rest must follow movement. The sense of superiority and power to command are in themselves a source of pleasure for the strong, whereas those who are being led and *protected*, who *have to* obey, will have a feeling of inferiority and will experience this as something disagreeable, as a form of pressure or compulsion, however much it may be glossed over by habit, gratitude or love. The point may be made clearer in the following way: all superiority carries with it the danger of arrogance and cruelty and a tendency to treat others in a bullying manner, if it is not outweighed by benevolence. In the nature of things

this does often happen; greater power in general means greater ability to render assistance [to others]; if it exists at all, the instinct to help will be much more effective if it is accompanied by power, which is in itself a kind of will to act. And, particularly within these organic kin-based relationships, the stronger party feels an instinctive, spontaneous *tenderness* towards the weak, a desire to help and protect, which is bound up with pride of possession and the enjoyment of his own power.

5

I shall use the terms *rank* or *authority*⁹ for any superior power which is exercised for the benefit of inferiors or in accordance with their will and therefore accepted by them. Three kinds of such authority can be distinguished: the authority of age, the authority of physical strength, and the authority of wisdom or intellect. These are united in the authority which belongs to the *father* at the head of his family, protecting, supporting and leading them. The menacing aspect of such power arouses fear among lesser folk, and this might mean only avoidance and rejection, were it not mingled with some degree of admiration. But graciousness and good will generate a desire to pay *homage*, and when this predominates it gives rise to a feeling of *reverence* or *respect*. Where there is a decisive difference in power, reciprocal sentiments of affection and reverence, or, in a lower degree, benevolence and deference, stand as the twin pillars that form the very foundations of *Gemeinschaft*. Because of such feelings a kind of community relationship is possible, even probable, between *master* and *servant*, especially when it is supported and encouraged, as it usually is, by close, continuing and exclusive domestic co-habitation, like the bonds of very close kinship.

6

Community by *blood*, indicating primal unity of existence, develops more specifically into community of *place*, which is expressed first of all as living in close proximity to one another. This in turn becomes community of *spirit*, working together for the same end and purpose. Community of place is what holds life together on a physical level, just as community of spirit is the binding link on the level of conscious thought. The last of

⁹ *die Würde*, used by Tönnies to imply legitimate authority arising out of communal life, as opposed to *Herrschaft* by which he usually (though not always) means 'domination'.

these elements, together with the former two, is what makes a truly human community in its highest form. In the first type of community we share our common physical humanity, in the second we share land held in common, in the last we usually share sacred places or worship the same deities. All three types of community are intimately connected with each other in respect of both place and time, both in particular phenomena and in the whole of human culture and its history. Wherever human beings are bound together in an organic fashion by their inclination and common consent, Community of one kind or another exists. Either the earlier type contains the nucleus of the later one, or the later one will have developed a relative independence from the earlier. We can regard (1) kinship, (2) neighbourhood, and (3) friendship or comradeship, as perfectly intelligible ways of describing those three original types.

(1) *The home* is both the physical location and, so to speak, the living body of *kinship*. Here people live together under the one protecting roof. Here they share the same possessions and enjoy the same good things, especially nourishment from the same supplies and sitting together at the same table. Here the dead are revered as invisible spirits, as if they still had the power to watch over their descendants, so that fear and honour together maintain peaceful co-existence and co-operation more securely. The spirit of kinship is certainly not limited by the walls of the house or by mere physical proximity. Wherever it is strong and lively in the most intimate relationships, it can find its own nourishment, feeding upon past memories and recalling close-knit communal activity, however far it may be from home. In such circumstances we cleave to physical closeness all the more, because only in this way can our longing for love find rest and harmony. The ordinary man, in the long term and for the most part, will feel at his best and happiest when he is surrounded by his family and his own circle. He is at home (*chez soi*).

(2) *Neighbourhood* is the general character of life together in a *village*. The closeness of the dwellings, the common fields, even the way the holdings run alongside each other, cause the people to meet and get used to each other and to develop intimate acquaintance. It becomes necessary to share work, organisation and forms of administration. The gods and spirits of land and water, which confer blessing or threaten disaster, have to be implored for grace and mercy. Although it is basically conditioned by living together, this kind of community can persist even while people are absent from their neighbourhood, but this is more difficult than with kinship; it has to be sustained by fixed habits of getting together and by customs regarded as sacred.

(3) *Friendship or comradeship* is formed independently of kinship and neighbourhood, being conditioned by and resulting from similarity of work or opinion. It grows most easily where people share the same or a similar calling or craft. But such a tie must be formed and fostered through easy and frequent meeting, which is most likely to happen within a *town*. The *divinity* thus evoked and worshipped by a common spirit is of major importance for maintaining the bond, since it alone or for the most part is what gives the bond a living, lasting form. Such a *benevolent* spirit is not located in any one place, but dwells in the conscience of its worshippers and accompanies their wanderings in foreign parts. Those who are truly comrades in the faith, knowing one another like members of a craft or professional group, will feel themselves to be united everywhere by a spiritual bond and by working at the same task. Therefore living together in a town can be included in the category of neighbourhood, as can living together in a household, where unrelated persons or servants are involved. On the other hand the comradeship of minds creates a kind of invisible location, a mystical city and meeting-place which comes alive through the medium of artistic sympathy or creative purpose. Relationships between people as friends and comrades have nothing organic, no inner necessity about their character; they owe least to instinct and are less conditioned by habit than are neighbourly relationships; they share a common outlook¹⁰ and thus, in contrast with neighbourliness, seem to rest either on chance or free choice. But a similar gradation of ties has already been shown to exist among relations of pure kinship, and this leads us to set the matter out in the following way.

7

Neighbourhood may be compared to kinship in much the same way as the marriage bond may be compared to the relationship between mother and child. Whereas with mother and child mutual affection is in itself enough to maintain the bond, with married couples – and all relationships based on affinity [rather than consanguinity] – the tie has to be underpinned by living together and shared habits. And likewise, just as relationships between siblings – and hence of cousins and more distant kin – depend on residual organic ties, so friendship also is linked to neighbourhood and kinship. Shared memories generate gratitude and loyalty; the concrete

¹⁰ *Sie sind mentaler Natur.*

reality of such connections must manifest itself in mutual trust and belief in one another. But the basis of such relationships is no longer so spontaneous and self-evident, and each individual is aware of himself and needs to assert himself over and against the others. These relationships are therefore the most difficult to maintain and are least able to cope with disruptions such as the disputes and quarrels that are bound to occur wherever people live together. Continuous proximity and frequency of contact imply not just mutual encouragement and support but also the possibility, indeed probability, of some degree of restriction and negativity; and only as long as the *positive* side predominates can a relationship claim to display genuine community. This explains why many such *fraternities* of a purely intellectual and spiritual kind have found by experience that they can tolerate the physical proximity of actually living together only up to a certain point. It has to be counter-balanced by a high degree of individual freedom.

Within the bonds of kinship all natural authority is summed up in the authority of the *father*. The idea of paternal authority also survives in the office of *prince* or ruler, even where the basis of the relationship is essentially one of neighbourhood. In this case it is determined more by power and might than by age and paternity – as can be seen quite clearly in the influence of a lord over his people, of a squire over his tenants, or of a patron over his clients. Lastly, in the context of comradeship or friendship – in the form of common devotion to the same profession or craft – such fatherly authority will be expressed as that of the *master-craftsman* over his lads, apprentices and pupils.

Authority that comes with *age* is best expressed in the administration of *justice* and the role of the *judge*. Violent deeds, followed by revenge and feuds, arise from the hot temper of youth and all its passions. An older man stands above all this as a dispassionate observer, in no way inclined to promote one person against another out of prejudice or hatred. Instead he will try to ascertain which side started the trouble and whether the provocation was sufficient for a normal, balanced person. He will also decide what a man who has overstepped the mark must do in compensation or how he should be punished.

Authority that derives from *power* must distinguish itself in battle – it legitimates itself through bravery and courage. It is epitomised in the authority of the *feudal leader* or warlord. It is his job to muster the fighting forces, to train them and lead them against the enemy, commanding everything required for the collective effort to ward off disaster

and harm. In many decisions and measures, however, it is the job of the 'expert' or person with special knowledge to guess or predict the best course to take, when everyone else is wondering what to do. When the future looms dimly before us, often threatening and full of menace, precedence is given to whoever has the art of discerning, interpreting or influencing the will of the unseen powers. Thus the authority of *wisdom*, in the form of *priestly* authority, assumes a superiority above all the others. In that authority the figure of God himself is believed to walk among men; through it the Immortal and Eternal One is believed to reveal himself and to communicate with those beleaguered by dangers and fear of death.

These various forms of political leadership and virtue are mutually reinforcing. The types of authority that we have classified can, according to circumstance, be assumed to be linked together in any position of superiority that stems from the organic character of a community. Thus judicial authority naturally and originally belongs to the position of head of a family, feudal authority corresponds to the role of the patrician class, while priestly authority seems most appropriate for those who possess special wisdom or knowledge. The head of the family will also normally exercise military authority, especially where unity in the face of enemies requires some degree of subordination. This kind of authority also attaches to the chief of a clan, as head of the senior branch of related families, and in its most rudimentary form to the headman of a primitive tribe, who represents the mythical common ancestor. Feudal or military authority can also be transmuted into the divine priestly variety, because ancestors are also deities, or are likely to become so. The gods are believed to be ancestors or father-like friends or companions, so that there are gods belonging to the household, the family, the tribe and the wider national community. The power of such communities is to be found at its strongest in relation to these divine beings – who can achieve the impossible and work miracles. When they are cherished and worshipped in humble piety they give help, but they bring trouble and punishment if they are despised or forgotten. As fathers and judges, as lords and leaders, as task-masters and teachers, they are themselves the original exemplars of those human offices. The feudal lord is also required to act as a judge, for military organisation requires snap decisions to settle internal disputes. Then priestly authority comes into its own to consecrate such decisions as sacred and inviolable, and the gods themselves are honoured as the authors of law and judicial pronouncements.

8

All authority which enjoys specially *enhanced* freedom and honour, becomes a specific sphere of influence, derived from the general will of the wider community. The corollary of authority is *service*, which requires that freedom and honour be specially limited or *restricted*. Every authority can be regarded as a form of service, and every service as a form of authority, provided its *special character* is taken into account. The influence of will, and so the will of the community, is a mass of determinate force, power or right; and right is both the embodiment of will in the form of ability or permission to act, and will as obligation or duty. The same is true of all further spheres of will, where privilege and duty are two corresponding sides of the same coin or simply the subjective forms of substantive right or power. By allowing this mixture of both enhanced and restricted obligations and privileges, the will of the community permits substantial *inequalities* to exist or arise. These inequalities, however, can increase only up to a certain point, beyond which the very nature of Community as a unity of disparate entities would be undermined. If on the one side, in the upper echelons, legal power becomes too great, the link with the wider community will become insignificant and valueless; and on the other side, among the lower orders, the link will be *unreal* and of no value when their legal power is too limited. The less people who come into contact with one another are linked together in the same community, the more they are ranged against one another as free subjects of their own desires and powers. This freedom will be all the greater the less they feel themselves to be dependent on some *predetermined* guiding power, specifically stemming from the will of some community. Apart from inherited instincts and drives, the most important factor in shaping and developing the character and behaviour of the individual is some communal will which *educates* and guides. Family spirit is particularly important, but so is any other mental or spiritual principle that works in the same way.

9

Reciprocal binding sentiment as the peculiar will of a community is what we shall call *mutual understanding* or consensus.¹¹ This is the special social

¹¹ *das Verständnis* = understanding, sympathy, insight.

force and fellow feeling that holds people together as members of a whole. Since everything instinctual in mankind is tied up with reason and presupposes the faculty of speech, we can regard mutual understanding as the inner rationale of such a relationship. It exists, for example, between father and child only in so far as the child is assumed to be capable of speech and rational thought. We can say that anything which is in agreement with the *inner character* of a community relationship constitutes its *law*, and will be respected as the true, essential 'will' of all those bound together in it. Hence, if differences in rewards and work correspond to natural differences, particularly in capacity for leadership, then we have a *natural law*, a rule for co-existence which assigns to every personality its sphere or function, incorporating duties and privileges. Mutual understanding rests upon intimate *knowledge* of one another, reflecting the direct interest of one being in the life of another and willingness to share in his or her joys and sorrows. Such understanding becomes more likely, the greater the similarity of background and experience, or the more people's natural dispositions, characters, and ways of thinking resemble or complement each other.

The true organ of mutual understanding, its means of development, is language itself. In gestures and sounds we convey and receive expressions of pain and pleasure, fear and desire, and all other feelings and emotions. Language has not, as we all know, been 'invented' or somehow agreed upon as a mere tool for *making* ourselves understood; it is the very act of understanding at work, both in form and in content. Like all other conscious modes of expression language is the involuntary outcome of deep feelings and prevailing thoughts. It is not an artificial means of making oneself understood where there is an inherent absence of understanding, although language *can* be used merely as a system of symbols between those who *do* understand each other, just like any other accepted signs. All these utterances can be manifestations of hostile feelings just as easily as of friendly ones. This means that friendly and hostile moods and passions may underlie the same or very similar conditions. We must, however, distinguish between the hostility that results from rupturing or loosening existing natural ties and the sort that is based on strangeness, misunderstanding and mistrust. Both are instinctive, but the first is rooted in rage, hatred and vexation, the second in fear, aversion, distaste. The former is temporary, the latter enduring.

Of course, language, like other forms of communication between human souls, does not spring from either of these forms of enmity, both

of which are pathological. It comes rather from familiarity, intimacy and love. Our *mother-tongue* in particular must develop most easily and vitally from the deep understanding between mother and child. And we can also recall those cases of passionate enmity that are invariably rooted in deep friendship and similarity.¹² Unity of human wills and the possibility of community is in fact based first and foremost on close blood relationship and mixture of blood, then on spatial proximity, and finally, for human beings, on mental and spiritual closeness. The root of all understanding is to be found in this sequence, so we can now establish the fundamental laws of all community: 1. Relatives and spouses love each other or easily get used to one another. They often think of each other and like to converse together. The same is true of neighbours and other friends as well. 2. There is mutual understanding between those who love each other. 3. Those who love and understand each other stay together and organise their joint existence.

The aggregate of determinate will which governs a community, and which is as natural as language itself and contains a multitude of understandings regulated by its norms, I shall call *concord* or family spirit (the term *concordia* implies a *heartfelt* sense of integration and unanimity). Mutual understanding and concord are one and the same thing: namely the will of the community in its most basic forms. Understanding operates in the relations between *individuals*, concord is the strength and character of the *whole*.

IO

Mutual understanding or sympathy is the simplest expression for the inner reality of all genuine co-existence, where people live and work together. In the first and most general sense this applies to domestic life. Since the core of this life is represented by the union and unity of man and wife for the purpose of producing and rearing offspring, marriage as a lasting relationship is the outstanding example of this basic meaning. The tacit agreement, as we might call it, about duties and privileges, about good and bad, can perhaps be compared to a legal arrangement or

¹² The first edition includes at this point: 'In an old legal treatise Cicero marvelled at the ingenuity of language "Si iurgant," inquit. "Benevolorum concertatio, non lis inimicorum, iurgium dicitur. Jurgare igitur lex putat inter se vicinos, non litigare"' ('If people quarrel, it is called a dispute between friends, not a lawsuit between enemies. Therefore the law thinks of disputes between neighbours as quarrels not litigation') (*De Republica*, IV, 8.8.fr.1). This was a citation from the early Roman Twelve Tables.

'contract', but only in order to point the contrast more vigorously. In a similar way we could say that words are symbols agreed upon arbitrarily; but again just the opposite is true. Legal deals and contracts are forms of agreement that have been artificially constructed or agreed. Promises are exchanged, implying the use of language and mutual understanding and acceptance of actions which will be carried out in the future and must be defined in clear terms. The agreement can also be assumed to have taken place if the right sort of results appear – simply by chance or tacit consent. But true understanding is by its very nature silent, because its content is fathomless and cannot be comprehended in words. Language cannot be decided upon artificially, although countless symbols for concepts can be settled *by means of language*.¹³

Likewise concord cannot be manufactured, although many kinds of common agreement can. Understanding and concord grow and flourish when the conditions are right for them, from seeds which are already there. As one plant springs from another, one house or family springs from another, and marriage grows from concord and habit. What precedes them, creating and shaping them, is not just something like themselves, but a general principle and 'form'. This unity of will, the psychological expression of the bond of blood kinship, is present in larger groups as well, albeit in a more shadowy form and affecting individuals only within an organic order. The general use of a shared language, with its real possibility for understanding what another person is saying, brings human hearts together. There is also a common awareness, symbolised in its higher manifestations like common custom and shared belief, which penetrates the members of a *people* or *nation*, signifying the unity and peace of its life, though it by no means guarantees them. This state of mind grows in intensity as it flows outward from the nation into the twigs and branches of the *tribe*. It is found in its most heightened form in the related houses¹⁴ of that important early structure of organic social life, the *clan* or kinship group, which is the family *before* the family although it performs the same function.

Out of these groups and beyond them new variants arise. These are the structures determined by land and territory which we can distinguish as:

¹³ Tönnies was to express exactly the opposite view – that language could, and should, be artificially invented for purposes of scientific analysis (Tönnies, 'Philosophical Terminology', *Mind*, n.s., vol. 8 (July 1899), pp. 319, 322–3.

¹⁴ 'House' in the kinship sense, as in the 'house of Atreus' or 'the house and lineage of David'.

A) the *country* or *kingdom*, B) the *province* or *district*, and C) the *village*, the latter being the most intimate formation of this kind. Partly from the village and partly alongside it the *town*¹⁵ develops, which is held together in its complete form more by a common spirit than by shared natural interests. In its outer form it is no more than a large village – either a collection of neighbouring villages or a walled village. In its next stage the town will rule over the surrounding countryside and thereby establish a new way of organising the province or, in a wider context, the whole country. Thus a people or a tribe is reconstituted in a new or different form. *Inside the town* certain characteristic institutions emerge – such as the craft union, guild or *corporation*, and the fellowship for worship, the fraternity or religious *congregation*, these being the ultimate and highest expression of the idea of Community. A whole town, or a village, or a nation, a tribe, a clan and finally a family can all in the same way be seen and understood as a particular type of guild or religious community. And vice versa – all these many different structures and formations are contained within the idea of the family and all proceed from it as the universal expression of the reality of Community.

I I

Community life means *mutual* possession and enjoyment, and possession and enjoyment of goods held *in common*. The motivating force behind possession and enjoyment is the desire to have and to hold. Common goods – common evils; common friends – common enemies. Evils and enemies are not themselves objects of possession and enjoyment, they come from negative, not positive motivation, from animosity and hatred, a common desire to destroy. Coveted objects are not in themselves objects of aggression, but belong to an imagined realm of possession and enjoyment, which may only be attainable by acts of aggression. Possession is intrinsically the desire to keep what you have; it is itself a form of enjoyment, a fulfilment of natural desire, like breathing the air in the atmosphere. This is also true

¹⁵ *die Stadt* can be rendered in English as either town or city. For Tönnies, *die Stadt* clearly has connotations of smallness and *Gemeinschaft*, as distinct from *die Grossstadt* which is a product of *Gesellschaft*. Earlier translators of Tönnies's writings have dealt with the problem by rendering *Stadt* as 'town' and *Grossstadt* as 'city'. But this is misleading because throughout the book Tönnies portrays the highest flowering of *Gemeinschaft* as occurring in the small, self-governing urban centres that political theorists refer to as 'city-states'. In this edition *Stadt* is translated as either town or city according to context, while *Grossstadt* is translated as 'big city'.

for the possession and interest which human beings have in *each other*. Use can differ from possession, in that some kinds of enjoyment depend on destruction of the object possessed, as when an animal is killed in order to be eaten. The hunter and fisherman want to eat rather than to possess their individual prey, although part of their enjoyment may be permanent and therefore count as possession, like the use of pelts or the accumulation of reserves. But hunting as an ongoing activity is dependent on the possession, however vague, of a *hunting ground*; hunting may be regarded as enjoyment of this possession. The general nature and content of this possession must move rational people to preserve or even to increase it, since it forms the 'capital' of which the prey is the product. In the same way the tree is the 'capital' whose fruits are picked, or the soil, which yields edible shoots.

The same quality is assumed by the domesticated animal which is fed and cared for, whether it is going to be used as a servant and helper or to provide parts of its body for consumption. Animals are *bred* with the purpose already described; the species or herd is the permanent, preserved element – the actual possession – while the individual specimen is slaughtered for consumption. The keeping of herds implies a particular relationship to the earth, and to the pasture lands, which provide food for the cattle. But hunting grounds and pasture lands on an open range can be changed when they are exhausted; the people with their belongings and their animals leave their territory to look for a better one. It is only the ploughed field, in which a man sows the seed and reaps the crop with his own labour, that binds his feet. It becomes the possession of succeeding generations, and together with constantly renewed human energies represents an inexhaustible treasure. It gains its full value only gradually through the growth of experience, which produces sensible and careful cultivation. With the cultivated field the dwelling house also becomes fixed. Instead of being movable, like people, animals and things, it becomes immovable like the earth beneath it. Man becomes doubly bound, both by the ploughed field and by the house in which he dwells – in other words, by the works of his own hands.

Community life develops in permanent relation to field and dwelling house. It can be explained only in its own terms, for its inner core and thus to some extent its very existence is part of the nature of things.

Community in general exists among all organic beings, rational human Community among human beings. We make a distinction between animals that live together and those that do not live together, that are social or asocial. That is fine, but we forget that we are dealing only with different degrees and varieties of co-existence – in the way that co-existence among birds of passage differs from that among predatory animals. And we forget that living together is a primal fact of nature; it is isolation, not co-operation, that needs to be explained. This means that *particular* issues will sooner or later bring about division, the dissolution of larger groups into smaller ones; but the larger ones were there *before* the smaller ones, just as growth precedes procreation (which can be seen as a kind of supra-individual growth). Each of these larger groups has the capacity to carry on despite division into the separated parts that form its ‘limbs’. In the representative limbs the larger body can still act and exercise influence.

If we then picture a model of development in which a centre or core radiates spokes in different directions, that centre itself signifies the unity of the whole. The whole is held together by force of will, and such will must be particularly powerful in the centre. But along the spokes points for new centres will develop; and the more they require energy to maintain themselves and to expand into their periphery, the more they will draw away from their original core. The latter will necessarily grow weaker and less able to extend its influence in other directions unless it can continue to draw on its original resources. Nevertheless let us assume that living ties of union *are* maintained between the core and the various secondary centres branching off from it. Each of these centres will be represented by a ‘self’, which can be called the *head* with regard to its members. But as head it is not the whole – though it becomes more like the whole when it collects around itself its subordinate centres in the form of *their* heads. In theory they have *always* been part of the centre from which they are derived, so they are fulfilling their intrinsic purpose when they draw nearer to the centre and gather together in one place. This is essential when circumstances either external or internal require mutual assistance and co-ordinated action. Power and authority will be found here which in some way or another affect the safety and lives of *all*.

In the same way the possession of all property resides ultimately in the whole community and in its central authority, so long as that is thought of as representative of the whole. It is from that central authority that the subsidiary centres derive their holdings and assert their rights over them

in a more concrete way by making use of them. Other centres lower down the scale do the same. This line of argument carries us right down to the final unit – the family or household – and to its possessions and their use and consumption within the community. Here finally the exercise of authority affects each individual directly; for it is only from that authority that they, as irreducible units, can derive freedom and property for themselves. Every larger whole resembles a household performing a multitude of separate tasks; and even where it is less than fully developed we can see it as containing the rudiments of all the organs and functions that the developed version would contain. Study of the household is the study of community, just as study of the organic cell is the study of biological life.

13

The essential features of domestic life have already been described, but are summarised here, together with some new ones. The household consists of three layers or spheres, which revolve round the same centre. The innermost sphere is also the primary one: the master and his wife, or wives, if they are all of the same status. The offspring come next; they may stay on in this sphere even after they are married. The outer circle is formed by the domestic staff – menservants and maidservants. They represent the newest layer; they are accretions of more or less related material. They belong to the community only as objects compelled to be there, who become assimilated by the will and feeling of the community and are themselves content to fit in. This is similar to the relationship between husbands and the women whom they have won in some foreign part and brought home as their wives. When these relationships produce children, the dependent offspring form an in-between group, linking masters with their servants.

Of the constituent elements of the household the last one is certainly the most peripheral. It is, however, the necessary guise which strangers or enemies have to adopt if they wish to be absorbed into the life of a household. This is not so for strangers who are treated as honoured *guests*, but that by its nature does not last very long. A guest who is loved and honoured may for a while virtually share in the master's status, but the guest of lower standing is more likely to be treated as a servant. The position of a servant can itself be similar to that of a child, but it can also become more like that of a slave, if human dignity is infringed by bad treatment. A deep-seated and thoughtless prejudice tends to regard the status of

servant as inherently undignified, on the ground that it contradicts the equality of mankind. In fact, anyone can demean himself before another by slavish behaviour born out of fear, habit or superstition, or out of calculation and cold-blooded awareness of his own interests. And likewise a tyrannical or greedy master in his arrogance and brutality may oppress people of lower status, even though they are bound to him [only] by a freely undertaken contract. Neither type of behaviour has any necessary connection with the condition of being a servant, although both probably often occur. If boot-lickers and human doormats are slaves by virtue of their moral natures, then the servant who shares family joys and sorrows, gives his master the honour due from a mature son and enjoys his confidential trust, may be a free man by virtue of his moral nature, even if he is not free in law. Legalised slavery is nevertheless essentially unjust, because the law seeks to be and should be rational; it thus demands that a distinction be made between persons and things, and that a rational being be recognised as a person.

14

The set-up of the household is important initially as a form of *housekeeping*, i.e. in its *economic*¹⁶ aspect, as a community working and sharing together. Eating is a human activity that repeats itself like breathing, and so procuring and preparing food and drink involve work that is regular and indispensable. We have already mentioned the division of labour between the sexes. Forest, pasture and field are the natural outer sphere of operations; the hearth and its ever-burning fire are so to speak the essential heart of the household, the place where man and wife, young and old, master and servant gather to share their meals. Hearth and board take on symbolic significance, the first as the continuing life force throughout succeeding generations, the second because it brings together the current members of the household for the purpose of refreshing body and soul. The table is the embodiment of the household itself, in that every member has his place there and receives his due portion. Before a meal the household will have been divided up, everyone going about his own tasks; now they get together again for the necessary business of sharing food. In a similar way all other goods will be shared out for communal or individual use, whether these have been produced by joint or individual labour.

¹⁶ *ökonomisch*, a term normally used by Tönnies to refer to 'domestic economy' or to small-scale economic arrangements based on household production.

Exchange in its literal sense, however, is contradictory to the very nature of the household, unless it takes place subsequent to the main share-out, or except where individuals can regard their share of what is allocated as their private property. This might be the case with things which they had made on their own apart from communal activity. The household as a whole, under the guidance of its master or overseer, can change surplus products into more useful items by means of barter. Such exchanges can take place regularly within a community of households which itself resembles an extended household, as in a village, in a town, or between town and country in a rural region or urban area. When this happens peacefully and according to standards which have been agreed upon as just, the process can be regarded as an extension of the regular distribution and sharing at the communal table. We may note that this always remains the intrinsic *idea* of exchange, of the basic circulation of goods, however much this fact may come to be obscured. But external appearances can move a long way from this core idea and finally become nothing more than a caricature of the original. To grasp them properly, these transactions must be understood on their own terms and explained simply in relation to the needs and desires of individuals.

15

For the purpose of looking at the actual household in its physical form, I want to distinguish three categories: (1) the *isolated dwelling house*, i.e. one which does not belong to a cluster of houses. The movable tent of the nomad, carried from place to place, is a particularly good example. It continues even into the period of agriculture in the shape of the isolated farmstead which is natural and peculiar to mountain districts or to low-lying marshlands. Similarly the farm as a manor or family seat continues to exist in the countryside, set apart from and superior to the village, which is obliged by custom to render services to those who originally brought it into being and now offer it protection. (2) The *farmhouse* within the village, however, is well established as the dwelling most appropriate for normal cultivation of the soil. It belongs to an economy which supplies all its own basic needs or supplements them with the help of neighbours and workers in the community, such as the village blacksmith and other artisans. It could also be self-contained and have all these workshops, if not under the same roof, certainly under one system of household management. An excellent writer on these matters, Rodbertus, has

characterised the typical Graeco-Roman villa in the phrase: *Nihil hic emitur, omnia domi gignuntur* (nothing is bought in, everything is produced within the household).¹⁷ (3) The *town house*, on the other hand, especially as we picture the household of the master-craftsman, is dependent on barter even for its necessities. What the craftsman himself produces (e.g. shoes), is not for the most part for himself. If the town as a whole is regarded as a community of trade guilds which through mutual co-operation supplies its households and thus itself with desirable and useful things, it must be constantly producing surplus goods with which to buy in the required foodstuffs from surrounding farmhouses (except in cases where the townspeople themselves own land and cultivate it).

In this way an exchange is established between town and country, which is of great importance in looking at cultural phenomena more generally. In this exchange the country obviously has the advantage, because it holds the necessary rather than the dispensable commodities, except where it is a question of tools and other domestic implements needed in the country. The town has the edge with the rarity and beauty of its products; but if it is assumed that a large district will have only a small selection of its population living in the town, then the number of workers producing surpluses of corn and meat, compared with those producing exchangeable artefacts and *objets d'art*, will be in the ratio of ten to one. Moreover, we are not visualising here a professional trader making great efforts to sell his goods in competition with others, nor are we thinking of a monopolist waiting for the need of the buyers to become more pressing so that demand will increase and he can extract the highest possible price. These possibilities are only likely to occur as non-working middlemen take charge of things.

We may thus assume that in any links between town and country a spirit of brotherly sharing and cheerful giving lives on to some extent. Such a relationship is regarded as good and right; it is maintained by many ties of kinship and friendship quite apart from the business of exchanging goods, and people share the common centres of market-places and shrines. This spirit survives in spite of a natural desire to hang on to one's own and acquire as much as possible of other people's goods. A similar relationship may well exist in the more vigorous interchange between one town and another, though this will be less favourable in

¹⁷ Johann Karl Rodbertus, 'Untersuchung auf dem Gebiete der National-ökonomie des klassischen Alterthums', *Jahrbücher für National-ökonomie und Statistik*, vol. 2 (1864), pp. 206–68.

terms of community ties, because of the way these are fostered by kinship, neighbourhood and the non-commercial nature of country folk. But the higher functions in such a social body, those of physical and intellectual leadership, when added together can in no way be compared to goods offered for buying and selling. They are instead maintained organically, nourished and provided for by the will of the community through the powers at its disposal, in the form of complimentary gifts, taxes or statutory labour. The fact that these services can be exchanged in this way merely shows that the relationship is recognised as mutual – though of course things may change so that the *ability* and *desire* to perform such services may begin to approximate to goods brought to market.

16

Pursuing the analogy of the household, we can regard the town and the village as the most clearly delineated examples of community ownership and consumption. The duality of household and village is preceded by the *clan*, which has already been described as family before the family and can just as readily be regarded as village before the village, although this is less strongly pronounced. The clan certainly contains the potential for both of these dominant forms. Patriarchal characteristics – using the word to cover all authority associated with procreation – are mixed with fraternal ones, where brothers and sisters are equal. Elements of authority are combined with elements of co-operation. The first makes itself felt primarily in the household, the second comes into its own in the village community. A brotherly spirit is of course just as present within the family as the exercise of paternal authority within the village. But it is this paternalistic authority, as it continues to hold sway in a system of village organisation, that is particularly significant for the conceptual approach to *history*, because it forms the basis of the feudal system.¹⁸ Faith in the natural authority of an eminent house persists; it is regarded as noble and aristocratic even when the grounds for this belief have died away. It was rooted in the respect for the ancient and noble lineage which links the clan chief, whether in fact or in fiction, with the *common ancestor* of the clan in direct and unbroken descent. This seems to assure him as being of divine origins and therefore of an almost divine authority. But the nobleman also receives honour and recompense for exercising his aristocratic role. It is

¹⁸ Though a rather different account of the origins of feudalism is suggested in Book Three, below, pp. 230–1.

natural, then, that the first fruits of the fields and the first-born of the cattle are offered to him. When territory is occupied and divided up under his leadership the best and most central portions of arable land are allotted to him by common consent before the general distribution, first for alternating use then finally as a permanent possession. He may also have a multiple portion, or, if the clan has split into several villages, a similar portion in each of them. This was the most common pattern in the Germanic agrarian system. Thus his house and holding and hereditary property are fixed in the middle of the village or villages; while in mountain areas his fortified castle towers over his lands.

However, the feudal lord acquires real power only when he is fulfilling functions in the name of the community, with results that are mainly to his own advantage. It follows that in the end these functions will seem to be performed entirely in his own name. This is particularly relevant for the administration of land that has not been divided up and which is more likely to be left to him if it is not much use for exploitation. We are thinking of forest rather than pasture land, of moorland rather than woodland. Indeed, uncultivated waste land is not even seen as belonging to the communal fields [*Feldmark*], but is regarded as the business of a higher authority, the province or region, and administered by its lords, who in turn confer it as fiefs upon lesser barons. These barons settle the parts which seem worth cultivating with *their* people; and as population grows the hunting, warring knight or cavalier can collect an ever-increasing following of men-at-arms in and around his castle. Eventually, however, they consume more than the spoils of hunt and war can produce, even with the tribute and agricultural produce yielded to the overlord. The knights then settle down as farmers and cattle-raisers and furnish themselves with tools, seed-corn and cattle (hence the very term 'feudal').¹⁹ They remain closely bound to their overlord and are obliged to render him services and follow him into battle. They have their own property. It is not, however, derived from their own group or community, like the property of the free yeomen; instead it comes from their 'community' with their feudal lord and remains the property of a higher class. The concepts of 'ground landlord' and 'possessor of land', which have subsequently become separated, are fused together in this form of ownership.

By rights (i.e. according to nature and tradition, agreement and custom) this seigniorial property belongs to the community formed

¹⁹ 'Feud' or 'fe-od' comes from O.E. feoh = cattle.

jointly by lord and people; but the lord may have the opportunity or be tempted to treat it as his exclusive prerogative, especially the less valuable pieces of land. He may then ultimately reduce the yeomen and *their* dependants to a status similar to his own serfs, and turn their property into a mere right of use (*dominium utile*) dependent on his grace and favour. The free landholders may themselves co-operate with him in this, needing protection and a lightening of obligations *vis-à-vis* higher forms of authority. So at the end of the day the lord's ownership of the land may emerge as absolute, individual and exclusive, instead of being relative and shared on a community basis. The relationship of the people to the lord then either becomes one of complete *serfdom*, where unlimited services and duties are demanded; *or*, where limited (though possibly exorbitant) services are required, a free contractual *tenancy* may result. If the tenant has capital and some education this relationship may *possibly* develop into the very opposite of serfdom, but in other circumstances it may be the same condition under a new name and in a new legal *form*.

On the other hand, the dependent nature of lower-class or peasant property may be abolished, either voluntarily by the lord himself or through the overriding influence of compulsory legislation. The property may then be declared to be individually and absolutely owned in the same sense as the seigniorial property has been. In all these cases a separation or divorce takes place, though at first sight only in a legal sense – and, in fact, where community relationships still exist, they may be preserved. But pressure and resistance, corresponding to domination on the one side and dependence on the other, are likely to be constantly reinforced wherever domination can make itself felt merely by virtue of the superiority of large estates over small ones.

17

We cannot here even hint at the enormous variety of those relationships, which are further modified in no small measure whenever an ecclesiastical college, monastery or other corporation takes the place of the feudal lord. We must simply note, in village culture and in the feudal system based upon it, just how strongly the idea of natural *apportionment* and of a sacred tradition determining and resting on it, dominates all the realities of life and corresponding ideas of a right and necessary order. We also note how little can be done with the concepts of exchange and purchase, contract and regulation. The relation between lord and community, and

even more between a community and its members, is based not on contracts but on a series of understandings, as in a family. The village community, even when it includes the overlord, is like a single undivided *household* in its inescapable relationship to the *land*. The *common land*²⁰ is the object of its care and activity, partly for the collective purposes of the social unit, partly for the same related purposes of its members; the first emerge more clearly in the case of common woods, the second in the case of common pasture. But the fields and pastures which are apportioned to an individual family belong to it for cultivation only during the “close season”. After harvest the fences are taken down and the ground reverts to common ownership as part of the pasture land. Even within that special usage the village member is:

limited in many ways by the over-arching character of common law, whereby he is compelled to stick to the common order in the management of his meadows, fields and vineyards. In this respect an explicit directive is hardly necessary to keep the individual farmer to the traditional rotation of crops or the traditional seasons of tilling and reaping. It would be a practical and economic impossibility for him to detach his personal farming from the community enterprise which completes and indeed creates it and without which it could not survive. Particular details such as the open and close seasons for fields and pastures are usually fixed by age-old custom. If this should prove inadequate or need to be altered, the community steps in to decide. It is therefore the community which opens and closes fields and meadows, settles which areas shall be used for summer and winter crops and which shall lie fallow, regulates the times for sowing and reaping, manages the grape picking and later even fixes the wages for the harvest. Furthermore it exercises supervision so that the existing method of using lands under the control system is not changed arbitrarily, which would disturb the community of the fields (*die Feldgemeinschaft*). All the limitations and obligations of personal property in the field area are likewise rooted in the common law. These problems arise from the varying locations of the parcels of land. The whole of neighbourhood law belongs in this department, by virtue of its origins, since it was at first more a result of the bonds of fellowship embracing the entire district than an individual modification of supposed absolute ownership based on the particular title of a neighbouring piece of land (O. Gierke: *Das deutsche*

²⁰ *die Allmend* or *die Allmende* = an archaic colloquial contraction of *der allgemeine Grund* meaning the common lands of a village.

Genossenschaftsrecht. Zweiter Band: Geschichte des deutschen Körperschaftsbegriffs, pp. 216–18).²¹

Likewise an authority on the peasant village in India describes it as similar to primitive organisations in the West and the community as a self-organising, independent entity:

They, in fact, include a nearly complete establishment of occupations and trades for enabling them to continue their collective life without assistance from any person or body external to them. Besides the Headman or Council exercising quasi-judicial, quasi-legislative, power, they contain a village police force . . . and include several families of hereditary traders; the Blacksmith, the Harness-maker, the Shoemaker. The Brahmin is also found for the performance of ceremonies, and even the Dancing-Girl for attendance at festivities. There is invariably a Village Accountant . . . the person practising any one of these hereditary employments is really a servant of the community as well as one of its component members. He is sometimes paid by an allowance in grain, more generally by the allotment to his family of a piece of cultivated land in hereditary possession. Whatever else he may demand for the wares he produces is limited by a *customary* standard of price, very rarely departed from. It is the assignment of a definite lot in the cultivated area to individual trades which allows us to suspect that the original Teutonic groups were similarly self-sufficing. (Sir H. S. Maine, *Village Communities in the East and West* p. 125f.).²²

This is further confirmed in a description of the German mark:

According to modern thinking, the common land was used for the purposes of the community so that leaders, officials and servants of the community received their wages and compensation out of it. Sometimes official fiefs were formally carved out of the lands for such persons to live on. Almost everywhere they were granted special rights of use in forest and pasture which had the character of remuneration. To this category belonged, until they changed their nature

²¹ Otto von Gierke, *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht* (Berlin: Weidman, 1868–1913), vol. II: *Geschichte des deutschen Körperschaftsbegriffs*, pp. 216–18. In this and subsequent quotations, Tönnies modified Gierke's text in a number of minor ways (including replacing Gierke's term *genossenschaftliche* by *gemeinschaftliche*). The changes did not seriously misrepresent the original, but they did perhaps exaggerate Gierke's portrayal of the holistic and all-embracing character of the mediaeval village community.

²² Sir Henry Maine, *Village Communities in the East and West*, third edition (London: John Murray, 1876), pp. 125–6. The sentences cut out by Tönnies refer to the fact that Maine was writing about village organisation in India under British imperial rule.

with the change of their offices into seigniorial rights, the rights of use of district officials, woodwards, forest judges, etc. The same is true for the official rights of use or privileges of village and peasant judges. The rights of many officials rested on concessions made by the majority. For assessors, jurors, foresters, millers, verderers, bailiffs, herdsman and others, these rights were often described as fruits of their office and treated as compensation for their trouble. The rights of use of clergymen and schoolmasters were often regarded in like manner. Lastly, craftsmen licensed to trade in the district by the community or the overlord usually had much the same rights of use of common land. For the craftsmen were regarded as employees of the community, and as such were not only permitted but required to work exclusively or chiefly for the community and its members. Otherwise they had to perform a certain amount of work by way of taxes or in return for fixed prices. The use which they were permitted to make of common property represented a kind of payment. It allowed the exercise of their trade and was seen as recompense for it. In all these cases, however, where we are inclined to look back at the use of common land as a reward for special services rendered to the community, the community seemed to think that it was using the common property to meet the immediate needs of all. For supervisors, officials and servants, just like employed craftsmen, are simply given a job to do by the majority and are useful both as a body and individually. (From Gierke, *op.cit.*, p. 239f.).²³

In other words, the [villagers who perform these functions] are comparable to the organs of its body. The constitution of group co-existence is thus one of a 'household economy'; that is to say, it is communitarian or communistic.

18

The *town* or *city*, according both to Aristotle's description and to its own intrinsic purposes, is also a self-sufficient household, an organism living in a communitarian way.²⁴ Whatever its empirical origins, its existence must be viewed as a totality, together with the individual associations and families that belong to it and are dependent on it. With its language, its customs, its beliefs, as well as its land, buildings and treasures, it forms a

²³ Again there is some modification here of Gierke's actual text, the outlook of 'the community' being substituted for Gierke's vaguer reference to the outlook of 'the times'.

²⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 1-13.

permanent entity that outlives the changes of many generations. Due partly to its own resources, partly to the inheritance and education of its citizens, it goes on reproducing basically the same character and mental outlook. If it can secure its food and raw materials from its own possessions and those of its citizens, or by regular supplies from the surrounding area, it can then devote all its energies to the higher activities of brain and hand, giving *harmonious* form to things and making them generally pleasing to everyone's mind and senses, which is the very essence of *art*. Depending on the tastes of the municipality or of its leading citizens, all urban crafts tend to be true art, although in some branches this potential has little chance of being realised. Handcrafts as a form of art are primarily there for the needs of the community – architecture to erect the city's walls, towers and gates, and its civic halls and churches; painting and sculpture to decorate these buildings inside and out, using images to keep people mindful of the deities and to preserve the memory of eminent persons – in short, to bring lofty and eternal values closer to the senses. The particularly close relationship between art and *religion* – art is based, as Goethe said, on a kind of religious sense – has its roots in domestic life. All primitive cults are family-based and are thus most vigorously expressed as household cults where hearth and altar were originally one and the same. Religious worship itself is an art-form. All that is done for the departed and the revered springs from a solemn mood and is performed in a ceremonial fashion, calculated to maintain and generate this mood. Strict attention is given to pleasing combinations of speech, movements and actions, to everything that contains rhythm and harmony and suits the peaceful mood of those attending the ceremony, as though they had created it themselves. All that is jarring, lacking in restraint, or contrary to tradition is abhorred and rejected. Of course, the old and familiar can retard the search for beauty in ritual, but only because both tradition and the individual devout soul regard the old and familiar as possessing their own peculiar beauty and sanctity. In town life, however, people cling less to tradition – the desire to *create* takes over. In these circumstances the arts of speech may decline in comparison with the pictorial arts or become assimilated into them.

Religion, originally devoted chiefly to the contemplation of death, discovered in village life a more cheerful relation to the world of the *living* through the worship of natural forces. Rejoicing over the renewal of life becomes expressed in gigantic fantasies. Demons which had an underworld existence as the placated spirits of ancestors are resurrected as *gods*

and exalted into heaven. The city brings the gods yet more closely into its life by depicting their images and contemplating them every day, as used to happen with the household Lares who have now faded into shadowy figures. At the same time, however, when the gods are, so to speak, brought down from heaven, they take on a more prominent role in men's thoughts – they become patterns of moral purity, soundness and goodness, and their priests become teachers and preachers of virtue. The concept of religion is developed and refined through these practices. Such an element becomes indispensable as the life of the city becomes more varied and lively. Kinship and neighbourhood, which have provided a framework for friendly feeling and activity, and for intimate acquaintance and modesty in each other's presence – these all lose their power or are limited to smaller circles. A much stronger stimulus is given to art as a kind of priestly activity, for everything that is good, noble, and in some sense holy, has to be experienced through the senses in order for it to work on the mind and conscience.

Art and craft thus become a form of religious belief, a mystery and doctrine, passed on by teaching and example. They are therefore carried on most easily in the family, handed down to sons and shared among brothers. The practitioners of an art may well attach themselves like a clan to an inventor or pioneer of the art; the group will look after the common heritage and as an integral part of the citizen body will represent an "office" in the civic community. The collectivity of craft guilds comes increasingly to constitute an essential element in urban life, and may attain complete freedom and predominance within the community. The city becomes the guardian of *their* collective peace and of the rules by which this peace makes itself felt, through both internal and external organisation of labour. These are sacred ordinances of direct moral importance. The guild is a religious community, and so is the city itself. Accordingly, the entire *economic* existence of a fully developed city – whether as part of the Hellenic or the Germanic world – cannot be understood unless art and religion are taken to be the most important matters in the *whole* of civic life, for its government, its citizenry and its guilds. They constitute the very stuff of its *daily* life, the rule and measure of its thoughts and activities, of its system of law and order. The *polis*, says Plato in *The Laws*, is like a drama in real life.²⁵ Maintaining itself in health and strength is an art in itself, as is the sensible and virtuous lifestyle of an

²⁵ Plato, *The Laws*, trans. T. J. Saunders (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics edn, 1970), VII, p. 310.

individual citizen. For the city, therefore, the buying and selling of goods, along with the essential rights of storage and marketing, are not matters for enterprising individuals but are conducted by the town itself or by an office acting in its name. The city council will take care that nothing is exported which the city might need for itself, and that nothing harmful is brought in. The individual guild sees to it that the products sold by its master-craftsmen meet a high standard; while the Church and clergy will strive to ward off the corrupting effects of trade and commerce.

For these reasons the community-based nature of the town, as we have described it, is properly considered by the economic historian from an exclusively commercial and political point of view. Some relevant sentences from Schmoller (*Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung usw.* VIII,1) confirm the opinion that I have expressed. He lays strong emphasis upon: “the dependence of essential socio-economic institutions at a given time on the most important political bodies”. In this connection he says: “The village is a self-contained economic and trading system.” For Germanic culture we could extend this to the seigniorial estate and the monastery along with the village. “Like the village community with its organs, the town develops to a much greater extent into an economic body with a strong life of its own, which dominates every individual . . . Every town, particularly every major town, tries to isolate itself as an economic entity, while extending its sphere of economic and political influence as far as it can.”²⁶ And so on.

²⁶ Gustav Schmoller, ‘Studien über die Wirtschaftliche Politik Friedrichs des Grossen und Preussens überhaupt von 1680 bis 1786’, *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung*, vol. 8 (1884), pp. 1–61, 345–421, 999–1091.

The theory of *Gesellschaft*

19

The theory of *Gesellschaft* takes as its starting point a group of people who, as in *Gemeinschaft*, live peacefully alongside one another, but in this case without being essentially united – indeed, on the contrary, they are here essentially detached. In *Gemeinschaft* they stay together in spite of everything that separates them; in *Gesellschaft* they remain separate in spite of everything that unites them. As a result, there are no activities taking place which are derived from an *a priori* and pre-determined unity and which therefore express the will and spirit of this unity through any individual who performs them. Nothing happens in *Gesellschaft* that is more important for the individual's wider group than it is for himself. On the contrary, everyone is out for himself alone and living in a state of tension against everyone else. The various spheres of power and activity are sharply demarcated, so that everyone resists contact with others and excludes them from his own spheres, regarding any such overtures as hostile. Such a *negative* attitude is the normal and basic way in which these power-conscious people relate to one another, and it is characteristic of *Gesellschaft* at any given moment in time. Nobody wants to do anything for anyone else, nobody wants to yield or give anything unless he gets something in return that he regards as at least an *equal* trade-off. Indeed it is essential that it should be more desirable to him than whatever he has already, for only by getting something that seems better can he be persuaded to give up something good. If everyone shares such desires, it is obvious that occasions may arise when object 'a' may be better for person 'B' than object 'b', and likewise object 'b' may be better for

person 'A' than object 'a'; it is, however, *only* in the context of such relations that 'a' can be better than 'b' at the same time as 'b' is better than 'a'. This provokes the question: can we in any sense at all speak of the 'quality' or 'value' of things independently of such relationships?

The answer is this: as will be demonstrated, all goods are assumed to be separate from each other, and so are their owners. Whatever anyone has and enjoys, he has and enjoys to the *exclusion* of all others – in fact, there is no such thing as a 'common good'. Such a thing *can* only exist by means of a *fiction* on the part of the individuals concerned. It is only possible when they *invent* or manufacture a common personality with its own will, to whom the common *value system* has to relate. Such fictions are not of course invented without sufficient reason. But sufficient reason does indeed exist in the simple act of giving and receiving an object, because during this process contact takes place and *common ground* emerges which is sought by both parties. This lasts as long as the time taken for the "transaction", which can be almost no time at all or can be envisaged as extending for as long as you like. During this period the object which is being released from the sphere of 'A' has ceased to be completely under his will and control, but has not yet passed completely under the will and control of 'B'. It is still under the *partial* control of 'A' but *already* under the *partial* control of 'B'. It is dependent on both parties, in so far as their wills are acting in unison, as is the case while the will to give and receive continues. During this moment or period the object being exchanged represents common good or *social value*. The shared *will* to complete the transaction *can* be seen as constituting a sort of common or *unified* will, in that it *requires* each party to continue with the twofold act until it is completed. This 'will' *must* necessarily be regarded as a unity, since it is considered to be a 'person', or at least 'personality' is imputed to it; for to think of something as a 'being' or a 'thing' is the same as thinking of it as having a coherent unified identity.

Here, however, we must be careful to distinguish whether and to what extent such a fictitious entity exists *only* in theory, as a *philosophical* construct or hypothesis; or whether and when it also exists in the minds of the parties who conjured it up for a particular purpose (assuming that they are in fact capable of shared willing and acting). And the scene is different again if the two parties are conceived as mere *participants* in the creation of something objective in the scientific sense (meaning something that "everybody" necessarily *has* to think). It must of course be understood that every act of giving and receiving which happens in the

way we have described *implicitly* involves a social will. Now such an action is inconceivable without its own intrinsic rationale or purpose i.e. the assumed exchange of gifts; which requires that the one action cannot precede the other – they have to take place at the same time. To put the thought in a different way, offer and acceptance on both sides must exactly *coincide*. So the *exchange* itself, as a unified single act, forms the *content* of the fictitious social will. In relation to this will the goods or values exchanged are exactly *equal*. This equality constitutes the judgement of value, which is *binding* for both parties, because they were united in making it. It may last only for the period or moment of the exchange, but within these limits it must look like a judgement which has been reached by “everybody”, if it is going to be objective or universally valid. Therefore everyone is deemed to have one and the same will; the will to exchange becomes universal. Everyone takes part in and endorses the individual act, so that it becomes an entirely public act.

On the other hand, the general public may reject that individual act. They may say: a is not equal to b, it is greater or smaller than b, which means that things are not being exchanged according to their proper values. The true value is what everyone regards as its value, as recognised by Society in general; it is accepted as the rational and correct value, only when everyone has agreed on it as a matter of necessity rather than chance. The will of the people can be imagined as united and concentrated in the person of a skilled judge who weighs, measures and passes an *objective* judgement. All members of the public *have* to recognise this and behave accordingly, if they are themselves rational and capable of objective thought, and thus use the same criteria for weighing things up.

20

What is it, then, that we can offer as a yardstick or measuring-rod with which to pursue our theoretical comparisons? We know the “property” which is to have its quantity revealed by means of this constant standard, and we call it “value”. “Value” must not here be taken to mean what it is “worth”, since worth is something perceived only subjectively; and the very *difference* in perception of worth with relation to the same object is the basis of any rational exchange.¹ We, on the other hand, are seeking an

¹ cf. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Oekonomie* (Hamburg: Otto Meissner, 1867; third edition, 1883), ch. 1, section 1. Tönnies appears to have used both these editions, though not distinguishing between them in his citations.

objective measure for *equality* of value in *different* objects. Simple valuation compares objects belonging to the same category. Depending on how well particular specimens meet or fall short of the *standard* expected, they will be accepted or rejected. In this sense we can construct a general category of usable or useful things, describing some as necessary, others as superfluous, emphasising some as very profitable, rejecting others as very injurious. To do this properly, however, we would have to consider humanity as a single entity, or certainly as a community of people who lead very similar lives and have the same needs and desires. It would have to be united in its will and in the sharing of profit and loss, (since of course the judgement is at the same time deemed to be a subjective one).

However, when we assert that two exchanged things are equal in value, this does not mean that they are equally useful or necessary in the way that they might be for a corporate body. We would also have to allow for the possibility that some individuals might buy things that were utterly *harmful*. That would of course be a grotesque flight of fantasy! But we can reasonably say that a judgement may be false when it is determined by excessive desire, so that many a man may acquire through exchange a thing that is, *for him*, dangerous or damaging. Quite clearly, however, something like brandy, even if it harms the workman, is thoroughly useful to the owner of the distillery, not because he drinks it but because he sells it. For a thing to have any value in *market Society* it is only necessary that it should be possessed by one party to the exclusion of others, and that it should be desired by some of the excluded. All its other characteristics are completely irrelevant. The fact that it has a certain amount of value at no time implies that it is endowed with an equal amount of utility.

Value is an objective quality, just as length is for the senses of sight and touch, or weight for the sense of touch and use of muscles. Value functions in just this way for the mind, as it seeks to comprehend the working of 'Society'. The mind examines things and tests them to see whether they can be produced quickly or will require a lot of time, whether they can be supplied easily or cost a lot of trouble. It measures the possibility of producing them against the practicality, and decides whether it is feasible to go ahead. This is the sole criterion of value – subjective for the rational person involved in an exchange, objective for the overall commercial exchange system.² This means only that every sensible individual when confronted with objects for sale has – indeed must have – the

² *die Tauschgesellschaft.*

thought that these things naturally *cost* something in order to exist at all, and particularly to be available at this particular time and place. This may be because they have been exchanged for other objects, or for labour, or that they have a cost in both. But the fictitious entity ‘human Society’ in itself exchanges *nothing*; it could only do so if it could be conceived of as a particular person, which in this context is quite out of the question.³ Exchange can take place only between one person and another, and there is no single human being who could *compete on equal terms*⁴ with ‘human Society’. For Society the cost of objects is simply the effort and labour involved in producing them. Both robbery and exchange assume that objects already exist, and that the cause of their existence is labour, which at any moment in time is producing, nurturing, cultivating and creating concrete objects. To this internal labour we can add the external labour of transportation, the cause of their being at a particular *place*.

Things are therefore all commensurable with each other, and each object or each set of objects signifies only a given *quantity* of labour *necessary* for producing them. Even if some labourers work faster than others or are more productive – i.e. they can produce things with less trouble, because of greater skill or better tools – these distinctions are all expressed in quantities of the same standard measurement of *working time*. That is to say, the more the exchange of *goods* becomes generally commercialised, the more everyone offers his goods for sale to everyone else and the more everyone is capable of producing the same goods, though through choice and self-interest each confines himself to what is easiest for him. It is no longer a question of tasks that are naturally communal being shared out or sub-dividing as particular arts are developed and passed on by teaching or inheritance. It is rather that individuals take up work which corresponds most closely to the price set on it by Society; that is, work which demands the smallest possible amount of time *over and above what is necessary* spent in labour.

Gesellschaft may therefore be imagined as consisting of separate *individuals* who *en masse* work on behalf of Society in general, while appearing to work for themselves, and who are working for themselves while

³ Tönnies presumably means that ‘Society’ cannot become a ‘person’ for purposes of competitive exchange, because (being itself the sum total of exchange relationships) there is nobody else with whom it could exchange things – which would defeat the purpose of the market. This did not mean that ‘Society’ could not become or create a ‘person’ in other contexts, such as the establishment of state power (see below, pp. 234–9).

⁴ *gegenüberstellen* – literally, to confront, to face up to.

appearing to work for Society. By a constantly repeated process of functional division and rational choice the individual is finally reduced to starkly equal, simple, elementary units of labour, like atoms. The total output of Society is composed of such atoms, to which each individual contributes. Then by exchange everyone gets rid of items of value not useful to himself in order to acquire those which are. In the course of this investigation we shall eventually demonstrate how the actual structure of the *Gesellschaft* type of society is related to this idea.

21

If nothing other than the exchange of one commodity for another were to go on in perpetuity, each manufacturer would become completely dependent on every other manufacturer. His part in the process would be confined simply to supplying himself with a share of all other *consumable* goods, plus the necessary replacement of his own means of production. (We assume that the need for the latter varies in different cases.) Here we have a condition of dependence on market Society, which nevertheless entails an element of superiority and control over it. The condition is alternately one of being a suppliant and of being in command: you are a suppliant when you offer a commodity for sale at a certain value, you are in command when you offer 'value' for sale as a commodity. If, for example, a general commodity exists which receives the seal of universal recognition, i.e. through endorsement by Society's will, then this commodity, being unconditionally desired, represents a power over any other commodity which it or its owner might attempt to obtain in exchange. This commodity represents the abstract concept of value. This does not mean that such a commodity does not have a value of its own, provided that it is easy to handle, divisible into equal parts, and has an intrinsic quality that is readily ascertained, as with the so-called precious metals. These attributes are required to measure values and determine their relationships to one another as uniform prices. In this 'value' resembles a quantity of matter in terms of which the weights and specific gravities of bodies can be expressed. In their capacity as money, silver and gold belong to nobody but Society – *l'argent n'a pas de maître*.⁵ It is Society that determines in quantities of these metals the market price of goods. The

⁵ An anonymous eighteenth-century French proverb, more commonly found as 'l'argent n'a pas d'odeur' (i.e. Vespasian's reply to Titus, who objected to charging the people of Rome for the use of public lavatories).

individual choice of buyer and seller, in their bartering and bargaining, can move these prices up or down only within narrow limits.

The *concept of money*, however, can be represented in an even more abstract way than by any “minted” coinage. This is done by a commodity that is *worthless* in itself – a piece of *paper* covered with symbols. It receives not only its significance but also its value entirely from Society, and it is designed to be used in no other way than for this business of societal *exchange*. No one wants this sort of money in order to hang on to it: everyone wants it in order to get rid of it. All other concrete things are good as long as they fulfil their purpose by seeming useful or agreeable to their owner. This abstract thing, however, is good only in so far as it exercises an attraction for someone who does not possess it, because he imagines that by owning it he will have the same effect on others. On the other hand, *everything*, in its capacity as a mere *commodity*, shares in this attribute of pure money of being without quality or value. Every commodity is in some degree money, and is a better commodity the more it is like money, i.e. the more ‘current’ it is.

Society produces an abstract version of itself in the form of *paper money*, which it circulates by giving it a rate of exchange. This means that value is inherently the product of Society’s will. For Society is simply the embodiment of abstract reason – if we may imagine reason as being active and exercising will – and every reasonable being participates in it through his own thought. When abstract reason engages in a technical investigation it is *scientific* reason, practised by someone who is capable of recognising objective relations, i.e. who thinks in abstract terms. Scientific concepts are judgements about the origin and nature of things, by means of which complicated structures of sense data are given *names* – which circulate within the world of science in the same way as goods do in society. They come together in the system like goods in the market. The most abstract form of scientific concept which no longer denotes anything in the real world, like for example the concept of the atom or the concept of energy, is similar to money.

22

The concurrence of wills in every act of exchange – if we think of exchange as a societal act – is called a *contract*. It is the result of two divergent individual wills intersecting at one *point*. It lasts until the exchange has been completed; and it requires the two acts which together consti-

tute the exchange. Both of these acts can be broken down into a series of partial acts. Since the contract always deals with the future possibility of actions, it becomes meaningless and ceases to exist once these actions have either been carried out or become impossible, that is, by completion of the contract or by its breach. The individual will that enters into the contract refers either to an actual current action – such as handing over money or goods – or to an action which is possible in the future. This might be the remaining *part* of a larger action that is already in train, consisting perhaps of the delivery of the outstanding *balance* of money or goods. Or the action might be thought of as beginning and ending entirely in the future, on the appointed day. This means that, in whole or in part, *the will alone* is offered and accepted rather than the action itself.

The mere will to do something can of course become evident in other ways, but it can only be fully perceived when it is expressed in *words*. A word is given instead of an object. For the recipient the word has the value of the object only so far as the link between word and object is an obligatory one, that is, he must be sure of obtaining the object. The word in itself has no value as “*security*”, for it can neither be enjoyed nor sold as an object in its own right. But it is in principle equivalent to handing over the thing itself. The recipient has acquired the absolute *right* to the object, and this is the only thing he can have through his own will. In a state of nature the force of will would also get him *actual* possession, but now it can come only through the general will of Society. As Society cannot test every case, it *presumes* that delivery of the object is regulated according to the system of exchange, and that exchange means exchange of equivalents. This simply means that in Society as it is rightly understood the arrangement is given legal backing by the general will; and that not only this one, but every exchange and consequently every promise of future exchange is *validated*, i.e. is legal and therefore binding. From the outset, however, the agreement of the recipient is required, for only with *his* consent can something which has become his property – the only conceivable reason for exchange – remain in the hands of the other party. His consent can be interpreted as a promise to forgo the object until the appointed day and not to snatch it away before then.

As a rule, every promise may be regarded as referring to the *future* surrender of an object of exchange, but it is rather more like a current surrender which is to be completed at a stipulated date. It becomes a property regulated only by the will of the contract and represents a negative property because it is a “*debt*” of the current possessor with regard to his

“creditor”. This means that he must give up what he owes at a pre-determined date. *Positive* property, in the sense of the term which prevails in *Gesellschaft*, is the absolute and unfettered *freedom* to dispose of a thing for an unlimited time without regard to anyone else. A debit also represents genuine property lasting until its expiry date in the eyes of the creditor, and even after that date in the eyes of third parties (hence the hypothetical defence of ‘possession’ in commercial law). The debit’s character as property is limited, or negated, only by the existence of the creditor and by the necessity of “payment” or acquittance. The creditor’s ownership of the same object, which after the due date is absolute over and against everyone else, is in abeyance until then with all that follows from that, because he has yielded his rights to the debtor. With this limitation it is called a “book debt”, and the creditor has the right or liberty to exact delivery from the debtor after the expiry date. In the meantime, therefore, the property is held both separately and in common – complete ownership belonging to the creditor, *except* for the temporary right of disposal, which belongs to the debtor.

23

In a special contract of this kind the receiver who “gives the credit” may be just as active as the party making the promise who “takes the credit”. The normal case, however, as it has developed from simple barter into the sale of goods for money, is the sale of goods on credit. Through the medium of credit this transaction is just like a *loan*, which in its developed form is the sale of *money* in return for credit. But in that case credit is *deferred* payment which is often cancelled out by counter-claims, something which greatly assists the process of exchange. The promissory note fulfils the role of money, either temporarily or absolutely. It is a money substitute, and its effectiveness depends on the reliability of people who trade on credit, and on their ability to pay or to call in counter-claims. It can also serve as ready money for the consignee or receiver of goods, as a means of purchasing and paying. It has the value of money for both dispenser and consignee and is accepted as such. It corresponds to the concept of money because of its notional or hypothetical value, which is based entirely on collective arbitrary will.

A purely paper currency might in theory be generally acceptable for any commodity of equivalent value (because everyone would be certain of receiving an equal value of any other commodity in return). But a “bill of

exchange” or similar token money has value only if the receiver is sure of being able *either* to pass it on, *or* of giving it back to the giver (or issuer) for its equivalent in a particular commodity, e.g. gold. It is *private money*, which Society guarantees by enforcing the liability of the debtor or his “guarantors”. Paper currency in practice, issued by some person or corporation who in a limited capacity represents Society itself (such as the state or its “bank”), occupies a midway position between such private paper money and the hypothetical possibility of an unlimited public currency for which nobody would be responsible, while everyone would desire and pursue it. This latter is in effect what happens whenever money becomes the universal means of purchase, whatever form it takes.

The true nature of *Gesellschaft* transactions emerges most clearly when money is sold for credit, since both parties desire only money and need nothing else. Indeed, the bond or promissory note itself, being given in return for a loan received, becomes a special kind of commodity which can pass from hand to hand at varying prices. But anyone who acquires it in order to keep it and enjoy its fruits wants only to draw the sums of money that periodically fall due, the “interest”. He has a legal right to this even if no date has been fixed for the return of the “capital”. Indeed he does not really want that at all; instead he wants to keep his claim unrealised because it is the constant source of recurring payments by the other party to the contract. It is just an abstraction, represented like money pure and simple⁶ by a scrap of paper – it is the ultimate commodity, the very consummation of commodity. It does not age and depreciate like a lifeless piece of apparatus or even a useless work of art destined for “eternity”, but remains in truth eternally young – the living source of regularly repeated equal quantities of tangible pleasure.

One of the ancient philosophers has given us the oft-cited maxim, that money is barren.⁷ This saying is correct. Money is indeed power, but never the power of direct self-reproduction. Whatever may be acquired in exchange for it, it must first leave its owner’s hand in order to acquire anything. In itself it grants nobody any right. And in relation to money, everyone is free and unfettered. The holding of a bond, however, is based entirely on *legal* power. In the real world it is not possible to hold the future output of another person in one’s own hands. It is possible only in law. The exchange of money for goods is an altogether more concrete and tangible process, even if only comprehensible in

⁶ *das absolute Geld*.

⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 9–11.

terms of market Society. But to be in the position of receiving money payments by reason of owning a commodity (as is the case with bondholders), but without handing anything over, is something that transcends *Gesellschaft*. For here a lasting 'bond' is created, in contradiction to the very conception of *Gesellschaft* – a 'bond' which unites not objects but persons.⁸ The relation lasted just for a moment in the simple exchange contract, but in bond-holding it is regarded as having no time limits. In the former there was mutual balance, but here there is one-sided dependency and subjection.

24

In any exchange the place of a tangible object can be taken by some form of *activity* or service that is given and received. It must be useful or agreeable to the receiver, just like a material object. It is then regarded as a commodity, with its production and consumption coinciding in time. In so far as the activity is not performed, but only promised (the counterpart of the *object* not given but only promised), the result is similar in effect. It belongs by right to the recipient, who after the due date can legally compel the party making the promise to carry out the activity, just as he can legally oblige the debtor and any third party to hand over an object owed or he can take it by force. It may be the case that due performance can be exacted *only* by force. The promise of performance can be mutual or one-sided, both thereby involving the *right of compulsion*. In this respect several people can join together outwardly to share the same activity, in which each uses the output of the others for his own benefit. Eventually, several of them can agree to regard this *association* of theirs as an independent corporate body with the same kind of individual character as they have themselves. They can ascribe to this fictitious 'person' a specific will and the ability to act, and therefore to make contracts and to incur obligations. Like everything else connected with contracts, this 'person' can only be regarded as objectively 'real' in so far as Society co-operates with it, thus appearing to confirm its existence. Only thus can this 'person' be a fellow member of the *legal order* of *Gesellschaft* and be called a partnership, a union, an association, or any suchlike name.

The purport of this legal order can be summed up in a single formula:

⁸ *das Band*, meaning bond in the sense of a binding tie, as opposed to *die Obligation*, meaning bond in the sense of a debenture or promissory note.

pacta esse observanda – contracts must be kept.⁹ It is thus assumed that a situation exists in which the different spheres or areas of will are autonomous. The practical scope of these spheres is accepted and guaranteed by law; so any legal change in their activities – whether to the advantage or disadvantage of those either inside or outside the system – can only take place through contract, embodying the agreement of all. Such a concurrence of social will lasts by its nature only for a moment, so that the alteration, the development of a new situation, does not have to have any duration in time. Thus there is no modification of the primary rule that everyone may legally do as he wants *within* his sphere but not outside it. If nevertheless a collective interest group arises, as in the case of long-term bond-holders and of permanent associations and partnerships, then freedom itself, as the substance of the rights governing these matters, must become fragmented, or else a new conception of freedom must be artificially imagined and invented.

The simple expression of the general will of Society, when it institutes this *law of nature*, is what I shall call *convention*. Positive prescriptions and rules of all kinds can be recognised as conventional, although their origin may be of quite a different character, so that convention is often used as a synonym for tradition or custom. But everything arising from tradition or custom is conventional only in so far as it is willed for the benefit of all, and in so far as the benefit of all is desired and maintained for its own sake. Convention is not desired *for the same reason* as tradition, as the sacred inheritance of the ancestors. As a consequence, the terms tradition and custom are no longer appropriate.

25

Through convention and natural law *Gesellschaft* thus forms a single aggregate, and must be understood as a mass or multitude of natural and artificial individuals. Their wills and spheres of interest interact with each other in manifold different ways, yet they remain independent of one another and lacking in deep intimacy. A general picture now emerges of what may be called “Civil Society” or Society based on general

⁹ cf. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan. Or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. Sir William Molesworth, 11 vols. (London, 1839–45), vol. III, p. 130. The Molesworth edition of Hobbes’s English and Latin works, which was used by Tönnies, is cited throughout this translation except where otherwise specified.

commercial exchange.¹⁰ It is the task of political economy to understand the nature and dynamics of a situation in which, to use Adam Smith's expression, "everyone is a merchant".¹¹ The situation is one in which individual entrepreneurs, and businesses in the form of firms and companies, deal with one another in the national or international markets and stock exchanges. This is where the inner essence of *Gesellschaft* is epitomised, or thrown into relief as in a concave mirror.

The general character of this situation is by no means, as the famous Scotsman imagined, an immediate or even a probable result of the introduction of division of labour and exchange of products. It is rather an eventual outcome, in relation to which the *gradual evolution* of market Society or *Gesellschaft* must be understood. To the extent that this outcome is being realised, the unfolding of Society, in the sense in which I am using the term, is always a latent reality. It is always something in the process of becoming, something that should be regarded as a personification of the general will or general rationality – and at the same time, as we know, it is something fictional and nominal. It floats in the air as if it had emerged from the heads of its conscious promoters. They join hands across all distances, all boundaries and moral scruples, eager for exchange. They establish this hypothetical Paradise as the only country, the only city in which all soldiers of fortune and merchant venturers have a genuine common interest. Just as the fiction of money is represented by metal or paper, so this place can be represented by the entire globe or by some more limited territory.

In this view of Society all basic or natural relations between people become replaced by abstraction. The possibility of relationship within market Society can be stripped down to a heap of individuals who are capable of doing and promising anything. Society as a totality, covered by a conventional system of rules, is therefore in theory unlimited. It is constantly breaking through boundaries of all kinds, both existing ones and those that may arise. Every person in it seeks his own advantage and

¹⁰ *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, a term usually translated as 'civil society', and used by Hegel and Marx to denote bourgeois economic institutions outside the state. Tönnies's usage most closely follows Hobbes's *De Cive* and Adam Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) in applying the term not just to the economic sphere, but to the institutions of the state. Tönnies greatly admired Ferguson's book, which he annotated in detail in 1880 and re-read in 1885 (Tönnies–Paulsen, *Briefwechsel*, pp. 91–2, 210). Elsewhere in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* he uses the phrase 'staatliche Gesellschaft', which has a similar connotation.

¹¹ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 26.

acknowledges others only as long as they help to further his own ends. The relationship of all to all, both before and outside convention and contract, can be seen as potential enmity or latent war – against which all those willed agreements stand out like so many pacts and peace treaties. This is the only interpretation that adequately accounts for all the facts of trade and commerce, where all rights and duties can be reduced to the control and valuation of wealth. On this view must rest, even if unconsciously, any theory of purely private law, or of natural law as commercial Society understands it. Buyers and sellers in all their varieties relate to each other in such a way that each one desires and attempts to acquire as much as possible of another's wealth in return for as little as possible of his own. The true entrepreneurs and businessmen are like *sprinters* racing each other on many tracks – each is trying to get ahead of the others and to reach the goal first: namely, the sale of his goods in the greatest possible quantity. They are often obliged to push each other out of the way or to trip each other up. Harm to one means profit to another, as is the case in any individual exchange, except when exactly equal values are changing hands.

This is the essence of general *competition*, which occurs in many other fields but nowhere so clearly or so consciously as in the field of *commerce*, to which as a result the term is restricted in everyday usage. Many have lamented that this is an illustration of the war of all against all which a great thinker held to be the natural state of the human race in general.¹² But even competition, like all forms of war, can potentially come to an end. Even enemies like these, although they may find it extremely difficult, recognise that it is to their advantage in certain circumstances to agree to leave each other alone or even to unite for a common purpose, most likely against a common *opponent*. Thus competition can be limited and resolved by coalition.

All *conventional sociability* may be understood as analogous to the exchange of material goods. The primary rule is politeness, an exchange of words and courtesies where everyone appears to be concerned for everyone else and to be esteeming each other as equals. In fact everyone is thinking of himself and trying to push his own importance and advantages at the expense of all the rest. For any favour which one person renders to another he expects, even demands, an equivalent in return. He calculates his services, flatteries, and gifts to the letter, to see whether they are having the desired effect. Informal contracts with this intention are

¹² Hobbes, preface to *Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and Society (De Cive)*, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. II, p. xvii.

constantly being made, and all the time the many are being pushed out of the race by the fortunate and powerful few.

Since all relationships in *Gesellschaft* rest upon *comparing* potential and offered services against each other, it becomes clear why relations to visible material objects take precedence; mere deeds and words cannot form any real basis for these relations. This is the exact opposite of what happens in *Gemeinschaft*, which as a bond of “blood” is first and foremost a physical relationship, expressing itself in deeds and words, and where a joint relation to objects is second nature, because goods are not so much exchanged as possessed and used in common. Furthermore *Gesellschaft*, in what we might call its *moral* aspects, is very closely linked to the *state*. This latter aspect has not been relevant for our study up till now, since the *economic*¹³ aspects of Society must be regarded as having priority.

26

Mass commercial Society is the culmination of a developing process of communal and national life. If we examine this continuous advance of Society, limiting ourselves strictly to the economic sphere, it comes to look like a transition from a general household economy to a general trading economy. Closely connected with this is the transition from the predominance of agriculture to the predominance of industry. This might look as though it had been conducted according to a plan. With increasing success in every nation, businessmen as capitalists and capitalists as businessmen push to the fore and seem to unite for a common purpose. This purpose can best be expressed by the word “commerce”.¹⁴ A householder, farmer or townsman normally looks inwards to the core or centre of the place, the community, to which he belongs. The business class, on the other hand, turns outwards; they are interested only in the lines of communication, main roads and means of transit. They seem to live in the centre of every region, while constantly bursting through it and transforming its character. The whole country is for them only a market, for buying and selling, for contraction and expansion, like the systolic/diastolic beating of the heart.¹⁵

¹³ Tönnies here and in the next paragraph confusingly uses the word *ökonomische*, which he normally reserves for *household* economy within *Gemeinschaft*.

¹⁴ *der Verkehr* = commerce, communication, traffic.

¹⁵ Systolic/diastolic – the dilation and contraction of the heart, an image derived by Tönnies from Hobbes’s writings on William Harvey’s discovery of the circulation of the blood and its application to the body politic (Ferdinand Tönnies, *Thomas Hobbes, der Mann und der Denker* (Leipzig: U. W. Tidfeldt, 1912), p. 149.

It is the same for foreign trade, where by the same means surplus goods can be got rid of and goods that are needed brought in. Every country can, of course, become a trading area of this kind; the larger the area the more perfectly it becomes a country of *Gesellschaft*, because trade can take place more freely and generally, and the more likely it is that the pure laws of the market will take over, and other qualities which relate men and things to each other will be lost. The trading area eventually becomes concentrated in one single dominant market, the *global* market, on which all other markets depend. As the area becomes wider, however, it becomes ever clearer that the promoters and directors of trade do everything that they do for the sake of their own profit. They position themselves at the centre of the trading area; from their point of view the land and labour of the country, as of every country with which they trade, are merely actual or possible objects for the investment and turnover of their capital, and thus for the increase of their money. In addition, the more the organisers of actual production, as owners of land and industrial plant and as owners or hirers of labour, conduct their business entirely with a view to net profit or surplus value, the nearer they themselves come to being merely a type of trader. They seem to operate either from above or below or on the same level with trade itself, opposing some of its interests but sharing many of them. Both classes are busy amassing liquid, moveable wealth which is constantly increasing by being employed for purposes of commerce or industrial production, and is called capital.

The nature of capital first appears in the speculative outlay of the trader, who buys in the cheapest market and seeks to get rid of the same goods in the dearest. Any seller who offers the products of his own *labour* for sale can be thought of as a trader, because he is acting like one and calculating the ratio of the money he has made to his outgoings. But he will reckon the *difference* as the equivalent of his own *activity*, which in effect has produced *new* value. If the added value can be established as real and valid, he is not taking more out of the same market than he put in. If mutual exchange took place only on this kind of basis (as can be imagined in our conception of a fully developed *Gemeinschaft*), it could certainly look like trade of the *Gesellschaft* type, in which everyone was extending his efforts into an unlimited area in order to get the highest possible price. The end result in this case would be, however, that conflicting efforts were balanced and cancelled out, even though it may appear in practice that one seller has taken advantage of another – something that is less likely to happen, the more everyone is mentally equipped to act like a trader. This is what is meant by the comment that bourgeois Society assumes in

everyone an encyclopaedic knowledge of commodities (K. Marx, *Capital* I, ch. I, footnote).¹⁶

27

All creative, productive activity of mankind is a kind of art – an organic process where human will-power is poured into extraneous material so as to give it shape. When this process serves to maintain, promote or give pleasure to the Community, as in basic natural relationships, it can be understood as an intrinsic function of the Community, i.e. as if the Community were doing itself a service through the agency of the individual or group. *Commerce*, the skill of making a profit, is the opposite of all such art. Profit is not value,¹⁷ it is just an alteration in the distribution of wealth: a plus for one means a minus for the other (*le proufict de l'un c'est le dommage d'aultruy*: Montaigne).¹⁸ *Appropriation* is simply an act of occupation; and in so far as others are harmed by it, it is an act of robbery. It is not genuine labour which fashions goods or objects for use out of something that was previously not there, except as raw or unfinished materials. The “activity” which commerce undertakes in relation to objects is essentially nothing but demand, acquisition, supply and delivery. Commerce may indeed contribute some labour, but these are mere manipulations which leave the nature of things untouched.

On the other hand, the merchant may glimpse the possibility of abstract profit as a real and rational *goal* of economic activity, in a way that goes beyond the actual activity itself. In that sense he is the first reflective and *free* human being to appear in the normal development of social life. He stands isolated *as far as possible* from all constraining connections, duties or prejudices. (“A merchant, it has been said very properly, *is not necessarily the citizen of any particular country*”: Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, bk. III, ch. 4,¹⁹ a passage which might be compared with the previously cited statement by the same author, that exchange makes a merchant of every man.) He is free from the ties of community life, and the freer he is, the better it is for him.

In advance of him, and developing in tandem with him and his like,

¹⁶ cf. Marx, *Kapital* (1867), section 1, n. 5.

¹⁷ Tönnies here seems to be using the term *Wert* to mean *intrinsic* value or worth, in the way rejected in para. 20.

¹⁸ Montaigne, *Essaies*, (Paris, Pleiade, 1950), book I, chapter xxii, pp. 134–5.

¹⁹ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, p. 444.

comes the creditor or money-lender. The difference between merchant and creditor is clear: the creditor deals with a specific client and gives him something in order to get more back. He himself acquires no more than a claim, i.e. a right given to him by the debtor's *promise*. He thereby gains a potential right of coercion over the debtor, or at least the right to hang on to or retain the thing which the debtor handed over to him (actually or symbolically) as a pledge to reinforce his promise. This has already been portrayed as the typical case of a contract *effective over time* which produces a bond or *obligation*. It is not essential to the concept of a bond that what is promised should in fact be more than what is given. This condition is, however, essential to the idea of exchange which lies behind bond-holding. The interested party here is concerned about the *conclusion* of the exchange, which is its intrinsic purpose; he has given away existing goods, calculating that he will get *more* back in the future. In that respect the creditor or money-lender is exactly like the merchant. As long as the loan is only a kind of assistance, and interest is required only as compensation for *lucrum cessans* (loss of gain) or *damnum emergens* (damage suffered), profit is not thought of as the decisive motive. The merchant, on the other hand, by definition acts calculatingly, and profit is the necessary and *only* motive for his actions. But for that very reason he acts without recourse to coercion and without that ruthlessness which in some circumstances earns the creditor the bad name of usurer. The merchant goes in for amicable arrangements: as a buyer he may have to deal with this same person, and as a seller with another, perhaps in a distant place. Formal bonds are not essential, although they are possible and probable, in which case the merchant himself may become a debtor or a creditor, or even both at once. The creditor becomes a variety of merchant, however, as soon as he conducts his business systematically for the purpose of profit. The claim, in the form of a *bill of exchange*, becomes itself a transferable commodity that can be bought up for the purpose of sale. Its existence ceases when it is sold on for the last time. In this way the credit system develops as an auxiliary to commerce itself. If merchants are the people who facilitate exchange, bankers are the people who facilitate the facilitators. It is, however, a basic characteristic of both groups, whatever services they may render each other and outsiders, that they act not as agents, but entirely on their own account and at their own risk. They are free, independent powers, calculating all their actions as means to their own carefully planned ends.

All these activities may *help*, directly or indirectly, to meet an already

existing need for exchange within what may be thought of as a wider organic structure. Consequently the advent of merchants, not as individual traders but as part of a general merchant *estate*,²⁰ can be seen as an organic growth created out of the life and will of a *Gemeinschaft*. Where there is no Community, there can be no such organic growth; but it may well emerge either as an instrument for regulating *markets*, or as a means of *procuring* basic supplies. In either case, it can exist in *Gemeinschaft* only on the assumption that the total transaction is truly for the benefit of the whole, by transforming less useful into more useful value. Remuneration, although it comes in the form of legally regulated profit, must be appropriate to the value which the activity is deemed to achieve for the whole. (This does not preclude a higher profit, if this can be made at the expense of *outsiders*.)

28

In reality, however, a contradiction is at work, pressing for an overthrow of all these relations. While people in general offer the products of their own labour as real goods in return for others, it is a peculiarity of both merchant and usurer to be in possession of a good which they have not produced, namely money, which is by definition a merely notional commodity, although it is as a rule *represented* by the tangible commodity of minted metal. Money embodies the abstract property of all commodities – the ability to purchase other commodities. It has the power of a lever or weight, and it cannot be created, only amassed. And to amass money is the merchant's sole aim. He buys money with money, even when using goods to do so; the usurer does so without even this middle step. All their hustle and bustle would be worthless by *Gesellschaft* standards if they were earning only the equivalent of what they laid out. That would be like a non-commercial loan, made out of kindness and friendship, or of a sale at the purchase price, which can sometimes be needed in the interest of a negative profit to avoid losses. Being skilled at their trade both the merchant and the usurer want to earn larger quantities by regularly handing over smaller ones. They want to end up with a gain. The degree to which they succeed depends on differences of time and place. By cleverly calculated exploitation of these and other favourable circumstances they can increase their money or their wealth immeasurably. By contrast,

²⁰ *der kaufmännische Stand.*

producers²¹ bring the fruits of their own labours to market in order to convert them into a form more convenient for saving or for consumption – though it may be that cash payment, where available, is preferred, because it embodies freedom of choice and allocation for future use.

In point of fact it is always possible to use money in such a way that it augments itself. If such an increase is conceived and insisted upon as an absolute end, then a choice can be made between usury and trade as the simplest and easiest methods. But even where people are keen to take part in them, opportunities for such activities are limited by many particular conditions. Moreover, making extra money out of the fruits of one's labours is limited by materials and tools as well as by the workman's strength and skill. Any such gain, even in the form of money, can fittingly be regarded as the natural reward and price which "the people" (or whatever we call this conception of Community) offers to its workers for the support and furtherance of their present and future life. In practice it consists of food, accommodation and clothing, and all sorts of things which they need or would like to have. "The people" would be crazy if they gave to someone who performs a service, however rare and valuable it might be, a quantity of money that would enable him to buy goods from them – which they would then have to buy back from him for a larger sum of money. (This shows how inadequate is the whole way of thinking about reality that we understand as market Society.) Merchants and capitalists – possessors of money which can be increased by double exchange – are the natural *lords and masters* of commercial Society. *Gesellschaft* exists for their sake, and is their tool. All non-capitalists within Society are either themselves like inanimate tools – the very essence of slavery – or they are *legally* nonentities, deemed incapable of exercising rational choice, therefore unable to make contracts valid within the system. Here one might expect that the corollary of slavery – namely, domination or mastery – would be quite explicit. But that would negate the very notion of *Gesellschaft* as universal, all-embracing human society. There could be no 'societal' relationship between masters and slaves; consequently there can be no relationship at all.

Alternatively, slaves may be seen as 'persons', as free conscious beings with their own power to make choices, exchange goods and form contracts. This would mean that they are subjects of Society itself and its conventions. And this is in fact the way things are. According to market

²¹ *die Produzenten*, implying in German both agricultural producers and manufacturers.

Society's own conception of natural law all people, as reasonable beings and free agents, are *a priori equal*. Everyone has a certain amount of power, freedom and scope for free choice. Anyone is capable of killing another human being, if he thinks this is a good thing. Anyone can seize upon and make use of ownerless property and defend it against attack.²² Anyone, if he has the material and equipment, can produce new things through his own labour. And so anyone can turn his own activity into a commodity and sell it. He can make it the object of a promise, i.e. of a contract. The recognition of these universal and inescapable qualities as inherent in every adult human makes *legal* slavery an absurdity and leads to its abolition.

29

The natural ascendancy of *free* merchants or capitalists in Society in relation to and over *free* workers, as we may call the mass of the people, becomes an actual ascendancy *despite* the workers' freedom. This happens in the degree to which the workers are deprived of property, of ownership of working materials and of consumer goods. They are reduced to being the mere possessors of *labour power* ("hands"), compelled by circumstances, i.e. by the impossibility of *surviving* in any other way, to sell their labour for money. This selling for money makes them nominally a kind of merchant: they offer their particular goods for sale and like all traders they exchange them, not for other specific goods, but for the general commodity which offers freedom and power to spend, buy or save as they please. It follows as a logical possibility that this commodity could be increased by means of usury or trade – this temporary possession of money turns workers into potential capitalists. To what extent this could actually happen is not relevant here – and in any case it is a *secondary* characteristic that has nothing to do with the inherent concept of a worker. Essential to that concept, however, is the possibility of becoming temporary possessors of money. The necessity, as long as it lasts, of transforming money into consumer goods restricts the true meaning of this trade to the exchange of labour for consumer goods, which we must assume that they lack. This trade is, in consequence, not a real trade at all, but merely an exchange, albeit one going through two phases. It stands in contrast to real trade, i.e. trade for the sake of profit. For those involved, purchased

²² cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. xiii.

labour power is a commodity, and the sole purpose in purchasing it is to sell it again. The resale can take place directly through simple transfer, and in that respect this trade is like any other, whatever the type of commodity may be. For labour's difference from other commodities lies in the fact that it can only be used by being applied to or linked with some given means of production (materials and tools). In this way it is transformed into convenient and useful things, into goods for consumption or production: generally speaking, into objects of utility.

The *distinctive* character of trade in the commodity of labour power therefore depends on the fact that labour power gets used up and has to be resold in the form of consumer goods (which are not just goods in their own right, but in part the means by which labour and its strength are replenished). The sale of ready-made consumer goods is basically identical with the sale of labour. Although at first glance the transfer of money may imply something different, in essence it means nothing more than the conversion of one form of consumer goods into another. The *sale* of labour power, unlike its purchase, is never thought of as leading to the profitable resale of the money in the future. The motive of commercial profit is not at all relevant here. The *precondition* of such profit is that a commodity should be *preserved*; whether it is divided up or increased in size, however it may be changed in nature or appearance, the commodity must *not* be used up, must *not* be consumed. The commodity of labour power, however, *has to be* consumed; it must perish, so to speak, so that it may rise to life again in the form of material objects.

30

The prime act of usury is to advance money for use, and it is therefore clearly different from trade. In the case of usury, the passive contracting party, despite possessing full formal freedom, can be placed by his indebtedness in a position of natural material dependency, because he is compelled to buy both consumer goods and the means to do his work with "alien brass".²³ His ownership of these goods is thus counter-balanced by a negative property, in the form of the capital and interest that he owes. In its effects usury closely resembles the hiring out to tenants of land and housing with fixtures and fittings, where this is conducted purely as business. Here too the tenant farmer or lessee can be seen as the negative

²³ *Aes alienum* = another man's bronze; a common Latin term for debt, used by Cicero.

possessor of house or land, because he is obliged to pay rent or to hand back the property when the contract finally expires. The main element – the capital – is, however, preserved as ‘real property’ and can have no substitute. In this respect landlordism lacks the affinity that common usury has with trade, in that both the latter *risk* their investment, even though the usurer gains some form of security, and the trader, of course, acquires goods.

Money *disappears* in circulation. Land does not disappear – it remains under the feet and in the hands of the man who cultivates it.²⁴ This means that landlordism is not in essence a form of trade. Land must first be transformed in the imagination into money or monetary value – by thinking of it simply as a *means*, and of rent as an end in itself, just as capital is merely a means for the money-lender or merchant and interest or profit their ultimate purpose. This may be the natural way to handle money (for simply *qua* money it *is* a means, though chiefly for acquiring goods and not for self-multiplication). But this is not the case with land, for it has substantial reality. It is the very predicate of a man’s existence, sustaining him and binding him to itself; it is not at any master’s disposal in his hand or pocket. It is therefore a major conceptual development when both individual and Society begin to treat land as a special kind of wealth and finance capital.

The misery caused by the dominance of merchants is surpassed by the immediate personal pressure that the creditor can exert upon the debtor. And it seems from familiar historical and current events, that the landlord and his agent may be no less hostile to the tenant farmer, ruthlessly *exact*ing rent and mercilessly *expell*ing him from hearth and home. The merchant as buyer or seller may cheat his customers; indeed as a professional profit-maker he may have strong temptation and ample opportunity to do so. He often has an acquired or inherited capacity for such behaviour and the lack of scruple to go through with it; but these are isolated acts that are usually forbidden by self-interest, especially where merchants are dealing with each other and would be warned in advance against anyone trying it on too often. And no personal subjection, no legal claim, no right of coercion, giving him mastery over the lives of others, would be the result of such a deed. The creditor and the landlord, on the other hand, do have such powers which enable them to exploit their debtors and turn them into indentured labourers. And the same is true of

²⁴ An echo of the physiocrat (and Aristotelian) view that land was the source of true wealth.

the merchant whenever he advances money to a worker for materials or tools, or both. He resembles the landlord in that these are the basic prerequisites for work; but he is very different in that he does not leave the worker to himself and get his rent out of the man's earnings. Instead he wants to acquire the actual products of labour for himself, in kind. This takes the form of purchase, but should really be called pure appropriation, since the merchant himself fixes the price, while the worker, as his debtor, becomes his dependant. This is not a new contract of exchange but the outcome of an earlier one for the sale of the goods to be produced, i.e. a sale of labour power. By this means the merchant emerges as the owner of the labour and thus the formal producer of the goods. This is also true of the landlord (other than where he is a capitalist entrepreneur) in a system where his tenants are forced by their contract to work on his demesne, thus making him the owner of saleable products. Where the tenants work on their own account he can only, at worst, be an oppressor who extracts money from them instead of goods (in which case the roles may seem to be reversed). Money rent always originates from rent in kind, not from a contractual relationship; but the landlord too (except when he is really a capitalist on the side) will be interested in cash payments, because they represent items that he wants to buy. For the merchant, the objects which he has called into being also represent a sum of money. But for him money means principally the opportunity and means for making more of it.

3I

In this picture of the merchant turning industrialist we recognise the earliest method by which commerce takes root within the labour process. But alongside it runs another way by which the *principle* of commerce develops, namely from the workshop of the independent artisan himself. Such an establishment generally works to order, to meet the needs of customers who actually use the goods and who, living round about, need no middleman; but even so it can begin to build up stocks and to look for sales in distant markets. The more successful this enterprise is, the greater is the temptation for the master to concentrate as many hands as possible into his house instead of a natural or legally limited number of apprentices and journeymen. He then has them producing goods for profit and confines himself to giving orders, taking responsibility, and organising business transactions. On the other hand, it is the poorer and weaker independent

artisan who best serves the purposes of the merchant coming in from outside, and so we have a contrast between the rural and the urban worker. The urban worker, or so we may assume, is or plans to be a master-craftsman. He may have inherited or can acquire a home workshop and equipment. He has his skills, his customers and regular work all the year round or certainly at seasons of demand. In all these respects he is supported and protected by the trade guild, which restricts tendencies to capitalistic divisions within the workshop. For these reasons it is harder to get at him from the outside.

The rural worker, to whom most of these circumstances do not apply, is for that very reason a ready prey for the merchant. So long as town crafts are not undermined by growing population, technical changes and increased business, industry stimulated by commerce is in its earliest phase rural, even though this seems to contradict its initial impetus and inherent tendencies. This predominantly rural industry is mainly a home-based industry. The dependence of the peasant or day labourer on his overlord, the obligation to do forced labour and the care of his own patch, do not prevent him from having ample *free time* during the winter months. He can make good use of these in the traditional way, together with his wife and children, plying the old household arts. Spinning and weaving are the commonest of these, but carpentry and carving are also possible. He may work to meet his own needs, but occasionally takes on jobs for the town market as well, or for the visiting pedlar. The pedlar, knowing the market and capable of reaching distant markets, finds here a most fruitful source for making money. By the time the merchant is furnishing the home-based labourer with materials, tools and patterns, and in the end even supplying him with food, there is not much left for the worker to contribute to the production as his own, except for the domestic workshop, his hands, and perhaps his skill.

Integration of home and workplace is by this time only coincidental. For crafts of an independent nature such integration remains the natural thing, even if not strictly necessary. It means a useful and agreeable independence which the worker strives to achieve and maintain, wherever the nature of his craft permits. But however desirable it may be, it no longer depends on the wishes of the rural worker, but increasingly on the convenience of the merchant. He will tolerate the arrangement, troublesome though it may be, until the advantages of concentrating his individual groups of labourers in large buildings appear to outweigh the costs involved. The general advantages are: easier and more effective supervi-

sion, faster and better planned co-ordination of separate or separable processes within the same piece of work, and the opportunity to move the entire operation nearer to its most important markets. What is critical for this, however – and what makes a centralised workplace inevitable – is the development of *technology*.

Technology partly means the breakdown of a skilled operation into its elements by simplifying them, and distributing to specially trained operators processes that are related but have been deliberately divided up. It also, more particularly, involves the invention of tools that go well beyond the scope of the individual domestic workshop, in other words, *machinery*. The result is the same when the independent master himself expands his home workshop into a factory, and tools for mass production replace tools on a human scale. In the whole development of industry, i.e. the dominion of trade over labour, three patterns can be distinguished (according to the masterly analysis of Karl Marx, with a slight modification of his view). Of these the last two are more closely connected with each other than with the first. They are (1) simple co-operation, (2) manufacture, (3) machine-based industry (true heavy industry). The term ‘factory’ can cover the last two types, (i.e. *manufacture réunie*, which can fittingly be contrasted with the home-based industry dependent on it, *manufacture séparée*).²⁵

The dominion of commerce or capital has indeed its own natural sphere in industrial production. There are many reasons for this, the most important of which are fairly obvious and need no examination here. Nevertheless there is a parallel in agriculture, which is reduced from its status as the mother of all proper work to a branch of national or international industry. Even if the rule of the landlord, which we have already discussed, is not directly concerned with the production of goods, it still encourages this production, since money-rent compels the producer to sell in the highest markets. As well as the landlord, the peasant or tenant-farmer is confronted with the grain dealer and the usurer, both bent on appropriating as big a share as possible of the money which he earns by the sweat of his brow. By producing goods independently the manorial estate becomes more powerful than the farm. Initially it collects the peasants together to work on it – for which serfdom or bondage is perhaps the most appropriate term. In the long run we have development of the free, capitalist estate with its own equipment and machinery, employing free, mobile workers who are paid by

²⁵ cf. Marx, *Kapital* (1867), ch. 4, section 3.

the day. Here land and labour are deliberately exploited for the sake of the greatest net returns. The axiom ‘profit is the sole end of trade’ is applied even to this, the oldest example of the genuine “Oekonomie”.

32

Wherever these tendencies are realised, fruitful and productive human labour becomes merely a means leading to profitable resale of that unique commodity. The merchant or capitalist masks himself in this process as a worker or creator of work, as a peasant, artisan or artist; he becomes an entrepreneur of labour processes. As a historical process, this can just as well happen in reverse: the owner of an estate or the master of a guild can become a manufacturer and thence a merchant. It is all the same in terms of theory. The business of trade and industry become simply taken for granted. The problem is: why has it taken over? The master-craftsman turned manufacturer is in *essence* no less a capitalist than the merchant dealing with the same kind of business – he could be any faceless wealthy person, such as we expect a merchant to be. He seems simply to have covered his nakedness *a posteriori* with the cloak of what looks like the old-fashioned ‘master’. The manufacturer or entrepreneur may in practice make his own contribution to the production process, certainly hard work and service, so that he adds his share to the real *value* of the end product. Activities such as management, giving orders, allocation of existing resources, ultimate supervision – in short, organising and directing a complicated system of business operations – all fall into this category as distinct from actual labour. So long as the link between mental and practical spheres is maintained, however, the distinction is an artificial one, and management *like all real labour* can be separated out from the entrepreneurial function – indeed, *has to be* so separated, if entrepreneurship in its pure and undiluted form is to emerge.

The merchant does not need to evolve in this way, or only in rare cases, since by nature he has nothing to do with productive labour. But it is absolutely essential for the master-craftsman, or whatever we want to call the worker-producer. He has to withdraw from his personal involvement with labour in order to regard it as just an extraneous tool. For the merchant all that is necessary is to maintain a merely instrumental relationship with labour; it is unlikely that it will be a very personal one. Thus these two characters meet in the middle of their path. They are both included in the category of entrepreneurial capitalist, to which we may add the figure of the loan capitalist (in line with our distinction between usury and trade).

But these occupations, like the characteristics that go with them, can all be united in one and the same person.

A 'sport' or *mutation* of both these types, and found in conjunction with them, is the capitalist who bets, gambles and *takes risks*.²⁶ For trade is by nature related to gambling (*le commerce est un jeu*), since purchase is a risk and a favourable sale, however probable, is uncertain. Usury too is a gamble, for one is never sure of recovering capital loaned, let alone of collecting the interest on it. Business is based firstly on hope, secondly on calculation and a conjunction of probabilities. If failures are balanced by successes, and the latter outweigh the former, the purpose is achieved. As in a game the unpredictable (chance) elements in the trade cycle will be given free rein and the likelihood of loss will be faced; but it is still natural to try to cut out uncertainty and to ensure a regular profit. The taking of pledges or securities is the most important of the many methods which lenders of capital can employ in this respect.

We have been talking here only about those methods used by commerce to take control of production and to make profit for its own sake an *integral* part of the manufacturing process. The sale of manufactured goods can be just as uncertain and prone to failure as the sale of goods that have been purchased. This is undoubtedly true; but in the manufacturing sector this is only a temporary state of affairs. It arises from the painful separation between capitalism and a system of communities which make things for their own use and distribute them among themselves. In a more perfect version of *Gesellschaft* every commodity would be produced in the correct amounts and sold at its proper value by one single unified capitalistic concern which had complete foreknowledge of normal demand.²⁷ This ideal conception cannot be realised. But it is the attempt to approximate to it that brings into sharp relief the solidity and stability of capitalist *production* compared with common trade.

33

We shall pursue this matter in the following way: all objects for sale and purchase are, as such, called *commodities*. Some of these will be things that already exist, and in this sense anything can take the form of a commodity if it is controlled by one person and can be transferred to another – e.g.

²⁶ There is a pun here, difficult to render in English between *die Spielart* (a 'sport' in the sense of a biological variant) and *der spielende Kapitalist* (who 'plays' the markets).

²⁷ This might appear to be a prediction of the universal triumph of state socialism. But cf. below, Book Three pp. 238–9, 260, for a rather different account.

plots of land, rare books and pictures, and other irreplaceable items. Our own activity, labour or service, may also take the form of a commodity in this way. For the merchant, passing on wares that he has not produced himself, *all* goods are commodities of this sort and are indistinguishable from each other. He may, for example, run a servants' registry or a theatrical agency, dealing in hired labour or human voices as he might deal in old clothes. The grain dealer behaves in the same way when faced with the farmers of a specific region. After every harvest a certain amount of grain becomes available for trade. If the dealers can be imagined as a single person or agent, this person can get up to all sorts of tricks with the grain, to the advantage or disadvantage of the rest of society. He could, for example, burn a part of it in order to raise the scarcity value of what remains. Or, more obligingly, he could hoard some of it in order to market it later: in short, any manipulation that seems to promise him the highest profit.

Alternatively, it may be a question of *producing* goods specifically for sale. This is possible only by doing the work yourself or getting others to work for you (a self-evident point that does not have to be proved). We may assume that producing goods or increasing production – what is commonly called “supply” – is a matter of rational human calculation. Now it is true that a merchant can supply goods for a *given region* without working or having others work; he does this by buying them in from another region. But if we imagine the given region as having no boundaries, or if, in the case of a more limited region, importation is impossible (which effectively amounts to the same thing), then the alternative – of getting someone to make them – is obvious. Indeed – and it is important to note this – rational control over supply has much more relevance to work done through employing others, than to work done by oneself. The employer will achieve his aim not only by appearing to be the author of every item produced (of which he is of course the owner), but also by limiting the amount that he chooses to have manufactured and by control of the resources available. That is to say, he achieves his ends whenever he is in a position to extend production in whatever way he likes, by procuring materials and employing hired labour to process them.

The profit of most kinds of trade is at the present time an unnatural one, in that – however it may be divided among individual traders – in market Society all goes to the commercial class. But in the end it must be reduced

(through trends inherent in a *Gesellschaft* system) to nothing more than the value of transfer of goods and temporary storage, in the form of commercial *services*. This will affect not just services but commodities in general, because money prices, which vary according to time and place, oscillate in ever-diminishing circles around real prices, which vary only through time. Manufacturing business, however, is in a much more secure position. It adds value to pre-existing value by means of labour, as does the independent worker, the farmer or craftsman who brings his products to market or makes and sells them to order. In a system of exchange based on value this labour should command remuneration equivalent to its fruits, which would be assessed *according to the relative conditions of work*, weighed against the quantity of work done. Similarly, the capitalist who has people working for him must estimate the value of his employees as equal to the amount of labour which he has employed and transformed into goods. Since he purchased this labour in the form of labourers, the question arises: how is it possible to produce a regular profit out of the difference in value between *labour power as a purchased commodity* and *labour* as the principal factor in the production of goods *sold* (assuming that the goods are traded at their proper value)?

35

Labour and services are offered and sold as commodities. We expect them to have a price, just like a loaf of bread or a sewing needle. But they are different from these commodities, which are composed of raw materials and labour. They are in themselves pure raw materials – they are not the products of labour. In this respect they are on the same footing as land. The supply of land can in no way be increased, artificially or at will, in a given area. The supply of labourers can certainly be increased by importing them, but this assumes that they are already objects of trade. Where this is not so and “every man brings his own hide to market”,²⁸ the number of labourers is as limited as the amount of land. Neither sort of commodity can be manufactured or constructed. Its value and price is therefore determined by the amount existing at the moment and not by any possible future quantity. It also depends on the ratio of supply to the volume and purchasing power of demand. In practice, supply and demand are not concerned with labour and services of a general, indefinite kind, but with those of a specific and well-defined sort. Thus

²⁸ *seine eigene Haut zu Markt trägt*. A colloquial phrase usually translated as ‘to do something at one’s own risk’, but the more literal version seems appropriate here.

the limited nature of the supply makes itself felt more clearly. Other things being equal, scarcity of supply is an advantage for the suppliers. Its disadvantage is the difficulty they may find when they want to acquire commodities for themselves, such as money and consumer goods. In that case the greater the subjective desirability of the things they want, the weaker must become the subjective value of keeping the thing they already possess; the desire and determination to get rid of it becomes stronger and more powerful. Anyone who has no money or food has a boundless desire to secure them if he cannot get them from his own community – which in the kind of Society we are talking about is out of the question. His only choice is to seize the desired things by force, which is against the natural law of *Gesellschaft*, or to acquire them in the market by selling his labour.

On the other hand it makes a great deal of difference whether a commodity is demanded and bought by someone who intends to use it, i.e. he values the thing for its usefulness as an end in itself, or by someone who merely wants to resell it. In the first case the thing is acquired because somebody really wants it or to replenish his strength. It is as much a *need* as a desire. Even where there is no pressing need for it, someone will be taking pleasure in it, may even feel passionately about it; at any rate a wish exists with some real intensity. This weights the scales in favour of the side offering the services – particularly where such services are goods of a very special kind and where the exchange is clearly of a largely non-commercialised character. It is also true where the needs of the vendor are limited or non-existent; in which case, although he has no commercial interest in someone else's goods, this is certainly not true of his desire to get rid of his own. But if the acquisitive passion declines, the desire to sell one's own wares also declines. The most favourable circumstances for doing business in a way that differs from the usual practice of commercial Society occur when each party has a moderate wish for an exchange, that rests on pleasure in or need for the object or skill possessed by the other. In fact the exchange is then in outward form indistinguishable from the kind of principle of *distribution* that prevails in *Gemeinschaft*.

36

It is a very different matter when a commodity is desired and purchased by someone who wants to own it only with a view to selling it again. He has no close relationship with the object, and regards it with complete

indifference. He has not the slightest temptation, out of affection or good will or pleasure in the work, to *reward* the worker or artist as an act of appreciation, as if offering a gift. On the contrary, the trader's sole object is to give as little as possible in order to make the margin on the future price as large as possible. This margin is the aim and end of his efforts. In his hands the commodity represents merely exchange value, i.e. simply a means and a mechanistic power by which other people's goods may be acquired. It performs the same function as money in the hands of ordinary people. Everybody else uses money (the natural exchange value) to buy objects, food, pleasures (the natural use values). But the merchant does the reverse and treats food, etc. as artificial exchange value with which to buy the use value of the natural exchange value – money. This [*artificial* “use-value”]²⁹ consists for him not so much in buying goods for his own use as in buying goods for the purpose of resale – a continuous repeat performance of his professional activity. As a buyer he is not in any need, for it may be assumed that he has plenty of money of his own and is at liberty to spend it on whatever he wishes. He is completely free, and in no hurry to part with his money! And this is how we see him in relation to those who sell their labour.

It is highly likely in these conditions that the price of labour, purchased with a view to employing and making use of it, will be equivalent to the cost of food. This will represent the *necessary minimum*, in the seller's eyes, to keep him alive during the period of his employment. This is the *negative* limit which the seller of labour power must himself insist upon, however much he may wish and attempt to set a higher price. At the same time it is the *positive* limit which the buyer has to acknowledge as absolutely necessary, but he will be not at all inclined to go above it to his own detriment. This way of expressing it is of course open to a variety of meanings – the lower limit represents the maintenance of bare *existence*, in whatever terms the individual subjectively interprets this. Beyond that is utter *destitution*, which reduces the concept to its rock-bottom. This is the natural cost price of basic labour power, the condition and material means for its replenishment – a process that can certainly be compared to production itself and thus constitutes its true value to commercial Society. It is nevertheless of primary importance for the individual labourer, who, having gained just enough to keep himself alive until the start of the following week, will once again be in a position to offer his

²⁹ This phrase was added in 1912.

labour. On the other hand, as soon as the notion of a minimum for existence comes to include the sustenance of wife and children, it is liable to further reduction, because women and children beyond the earliest years can themselves develop and offer for sale their labour power.

37

The concept of a *standardised, socially necessary period of working time* is as profound in meaning as it is difficult to apply – like all proper concepts in political economy. It must be confined to actual goods production in commercial enterprise, because it is here that competing suppliers can each produce a practically unlimited quantity of their products. The supplier who produces under the most favourable conditions is potentially able, or so it seems, to meet the entire demand. The others, in order to retain at least their existing level of sales, will then find themselves compelled to pitch their prices closer or equal to his. After that they will try to establish equally favourable conditions for themselves, so as not to see their profits permanently diminished.

This is the essential principle of commercial competition: the merchant who buys cheapest can sell cheapest, and he becomes a rival and competitor for the others through the sheer volume of his goods and the long range of his marketing opportunities. There is nevertheless a countervailing tendency – which is that goods actually on offer, in so far as they are all much the *same*, have the *same* probability of sale (and will try to command a price adequate for their intrinsic value). This happens independently of the fact that some producers have much greater capacity. Besides which, it is difficult or impossible to turn unfavourable conditions into favourable ones simply as an act of will.

In studying the reciprocal exchange of goods, however, the active agency of commerce must be disregarded. Each type of commodity appears on the market in a certain quantity of, let us say, similar specimens and tries to capture the greatest possible quantity of other commodities from the market. In this respect all internal competition within the same type of commodity ceases to exist. An equilibrium is reached, as though the entire supply were in the hands of the same person; thus power is unified and the power of each commodity (and of each brand of that commodity) is determined by the power of the overall supply. A price war among *monopolists* would look exactly like that: every brand would defend itself against all the rest by going energetically on the offensive.

The result will be that, although the overall market value of a particular commodity may vary, the price ratio between different brands of that commodity always remains the same. It is the same in nature, where according to the theory of mechanics every quantum of energy is transformable into one that is equal but different. In this way all windfall gains and absolute profits within the market are ruled out, and what in fact occurs is only an exchange of concrete use values measured by the *standard* of an abstract exchange value. This principle fully applies only when conditions of production for the same *categories* of goods are roughly equal (though they may differ for different levels of goods within those categories), and are used with equal efficiency. The most favourable conditions exist when: (1) no comparative advantage is conferred by natural resources; (2) people work together in the most effective way; (3) there is efficient co-operation between men and the appropriate instruments (tools, machines). When these conditions are fulfilled and all distinctions in human labour are reduced to the lowest common denominator of labour *time* (facilitated by the relations of labourers to each other), a law comes into force that the sole constituent of the value of every category and quantity of goods lies in the average labour time deemed necessary by market Society for their production. The development of *Gesellschaft* and its scene of operations, the world market, proceeds continuously towards an approximation to this point of relative equilibrium.

This law is at first glance just a piece of theory and can be reduced to the rules of formal logic or tautology. It means simply this: what has been *added to* natural forces and pre-existing materials in order to produce objects in their present form is a certain amount of human labour. Natural forces have, it is assumed, *no* exchange value. The exchange value of other things which are necessary for production (materials and instruments), can in turn be dissolved into quantities of labour. Consequently the new exchange value can be divided up into the exchange value of those productive materials plus added labour, and so into labour alone. Labour has become incorporated into the objects; it has so to speak *percolated* the increment which the objects exhibit over and above the natural forces. The commodity and its owner will now have no need to demand more exchange-value from the market than they bring to it. The value received in exchange under normal conditions must comprise only (a) the value of the raw materials in the commodity sold, plus the part contributed by the instruments of production, and (b) the value added by labour for the purpose of production. The nature of this exchange value, obscured by

the role of money, will become clearer the more money ceases to be tied to goods, and – in the form of credit – reveals more plainly its abstract nature as a mere medium of commercial transfer.

38

Profit or surplus value is the difference between the purchase price of labour power and the selling price, not of the product, but of the exchange value of the labour contained in the product. In the market for commodities labour power appears only in this form, transformed by the fact that it is used in conjunction with raw materials and tools. This means that it is not the property of the workers but of the capitalists. Labour also appears in the form of services which can be exchanged for goods. This kind of labour has not been incorporated in any tangible product, but has, so to speak, retained its liquidity. It is consumed and vanishes in the very act of performance. As non-material goods, services may also command their value, although they have no value which is measurable by the labour time contained in them. Like many other things their value can more correctly be described as *the going rate*, determined by their availability in relation to the average strength of demand. That means their value can be expressed only as a price, i.e. with reference to a certain quantity of other goods. It is thus always a relative and never an absolute amount. The labour power which *generates* goods is *not* to be found in this market. Labour is not in that sense a commodity, as inanimate objects are by nature, and as services can be. Labour is not like the performance of a service, where fulfilment of the exchange completes a cycle, in which every element in the exchange disappears in the process of being used up.

As the key element in commodity production, labour is nevertheless considered as merely subordinate and inferior to it. Labour can only be linked with the other factors of production by having already been purchased by someone, and that purchase must be understood as having occurred *earlier* in time before the sale of the completed goods. The *labour market* is thus completely separate from the commodity market and subordinate to it; it is also 'invisible', in that no hint or trace survives of its ever having existed in the more open market for commodities. Labourers are bought and paid for there as though they were indeed just performers of services, whose role would terminate with the act of performance. The fiction is that the manufacturer (some capitalist concern, let us say a joint-stock company) is the real author and creator, and hires workers

only as assistants. The fiction gains in credibility the more the whole set-up, the conditions of co-operation and subsequently the actual instruments of production – all owned by the manufacturer – takes on a life of its own; and once it has got going it can produce automatic imitations of human hand and human art by being built for that purpose. If all these things are there to serve the purpose of the owner, then it is his initiative, his ideas and his will that govern them, and can start them up and stop them again at a moment's notice.

Within this system the labourers have no will of their own, but have their tasks assigned to them by orders from above. The whole thing hangs together through a fixed method and routine for processing the given raw materials, namely the division of labour within industry or industrialised agriculture. The implements – the machines involved in the system – are kept constantly busy, *served by* and at the same time dominating the working men. The workers become less immediately dependent on the will of an outsider who stands there giving them orders, and more and more upon the relentless qualities of a “dead monster” against which they react as a collective whole. As a result they are all the more inclined to take a collective stand against their employer.

The *really objective view*, however, must always and inevitably be that *human labour alone*, however powerful the instruments which it uses, is the *source of human 'work'* – individual labour of individual work and collective labour of collective work.³⁰ It is not the joint-stock company but the co-operative fellowship of workers that produces objects and values. And since only ‘works’ have genuine value, the statement that *labour is the source of all value* holds true from that point of view. In [simple] *manufacture* labour is brought together simply by common goals and methods, which (being merely mental processes) are still seen as ‘products’, and thus as the genuine property of the entrepreneur in charge. In the factory proper it is essentially labour, united by its common and inexorable relationship to the machinery, that forms the visible body of the factory. In both cases we recognise that it is *only* the united activity of labour – of course operating through intelligent use of raw materials, planning and equipment – which constitutes the essential element in production.

In the labour market the workers can certainly combine as sellers of labour power to command a higher collective price for themselves by

³⁰ Tönnies distinguishes here between *die Arbeit* (work or labour in the sense of energy expended) and *das Werk* (in the sense of creative endeavour). Cf. Marx, *Kapital* (1867), ch. 5, n. 80.

excluding competition. But as owner of all the institutions, etc. by which labour is effectively incorporated and subdued, the manufacturer remains the creator and consequently the owner of the human artefacts that have been produced by someone else's human labour and sold on the market to retain their value. The owner is deemed the *natural* creator by a process of logical reasoning, although practical experience denies this as *unnatural*.

39

The labour market does not depend on the prior existence of a market in commodities. It is completely irrelevant for our discussion in what manner the capitalist has acquired the money with which he pays his labour force, or where the products come from which this money represents. Part of it may come from previous production, perhaps from the capitalist's own labour; part may be dependent on present or future production. Transforming money into goods for consumption has nothing directly to do with either the labour or the commodity markets. This belongs to a third market, known as the *retail market*, which represents the normal vehicle for distribution. Retail certainly presupposes production, and is dependent on regular circulation in the market for commodities. The retail market is thus the final link which joins up the other two markets. It moves outward from the centre to the periphery – it gives goods to all those with money, indeed it forces goods upon them and is desperate for their money, which is sucked up in countless small amounts to be devoured *en masse* in the commodity market. The commodity market moves in the opposite direction, from the periphery to the centre. It is a mere heap of undifferentiated products from no matter where, marked by inexorable cycles of contraction and expansion like the beating of a heart. The labour market is a network of communication within the periphery.

We may have theorised about commodity and labour markets without reference to trade; but retail and distribution are quintessentially a business of buying and selling, and are thus the proper sphere of merchants. In the fully fledged system of market Society and capitalist production this sphere can be regarded as a form of social 'service'. It must promote its own value and extract its remuneration from the commodity market – just as everything else organised as a form of quasi-production or as part of the service sector of commercial production must make its appearance

on the market and sell itself for what it is worth. Moreover, all services can be viewed as being set up and commodified on capitalist lines, in that their delivery is dependent on such things as offices, materials and equipment. This in turn requires a sector within the labour market where services can be purchased in a basic form for their future potential.

If the retail market may be seen as merely a necessary sequel to the commodity market, then the essential structure of *Gesellschaft* can be described as a play in three acts, with the *capitalist class* as the leading actors. As such, they are to be pictured as equipped in advance with the potential means of production (which do not first have to be brought from the market but are already in place). The three acts are: 1. the purchase of labour; 2. the employment of labour; 3. the sale of labour (in the form of value added to the products). The *working class* also plays an essential part in the first act, even if only by agreeing to part with its surplus [energy or labour-power] so as to acquire basic essentials.³¹ In the second act it appears to participate only as a passive object; though in actual fact, everything substantial is being done by workers, and the agency of the capitalist is merely formal. In the third act the capitalist class really acts entirely on its own, and the workers are there only in the form of the value which has been, so to speak, squeezed out of them. In so far as the working class is able to take an active role, it is free; its labour is merely the fulfilment of a contract, that is, of an exchange which it performs out of acknowledged necessity. All exchange (i.e. sale) is intrinsically an act of free will, and commerce is the embodiment of such an act. The working class is therefore semi-free – that is, until the middle of the three acts – and *formally* capable of rational choice (as distinct from a pseudo-class of slaves, who would formally appear in the process only as tools and components). The capitalist class, on the other hand, is wholly free and *materially* capable of rational choice. Its members are thus to be considered as fully autonomous, satisfied and substantial constituents of market Society; opposite them stand the masses, as reluctant and merely token participants. Involvement and participation in these three acts and their total dependence on each other is synonymous with the complete acceptance of *Gesellschaft* and with assent to its existence and underlying conventions. Whether this dualistic picture of the idea of commercial Society is the only possible one is a question which need not concern us at this

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 515–20, ‘The Rate of Surplus Value’, where the worker’s day consisted of ‘necessary labour time’ (to obtain their means of subsistence) followed by ‘surplus labour time’ (to generate the employer’s profit).

point. It is the picture which emerges from the principle presupposed by *commerce* when it confines itself solely to that one object – the acquisition of labour power. Apart from the role of commerce as a service activity (though related to that as well), it is labour power which removes all chance elements from the goal and rationale of commerce – namely, *profit*. For it is labour that by its very nature guarantees profit as the necessary and regular outcome of commerce. But *labour power* is a purely artificial, unnatural commodity, created by human will. Thus the key to all these concepts, and their analysis and unravelling, is to be found in the theory of the individual human will. Our whole study will therefore press on towards this.

Postscript (1911). When this treatise was written (1880–7), full knowledge of the Marxian system, which had some influence on the content, was not yet available. The author, in the meantime, has not found that a solution to the “riddle of the average rate of profit”³² has been conclusively argued by either German or Austrian academic critics. In particular I regard as groundless the criticism that the law of value becomes meaningless when applied to the total value of all goods, because this total value cannot itself be exchanged and is really just a name for overall production, or rather for its newly produced elements. It makes perfectly good sense to argue that the annual product of labour is equal in value to the labour time socially necessary for its production. It is equally reasonable to suggest that this standard of value, which is similar over long periods of time, also initially determines the exchange value of one commodity in comparison with others (that is, of one part of the total product with another). And it can also be argued that this relationship gets shoved aside by the capitalistic nature of production, so that the *value added* is transformed into profit and distributed among the commodities in proportion to the capital involved and the cost of production. However, though such an account is perfectly conceivable, it puts a very forced and artificial construction on the matter. I have never accepted the value theory of Ricardo, Rodbertus and Marx in the form in which they present it, though I agree with their central and basic ideas. I have indicated in this treatise where I depart from them. Now as always I take the line that labour alone creates new values. But I would add that labour does not create *equal* value in *identical* units of socially determined time. Indeed,

³² Not fully expounded by Marx until the posthumous publication of a version of vol. III of *Kapital* in 1894.

as Marx himself maintained, not only does skilled labour produce *many times* the value of unskilled general labour, but it also produces very *different* values in the *same* time according to its effective co-operation either with other labour or with the most appropriate means of production. This amendment means that we can retain the proposition that in a free market prices of commodities go up and down according to their relative values.

But in itself labour power has just as little intrinsic value as land. Its price varies with its quality, with supply and demand, and with the collective strength of the people selling it, the workers themselves. The upper limit is fixed by its utility, since it is purchased to promote the business of the entrepreneur; the lower limit is set by the minimum required to keep the individual worker alive.³³

³³ Tönnies's postscript, added to the text in 1912, reflects developments in economic theory that had taken place between the first and second editions: on the one hand, the posthumous publication of vol. III of *Kapital*, which expounded a more refined version of the labour theory of value; and on the other hand, the rise of the 'marginalist' school (Jevons, Menger, Walras) for whom all value was determined by 'final utility'. Tönnies's 1921 study of Marx's thought argued for both 'surplus value' and 'marginal utility' theories to be taken into account (Ferdinand Tönnies, *Karl Marx. His Life and Teachings*, trans. C. P. Loomis and I. Paulus (Ann Arbor: Michigan State University Press, 1974), pp. 146–8.

Book Two

Natural will and

rational will

Voluntas atque intellectus unum et idem sunt

Will and intellect are one and the same'

(Spinoza's *Ethics*, prop. XLIX).

Der Wille ist die Wurzel der Bildnis

Ein falscher Wille zerstört die Bildnis

Will is the root of what appears on the outside.

A false will destroys that outward appearance.

(Jakob Böhme)

SECTION I

The forms of human will

I

The whole thrust of this treatise demands a correct grasp of the concept of *human will*, which is to be understood in a twofold sense. All intellectual activity may be characterised as ‘human’ by the fact that it involves thinking; but I shall distinguish between ‘will’ that includes some element of thought, and ‘will’ that is merely a part of the thought process. Each represents a coherent whole which integrates many different kinds of feelings, instincts and desires. In the first case the integration must be seen as natural and spontaneous, whereas in the second it is abstract and artificial. The first sort of human will is what I shall call *Wesenwille* [i.e. ‘natural’ or ‘organic’ or ‘essential’ will]; the second I shall call *Kürwille* [i.e. will that involves calculation, arbitrary freedom and rational choice].¹

2

Natural or *essential* will is the psychological equivalent of the human body; it is the unifying principle of life, conceived of as the pattern of material reality to which thinking itself belongs (*quatenus sub attributo cogitationis concipitur*²). It involves ‘thinking’ in the sense that the organism contains certain cells in the forebrain which, when stimulated, cause the

¹ See ‘A note on translation’, p. xlii–xliii. Tönnies’s discussion of ‘rational will’ in this and subsequent sections contains echoes of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*. But his conception of ‘natural will’ is wholly different from that of Hegel, who had portrayed ‘the natural phase of the will’ as self-contradictory and evil (G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, paras. 4–28, 139). ² This Latin quotation has not been traced.

psychological activities that we interpret as thought (of which the speech faculty is undoubtedly a part). By contrast, *rational* or *arbitrary* or *calculating* will is a product of thought itself, and comes into being only through the agency of its author – the person doing the thinking – although its existence may be recognised and acknowledged as such by other people. Both of these very different concepts of will have this in common – they are seen as *causing* or predisposing a person to act. Their very existence and distinctive attributes in a particular person make it possible to infer how that person is likely to act, or how, in certain circumstances, he necessarily must act. But natural will is rooted in the past and must be explained in its terms, as must things that are in the process of currently evolving; whereas rational, calculative, arbitrary will can be understood only with reference to developments in the future, by which it is brought to fruition. Natural will contains the future in embryo, while rational will contains it as an abstract image or hypothetical idea.

3

Natural will relates to *action* in the same way as energy relates to work.³ It is necessarily involved in some shape or form in any activity where an individual human organism is the motor force, and it is the basis of ‘individuality’ in the psychological sense of the term. It is *immanent* in physical movement. In order to grasp the concept of natural will properly, we must discount any intrinsic existence in external objects and understand them as perceived or experienced only in their *subjective* reality. Thus we are dealing here with reality and causality only within the human *psyche*; with mere conjunctions and trains of feeling relating to existence, instincts and actions, which in their interlocking totality may be seen as arising from the basic inherited make-up of the individual being. This will be the case, even though the specific development of that being will be conditioned and modified by material sensations (which operate in much the same way, whether they stem internally from the body’s dependence on food and other substances, or from what we normally call the outside world).

Rational will on the other hand precedes the activity with which it is concerned and remains detached from it. Although it has no existence except in the realm of thought, it is realised only in action. But on both

³ Clerk Maxwell, *Matter and Motion*, ch. 5.

levels the 'subject' or 'agent' gets the body going by external stimulus (the body being seen as a mere inert object⁴). The 'subject' is an abstraction. It is the human 'ego', stripped of all other qualities and conceived of as a purely thinking entity. It can conjure up the certain or probable consequences of actions which it may itself initiate, and calculate the end result; this provides a measure for sorting out and ranking such possible actions, and deciding which are to be realised in the future. Pictured in this way, thought operates with a kind of mechanical compulsion upon nerves and muscles and thus upon all parts of the body. Since this way of looking at the matter is valid only within a physical or physiological framework, we need to understand thinking itself as a form of motion, i.e. as a *brain function*, and the brain as an objectively real thing occupying physical space.

4

The problem of will as natural or essential will, looked at in this way, is as complex as the problem of organic life itself. A specific kind of natural will is innate to the human race, just as every other species has its own particular kind of body and soul. The individual attains to complete mature existence, like the organism which he or she represents, by constant imperceptible growth and development from an embryo containing the determining factors (intellectual as well as physical) created by the union of cells from both parents. Thus in its origins natural will must be understood as being inborn and inherited. Nevertheless, in the combination of paternal and maternal traits as well as in the particular circumstances which form its environment, it has the rudiments for development into something new and different, or at least into some kind of variant or modification. Its development corresponds to each phase of physical development – it contains just as much strength and coherence as is in its physical body. Organic growth must be seen as a spontaneous process, and so too is the development of natural or instinctive will.

We have come to understand this growth as an amazing mass of accelerating motor forces, which have become ever greater and more complex down all the generations that link the individual being with the primal forms of organic matter. Within this process the special role of the bodily will is less apparent the closer it is to its primordial origins, although the process will still be active in other ways, through pressures within the

⁴ The Latinate word "inert" in the first edition was later changed to *bewegungslos*, presumably as part of the early twentieth-century attempt to restore German usage.

environment. More and more, however, these outer conditions will emerge as being distinct from innate tendencies, and only then can changes be detected which, in relative independence of inherited potential, are brought about by means of the will itself. Such changes are almost non-existent in the embryo but are considerable in the child, and they increase, generally speaking, to keep pace with age. Although the will, just like the body, is different at each point in time, its individual development, seen in this way, can be thought of as a succession of acts of will. Each of these presupposes all the acts of will that have preceded it, which collectively constitute the strength of the organism up to that moment, together with certain characteristics assumed to come from external stimuli. All previous acts of will go right back to the basic disposition, the original instinctive will. This includes them all in a provisional way not as logical but as *practical possibilities*, or even as probabilities, which under certain conditions may become inevitable and thus succeed in emerging into reality.

In this process natural talents or tendencies become practical capabilities, but they [also] continue to operate as powerful *underlying drives* in an unbroken connection between the inner core of primordial will and all its further developments and ramifications. If this development is seen as reaching maturity at a certain point, the will then confronts the material world as a fully developed entity, both influenced by and itself influencing others. Both of these interactions can in a very broad sense be deemed 'acts of will', since in its fully developed state the will can choose whether or not to allow itself to be changed. But all those forces which bring about the "miracle" of evolution continue to be active; so that the true agent of this willing may come to be seen as some higher order or biological principle from which these forces arise. The same may be thought of the 'individual' himself (in so far as this concept serves some purpose). Thus, if we think of the evolution of the individual as embodied in his 'will', while knowing full well that an 'Infinite Unknown' is actively assisting the process, so we must also learn to see the will as a kind of genesis and growth outside or beyond evolution.⁵ We must recognise the rational subject as a representative figure of whom it could be said that things happen *to him*, although he himself carries them out. In order to make this

⁵ There are echoes here of Herbert Spencer's 'Great Unknowable' underpinning all natural phenomena, and of Schopenhauer's over-arching 'Will' that used individual consciousness merely as an instrument for preservation of the species; but the most likely source is Spinoza, whom Tönnies was studying in the early 1880s (cf. Spinoza, *The Ethics*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (1883) (reprinted New York: Dover, 1955), pp. 48–53.

distinction we have had to emphasise large-scale processes of change. But we are aware in ourselves of just these processes, because of a general sensation of activity that *coincides* with our subjective understanding of our overall condition and embraces everything in which we bear a part.

5

The most general classification of animal organs and functions distinguishes between those of vegetative (inner) and those of animal (external) life. Thus it is reasonable to postulate a vegetative and an animal consciousness, which (like physical structures in the body) are both united and mutually determinant within an animal's *will*. This connection, however, takes on such a special significance in the characteristics and activities peculiar to *human beings* that it becomes necessary, from the psychological point of view, to distinguish human or intellectual will (and the particular life form that goes with it) from the animal and vegetative kinds – from which it differs, in much the same way as they differ from each other.

We can then think of three natures united in the human constitution, two of which are united in the overall constitution of any animal. The activities of the vegetative or organic consciousness are in general determined by material sensations; those of animal consciousness are determined by perceptions or visual impressions (sensory or motor stimuli); and those of mental consciousness by thoughts or verbal impressions (intellectual or mental stimuli which cannot be measured merely in terms of matter or motion). 'Vegetative' life forms the basis of everything else and remains substantially constant, all its distinctive functions being mere variants and duplications of this basic level of existence. It consists entirely in the maintenance, multiplication and reproduction of itself, of the energy required by those functions, and of the form that holds together the various component parts. It is concerned with existence and action as ends in themselves: assimilation of materials, circulation of nutrients, maintenance and renewal of organs. 'Animal' life is chiefly external motion – the necessary and natural expenditure of energy in relation to other things and creatures: stimulation and contraction of muscles for changing the position of the whole or its parts. 'Mental' life is expressed as communication, i.e. the interaction of beings of the same species through signs, especially words uttered by using the vocal organs. This develops into thinking, which consists of communicating with

oneself by speaking out loud or in silence. Communication in general is already latent and foreshadowed in animal life, but all the capacities and activities belonging to it are multiplied, intensified and enhanced by speaking and thinking. This entire third category of will should be understood as a kind of retrospective development from the second category, just as the second is of the first. In the natural will or disposition of human beings these three types are found together and form a coherent whole. Organic disposition is defined in terms of animal–mental will; animal disposition is expressed by both organic and mental will; and mental disposition itself is conditioned by organic–animal will. All the underlying motive forces are found in organic life; they in turn are given direction and shape by the mental life; their most important, everyday aspects are most apparent in the animal sphere.⁶

At this point I am going to set out several groups of psychological concepts as the characteristic forms of human natural will; the will makes its presence felt in these forms by affirming or denying other things. Only the *positive* meaning is indicated by the terms I shall use, but they also have recognisable negatives: ‘will’, for example, in the sense of ‘desire’ is the reverse of antipathy or revulsion.⁷ In each case the mental aspects of action and movement are so bound up with those of perception, sensation and cerebration that they represent a coherent interdependent system, just like the central nervous system in animal physiology. Thus a specific sensation is always the origin of or impulse towards a specific expenditure of energy, which will follow from it and inevitably pursue the line of least resistance or of strongest attraction. Again, a tendency to react or express oneself in a certain way is closely bound up with the sensations produced by certain objects. Will can be understood as the process of relating to those objects, i.e. the way they are perceived and the action that follows – or as the connection between internal stimuli and external action. In both types of relating, if they are positive and constructive, the will regulates itself by its own character and norms; it engages itself in the objective world, ready and willing for appropriate action.

⁶ On Tönnies’s application of the ‘vegetative’, ‘animal’ and ‘mental’ spheres to social and political life, see below, pp. 232–3. They closely coincide with Hobbes’s division of civil government into the ‘nutritive’, ‘motive’ and ‘rational’ faculties (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 29).

⁷ There is a play here upon *der Wille*, *der Unwille* and *der Widerwille* that is lost in translation.

6

The human being's inherent longing for certain objects and activities is his version of a general animal instinct; it is what I shall call his *preference* or *desire for pleasure*.⁸ From this we can explain everything that can only be explained by the development and normal growth of the biologically determined psychological aspects of the human constitution. This is the complex of organic instincts which permeates the life of man, dominating his actions, his thoughts and endeavours. All distinct ideas or sensations are both derived from, and inexorably linked together by, this fundamental unifying principle. This unifying principle is characterised by three different attributes: (A) the plain and simple passion for life itself, that is, to affirm life-promoting activities and sensations and to reject inhibiting ones; (B) the desire for nourishment and the activities and sensations that go with it; (C) the desire to reproduce. In this last attribute the principle is expressed most intensely, for reproduction is the very essence of life; but it is classified as a special kind of desire only in the sense that special sensations and activities are required for it.

These needs and desires, which correspond to functions common to all organisms, strike the keynote in the harmony of human feelings. All the varying likes and dislikes, which as moods and as states of health make up the individual's permanent and temporary characteristics, depend on the fitness of the organs and the degree to which they are satisfied. These are usually regarded as mere physical factors; whereas in actual fact everything that gratifies the spirit, i.e. a person's mental life, is demonstrably dependent on these conditions and in turn has its effect on them. But it is the sense organs and nervous system which are the basic and essential intermediaries between the external and internal worlds, at least for all forms of animal life. The senses, like the rest of the body, get their satisfaction partly from themselves, depending on their quality and condition and that of the vital organs. And they also get pleasure from their environment, from the world outside, which they experience in many special ways, both agreeable and repulsive. Feelings of pleasure or aversion do not *cause* those reactions, they *are* those reactions – transmitted into expressions of the will via muscular contractions stimulated by nerve endings.

⁸ Tönnies's discussion of pleasure and pain seems to have strong affinities with English utilitarianism, but in fact was derived from Spinoza's *Ethics*, pp. 140–55. In this paragraph, *das Gefallen*, *die Gewohnheit* and *das Gedächtnis* recall the triad of Book One, para. 1.

We can explore the causes of these motions in two different ways. Either we can see them as constituting an explanation of life itself, and of the genesis of individual life from life in general: this would give us a theory of stimulation of the nerves by external forces, which are then either re-transmitted to the outside world or subside into a state of relative inactivity (the molecules reaching a new equilibrium). Or we can look at the history and interaction of the emotions, which are in any case only the subjective reality of these biological phenomena. Every cell, every tissue and organ is a complex of unified will, both internally and in relation to the outside world. So too is the organism as a whole. Alterations in the organism, i.e. nervous emanations from within, through which life is maintained, are always conditioned by impressions simultaneously received from outside. In the human being we consider these responses as belonging to the animal–cerebral sphere only when they come from those centres which control organic life. These are the instinctive movements or reactions by which a sensation is accepted or rejected. It is as if the general intelligence poses questions to the world of things by means of the senses, testing and weighing their qualities; it then judges and decides whether they appeal to it or not, whether they are good or bad. The animal and cerebral organs and centres (in the spinal cord and brain) are themselves involved here only as expressions of vegetative life, dependent on the sympathetic nervous system.⁹ In this context every detail of the individual character of the sense organs – which in turn stems from basic disposition – represents as many kinds of preferences as there are acts of positive or negative will. The essentially subjective senses, such as the sense of touch, smell and taste best illustrate this quality. They are the organs which most directly “enjoy”.

7

There is another aspect to the ‘animal’ form of the instinctive will, which must be distinguished from mere preference, and that is *habit*. Habit is the desire or pleasure that comes from experience. Ideas which were originally a matter of indifference or aversion become more agreeable through association and combination with ideas which gave pleasure right from the start. They eventually enter the maelstrom of life and are, so to speak, absorbed into the blood. Experience is the same thing as regular

⁹ The ‘sympathetic nervous system’ (as opposed to the cerebro–spinal system), meaning the fibres and ganglia in the vertebral column that regulate blood and viscera.

practice,¹⁰ and practice is what promotes habit, just as mere physical evolution gave rise to the instinct of pleasure. Repeated practice at first is itself a strand in evolution, and we have to explain how the two part company, with practice becoming a specific factor apart from and alongside evolutionary development. This occurs when circumstances or conditions [begin to] have a more decisive effect upon individual existence, which is then confronted by a more complex task of co-ordinating impressions. In the normal course of events, [further] development and growth are easy and straightforward and affect the entire organism. Use of limbs, difficult at first, becomes easy by constant repetition, transforms vague, unsteady movements into confident ones, and builds up particular organs and reserves of energy. The result is an accumulation of countless tiny effects. Hostile and repugnant things cause pain, and the seeming power of the strange and unfamiliar provokes instinctive fear; but this decreases with frequent repetition as the danger passes without doing any harm. Thus things which are feared and hated will become first bearable and finally even agreeable. Experience can also induce the opposite – the breaking of a habit and reversion to type. Obstacles that stand in the way of a straightforward and easy acceptance of something may be overcome by the individual's own strength, which increases with use. But this increase of strength has definite natural limits. Over-use means over-exertion, which may occur either at the cost of other organs (causing them injury), or result in the *exhaustion* first of the muscles involved, then of the entire organism, i.e. depletion of stored-up energies without adequate reinforcement. This explains why an activity that is originally easy and natural can become difficult in the long run and eventually impossible. Pleasure gives way to apathy, or even pain; hunger and thirst may turn into satiety through over-indulgence, sexual desire may become revulsion – in general, passionate desire may turn to antipathy and disgust.

Nevertheless, what mainly happens is that, wherever a basic inclination leads, a habit will be formed, and what was originally liked will become actively preferred. Thus special types of activity based on preference become ever more readily and more exclusively habitual. A definite mode of living (including the natural environment), simply *because* it is habitual, becomes agreeable to an animal and finally indispensable; this applies to a certain diet and to companions of its own species. In this respect man

¹⁰ *die Übung* = practice in the sense of repeated work at the same task; can also be translated as 'use' or 'exercise'.

is wholly and entirely animal, albeit in his own fashion. As the saying goes, man is a creature of habit, a slave to his habits, and so on, and this hits the nail on the head. Comparing man as a species with the other great category of organic beings, [we see that] habit forms an essential and substantial part of his mind. Just as all regular practice, and thus habit, presupposes some sensory perception, so habit in humans assumes the understanding of signals in the form of words. An animal first gets used to those objects which are immediately connected to the activities of its life. Later it grows particularly accustomed to certain necessary movements and tasks which depend on special perceptions and which it must perform over and over again. These are linked to a series of related perceptions and conceptions to which it must also get accustomed. These form the basis of a process common to all higher animals – the process of forming conclusions, i.e. supplementing given facts by means of existing associations. This is what we mean by the faculty of *reason*.

In human nature these types of habit are merely specialised and modified variations [of more general animal behaviour]. We can distinguish specifically human habits of living, working and imagining, all connected to each other by numerous interweaving threads. What is most remarkable here, as everyone knows, is the way in which the things which individuals know about and can do are the same as those which they enjoy doing. Ability to do something is in itself a feeling of power, an urge and desire actually to do it; and an organic being feels impelled to live in this way to keep itself in good shape. For an organ which is not used or a power which is not exercised will atrophy, while using it is the right way to build it up. From this we can see why habit, as the basic principle of knowing how to do something, is the same thing as will in action. For if people can do something, they do it easily and gladly – they positively want to do it. If, on the other hand, something is unfamiliar, people find it more painful or difficult and are less willing to undertake it. Expressions in the ancient languages are significant in this respect. The Greek word *philein*, for which we say, ‘I love’, means ‘I am accustomed to do such and such’. There is also the special term *ethelein* which means both “I want to” and “I am willing to”, but significantly also means “I have a tendency to”. We can also take the Roman word *consuetudo* which signifies that everything the mind has created and absorbed becomes an essential part of it; the component *suum* (root, *sva-*) suggests that blood and breath are things inherited, while *consuetudo* implies that the newly acquired characteristic

has nevertheless become just like the other two. Finally, let us look at the meaning of habit [*Gewohnheit*] itself and at the corresponding Greek word (*ethos*). Both point to what we may call the settling down of ideas and impulses; they have found a fixed abode, a home territory. The spread of these ideas within the Community [*Gemeinschaft*] relates to this particular place; they adapt to it completely and thus become all the more closely interwoven with it and each other. Thus habit or custom have the same relation to reason – in the particular guise of *common sense* – as pleasure or preference have to the various sense organs and their functions.

8

The third form of human natural will I call *memory*. This is only a special evolution of the second form; and it means the same with regard to the higher cerebral centres that are outstandingly developed in man, as does the more general concept of natural will with regard to the spinal column. Memory is conceived of here as the core principle of mental life, and therefore as the *peculiar* characteristic of natural will as it appears in humans. Given the fact that man was originally identical with all organic life, it is appropriate to talk about the true character of will as most clearly expressed as memory or the association of ideas (for it is in this form that sensations and experiences arrive at a comparatively independent existence). And certainly memory has often been defined as a general quality and capacity of organic matter (by Hering, Haeckel, S. Butler, and recently Semon in particular), and attempts have been made to describe animal instincts as inherited memories.¹¹ But they can just as well be seen as habits, and they are indeed nothing else, when viewed in relation to the species rather than the individual. For the original organic instincts have assimilated such capacities and preferences and tend to perpetuate them

¹¹ Richard Wolfgang Semon (1859–1918), zoologist and anthropologist, was to become famous for his work on physiological transmission of memory. His first major work did not appear until after the publication of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, but Tönnies probably knew of the *Habilitation* thesis for the university of Jena on which it was based.

Ewald Hering (1834–1918) was an authority on the human nervous system, and on theories of light and vision. His ideas on ‘racial memory’ were popularised in Britain and the USA by Samuel Butler’s best-selling work, *Unconscious Memory*, published in numerous editions in the 1870s and 1880s.

Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919), professor of zoology at the university of Jena, a disciple of both Darwin and Lamarck, was a major influence in applying evolutionary theory to social anthropology.

beyond the individual life, linking them ever more strongly and intimately to the instinctual core.¹²

Habit and memory are related in a similar way. The latter concept becomes detached from the former, but tends at the same time to collapse back into it as an ever-stronger power. In this sense English psychologists (Lewes, Romanes) have developed the theory of *lapsing intelligence* as a formula for a well-known phenomenon: that so-called voluntary actions, i.e. those which involve thinking (or, in the case of animals, certain perceptions or mental images) become involuntary or unconscious.¹³ This means that less and less of a stimulus is required to trigger them off, a process generally implying that intellectual activities have become charged with their own self-activating forces. We must remember, however, that all types of sensation and reaction can only be explained by their common source in the unity of the organism, which contains the germ of any such connection.

Memory, in the usual meaning of the word, is the ability to reproduce impressions; as a scientific term it denotes the ability to repeat purposive acts. This would be meaningless if we did not know that impressions are themselves 'acts' – and that this duality [between purpose and pre-determination] is implicit in the very concept of organic life, with its uniform pattern of nourishment and reproduction, of which all specific life is a simply a variant. This uniform pattern is maintained partly through development, partly through practice, but ultimately it is also a special combination which has to be *learned* in order to be retained. This combination is at work in all activities which in essence depend on peculiarly human aptitudes. Learning comes partly from experience, partly by imitation, but above all by being taught how something *must* be done in order to do it correctly and well – and what things and ways of behaving are wholesome and worthwhile. This then is the real treasure-store of memory – knowing what is right and good so that we may love it and do it. For knowing what is good and approving it are one and the same, as are being familiar with it and taking pleasure in it. None of these positive attitudes, however, will necessarily lead to corresponding action, and even in combination will only do so when they have overcome considerable opposition.

¹² An important passage which demonstrates Tönnies's view that the 'inheritance of acquired characteristics' was a social and 'human' rather than biological process (see general introduction, above, pp. xxii–xxiii).

¹³ G. H. Lewes, *The Physical Basis of Mind* (London: Trubner and Co., 1877), pp. 367–80; G. J. Romanes, *Mental Evolution in Animals* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., 1883), pp. 178–80.

The general way of expressing mental life is speech – communication of one's own feelings, wishes and various intellectual experiences to others, or in silent reflection to oneself. Language itself has to be learned, both as knowledge of the meaning and value of word symbols and as the ability to combine and use them. Practice and habit certainly play the greatest part in this. Nevertheless, precisely because we possess this art, what we say depends very little on thought; it stems as a rule only from momentary preferences or sudden *whims*, the meaning of which is evident from the context, especially from what is said or what questions are posed. Preference or pleasure can always be interpreted as a form of instinctive judgement (for in the German language the term for 'as I please' is very similar meaning to the term 'at my discretion').¹⁴ Through the making of choices, pleasure exercises sovereignty over the whole of life¹⁵ – even the life of the imagination, that type of memory which is not limited by words but which, once they are there, continually reproduces them in manifold complex combinations, just like other imaginative constructions. In the same way *familiar* groups of ideas make themselves felt most powerfully as functions of imagination or memory. And finally there are cases where the very association of ideas is the product of memory. This means that a recollection is needed, or a particular sudden idea or thought, which functions like a weighing-machine to sort them out and recognise their value before the mind can claim them as its own. Similar to speech are all other human activities that are essentially linked together by imagination, memory or reason; it is these activities which distinguish man clearly from most animals, and especially those most closely related to him, by being creative and artistic.

Hence the same kind of relationship that exists between reason – in the sense of general understanding [*Verstand*] – and habit, sense data and pleasure, also exists between memory and the other kind of reason – meaning the power of speech, thought and reflective action [*Vernunft*]. If memory is a combination of both mental preference and habit, then habit counts as a lower (animal) form of memory, while preference is a more fundamental form deriving from general organic life.

¹⁴ *das Gutdünken* = discretion, a word that normally appears in the phrase *nach Gutdünken* = at your discretion, or as you please. Linked historically to the discretionary judgement exercised by *Gutsherren* in manorial courts. There is an English parallel, which captures the link with *Gefallen*, in the phrase 'detained at Her Majesty's pleasure'.

¹⁵ There may be an echo here of Jeremy Bentham's 'two sovereign masters – pain and pleasure' – though again the most likely source is Spinoza's *Ethics*, books III and IV.

Note. Spinoza recognised memory as an element of human will. See the passage at the end of the *Scholion on Ethics*, III, prop. 2, which begins:

There is another matter which I want to emphasise here, namely, that we can do nothing as a free decision of the mind if we do not remember having done so. For example, we cannot say a word if we cannot bring it to mind. And it is not in the power of the mind to think of a matter or to forget it at will.

After taking account of an objection, he concludes:

It must of necessity be admitted that an intellectual decision, which we think is free, cannot be distinguished from imagination itself or from memory. It is nothing more than the affirmation which an idea, by virtue of being an idea, necessarily involves. Furthermore, these intellectual decisions arise in the mind with the same necessity as do ideas of things that exist in reality. People who believe that they speak or keep silent or do anything by free decision of their own minds are dreaming with their eyes open.¹⁶

However, we should be able to formulate this truth with still greater precision when we come on to discussing the forms of arbitrary will.

9

I shall now sum up in a few generalisations the ideas put forward so far, and extend them to include the definition of further concepts. (A) All specifically human (in the sense of conscious and routine) activities that belong to the sphere of the natural will, are derived from the qualities of that natural will and from its state of arousal at any given moment. This state can be understood in various ways – as mood, emotion, prejudice, opinion or delusion. Generally, however, it is termed *feeling*, which seems to convey the overall drift: that we ‘act as we feel’, we do what we are used to doing, or as seems good to us. In each case there is a certain amount of nervous energy in the *brain* which is transmitted to the muscles if it cannot be discharged in the brain itself. This transmission of energy is determined partly by certain external stimuli, partly by the organic network of the nervous system, in which the pathways used follow the lines of least resistance. All these energy-consuming activities, are dependent upon a specific intake of energy, either previous or simultaneous; this

¹⁶ From a passage in which Spinoza argued that mental decisions and bodily sensations were identical (Spinoza, *Ethics*, pp. 134–5).

energy, however, can only do its work effectively upon, as it were, prepared soil or inherited ground. This work is the development of the brain and its growth via the mental functions themselves, constantly nourished by the vegetative system. The energy or power which is exercised and increased by these functions, but also absorbed from outside, constitutes intellectual experience. It is produced by the activities, individual and connected, of the sense organs in combination with existing brain power and including parts of previous experiences. It also involves the activity of all the other organs, particularly those controlled by the senses and brain. Among these the most important in its effects is the power of speech, which involves the exercise of highly complicated brain and muscle activity simultaneous with further perception by the sense of hearing. A third factor is the threefold independent activity of the brain itself: (1) verifying and reproducing immediate ideas – the quintessential function of ‘memory’; (2) organising and connecting up these ideas to form independent images which have a life of their own and seem to flash upon the “inward eye” – a highly “subjective” process, governed by a peculiar power of the memory, i.e. the imagination;¹⁷ (3) analysis and synthesis of images by labelling, accepting and rejecting them. This takes the form of deliberate *recollection*, of which a special offshoot is the kind of thinking and calculation that uses comparison and *concepts*.

(B) The development of definite types of preference, the basic orientation of the will, depends chiefly on internal conditions, i.e. innate tendencies, and is least influenced by external circumstances. In the development of habits both nature and environment may have an equal share, but external circumstances will predominate in the shaping of memory. We can also include in the equation the results of regular practice and of that special kind of practice called learning. The potential for practice partly depends of course, as everyone knows, on the innate capacities and the results may be very variable. But a weak natural ability can with determined practice rise to be at least equal to a strong but poorly exercised natural ability. This is just as true of talents for particular artistic or productive skills as for tendencies towards particular types of behaviour, action or thought in general. We are accustomed – and here the traditional view coincides with the theory of Schopenhauer – to distinguish between the innate spiritual qualities of the psyche on the one hand

¹⁷ A possible reference to Wordsworth, *Poems of the Imagination*, XII:

They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude.

and intellectual and moral attributes on the other (to say nothing of the bodily ones). But in this way only the spiritual qualities are seen as true capacities, intellectual and moral attributes being mere likes or dislikes.¹⁸ For the purposes of the present study [we shall assume that] there are simply different types of *will*. These derive their objective reality from the general bodily constitution, but in certain conditions they *are* also capable of reaching some kind of higher fulfilment. They are most clearly recognised in the things and activities which give a person pleasure; but also in the things and activities to which he gets easily accustomed, and finally in those for which he has a good memory.

(C) We can regard everything to do with pleasure (i.e. the basic human instinct) and with habit and memory in a human being as having been absorbed into his character and processed so that it all forms a coherent whole. Alternatively, pursuit of pleasure can be seen as so completely identical with the basic attributes of an individual's nature that in favourable circumstances it develops simply through the growth of the whole organism. In this case habit (as developed by practice) is *second nature* and memory (developed by imitation and learning) is the *third*. But the nature of every animal being constantly reveals itself in acceptance or rejection, attack or defence, approach or flight; in psychological terms as pain or pleasure, desire or aversion, hope or fear; or in philosophical terms as affirmation or negation. All living and willing is self-affirmation – and hence either affirmation or negation of the 'other', depending on the relation it may have to the 'self' (meaning the union of body and soul). This may be experienced or anticipated, desired or loathed, depending on whether and to what degree the other is seen as good or evil, friend or foe. The whole essence of our particular nature, of our very own exclusive self, can be defined as what we can do or are capable of doing, our real concrete power; it consists of what we have willed in the past and still hold on to, as the entire complex of our instincts, habits and memories. This is particularly evident in individual acts of will: (a) through the direct (instinctive, sub-conscious) expression of feelings, such as the contraction or expansion of the physical substance of the body, where individuality is least able to express itself; (b) through the communication of feelings by movements, gestures and sounds; and (c) through their heightening and distillation into publicly expressed or privately considered judgements,

¹⁸ cf. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. I, pp. 376–9; and A. Schopenhauer, *Essay on the Freedom of the Will* (1839), trans. K. Kolenda (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1960), pp. 8–11, 14–6, 23).

where individuality finds its most important expression. A person's power and character are further revealed in his objective achievement, in the substance of his life and career, i.e. his influence, deeds and works. The more difficult some of these achievements are, the more a person will be thrown back upon imitation of his fellow workers and masters in order to acquire such skills. For this task of imitation, man, like his animal relatives, has inherited a special faculty and bent.

(D) In all such manifestations we are trying to understand the essential nature of a human being. If this nature in its essential functions is basically moved by nothing but blind instinct and impulse, these urges will nevertheless appear quite different in the vegetative sphere of life from the animal and mental. If a drive is very powerful and deep-seated we call it *passion* – the urge to enjoy things, a general “life force” which displays its greatest energy in procreation or lust. Similarly there is a compulsive “drive to action”, a joy in the exercise of animal strength, known as *boldness* or being on one's *mettle*. And finally there is “creative drive” in the intellectual sphere – the pleasure in arranging, shaping and communicating the contents of the memory and imagination that we define as *genius* or creative ability. Every human being possesses some element of passion, boldness and creativity. But all these qualities must be seen in relation to what they are meant to achieve, which makes the first fairly standard and the last the most variable. It also becomes clear that these are only specialised terms for the basic forms of natural will; in other words, passion is based on pleasure, courage on habit, creative ability on memory. These complex forms involve elements of, and are inclined towards, ‘rational’ rather than ‘natural’ will; but in so far as they are expressed through natural will we can classify them as something found in a person's *natural disposition*. The impulses and forces of passion, courage and creativity are mixed in varying proportions in the human disposition, but passion and vitality are primary and more or less fundamental. And this is confirmed by the fact that passion is used as an indicator of a positive or negative attitude between one person and others; it is a powerful *sentiment* of love or hatred.¹⁹ Similarly courage [*Mut*], being the desire to act upon such sentiment in a friendly or aggressive way, is the essence of the “moral” qualities which we identify with *heart and soul* [*Gemüt*]. Lastly we have the individual's own peculiar ‘genius’, his memory and thought processes, which weigh up and pass judgement

¹⁹ This sentence introduces another of Tönnies's favourite alliterative trios, *die Gesinnung, das Gemüt, das Gewissen*.

on friendly or hostile behaviour and qualities, his own and other people's. This may be expressed in the form of moral *tendencies* and opinions or inclinations, and is by general consensus defined as *conscience*.

(E) *Qualities* of temperament which are admired, praised and honoured, or despised, criticised and reviled, are attached to these psychological forms. In general, good will (with the emphasis on the *will*) as distinct from practical knowledge and successful *achievement*, means the intensive exertion of all available forces with the object of accomplishing some activity or finished work. This is where power or strength, as the state of potential for action, and will as its actual realisation, diverge, having hitherto been contained in the same concept. Power becomes a more channelled, firm and substantial expression of will, while will expends itself as a discharge of hydraulic power – like the relationship between latent and kinetic energy. Powers and abilities in general are often seen as gifts of fate or from the gods; but we take man himself with his fixed identity and individuality to be the author of work performed, both of the results achieved and of the activities that went into it. We are not thinking of the special sense, which we shall be considering later, whereby someone wills in advance or chooses something in his mind, while at the same time being perfectly capable of willing something different. It is rather that individual and specific acts of will seems to flow or spring from a general overall will, even when will and action are regarded as identical.

Within the basic framework adopted here, the distinction to be made is essentially that between mere evolution, and something quite different: namely, the actual exercise (together with training and application) of inherited natural abilities. The whole, fully developed person is engaged in such practical development, and so too are his specific qualities of intellect and reason, or in physiological terms the relevant centres of his large brain. For this reason any judgement concerning an action or a single act of will applies to a person's whole being, as the effective cause of everything he does. If this were not so, then an action and its components might be judged differently; but because things are as they are, this cannot be done.²⁰ The overall natural or organic will is therefore characterised by permanent qualities which explain it in terms not simply of power and substance but also, in the sense indicated here, of will and action. Where

²⁰ The translation here is rather free, in an attempt to make sense of a difficult passage. Tönnies appears to be linking *Wesenwille* to the classical and early-modernist view that there is an inner coherence of human identity (as distinct from the 'post-modernist' view, anticipated in *Kürwille*, that identity is non-sequential and fragmented).

these characteristics are particularly outstanding they will entail exceptional merits, abilities and *virtues*. And of course, the cardinal virtue is *energy* – energy in the form of strength in deeds and strength of will. In the field of action it expresses itself particularly as *valour* or *bravery*, in the world of work as *industriousness* (or seriousness, keenness, conscientiousness). Such virtues thus correspond to the notions of passion, courage and creative capacity. While these virtues can of course be confined to a meaning which classifies the will as natural force or innate endowment (albeit with so many different applications), they can also be viewed as special examples of *reasonable* will,²¹ and of the basic principles of human labour, practice and creative endeavour.

In these virtues and their manifold variations, however, the real moral *goodness* of the will, and therefore of the human being, is not to be found. A person may be something special, unusual or useful because of his abilities and skills – a good craftsman, a good soldier, a good writer; but he may not be a good *human being*. On the strength of these virtues, or of a firm desire to accomplish something, a person may be efficient or important, but still not a *good* man. Human goodness (to use a general term) depends on behaviour towards others, and thus refers only to the second rank of expressions of the natural will. Goodness is a genuinely benevolent outlook, true considerateness – “flower of the noblest soul”, as a poet has said²² – a ready sympathy with the joys and sorrows of others, loyalty and gratitude to the friends who share one’s life. In the same way, we see a candid and straightforward “outlook” as denoting *sincerity* and honesty; what we call ‘depth’ and generosity of “character” as *kindness*; goodness and uprightness of “conscience” – involving a sensitive, even ultra-sensitive, conscientiousness – as *faithfulness* or loyalty. All natural moral values can be derived from these three virtues.²³ In comparison with them, those conventional intellectual abilities, however important they may otherwise be, seem matters of *indifference* in the moral sphere. Much confusion results in discussions of such issues from mixing up one category of judgements with the other.

²¹ i.e. *vernünftiger Wille*, as opposed to the calculative ‘rational will’ of *Kürmille*. See below, where Tönnies portrays *vernünftiger Wille* as the guiding power of a well-ordered commonwealth (p. 232).

²² Possibly Theodor Storm, though the exact reference has not been traced.

²³ A difficult passage to render precisely from German into English, because in both languages the adjectives and concepts used involve a range of possible meanings and emphases. The language used exemplifies Tönnies’s belief that goodness was an aesthetic as well as moral quality (cf. his *Die Sitte* (1909), trans. A. Farrell Borenstein (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961).

Nevertheless, those indifferent virtues acquire a certain moral *significance* when they give pleasure, promote the welfare of others, contribute useful qualities and strengths, and are seen to be practised with such ends in view. It is hardly surprising that the lack of these virtues – or the presence of their opposites – is not only despised and censured, but can seem deliberately offensive and fraught with ill will – which arouses animosity, just as good will evokes fellow feeling. Virtues are admired, vices are despised, even in *enemies* – although the virtues of our enemies can be terrible and their vices agreeable and useful!

Note (1911). The distinction made here with regard to ethical values is also very important for the theory of social life, and for the antithesis between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* – although it is usually ignored by writers who do not think conceptually. Hobbes, by contrast, has accentuated their importance when he says (*De Homine* c. XIII, 9): “The three cardinal virtues of courage, prudence and temperance are virtues of the citizen not as a citizen but as a human being, because they are useful not only to the commonwealth but also to the individual who is endowed with them. For just as a commonwealth is preserved through the courage, prudence and temperance of good citizens, so it will also be destroyed only by the bravery, cleverness and temperance of its enemies.”²⁴

IO

It is an entirely different perspective which deals with the will as a product of thought, as a calculative, rational-choice-making will, since it takes for granted an advanced form of rational intelligence existing in the human organism. The glimmerings of visions of future activity, which are found in vast quantities in any memory, can only come to fruition through a concentrated effort of thought which is constantly extended and renewed. The separate tendencies or forces in the thought process form themselves, or are organised, into systems in which each one has its place and performs its function in relation to the others. Such a unified system, conceived of in relation to thought, is one possible way in which the *entire* human personality may be actively expressed. An imagined goal, i.e. an object to be gained or a desired event, continually sets a standard by which

²⁴ Tönnies would have translated this into German from the Molesworth edition of Hobbes, *Opera Latinae*, vol. II, p. 117. There is a modern English translation (slightly different from the version offered here) in Bernard Gert (ed.) *Man and Citizen* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978).

future activities are planned and determined. Ideally the thought of the goal *governs* all other thoughts and considerations and consequently all freely chosen actions. They must serve the goal, actively conduce to it, or at least not hinder it. Therefore many aims become subordinate to a single goal, and many thoughts settle upon one common aim which seems collectively worth pursuing both as an end and as a means. In so doing they themselves become reduced to means – in relation, that is, to the higher purpose.

The complete dominance of thought over will would thus come to represent a hierarchy of aims whereby everything we might want is referred to a supreme over-arching goal, or to several such goals if they were ranged side by side, of equal importance but independent of each other. According to the framework adopted here, however, even these higher purposes get their validity from thought, which is the process that gives them recognition and approval. It must therefore be possible to derive or explain all expressions of desire from the activity of thinking that goes on above or behind them.

The tendency towards such domination is evident in every act of the intellect (imagined as having a separate existence), for every passing perception helps to guide and direct the impulses emanating from the natural will. This intellectual process does not, of course, produce *motives* but gives *directions* to pre-existing ones. Ideas and thoughts can even supply the essential conditions or favourable occasions for awakening potentialities that lie dormant in the will. Yet the latter remain as distinct from the former as natural energy from the laws of motion. Thought sets itself up as master – it becomes the *deus ex machina*, the ‘god from outside’ who sets an inert mass in motion. It must be seen as detached and free from the original will, from which it nevertheless emerged, and as expressing and containing will and desire within itself, instead of being expressed and contained in them. The very possibility of rational choice-making will depends on the fact that the activity of thought in relation to future conditions can be carried on and lead an apparently independent existence, even though those conditions have no existence outside the thought which encapsulates them. Thinking as a form of will – as the *primum mobile* of other wills – is the precondition of all movement and perceived as being its cause. We notice only the psychological aspect of the thinking process and only the physical aspect of other activities, and so we jump to the conclusion that it is the soul (or the will) which causes the actions of the body. But this is impossible, since they are identical with the body.

The truth is as follows: in so far as we can ascribe any existence to those products of thought (an existence which properly understood is entirely contingent), we find a mental reality acting upon a physical reality; an ideal will acting upon a real will (for the possibility of being set in motion must be interpreted in the psychological sense); and matter as a theoretical construct acting upon matter as concrete substance. This is an explanation for the highly complicated physiological process by which a precise quantum of brain energy is transmitted via nerves and muscles to the parts of the body.

I I

The concept of *Kürwille* (calculative, arbitrary, abstract will) can be broken down into three simple forms.²⁵

(a) It may refer to free behaviour in general or to the act of choosing something, i.e. an activity in relation to an object. This form is called *fore-thought* or *deliberation*. Let us imagine two naturally hostile ideas meeting each other – one to do with enjoyment, the other with dislike. In our thoughts, the first represents a reason for wanting one thing, the second for wanting something different. They can co-exist in our thoughts and be of use to each another. Deliberation as a form of will takes account of something which is painful and not wanted *per se*, but only because of what can be achieved through it – the resulting pleasure which is what we really desire. In the short term, however, any thought of pleasure must be put on one side and remain in the background as an unobtrusive ulterior motive. Thus the idea of aversion is regulated by the will, but at the same time the idea of will is subjugated to the sense of aversion. They reach a *rapprochement*. Their common concern and purpose, viz. a favourable balance-sheet of pleasure which is what is implicitly desired, becomes explicit. The same relationship occurs when one pleasure is forgone for the sake of another, or when something unpleasant is accepted in order to avoid trouble in the future. The essential feature is the weighing of opposites. For in the very act of thinking about what we are going to do we make a sharp *division* between end and means; a division which is spelt out and clarified when the one is seen to be the antithesis of the other, i.e. the end is something good or pleasurable, the means something bad or painful. Neither is actually *experienced* as such, since they are merely

²⁵ Tönnies here sets out yet another triad – *der Bedacht, das Belieben, der Begriff*.

products of conjectural thought; but they are conceived as antithetical concepts which have nothing in common except the hypothetical measuring rod on which they have been brought together. The one which is the *raison d'être* of the other necessarily appears desirable as soon as the coveted pleasure seems great enough to outweigh the "sacrifice". Cause and effect, therefore, are compared according to their "values". They must be commensurable, i.e. they must be dissolved into their elements and reduced to common units of measurement. All the qualitative aspects of pleasure and displeasure then disappear as unreal and imaginary; they have to be transformed into purely quantitative distinctions so that typically a fixed quantity of pleasure and pain can be compared and contrasted.

(b) The second form of *Kürwille*, where it is directed towards specific individual actions, I shall call *arbitrary choice*.²⁶ It emanates from a fully developed subject or "ego", self-consciously aware of its own potentiality, whose existence is permanently oriented towards a fixed goal, even though this may subsume and incorporate many other goals. Within its particular sphere all aims must be subordinate to this overriding goal. The simpler and more basic aims all derive from the general mass of intellectual experience, in the form of memories and knowledge of pleasurable things and sensations, but in the main goal all such connections will have practically disappeared. The mind thus has at its disposal simply a vast range of possibilities, similar in nature and value, and it decides each time how much of this to bring to fruition, depending on what is necessary to produce an imagined outcome. A number of distinct possible actions which seem to hover in the mind as real objects are, as it were, fused together and established as 'actual' instead of merely 'potential' will. This will henceforth stand between the ego and the objects as a "decision"; but it belongs entirely to the ego, being completely without power and substance, so that the person who has made the decision can easily go back on it and change his mind. As long as he keeps to it, however, he can use it to impose upon and influence things and people *through* his will. And if will itself is thought of as having an effect on things, or if the person who does the willing is seen as responsible for direct (physical) causality, then he must himself *conform to his own will*, as if it were a pattern or prescription of general application.

²⁶ i.e. arbitrary in the sense, not of capricious, but of unfettered, not subject to any higher restraint or authority, as in *liberum arbitrium*, the Latin term for free will (see above, 'A note on translation', p. xlv). *Belieben* = choosing whatever you please.

(c) What choice and decision are to actions the framing of abstract *concepts* is to thought; it entails exact judgement about the use of terms that intelligent people observe in conversation. Such terms can be employed as a standard for comparing and appropriately describing actual things and circumstances. For a concept itself, e.g. the concept of a circle, is a pure construct of thought; and figures in a plane, either given or constructed, are defined and treated as circles according to their resemblance to this concept. Here we see thinking at its proper task, which is to formulate simple and constant categories out of a multitude of shifting experiences. Most concrete phenomena can be related to these categories and expressed in terms of them. This also holds true for the concepts of what is right or useful or practical, which the thinking mind has formulated or at least verified for itself as guidelines for judging or acting. With their help the mind measures the value of things and decides what must be done to achieve the desired end. Such concepts are, therefore, either implicitly contained in a decision or applied to it as general maxims.

In deliberation or forethought, the action in view and the thinking about it are one and the same. The process of choice acts as a general principle to which many particular ones are subordinated. The third element, conceptual thought, is vague about practical action, seeing this as simply a product of its true realisation in thought itself. To understand deliberation or forethought, we must study intention or purpose; to understand the making of choices, where the end is assumed, we must investigate reasons; to understand conceptual thought, we must find the goal for which it is designed.²⁷

12

The general character of arbitrary, calculative, abstract will (which includes elements of natural will) should therefore be seen as several different structures of thought – aims, ends and means – which a person carries in his head as his *instrument* or *apparatus* for comprehending and coping with reality. From such structures the basic features of his rationally chosen actions may be deduced (other than those aspects that stem

²⁷ Tönnies tinkered with this sentence several times. The 1887 and 1912 texts referred to the need to look for the ‘basic principles’ (*die Grundsätze*) of conceptual thought, and the 1920 edition to the ‘rules’ (*die Regeln*) of conceptual thought, while the 1935 version referred to its ‘end or purpose’ (*der Zweck*). The changes may have reflected the development of the concept of goal-driven rationality in the writings of Max Weber.

from his natural or instinctive will). Let us call such a system, in general, striving or *ambition*. This is what dominates calculative, arbitrary will, even though its subject may have organised this sum of his desires and goals for himself, and may feel it to be his own free choice. In particular it determines his attitude, favourable or hostile, towards his fellow men. If it seems to serve his ambition, he will get along easily with other people; but where his feeling is equivocal, things become more difficult because his predisposition [in his own favour] will have to be kept under control. The ambitious man must have no scruples about putting on a show, whose effect may be the same as if it were genuine. A lie can mend a situation which speaking the truth would ruin. Conscience dictates that offensive and disgusting emotions must be controlled. To conceal them where revealing them would cause offence is a basic rule of worldly wisdom. To adopt or discard them according to circumstance, to express the opposite of what one really feels, but above all to conceal one's *intentions* or to spread uncertainty about them: all this belongs to a mode of conduct informed by *calculation*.

Calculation is the concept of instrumentality in another guise. The ambitious man never does anything for nothing: everything that he does must be profitable, what he spends must return to him in another form; he is always mindful of his own advantage – he is never disinterested. The calculating person wants only the final result; he may do many things apparently without reward, but takes account of them in his calculations and registers them according to their value. The final balance-sheet of his actions must not only recoup any losses but also show a profit going beyond the original outlay. This profit is his goal. It may not involve any special means, but simply the correct deployment of existing means, achieved by the prior calculation of demand in relation to time and place. Calculation is evident more in the context of actions as a whole than in minor features, gestures or speech. The man who is making his way up sees only a small stretch of the path ahead; he knows his dependence on chance occurrences and hopes for good luck. But as a rational calculator he feels superior and free, sure of his aims and master of his resources, which he controls through conscious thought and directs according to his own decisions, however much they may appear to follow their own fixed orbit.

What I shall call man's *consciousness*²⁸ consists of the totality of

²⁸ *Die Bewußtheit*, meaning consciousness in the sense of 'heightened consciousness' or 'self-consciousness', rather than merely passive consciousness (*das Bewußtsein*) – a distinction used by Schopenhauer, *The Freedom of the Will*, pp. 9–13.

knowledge and opinion that he has at his disposal about the way things are, or are likely to be in the future, whether or not they are in any way under his control. It includes knowledge about his own and other people's power and resources, and whether these are adverse or favourable to his interests (and thus whether they need to be liquidated or simply taken over). Such 'consciousness' must form the basis of all his plans and estimates, if his calculations are to be correct. This is the kind of knowledge that is available for and adapted to systematic application – the theory and method of control over man and nature. The 'conscious' individual despises all vague hunches, premonitions and prejudices as having minimal or doubtful value in these matters; he wants only to arrange his plans, his way of living, and his philosophy of life according to his own clearly defined conceptions. Such 'consciousness' implies self-criticism, which means condemning one's own (practical) *stupidity* in the same way that 'conscience' is aimed at our supposed wicked deeds. Consciousness is the highest or most intellectual form of the rational will; just as conscience is the highest or most intellectual form of natural will.

13

The supreme goal which dominates the thought system of a human being is willed in his conscious thoughts only when it is the object of intense desire. It is imagined as a future pleasure, near at hand. It is not a matter of freedom: one cannot take it or leave it, seize and use it or keep it on hold, simply at will. It is, rather, an alien thing, belonging perhaps to an alien will, an alien freedom, necessarily distinct from one's own acts and deeds. And so we come to the thing that *everyone* wishes and longs for – *happiness*. Happiness is in the first instance no more than favourable, agreeable circumstances which make life and its doings easier, prosper our labours, and lead us safely through dangers. Such circumstances can perhaps be foreseen and foretold but – like good weather – cannot possibly be *brought about*. Little of what we desire could possibly be turned into a goal that we would really want to realise or achieve. Nevertheless, countless people *struggle* and rush in the hunt for *happiness* as though it lay at an end point that has to be reached, and reached quickly, because the desire is so strong, or because we fear that it might vanish or others may get in first and snatch it away. It is as though it were fleeing ahead of us, and we must catch up and grab it or shoot it from a distance with arrow or bullet.

Looked at in this way, happiness is like an external object which we can take possession of by force, if we are lucky and chance is in our favour. But we can also look out for it, or even – calculating the probabilities – go in for some undertaking like a gambler, weighing the risk of failure or loss. Such unremitting or oft-repeated attempts are, once again, like struggling or wrestling, as though we would be masters of chance itself. And, certainly, the ability to foresee events *correctly* is a kind of mastery over them: even though we cannot change them, we can still *work with* them, enjoying the good and avoiding the worst. We are thus spared vain endeavours and encouraged to try something else more promising. But foresight like this is possible only in limited areas; as purely factual knowledge it is highly uncertain, and as knowledge based on causes it is highly imperfect. If it were both precise and perfect it would eliminate the very concept of *chance*. Yet as the medium of the unfamiliar or the unknown, chance remains a sphere of the most far-reaching uncertainty in everything that happens. That uncertainty is all the greater the less success depends on our own strength and determination of *will*, and even this varies from moment to moment as a sure factor in our fate.

When happiness is *striven for* and hunted down, a future *event* becomes, in the thinking process, like an object whose reality is determined by its causes, and these causes seem to offer themselves as possible ways of acting. In defining his capacity for rational choice as control over means, man turns a part of his potential freedom into its opposite, which is itself at first only imaginary but becomes real in the process of being put into effect. Formerly his own master, man becomes his own debtor and bond-servant by tying himself down. Indeed this whole idea can be grasped in its pure form only if all such freely chosen *activity* is presented as a sacrifice, performed with great reluctance and repugnance. *Only* in this way can the thought of the one (solely desired) goal, i.e. pleasure, gain, happiness, move a man to act as though *voluntarily*. The element of free will is thus precisely lack of freedom with regard to oneself; it is self-compulsion, since compulsion and pressure from outside would destroy it. All rational, calculative will thus contains something unnatural and false. It merits the common reaction of the disinterested observer, who often judges such actions as “artificial”, “forced”, “disingenuous” or “calculating”. It is a feeling of aesthetic-moral distaste, which is often energetically voiced in life and literature.

14

As we know well enough, people strive in a great variety of ways for pleasure, gain or happiness; the highest good being imagined as residing in many different things. Such objects can be further distinguished according to their relation to the three kinds of life. And within each category a further dichotomy may occur; aims take on one aspect when it is the mind that reserves pleasure for itself and delights in its own activity, but quite a different one when it is the instincts and carnal appetites that are behind the demand. These instincts are contained in and controlled by the mind, but may for that very reason be no less pressing. This is true of the pleasures of the so-called lower “parts of the soul” of the great masses, whereas the pleasures of the mind belong to the upper ranks, the few, the elect, the refined. A man may be a very distinctly rational being in the intellectual sphere – and yet may think only of vulgar happiness and know nothing of the pleasures of the mind. It does not occur to such a man to exert himself for such things – except for the sake of other ends which he sees as more important. On the other hand, there are many who despise conventional happiness but will resort to any means to gain what seems to them desirable. Yet all are agreed on acquiring either the means or the power which will guarantee them, when they choose to use them, as much of their pleasures as they desire. Thus Hobbes was right when he described as “a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of *power after power*, that ceaseth only in death”. “And the cause of this”, he says, “is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight than he has already attained to; or that he cannot be content with a moderate power: but because he cannot *assure* the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more” (*Leviath.* ch. XI).²⁹

For that reason such desires are almost identical with the striving for *money*; since money, in a certain kind of social system, both is and signifies power over all the goods and pleasures that can be exchanged for it: it is both a universal commodity and an abstract pleasure. The real aims, however, are something very different, as will now be demonstrated by looking at the different types of ambition. In general and at the top of the list I put (a) self-interest and (aa) vanity, side by side. *Self-interest* ranges from a variety of coarse and “materialistic” activities, experienced in various ways, through to more distinctive, refined and intellectual vari-

²⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. XI, p. 70. Italics added by Tönnies.

ants. The intellectual motive which, apart from the physical and animal drives, lies at the root of it, is strikingly pin-pointed by a passage from the author just cited: “All the pleasure and jollity of the mind consists in this, even to get some, with whom comparing, it may find somewhat wherein to triumph and vaunt itself” (Hobbes, *de civ.* I,5.).³⁰ This is the essence of *vanity* or self-satisfaction – the endeavour to make a show and to shine, to be admired, to make one’s presence felt, to “impress”³¹ other people. If the enjoyment of one’s own power and its effects on others becomes the very end of one’s efforts, then *pursuit of pleasure* as a general characteristic becomes identical with self-interest: so that even really necessary things come to be sought only for the sake of ultimate pleasures. When the self-interested man takes pride in renouncing pleasures, he does so rationally, thinking of the future by preferring something profitable to something agreeable. Self-interest, like vanity, is a motive for *sociability* – vanity needs other people as mirrors, whereas self-interest needs them as tools.

Self-interest assumes a specific form, when it fixes its eye upon the means to all possible pleasures as its particular end; this, as already indicated, is (b) *greed for money*. Vanity is thus transformed into a specific type of striving for gratification from external goods, i.e. (bb) the refined form of greed for money, known as avarice – that is, striving for a continual *growth* of goods and money rather than just for an abundance of them. Thus it is defined not by quantity but by proportion, not by the mere satisfaction of greed, but by the contemplation of profits. What they have in common is best expressed by the term *covetousness*.

When self-interest uses other people as tools, it takes the form of a struggle through immaterial and intellectual means to establish control over human minds and their opinions of one’s own greatness. We call this (c) hunger for status and power. The most absolute *mastery*, in a literal sense, over men and matter stems from “scientific knowledge”. This is the form of superiority that consists in knowing how events are inter-related and generally determined, and thus can foresee and make predictions about the future. So (cc) *thirst for knowledge* can serve all other purposes, although it may also become detached and be purely an end in itself. Even in its purest form it is still an offshoot of and a type of vanity. The scholar and researcher may be happy and content with his own private opinion of himself, through awareness of the extent and content of his own

³⁰ Hobbes, *De Cive*, p. 8.

³¹ *Imponieren* = to impose or impress; also to stab someone with a dagger.

knowledge (expressed in the famous line: *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*).³² So a high-minded thirst for knowledge can rise above vulgar vanity. But the reverse side of the coin is that the coveting of honours and the *quest for power* merge imperceptibly into each other. The man of power wants to be honoured: he wants to see and receive tangible signs that people recognise his power and fear or love him. The ambitious man wants to rule, even if only to be free of the domination of others and to eliminate them from the competition.

15

All such motives are, on this showing, nothing more than idle desires in the imagination, or unconscious impulses and preferences, which have turned these things into the objects and ends of thought. Individual acts of choice which are functionally linked to these ends are made in accordance with them; they are not, as they would be if they were features of the natural will, a direct desire and urge, even an ability, to perform certain works or deeds as measures of their own intrinsic worth. Nothing follows from them, although a person will use every means at his disposal to produce the desired results. This will not involve a creative act which expresses a person's individuality. Instead the means are judged by how far they coincide with the wishes and actions of a disembodied ego, which has access to an infinity of means and ends and sees its task as being to adjust outlay to the desired outcome. The simplest and easiest way of managing and accomplishing this task is to "off-load" these means and to "re-invest" them in the right place. Will cannot here be pledged as "*good will*" with regard to a task or job to be done. Application and effort will always have to be added to make even the most perfect talent fully creative; but the rationally calculating will is not concerned with perfection or even with ability, only with material outcome. It is expressed in a deed or a piece of work which may be praised or criticised; but neither praise nor blame will attach to the will that lies behind them, either in a morally neutral or in a specifically moral sense. This will not happen in the first sense because rational will is not something real belonging to the essence of the human being, nor in the latter sense because it never involves the positive feelings towards fellow men that stem from character and conscience. For pure and unalloyed free thought must always be questioning

³² 'Happy is the man who understands the causes of things' (or 'Happiness lies in knowledge') (Virgil, *Georgics*, 2, 490).

the reason or purpose behind such feelings, and can only discern end or purpose with reference to its *own* well-being. Anything outside itself only makes *sense* in relation to that sole aim, and must therefore be made subordinate to and dependent on it.

Only *cleverness* will be recognised and admired as the peculiar virtue and skill of detached thought – on the strength of which it may choose the right means for any given purpose, predict the results of its actions, and in general make the best possible use of all known circumstances. Cleverness is the virtue of the brain, just as “speed” is the virtue of legs and “sharpness” of eyes or ears. It is not a virtue of the human being because it does not express his whole personality. The clever man reflects and reasons over his problems and endeavours; he is *smart*, if in the course of his calculations he knows how to find unusual means and build complicated *plans* on them. He is *enlightened*³³ – meaning clear and precise in his concepts – if he possesses correct abstract knowledge about the external connections in human affairs, and is not led astray by feelings or pre-conceptions. From the combination and fusion of these qualities arises the *rigorous consistency* of the rational will and its practical manifestations, which though admired as a form of strength and as rare and important qualities, are also something to be feared.

16

It is a rather different matter when these types of endeavour, and abstract will in general, are judged from the standpoint of the natural will – of which they appear only as highly developed modifications. This account goes somewhat as follows: everything belonging directly to natural will can be portrayed in a favourable light, as expressing the integrity and individuality of the whole human being. This is practically expressed both in bodily form and in the mind or soul with which every human being is endowed at birth, through his membership of the species. By contrast, thinking in an “egotistical” way, where the principle of individualisation is pushed to its limits, will appear as malignant and evil. According to this account (which is deeply grounded, but in fact incorrect) the heart or emotions, as well as feeling and conscience, are associated or even identified with goodness, as though it were their necessary attribute. The calculating, scheming person is then regarded as bad and

³³ *Aufgeklärt* = ‘enlightened’. Tönnies often uses the term in a derogatory sense, to mean ‘knowing’ in the sense of ‘knowing one’s own advantage’.

wicked because he is “heartless” and “lacking in conscience”, and egotism is equated with malice and aggression. And it is true that, the more completely egotistical a man is, the more *indifferent* he will be towards the ups and downs of other people. He will care as little about their misfortune as about their well-being, though he may promote the one or the other if it seems to suit his purposes.

Pure and all-embracing evil-mindedness is, however, just as rare, and indeed well-nigh impossible, as pure and universal “goodness of heart”. Every man is naturally nice to his friends and those he regards as such (if they are good to *him*), but aggressive and hostile towards enemies (those who injure, attack or threaten him). But our abstract or artificial man³⁴ has neither friend nor foe, and is himself neither the one nor the other. In pursuing his aims he is aware only of allies or opponents; both represent for him only powers or forces. Feelings of hatred and rage against the one are as inappropriate as are feelings of love and compassion for the other. If any such feelings ever do arise, his mind experiences them as something alien, disturbing and irrational, which he is duty bound to suppress, even eradicate, rather than cultivate and foster. For they involve positive or negative emotions no longer dictated and limited by his own interests and designs, and may therefore lead to acts of imprudence. Of course, he may begin to offend his own conscience when he behaves in an aggressive fashion or treats everyone else like objects and uses them as his means and tools. This assumes, however, that such influences are still alive in him enjoining the opposite kind of behaviour – as indeed they do, at least with regard to relatives and friends. He will appear in the same light to the feelings and conscience of others who put themselves in his place. People, as we know them, are unwilling to give up the view that evil-doers still *have* feelings that hold them back (and thus a natural goodness), and that the voice of conscience in them is not entirely anaesthetised and dead. (The reasons behind this opinion are not relevant here.) A “guilty conscience” is interpreted as proof of a remnant of right and proper thinking, because it is obliged to condemn evil deeds and designs against friends (not to mention the good deeds, or lack of appropriate bad deeds, done to enemies!).

For it is friends who pass judgement and set the seal of approval on heart and conscience. If one’s friends think that aggressive action against

³⁴ *Jener abstrakte oder künstliche Mensch* sounds like an image borrowed from Hobbes. But, as noted in the general introduction, many of the characteristics of Tönnies’s ‘artificial man’ are those which Hobbes classified as natural (above, pp. xxiv–xxvii).

enemies is desirable and honourable, then one's mind is perfectly at rest (unless it has become unhinged and wants to do evil to friends and good to enemies). And conscience likewise is absolutely clear, when it is directed in this way. On the other hand, viewed from such a vantage point, all that ultra-rational ambition (rational at least in *form*) by which people try to attain happiness and the means thereto, must seem – if not exactly evil – then at least as immoderate passions (the most extreme of which are indeed spoken of as a kind of illness). They are certainly beyond the pale of virtue, in whatever sense that term may be understood. Moreover, egotistical and arbitrary behaviour may be seen as aggressive and offensive, even when it is nothing but play-acting – as in all cases where it is used by the aggressor deliberately to mislead another party. He may make things up out of rubbish and pass them off as the genuine article. If the other person accepts them, believing that he is getting something, then he will respond accordingly, and – as was clearly intended – give something in return. That something is thus taken away from him, stolen by such trickery.

The same relation that exists between this kind of arbitrary action, and the thought lying behind it, exists between exchange and deception, between selling and swindling. False coin or shoddy goods, and lies and pretence in general, if they produce the same results (either in a particular case or typically), have the same value as the genuine article, a true word, or unaffected behaviour. Indeed, if they achieve more they will have *greater* value, though of course *less* if they achieve less. In terms of expendable energy, what exists and does not exist (the genuine article or the reproduction or fabrication) are *qualitatively the same*.

17

In everyday language we make a distinction between what springs merely from the cold intellect, “the head”, and the warm impulses of “the heart”. The contrast in question is generally recognised when the impetus and direction comes from feeling, as distinguished from the *intellect*: head versus heart, to put it in the most vivid and telling way. Earlier theories regarded such feeling as being *confused*, while the intellect conceived things *clearly* and *lucidly*. To this day some people still try to derive feeling from intellect, on the ground that the latter seems simpler and must therefore be more basic. But in fact, thinking, however rational and self-evident it may appear, is the most complicated of all psychological activities. It requires, particularly if it is to function independently of the

impulses of organic life, much training and practice to be applied even to such simple categories as the relation between ends and means. Understanding these concepts and the difference between them, and then establishing a relationship between them, can be done only by verbal representation in the form of hard systematic thought. The same is true of the development of a form of calculative will, if only to give oneself well-thought-out reasons for saying: I must and I will. All animals, and to a great extent people too, prefer to follow their “feelings” and their “heart” in what they do and say, i.e. they follow a disposition and inclination which is latent within the individual character and has developed along with it. This is of course considered as a part of the intellect; but it was originally part of the overall structure of the human psyche, and only later became dependent on the cerebral organ alone. It was thereby transferred into a new system, which is certainly simpler, because whenever possible it is composed only of self-generated elements that are equivalent (or, in the sense used in geometry, ‘analogous’) to each other.

This happens when a human being recalls the past and retains in his mind countless pictorial images that come and go in accordance with their own inner logic and influenced by certain stimuli. Within that process the “priority of the will” can be recognised only because memory or imagination are seen to depend upon the complex system of sympathies and antipathies. We are easily deceived about this, because all intellectual processes appear to be what primarily *cause* feelings, emotions and so on. But, in fact, the processes of differentiating and combining *existing* inclinations are here continually repeated, together with transition from rest to motion, by the stimulus of positive or negative attraction to some perceived or imagined object or position. Correspondingly, the alertness, vigour and acuteness of the senses are vitally dependent on current impulses and stimulation to action. The same holds of ideas and thoughts: man’s “thoughts and aspirations” are part of his overall endeavours.³⁵ The things that we think and dream about, whether frequently and happily or seldom and unwillingly, depend upon our wishes, preferences and dislikes, our hopes and fears: in short, on whatever gives us pleasure or pain. This view is not invalidated by the fact that gloomy and unpleasant images take up just as much space in our consciousness as cheerful and pleasant ones. For such ideas can themselves be experienced as feelings of pain, and when this is so, body or will struggle to get rid of

³⁵ *Dichten und Trachten* – a colloquial phrase meaning ‘man’s whole endeavours’.

them. This does not prevent the mind from to some extent enjoying these feelings and even “emotionally wallowing” in them.

18

As is well known, the laws regulating the *association of ideas* are many and varied, because the possible connections and relations between them are innumerable. But not enough emphasis is laid on the fact that individual character, and the ability to move from one thing to another and to generate one thing from another, are also very varied. They are bound up with the complete mental and physical constitution as it has developed in the course of life and experience, from which they are derived. For by and large, everyone thinks about his *own* affairs; his thoughts are engaged with cares and hopes, with worrying about what to do and the right way to do it. What forms the focus of his mental activity is the regular occupation he has to follow, which becomes his task and duty, his past, present and future function, his work and his art. For that very reason *memory* can be described as a form of essential will, because it involves a *sense of duty*, or voice of reason, pointing out the necessity for such work and the rightness of doing it. It is the recollection of what a man has learned, experienced, thought, *and* stored up within himself; it is precisely what is meant by practical reason, *opinio necessitatis*, the categorical imperative.³⁶ Furthermore, in its fully developed form it is identical with what we call *conscience* or guiding spirit. There is nothing mysterious involved here, except in so far as organic will in itself is dark, irrational and primordial. For these special propensities, partly innate, partly developed, are themselves fixed associations – whose expression in the form of action merely demonstrates the strength of their drive or impulsion. Many such “triggers” struggle and compete with each other. Even in *thinking* about doing something, we feel the temptation and urge to do it, and the mere envisaging of this can be enough to stimulate nerves and muscles – particularly if we feel strongly attracted or averse to something, out of preference or habit. In that case a more considered approach to the object can counteract the feeling and move it in a different direction. In all of this, where feeling – or thought governed by feeling – is influential or even paramount, our conduct, behaviour and speech are merely particular

³⁶ *opinio necessitatis* – a term used by nineteenth-century jurists to imply ‘common agreement about the nature of things’ – *not* in fact the same thing as the Kantian ‘categorical imperative’, which was supposed to be independent of mere opinion.

expressions of our vitality, powers and underlying nature. We feel ourselves to be the 'subject', not just of organic growth and decay, but, through a different set of sensations, of those things we do that are prompted by "the spirit". The latter is the frame of mind and impulse that (coupled with intellectual assessment of circumstance) tells us how things are and what we should do; or that (unconditionally, and without reference to circumstance) tells us what we ought to do: what is fine, good and noble.

These things vary in the degree to which the working of the intellect becomes autonomous and seems to interact freely with its subject matter, by analysing and putting together ideas about what is practicable. Thoroughly enmeshed in and carried along by practical action up to this point, the thinking process now breaks free, rises above it, and prescribes for itself its own aim, outcome and *purpose*. The deed itself becomes detached and distinct from thought – no longer essential and indispensable, but simply a means and a convenient motive, since many routes lead to the same goal or many causes can have the same effect. Now what needs to be done is to find the *best* means, i.e. to balance the relation of means to end as far as possible in favour of the end. If the outcome seems to be *really* determined by some particular means – be it the sole means or simply the best one – then that means becomes the *necessary* cause and *must* be employed.

Addition (1911). The association of ideas is an analogue for the association of people. The associations of thought that represent natural or essential will accord with *Gemeinschaft*, while those which signify arbitrary or rational will correspond to *Gesellschaft*. The individuality of a human being is as much an imaginary or artificial construction as the individual, isolated existence of a geometric point and its related axes. This observation was not expressly set out in the first edition of this book, but it proceeds from the whole line of reasoning because it is implicit in it. The author has, therefore, taken the opportunity on several occasions to point this out (e.g. in the treatise on pure sociology in the *Annales de l'Institut International*, Tom. VI, Paris 1900).³⁷ I have there emphasised the fundamental dichotomy of ends and means: of whether the notions of end and means are mutually inclusive, naturally interdependent, and

³⁷ Ferdinand Tönnies, 'Notions fondamentales de sociologie pure', *Annales de l'Institut International*, vol. 4 (1900), pp. 63–7. This article was possibly written in response to the review of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* by Emile Durkheim in *Revue Philosophique*, vol. 27 (1889), pp. 416f., and to Durkheim's *The Division of Labour in Society* (Paris: 1893). The article strongly defended Tönnies's claim that he had presented the two models, not as descriptions of two different historical periods, but as existing "side by side".

reinforce each other; or whether they are – like Hobbes’s people and their descendants in my *Gesellschaft* – natural enemies, mutually exclusive and contradictory. Without knowledge and recognition of this *psychological* antithesis, a sociological understanding of the concepts presented here is impossible. In particular, modes of consciousness such as pleasure, habit and memory are just as essential to and characteristic of a *Gemeinschaft*-based social union as foresight, decision-making and conceptualisation are to a union based on *Gesellschaft*. In both cases they exactly represent the nature of the *social bond*.

Explanation of the dichotomy

19

A concentrated mass of *natural, essential* will may be compared to a concentrated mass of *arbitrary, calculative, rational* will,¹ in the same way as the organic structure and individual organs of an animal body may be compared to a piece of apparatus or a *purpose-built* machine. It is easier to study the phenomena being compared if we think of them as visible objects, and an understanding of the contrast between the psychological concepts presented here can be gained from seeing them in this way. Mechanical equipment and biological organs have in common the fact that they contain and represent an accumulation of horse-power or energy which both embodies and increases the total energy of the systems to which they belong. In both cases they possess their own specific strength only in relation to this overall energy and their dependence on it.

They differ, however, in their origins and qualities. An *organ* is self-generating; additional and more specialised powers are developed to a greater or lesser degree by repeated straining after a particular activity – either of the entire organism or of one of its constituent parts – which the organ in its fully developed state has to achieve. A *piece of equipment* is made by human hand, which makes use of extraneous *material* and is given a specific structure and *form*. This accords with a mental vision of the purpose which, in the design of its creator, the new thing is supposed to serve – and which, according to his belief and expectation, it actually

¹ On the various ways of translating *Wesenwille* and *Kürwille*, see ‘A note on translation’, pp. xliv–xlv, and the previous section.

will serve. Thus when completed it is capable of performing particular kinds of work.

There is also a *difference in nature*. As a unit, an organ exists only in relation to the unity of a larger organism and cannot be separated from it without losing its own qualities and powers. Its individual identity is only derivative or secondary; it is no more than a specialised expression or variant of the total body. But this larger body, and through it the specialised organ as well, is unique in its *material substance*; it is therefore the only thing which really is 'individual', or at least constantly tending towards individuality, which can and does present itself to our experience. A piece of equipment, on the other hand, is similar in substance to all other materials and is nothing more than a particular pile of stuff which can be reduced to imaginary atomic units and pictured as a certain arrangement of these. Its identity lies merely in its form, and this is discerned only by considering the sort of use or purpose to which it can be put. It can pass from hand to hand and be used by anyone who knows the rules of how to use it. Its individual and separate existence is complete up to a point, but it is a mere dead object because it does not maintain or reproduce itself, but simply wears out. Similar items can be reproduced merely by the same external input of labour and mind that created the first one – they are copied from its pattern, or from the pattern on which it was itself modelled.

20

The material of the human psyche,² from which the forms of natural human will develop, is the very essence of the human will or what we may call 'freedom'. Freedom in this context is simply the practical possibility of individual life and action as we feel and know it, a general indeterminate inclination (activity, energy) which through the forms of will becomes specific and directed – possibility becomes definite probability. The 'subject' of the natural will is identical with the material life to which it is attached. It relates to its 'forms' in the same way as the 'substance' of an organism (imagined as abstracted from its overall 'structure') relates to the structure itself and to the individual organs. That is to say, the will is nothing apart from those organs; it has the same identity and substance as them, and its forms grow and become differentiated through their specific

² Tönnies's phrase is *die (psychische) Materie*.

action and exercise. This process is accomplished only in a very small part by the peculiar activity of one individual. Acquired characteristics which have evolved in the individual are transmitted to his progeny (including forms of will in their material aspect). If conditions are favourable, the progeny develop these attributes and exercise them further with the same purposefulness, so that they grow *stronger* through use and practice or become yet more *specialised* through particular application. All this effort on the part of his ancestors is *recapitulated* by the individual in his growth and development in a specially adapted, condensed and simplified way.³

The subject matter of arbitrary will is also freedom, in so far as it exists in the mind of the individual, where it takes the form of a mass of possibilities or powers of wanting and not wanting, doing and not doing. Both the possibilities and the subject matter exist in the realm of ideas. The tentacles of the mind conjure up any amount of such subject matter, selecting from it and giving it shape and coherence. This thing, the cultivated arbitrary or rational will, is thus under the control of its author, who seizes upon it and harnesses its power, even as he takes action. By acting he limits the range of his possibilities or expends his energy. Up until that *moment* he could still (in his imagination) leave the action undone; but, as he does it, both action and inaction vanish simultaneously from the realm of possibilities. For an (imagined) possibility can be eliminated by becoming either a fulfilled reality or an impossibility. The previous desire to perform a possible action can be seen as a preliminary to this double elimination. It increases the one possibility and diminishes the other, especially when the action follows very closely upon the thought, or when the very existence of the thought seems to be the necessary and inevitable *cause* of its enactment. The action, however, is only a tool or instrument, and really it is the actor who is working through this instrument, since he is both the thinker of the thought and the doer of the deed.

21

On the other hand, action (viewed subjectively) means that the will to act is in reality already complete in the idea which anticipates the action; i.e. in the use of *means* which (seen from this viewpoint) are entirely depen-

³ An expression of Tönnies's support for the theory of Lamarck, Spencer and Haeckel that acquired characteristics were transmitted to progeny (cf. Herbert Spencer, 'The Factors of Organic Evolution', *The Nineteenth Century*, April–May 1886, repr. in his *Essays: Scientific, Political and Speculative* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1891), I, pp. 389–465.

dent on the mind. Thus the (aforesaid) arbitrary will is itself simply the presence of such means, some of which have been shaped into a cohesive form that seems suitable for the purpose in question. Those imagined possibilities are no longer equally conceivable ways of attaining pleasure, but are themselves constituents of pleasure. This becomes clearer if the mind visualises them as corporeal things and thus, so to speak, chops up freedom of choice into separate pieces – so that, by *not* taking a particular thing, the individual seems to be forgoing, if not an actual object, at least a piece of his freedom. Understood in this way, every action is a *purchase*, that is, the acquisition of an extraneous commodity in exchange for something of one's own. And this interpretation corresponds more or less adequately to reality. What we receive are pleasures or goods (i.e. objects which may give pleasure); what we pay in return are other units of pleasure – ways and means, portions of freedom, or, of course, yet more goods.

If this picture of what happens were to be, so to speak, put into reverse and the purely subjective concept of freedom restored, then we would have the 'absolute' position, the pure self-affirmation of the mind.⁴ With regard to relationships in nature, however, the idea of calculative, arbitrary will is the total negation of this view. It assumes the *necessity* of a determinate causal act – something that is demanded, ordered or required by a particular desire or will for a particular end, outcome or final goal. It is a command addressed to oneself, a compulsion imposed (initially as a thought) upon oneself. "I want" means here the same as "you must" or "you ought to". One is under an obligation to the final goal, that is, to *oneself*; by carrying out the command one is 'absolved' from one's debt. Thus in thought and in action the pleasure or plus elements and the pain or minus elements are mutually exclusive and self-cancelling.

22

In the field of reality and of natural, organic will there is no possibility of multiple choice, no capacity for both wanting and not wanting something. Possibility and probability are like natural forces and – in a rather tentative way – point towards the very activity which is their rationale and ultimate fulfilment. Anything that can be isolated as a separate entity is merely the outward expression of something stable and long-lasting, which is maintained and grows larger and stronger by being nourished

⁴ i.e. absolute in the sense of 'unconditioned', implying that the mind is independent of contingent reality, as taught by many philosophers of the Idealist school.

from a common store – a store which in turn is replenished through interaction with its surroundings, either physical or psychological. Such an entity is something actually existing now which also existed in the past – in contrast to the mere possibility contained in arbitrary will, where things that exist are (envisaged) as in the future, as something so far non-existent. The former can be experienced and known by all kinds of sensation, since past and current experience are one and the same, and the one is as real as the other. What is to be in the future, however, is recognised and known only by the mind, which it confronts like an object distinct and separable from actual action. This ‘object’ is like something ‘produced’ or imagined, though in a vaguer and more general sense than the images which the mind may construct from such imaginary material at some later date. What we mean by ‘production’⁵ in the case of natural will is the activity of organised matter itself, which – though with creative co-operation from the thinking ‘subject’ – already contains its fulfilment in its beginning, with more definite forms continually emerging from the same less definite ones. In the case of arbitrary will, however, everything must be broken down as far as possible into equivalent elements, so that they can be re-combined into an infinite variety of forms and quantities.

Thus the concept of the natural will means that innate capacity entails an element of (not imagined but real) inevitability and all that it entails – which, under given circumstances, constitute its ‘telos’ and evolutionary product. It is like fruit developing from blossom and an animal from an egg – one and the same thing in a modified form. The beginning and intermediate stages of the process are connected to their end, the finished work. What is sacrificed here is not something different from what is received, with nothing but their *price* in common – which is what happens in the processing of raw materials so that ready-made goods can be bought for labour. On the contrary, what is worked upon here is matter that is always to some extent alive. By a process of mutual assimilation the energies of the individual flow into it, bring it into being and keep it alive, as in the act of procreation and in all creative thought or activity. This notion is based on an important general law, that every organic modification, involving an increase in the power to act, grows and develops through performance of the act itself.⁶ And, conversely, loss of function, regres-

⁵ *Produzieren*, implying both ‘to cultivate naturally’ and ‘to produce artificially’.

⁶ A further expression of Tönnies’s adherence to a teleological, Spencerian, model of evolution, rather than the random selection model of the Darwinians.

sion and death are the result of non-use, when the cells and tissues are not renewed.

We can go further and state the following: that, by means of *activity related* to something outside oneself, i.e. by directing one's will to it, and using one's energy to cultivate it, something like a special organ must develop which amounts to a special purpose and (through practice) a special faculty. Sight, for instance, is a function of this kind (common to most animals) with reference to light and to illuminated objects, and the eye has developed as a result of the act of seeing. This is just one organ in perfect relationship with the central nervous system, which stimulates it, and with the source of life, the heart, which supports it – the type of support *depending on* its own peculiar function. In the same way we can also develop, maintain and foster special organs of a purely psychological kind, through loving, nurturing and caring for beings and things that are special to us. In other words, we can by specialisation develop our general organic *power of loving*. Furthermore, this power functions *through* love, by transmitting our vital energy to the outside world, in proportion to its intensity⁷ and duration and to how close the external object is to us; it is experienced and recognised by us and retained by the intellect, thus continually receiving a sort of metaphysical dividend from the stream of life. It comes into being and endures as a living and active entity because of me and *through me*. It is like an organ, an *actual part* of me, not a temporary but a lasting emanation of my being and substance. This is true of everything that lives and works as *my* creation: all that I have begotten or borne, all that has derived from or been drawn out of me through education or care, nurture and protection; and finally all that I have produced and acquired, wrought and created by my mind and strength. But somehow I belong to all this, just as it belongs to me. In the same way, the body belongs to the eye as much as the eye belongs to the body – albeit in a more limited sense, for the body can survive without the eye, but not the eye without the body.

23

And so the organic whole must always be seen and considered in relation to its parts, in so far as they have a distinct and separate existence. The over-arching, but none the less specific, aspiration of life and will is not an either/or choice between pleasure and pain, but – if it is whole and

⁷ *Intensität*, misprinted in the 1979 edition as *Identität*.

undivided – a constant inclination towards pleasure. For pleasure, according to Spinoza's definition, is a *transition* to a greater perfection, and pain a *transition* to a lesser.⁸ Both are only excesses or disturbances in the unstable equilibrium that constitutes 'will' or 'life'. Consensus or harmonisation thus becomes necessary – what is pain or pleasure for the whole must be pain or pleasure for the part, in that the whole is expressed through it. Consequently, what holds for one part is true for another, in that they have a *stake* in a common source and in each other.

The different forms of the will themselves are likewise related to each other in this organic way; so that, prior to and beyond them, there is always a larger whole which expresses itself in them and has a relation to them. This relationship is the cardinal one, from which all the rest must be derived. All rank and distinction between the parts is therefore only a reflection of the power of the whole over *all* the parts; though within the parts relative wholes can start developing, which are wholes in relation to *their* parts or members. All this is still true when the processes of will are articulated or expressed as thoughts, as long as they arise from the inner life and are contained within it in the manner described.

Arbitrary will is thus a denial of (subjective) freedom, and arbitrary action a diminution of personal power, its outward success being a compensation for this. By contrast, natural will is the very embodiment of (objective) freedom, in all its unique reality. Its product hangs like a fruit on a tree – not contrived and manufactured by overcoming external resistance, but begotten and brought to birth. The same relationship exists between acquisition of things through productive *work*, and acquisition through exchange or purchase. And again this is true of genuinely creative work that fashions items of a similar kind out of the infinity of its own being – in contrast with the mere synthesis of whatever materials happen to be to hand. The 'whole' formed by the latter is as dead and soulless as the bits and pieces themselves, and exists only in the mind. It can therefore best be understood as an external end, which is attained by employing an activity or occupation merely as a means.

24

The processes of arbitrary will place the individual as both giver and receiver in opposition to the whole of nature. He attempts to master

⁸ A reference to Spinoza's *Ethics*, part III, note on prop. XI.

nature and to get more out of her than he has put in; that is, to extract units of pleasure which have cost him no trouble, labour, or other unpleasant experience. But within the realm of nature he will be confronted by some *other*, equally striving, *equally* calculating agent of will whose means and ends are both related to and in competition with *his* means and ends, and who thus gains and seeks to gain from his misfortunes. In order to co-exist as practitioners of arbitrary will, they must either agree together or not come into contact with one another. If one of them takes something from the other or forces him to do something, he will be deciding and acting alone – depending on the degree of coercion, which in turn depends on the means and instruments employed. If these do not involve benefits for him as well as for me (i.e. for both of us), then I will not be dealing *fairly* with him; I will not be giving him what he wants in return. Either he will not act at all or he will act under compulsion, i.e. not of his own volition, and his action will not be an expression of his rational will (which we must take it for granted he possesses). This means that the pure concept of an abstract ‘person’ generates its own dialectical opposite – an antithesis that appears in the market-place as merchant against merchant, as individual against individual: as competitors and contracting parties.

Furthermore, people in general interact with each other just like the processes of will, everyone’s behaviour being determined by his natural will. Here again, force or coercion will destroy the freedom and very identity of a man who is its victim, for identity exists only *through* freedom. But, in the realm of natural will, the relations of individuals with one another can be considered only in terms of a ‘whole’ which is alive in each of them. Already we have seen how the members can become isolated from one another through the process of specialised development, and so forget their common origins. They may cease to exercise their functions on behalf of the wider community or co-operative group, and instead perform them only for themselves – so that everyone is working for his *own* good and only accidentally for the good of others. Nevertheless, as long as they can be thought of as some kind of coherent whole, even exchange between them is only incidental to their (true) functions, i.e. to their existence as particular organic modifications, the expression of their natural unity and common life.

Addition (from the original manuscript). The processes of arbitrary, calculative will imply an estrangement within the human subject, although the part that sets the goals and the part that *experiences pleasure* are really separate agents. For each half can be conceived of as a separate person,

who confronts the other as an antagonist. According to the current way of thinking, I relinquish parts of my freedom or my pleasure, but only to myself; I receive my pleasure, but from myself. The relation makes sense only if this alter ego is no longer an ego but *another person*, a 'thou' who actually uses *his* means to exclude and combat mine. Thus he too acts on his own account and sees his goal as getting something from me, just as I plan to get something from him. But if I deprive him or coerce him, I am planning and acting as a solitary being; if the roles are reversed, he too will be acting all on his own.⁹

25

Ideas about forms and processes of will are in themselves nothing more than constructs of the mind; they are tools to help us understand reality. Whether the will is real or imaginary, we can apply these *conceptual models* as common denominators to the many-sided nature of the human will suggested by this twofold approach. This makes it easier to compare them with each other. Viewed as products of abstract thought these concepts are mutually exclusive; nothing to do with arbitrary will can be included when we are thinking about natural will, and vice versa. However, we can also consider these concepts *empirically*, in which case they are only names covering a multitude of views and ideas – and the further they extend, the less significance they will have. Observation and reflection will soon suggest that in practice no *Wesenwille* can occur without *Kürwille*, through which it is expressed, and that no *Kürwille* can exist without *Wesenwille*, in which it is deeply grounded. The point of the strict distinction between these models is to make us aware of how empirical *tendencies* incline in one direction or the other. They may exist and function alongside one another, they may even promote and augment each other, but since each type of will seeks power and control they must of necessity collide, contradict and conflict with one another.

For their content, as expressed in behavioural norms and rules, is in fact very similar. If the calculating, arbitrary will wants to organise and determine everything according to utility and purpose, it has to push to one side the accepted, inherited, deep-rooted rules wherever they cannot

⁹ This paragraph does not appear in the 1887 edition, and was added in 1912. It may reflect the influence of Freud, but a more likely source was the Hassidic philosopher, Martin Buber, author of *Ich und Du*, who was an admirer and collaborator of Tönnies. Robert Weltsch, 'Buber's Political Philosophy', in P. A. Schilpp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Martin*

be adapted for these ends: it must subjugate them as far as possible. It inevitably happens that, the more decisive the calculating will becomes, the more the mind concentrates on ends and on the knowledge, acquisition and application of means to such ends; and [in the process] the more the networks of emotion and thought which constitute the special individuality of natural will are in danger of dwindling through lack of use. It may be that a *direct antagonism* will arise, with these networks actively impeding the arbitrary will and opposing its freedom and authority. The arbitrary will at first seeks to free itself from the natural will and then to dissolve, dominate or destroy it. This situation is most apparent if we analyse such tendencies through the medium of *neutral* empirical concepts: concepts of human nature and psychological disposition that are known to be basic and to correspond to actual behaviour that occurs with regularity under constant conditions. Such a general disposition may fit with either natural or arbitrary will. Elements of both may meet and mingle within it, and determine its character one way or the other.

This general disposition can be broken down into much more distinct categories, however, if we take account of the particular ways in which it is expressed through the organic, animal or mental life of the human being. By doing this we arrive at the following familiar concepts:

1. temperament
2. character
3. intellectual outlook.

These concepts must, of course, be stripped of any connotation of meaning the same as human 'nature' or human natural will; they must be reduced to the purely *literal* meaning of "dispositions",¹⁰ seen as something that corresponds to, and provides a classification for, a cross-section of reality. We can also portray the relationship like this: in addition to the qualities that exist *a priori* for the arbitrary will, and the opposite qualities inherent in the natural will, arbitrary will can manufacture new and special qualities, thus creating a sort of 'artificial' character, which has nothing but the name in common with the 'innate' character stemming from the natural will. This [shared] name is based on the fact that in both characters changing outward manifestations are linked to a permanent or tangible 'representative'. This 'representative', or what we generally understand as 'character', will as a rule be derived from two different

Buber (Illinois and London: Open Court and Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 435-49. ¹⁰ i.e. derived from the Latin *disponere*, meaning arranged in order.

sources. Either normal *conduct, behaviour, and expression of opinion* will proceed from sentiment, heart and conscience; or it will come, to a greater or lesser extent, from ambition (i.e. self-interest), calculation and self-consciousness. We should note, however, in this connection how little a person habitually follows or is capable of following his own will and precepts, certainly not in any literal way.¹¹

26

If we think about it, our feelings are stimulated by the behaviour of other people in much the same way as they are by external objects. It is not just that a positive or negative attitude is aroused in us, but that psychological states and events are judged as though the feelings evoked were similar to those of touch and temperature, i.e. the most universal types of general perception with which we differentiate external things. For the contrasts of wet and dry, hard and soft, warm and cold are often (even if not to the same extent) applied in popular speech to the differences in human character and behaviour. The fluid (flowing), soft and warm qualities are ascribed to the “feelings”. *Physical matter* shares these qualities, if it is rich in inner movement and has a specialised and complex structure – just as life itself, for example, is often compared to a river or a flame; and plastic *softness* is the most universal characteristic of cellular material. In contrast, the irreducible particles of material which are the transmitters of mechanical reactions must be envisaged as absolutely stable, hard, cold, and devoid of inner motion. This is how we experience both pure thought and practical reason, both its subject matter and its practical fruits.

So it is easy to understand how a temperament, etc., in which the processes of natural will predominate, can be described in this way as fluid, soft and warm; but if arbitrary, calculating will prevails it will be described in the opposite terms – as dry, hard and cold. For what stems from natural will must be like it; and likewise actions that are thought about intellectually are the elements of which calculative will is composed. In the first case we have the concrete and spontaneous element in individuals (their originality) which has come to be universally designated as *natural*. In the second case we have the abstract and artificial, the stereotyped and conventional, or what may be envisaged as *mechanical*.

¹¹ A puzzling sentence that seems to contradict Tönnies's claim that both *Wesenwille* and *Kürwille* are 'rational' and govern all human behaviour.

Temperament, character and intellectual attitude are natural in so far as they correspond to the *natural* disposition, artificial in so far as they relate to the *mechanical*. They there take on an assumed and affected “character” adopted for show, as in a “role” to be played.¹²

27

Human life and its desires (and thus the totality of human activity) may be regarded as an essentially organic process which as such extends into many different aspects of intellectual existence. This is not the same for all people, except where their organic attributes and the conditions of their existence and development are the same; it varies in so far as these will have evolved differently. The exercise of will or desire thus cannot be taught; in the words of the old school tag from Seneca: *Velle non discitur*,¹³ or it can be taught only in the sense in which one of the fine arts is taught. Works of art cannot be produced by *rote*, but must spring from specific physical and intellectual qualities, particularly from the concentrated energy, temperament and creative imagination of the artist. In this case, learning is synonymous with the growth and training of an *innate* talent through practice and imitation. Artistic activity is part of this person’s special way of living, speaking and creating. It is the hallmark of genuine work, just as the particular essence and powers of any organism are in some way expressed in all its parts. These traits are most perfectly developed in production that is carried on between the generations and transmitted by inheritance to new people of the same kind. This life and way of living is what is meant by *vocation* or *calling*.¹⁴

Another way of looking at life is to run it like a *business*, with the definite purpose of reaching some fancied happy end. Concepts and rules may then be devised as to the best *method* of pursuing such an end. They can be presented, tried out, and communicated in such a way as to be understood and applied by any person capable of performing a logical sequence of operations – which is what in fact everybody has to do in every activity. The nature of all such *theorising* is seen most clearly in mechanics. Mechanics is simply applied mathematics, and mathematics is simply

¹² See below, p. 184, for a more extended discussion of ‘character’ and ‘role’.

¹³ Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, 81, 43.

¹⁴ *der Beruf*. Cf. the very different account of work as a vocation or calling in the writings of Max Weber (*Weber: Selections in Translation*, ed. W. G. Runciman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), ch. 7).

applied logic. The principle of applied mechanics can be set out in general terms as follows: to obtain the greatest possible efficiency with the least possible expense of energy or labour. The substance of this same principle can be framed to take account of any undertaking directed towards a definite end: to the fullest possible extent the end should be gained by using the easiest and simplest possible means. Or, if this is applied to a business run to make money: the highest possible profit with the lowest possible cost, or highest possible net yield! And if applied to life as a business: the maximum of pleasure or happiness with the minimum of pain, effort or trouble; the smallest sacrifice of goods or of vital energy in the form of work.

For wherever an end is to be gained, it is essential to keep it sharply defined before our eyes; just as a marksman has a visible target before his corporeal eye, so the end or goal is the focal point in the eye of the mind. We must consider coolly and calmly which are the best, surest and easiest means for accomplishing our purpose in the most complete fashion. Finally, these means must be grasped with a firm hand and made to take effect properly in the recognised manner. We must, therefore, (1) aim correctly, (2) judge correctly, and (3) act correctly. The third phase is decisive and closest to our goal; phases (1) and (2) are subordinate to it as means related to their end. But even correct action is only a means to an end – to producing or achieving the desired result. Three mutually co-ordinated categories of activity are needed to bring this about. These are: (1) harnessing the mind, or picturing the desired object, or exercising rational choice through concentrated thought. This is a process which underlies all other conscious activities – like training a telescope on the matter. It is identical with our inner perception of what we want to achieve, which is a proper understanding of our own interest. Anyone can become well informed in this business; an adviser or consultant will point out to someone advantages he does not see himself; he will “open his eyes” or “draw his attention” to it. (2) In order to make right judgements we must have an accurate conception of the relative value of things, and of the certain or at least probable effects of human action. These too can be passed on ready-made, as instruments of measurement whose universal applicability is self-evident. (3) Applying these standards or handling these matters properly – consisting as it does in the appropriate allocation of whatever powers and resources are available – is not easy to assimilate directly; but it does have its own particular method, which can be communicated and taught.

The acquired knowledge – the ‘science’ – of *how* something has to be done is thus the decisive factor. It is taken for granted that *everyone* easily and automatically *can* carry out the actions involved in applying this kind of knowledge. Normal human abilities are sufficient in this context; nothing is required that a person cannot do if he really wants to. No art or craft can ever be taught in this way, but *clever techniques* certainly may be. The will itself is just such a contrivance, if it is equated with ‘rational calculation’ and thus abstracted from the act to be performed. But in that case it is not just something that a person *could* do if only he really *wanted* to; rather it becomes something that he necessarily and undoubtedly will do (not just possibly and probably), as soon as he has realised that it is indeed “the best” thing to do.

The capacity for thinking in this way stems from the normal human capacity for thought (as typical of humans as sense perception is of animals), which simultaneously produces both understanding and desire. Action, however, is supposed to be the necessary consequence of desire – from which it follows that a person will always *act upon* what he knows to be most useful for his proposed aim. That is something which it is impossible to deny, wherever a man closely approximates to the model of a pure, abstract agent of arbitrary will. But, paradoxically, the further removed he is from that model, the more this analysis is pertinent to his entire being and condition. His passing thoughts constitute simply a *single* salient moment – but from that it should be possible to explain his observed activities in all instances. Thinking itself is part of these activities; it is able to form various complex associations of ideas according to the ability, habit and mood of its author and to the stimuli currently affecting him. In particular, thinking lays down laws for his future actions with regard to his intended and determining goals. Doing this does not require much knowledge about the intellectual process involved; what it needs is the fullest possible knowledge of available means, of favourable or contrary circumstances, of the probabilities of lucky or unlucky chances. That is, it demands merely the faculty of judgement and a crystal-clear scientific approach which is, in general outline, applicable to given cases and can be accepted as having complete objective authority. Wherever this happens, individual work consists merely in routine application, i.e. partly in drawing conclusions, partly in selecting and weighing the relevant factors. The first instance involves maxims or rules, the

second facts or events which are either already known about or else are seen as probable, expected or hoped for – with the result that they are “reckoned” or “counted on”. For all this, calculation of the prospects for an undertaking is a form of accounting, and, in the long run, a mental preparation for a variety of possible outcomes.

What we are talking about then is a thoroughly *scientific* way of thinking, which must be free from all taint of subjectivity; a combination (or synthesis) and breakdown (or analysis) of elements that are arbitrarily limited or defined, but are nevertheless thought of as entirely real. The method, technique or theory of all such procedures is what should properly be taught under the name of logic: that is, as an organon or ‘instrument’ of scientific knowledge, the theory of how to operate with conceptual entities (*Entia rationis*) or how to think and calculate in order to get the right results. These rules are particularly used in a deliberate way in proper arithmetic and the related mathematical disciplines, but they can be applied to all scientific thinking and hence also to any form of egotistical calculation. Arithmetic, however, is nothing more than the “mechanical” (and therefore superficial) combination and separation of an invented subject matter, made up of numbers or algebraic symbols.

29

We shall now attempt to compare the thinking that generates calculative will with mechanical *effort* and its fullest expression through the *shrewd* application of such effort. This corresponds to the metaphors which our language uses when we speak of ‘forging plans’, ‘hatching plots’, ‘weaving intrigues’, an undertaking which ‘casts its net far’, a ‘fabric of lies and deceit’, and so on. By contrast, the creation and existence of the processes of natural will have already been compared with *organic* activity; and, as we have seen, quite by chance, the very ideal of such processes has been likened to the *artistic* activity of mankind. For it is a fact that speaking and thinking – as ways in which human nature and the individual soul are revealed in their most essential and particularised form – are the common creative *art* of mankind, like weaving webs for the spider, or building nests and singing for the bird. The question continually arises here: how is the human being *able* to do such things? And the answer is always the same, in three parts: by native wit and its development; by repeated attempts and thus by practice; and by learning and imitation, i.e. by receiving

instruction from those who know how things should be done and can share their knowledge in a sympathetic manner.

Both inborn talents and acquired knowledge refer back in various ways to an endless chain of causation. Native *talents* are handed down entirely by the parents through a purely *organic* act and can be transmitted only by them; but their development involves activity, again essentially of an organic kind, on the part of the individual so endowed. For this to happen, other circumstances must be favourable, and it will be assisted by a caring upbringing, which is the conscious continuation or extension of the act of procreation. *Learning* is, of course, peculiar to the individual, and in the case of humans essentially an activity of the *mind*, but it is furthered by the efforts of those who are knowledgeable, older or experienced (both parents and others), so that teaching and learning require and complement each other. By contrast, learning through practice is basically an *animal* activity and function, however much it may be influenced and ennobled by the human mind; it is highly individual and essentially dependent on inherent strength of will. Nevertheless, external compulsion, direction and stimulation provide an incentive, and ideals and examples are imitated and fire the learner's enthusiasm. In this way instruction and teaching make the task easier and increase the skills.

30

Human art in its many differentiated forms is also to the fullest possible extent concerned with the production of tools and implements, so that eventually each species, sub-species and variety of art or skill requires its own master-craftsman and artist. The tools become more than just objects for use, because something of the inner harmony, beauty and perfection of form in the organism that creates them also resides in their life and properties. But in any art, or even in whole ranges of arts, a stage of development may be reached where the influence of the tools themselves or of the working *method* (which has the same effect) gains the upper hand or becomes by nature the most important element – leading to a situation in which nothing else is required but to understand and apply the tools or the routine. There will then be nothing left but *mechanical* or quasi-mechanical operations; which means that the use of energy, even when controlled by a human brain of merely mediocre ability, becomes the really crucial function which has to be performed in order to transmit to the machinery the energy required for doing a certain job, or producing

certain works. Thus, the ‘quantum’ of *human* energy in these operations can be replaced by an equal ‘quantum’ of some mechanical energy without altering the result.

This development occurs all the more easily when a thing is produced solely with an eye to its utility, or its application and consumption; though there is a point at which ordinary common-sense human effort, even without the help of working tools, remains the natural and indispensable way of proceeding. That process – whereby instruments themselves become productive – must, of course, be understood symbolically: concepts and methods are working tools, just as they are in intellectual work and especially in scientific thought, and the *analogy* is easy to understand. No special talent, training or practice are any longer required to do the job, but only the run-of-the-mill, impersonal quality of a rational animal, because the routine makes everything easy and does the actual work. But its *use* must be learned and for that reason its *nature* must be understood. Genuine mental production, the activity of the memory or imagination, is totally superfluous for this purpose, perhaps even dangerous! Rational calculation must take its place, i.e. intention, concentration and systematic operations. The commonplace discharge of these functions bears about as much relation to mental creation as the crude expenditure of human muscle power bears to the hand and brain-work of the sculptor or painter, lovingly executed according to *his* standards of precision and *his* personal taste.

31

Natural will is itself the embodiment of artistic spirit. It develops out of its own *self*, continually replenishing itself with new material which it shapes into new forms. It also creates complicated structures of images and thoughts, words and propositions, that express judgements, inspirations, intentions and designs. All this flows from the imagination, from a great ocean of sentiments and sensations. Wherever creative activity freezes into mere logical thinking, abstract and general repetitive brain-work takes the place of all specialised, concrete, qualified skills. This happens naturally even without the dilution and atrophy of such skills by the use of instruments and tools. But as these become entirely governed by utility and purpose, they increasingly *conform to* and *constitute* the arbitrary will and become ‘abstract-human’ instead of ‘concrete-human’ products. When that happens, either a *system* of unlimited free choice

emerges, or the higher forms of arbitrary will are set up over the lower, the latter henceforth appearing to be determined by and dependent on the former. This applies particularly to *ideas* and *theories* which are designed to resemble tools or implements and are passed around from hand to hand like objects in the external world. In acquiring and making use of these ideas all men are equal. Anyone who has had the right method *demonstrated* to him can *grasp* and memorise *how* something should be done. Such demonstration or proof employs the general human power of reason (i.e. of logical thinking), which is obliged to accept the proven theory or judgement as the right one, and as “nailing” actual reality. A “truth” is thus rendered as objective for the reason as a material object is for the senses.

It is no different when a means to a fixed purpose is pointed out (by someone else) and involves the taking of “advice”. No conclusion can be better grounded than this: that someone who fixes his eye determinedly on a goal and knows the means required to attain it, will seize and use these means if they are within his power, or try to acquire them if they are not. In such a case an adviser or instructor can apparently do *everything*, and yet do nothing but pass on or demonstrate a correct method, or the ways and means to an end (as if these were real things). To comprehend, grasp and use them is the pupil’s own affair; it is taken for granted that he has the general ability to do this. That he may need help in cultivating such knowledge is no concern of the person showing him how to do it. He, as teacher or adviser, has a limited task and business; he can simply get on with it and transmit his expertise to the other person to do what he likes with it. It makes no difference to the *efficacy* of the knowledge, the conceptual method, or the advice received, whether the recipient has succeeded in working it out for himself or simply taken it over at second-hand (even though taking advice is itself a form of decision and therefore of *action*). But the truth and correctness of this knowledge can be proved only if the deed which complied with it *has* the desired success, for it is true and correct only as long as it is useful and appropriate for its purpose. Thus knowledge has a hand in decision-making, just as it does in every case that involves precise and carefully calculated cultivation of the ‘instrumental’ will.

The teacher or adviser behaves differently when it is not so much a question of communicating ‘truth’ as of creating and fostering the ability to do certain things, especially when this involves the power of thought. Then he must himself be a master of, or at least experienced and practised

in, this art; or if learning and wisdom have to be transmitted, he must evoke or stimulate faith and trust. He has to appeal to good will instead of reason, and require practical experiment and painstaking effort rather than abstract conceptualisation.

32

The processes of natural will are *always* at work to a greater or lesser degree, because they are a part of life. But they play a decisive role as *motive* forces on those *occasions* when the subject matter to which they refer is in some way indeterminate or subject to 'selection'. This subject matter consists in particular of norms or laws which can develop from the general and undefined to become definite and specific. The processes of arbitrary will, by contrast, are applied (only) by being fully realised – which happens when the individual pins them down in his mind, and by precise and determined action produces a sort of imitation of them and 'conveys' them into reality. The task and purpose of arbitrary will is to serve as an *inducement* to action, either on single occasions (in which case its value or usefulness ceases when the job has been done) or on a regular basis, according to circumstance. Its subject matter progresses by a gradual build-up from individual to comprehensive and general norms.

The will is free only to the degree that it follows and conforms to such norms and laws as are of its own making. These stem from its natural preference, sense and taste (for or against anything), its habits, its ideas (and the combinations of those ideas in its memory) – in sum, from sentiment, mind and conscience, which both reflect and regulate its *inner* precepts. Its freedom and autonomy also depend on the extent to which it obeys the *external* rules which it may have set up for itself through a mixture of ambition, conviction and calculation. For these are the determining factors of freedom, the preconditions by which it is preserved (even although the various forms of arbitrary will are at the same time negative factors). This is how the crude material freedom of possibility relates to the fully formed and defined freedom of actuality. In other words, freedom and exercise of will are one and the same thing. But all willing, like all motion, is both necessary (in so far as it is part of the nature of things) and free (in so far as it has an individual body or organism as its subject or agent). Thus the movement of a drop of water falling on to a stone is both free and necessary, as it appears to seek its way downwards and finds it in the line of least resistance or strongest pull: it is 'free' in

that its position and direction are at all times determined by its own force and momentum, but ‘necessary’ because it is determined by other alien forces and motive powers.

Even the loftiest intellectual and rational emotions of human beings have therefore to be explained in terms partly of their own free will, and partly of pressure of circumstance; and, in so far as it is subject to the latter, the will is not free but under compulsion. Moreover nothing can be called ‘free’ in the sense that – through transcendence of its own inner and outer conditioning – it could *cease* to be, at all times and in all ways, limited and determined. This is true of any item you care to name; of an object and its composition, of both natural and arbitrary processes, of an emotion or an act of will. It can be predicated as a taken-for-granted, logically *a priori*, truth. The true freedom of the will lies in its sheer existence, which is a form of psychological ‘modality’ or ‘contingency’ belonging to unending, incomprehensible uncaused ‘matter’ – with the emphasis not on the modality but on the matter.¹⁵ Beyond this there is an imaginary freedom for the sphere of human thought, where a man thinks of his actions and omissions as objects between which he may pick and choose. And, in so far as he makes and constructs his will himself, he may indeed be regarded as a lord and free creator, distinct and separate from this creature of his own thoughts.

¹⁵ One of Tönnies’s more difficult sentences for both German and English readers. His use of the term ‘modality’ echoes the sense in which the term is used of German ‘modal verbs’, entailing some degree of uncertainty about which of a variety of possible, probable or imperatively commanded events will actually happen. Thus the freedom of the will has affinities with the elements of contingency contained in grammar (an idea that Tönnies may have got from his reading of Schopenhauer).

Practical implications

33

If we try to classify recognisable human qualities in these terms, a superficial glance suggests the following points. The first thing that strikes us, in broad outlines, is the psychological contrast between the sexes. It is a stale cliché, but all the more important because it is dredged up out of general experience, that women are mostly led by their feelings, while men follow their reason. Men are more 'prudent'.¹ They alone have the capacity for calculation, cool (abstract) thought, deliberation, strategic thinking and *logic*. As a rule, women are not much good at these things. They are thus lacking in the basic prerequisite of calculative will. It is not true that people can only succeed in being really active, independent of nature and with some degree of mastery over it, by means of abstract thought and rational calculation. But it *is* true that such activity begets and develops rational calculation and is [in turn] infinitely increased with its aid. Now the role of the male is more active not only among human beings, but certainly among other mammals, and in all cases where the female has to devote a large part of her time and attention to her brood. The male is then responsible for providing food and for fighting, especially when he has to attack and plunder or even kill his rivals in order to acquire a mate. His role as hunter and robber prompts him to use his eyes

¹ *Die Männer sind klüger* could be translated to mean that men are cleverer, more sensible, more worldly-wise, more cunning or more calculating than women. The term 'prudent' is preferred here, partly because it fits best with the account of women that follows, partly because Tönnies, when quoting Hobbes, had himself translated Hobbes's term 'prudentia' as *Klugheit* earlier in the text (above, p. 114).

and ears in reconnoitring into the distances around him; he trains these most active and independent of the senses and sharpens them to detect things from afar. He thus makes their use more deliberate, less dependent on mere reflex reactions and more on actual circumstance, thus responding in ways that the language of physiology designates as ‘voluntary’ rather than ‘involuntary’. (Sight is far more capable of improvement and fine tuning of this kind than hearing.) A male is thus more likely to become capable of active and independent perception and self-consciousness, which pounces upon and organises the substance of sense impressions, and synthesises data and symbols into a whole. It is this *alert concentration* which, as suggested above, helps the intellect and animal memory to grow and develop. The organ carrying these qualities becomes more perfect with each generation, and tends to be passed on to the female sex as well.²

Now although activity of the intellect is certainly not the same as ‘thought’, it is none the less a preparation for it, wherever an intellectual activity can be carried out independently of transient impulses and reflex reactions. This may happen wherever the intellect uses its own resources to supplement the effects of received impressions – thus endorsing the saying of the Greek philosopher, that it is the intellect which sees and hears – everything else is deaf and blind.³ Using this faculty for concentration to compare data that can only be perceived by means of a memory operating with word symbols, and to analyse and synthesise them, is what constitutes genuine (or abstract) thought. It also constitutes calculative will, whenever the data consists of actions and consequences (probable or certain) that are capable of being ‘willed’ – and whenever the purpose or design contained in the process of willing is the direct consequence of thought about a desired outcome (the act of thinking and the object desired being entirely distinct from each other). The more such an outcome lies hidden in the future, the more an intellectual far-sightedness is required to look ahead in time instead of space, so as to assess and thus make judgements about alternative projects.

The male is obliged to exercise this far-sightedness, because he is

² cf. below, p. 156, where artistic genius is inherited by male artists from their mothers. Since Tönnies explicitly believed that ‘acquired characteristics’ could be inherited across the male–female divide, it is unclear why he saw them as so important in differentiation of gender.

³ Cited by Plato, Aristotle and other Greek philosophers from the Sicilian comic poet Epicharmus (G. Kaibel, *Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1899), fr.249).

responsible for leadership and organisation, at least in all activities relating to the outside world. This comes naturally to him, above all because he is the tough guy and fighter; but also because he is swifter and more agile, whereas the woman by comparison is sedentary and awkward.⁴ A nomad, and particularly the tracker or pathfinder who goes on ahead, requires far-sightedness, prudence and vigilance, in every sense of those terms.⁵ He must learn to get into the habit of making judgements and deciding what is the right thing to do in given circumstances. From *premonition* of approaching evil the power of conjecture develops, signs become proofs, awareness of danger determines schemes and plans. The leader must likewise think about how to maintain order *within* his group of followers. Settling quarrels demands and trains the qualities of the *judge*. Scales are the symbol of justice – representing the objective, true and effective relationship between doing and suffering, ownership and debt, rights and duties. Wherever it is a question of allocating to everyone his due share of benefit or hardship, it is essential to make a *comparison* of the size, weight, utility, or beauty of individual items or of things to be divided – of animals or people taken as booty, of plots of land or tools. And from this general process of comparison develop the specialised formal activities of measuring, weighing and calculation of all kinds, which all have to do with the determining of quantities and their relation to each other.

At this point causal thinking emerges, through comparing an earlier event with a later one and weighing their significance in each case – or, as we might now say – weighing their effectiveness.⁶ All scientific procedures are based on that sort of comparison, and it is also contained in rudimentary form in all practical arts and activities. In the latter case direct observation and feeling for the right thing (intuition) are required rather than ratios, rules and ratiocination. People tend to assume that analytical reasoning was the original kind of knowledge and that intuition has gradually grown out of it through a network of associations. This theory survives at the present time only in a considerably modified form, as is clear from our previous discussion. For such knowledge *is* surely something quite different in kind, depending on whether it is absorbed by a

⁴ *schwerfällig* – perhaps conveying the sense of being weighed down by pregnancy.

⁵ *Fernsicht: Umsicht und Vorsicht in jedem Sinne*: another trio of related words and double meanings that cannot be exactly rendered into English. Each of the German words can be used to describe both a physical attribute and a trait of character.

⁶ Literally ‘measuring the quantity of their energy’.

ready-prepared, self-cultivated mind, or merely appropriated and used superficially, without such a prior basis. The first kind is like a lyre played by a skilled musician, the second is like a barrel-organ which anyone can work by turning a handle. It is the same with the knowledge of how to act justly: this may be – again according to its nature – a common way of life inspired by inner conviction and living belief; or it is and remains merely a dead concept, which we have usurped to ourselves and may apply as we like. The first is the way of a noble spirit, the second is something that any Tom, Dick or Harry can do.

34

To return to our earlier discussion: although the male is seen as having the advantage in ‘prudence’ or ‘cleverness’, yet this is by no means the same as overall intellectual power. Where this power is creative and synthesising, the female mind is more likely to excel. In the constitution of the male the muscular system is predominant, but in the female it is the nervous system. In tune with their more passive, humdrum and socially limited activity, women are generally more receptive and sensitive to unsought and unexpected external impressions; they take pleasure in current, day-to-day good fortune rather than striving for a rare and distant happiness in the future. For this reason they react more emphatically and passionately to both pleasant and unpleasant changes in their circumstances. Thus their sense faculties⁷ – which communicate feelings both positive and negative, and by which they distinguish beauty and ugliness, good and evil – become developed and refined in a way that is not at all the same as the ability to understand objects and processes (i.e. objective knowledge). Objective knowledge is acquired (like enhanced perception) primarily through exertion of the eye, secondly of the ear, reinforced by the sense of touch. The other sort (apart from general use of the senses) belongs particularly to the organs of smell and taste and requires only a passive consciousness of self. It is characteristic of women, and of all that direct, *unmediated*, relation to concrete objects which is typical of natural will. All activity which appears as a direct consequence or variant of life itself, whether originating in habit or memory, belongs to women. Thus all expressions and outbursts of sentiment, emotion, and

⁷ *Die Sinnlichkeit* – translatable as both ‘sensuality’ and ‘sensuousness’, neither of which precisely conveys Tönnies’s meaning here, so the more wooden term, ‘sense faculties’, is preferred.

thought inspired by conscience reveal the peculiar integrity and spontaneity,⁸ the directness and passion of women, as in every respect the more 'natural' branch of mankind. Upon these qualities is based the fertility of mind and imagination which, through "taste", discrimination and delicacy of feeling, becomes artistic creativity.

Although masculine strength and cleverness have generally been required to create great works, very often egotistical motives, which spur on and increase the man's activity, have been involved as well. This means that the finest part, the inner core of *genius*, is usually an inheritance from the mother. The most general artistic spirit of the common people, expressed in self-adornment, songs and stories, is transmitted through the inclinations of young women, through mother love, and through women's memories, myths and premonitions. The person of genius retains a nature that is feminine in many respects: simple and open, soft, tender-hearted, lively, volatile in emotions and moods, merry or melancholy, dreamy and fanciful, living as if in a constant state of ecstasy, believing and *trusting* in people and things – and for those very reasons disorganised, often even blind and foolish, in trivial as well as in serious matters. To 'real' men with their dry business-like seriousness, a 'free spirit' may seem quite clueless, stupid or silly, foolish, even insane, like a drunk at a temperance gathering. The behaviour and nature of a typical woman looks very much like this to such men, if their judgement is candid: they do not understand it, it strikes them as absurd.

Yet in reality the person of genius is endowed in full measure with those qualities which are only hinted at in ordinary mortals. Such a person comes closest to the model of the perfect human being, as we might construct the 'ideal type'.⁹ For muscle power and courage certainly distinguish one animal from other; but brain power and genius are the preserve and the potential of the human race. The man of genius is the *artistic* man; he is the developed form (the "flower") of the natural, simple, true human being. On the other hand, in all conscious and intentional go-getting he is outstripped by the *artificial* man, who is the very opposite of his natural counterpart.¹⁰ It is as though he had fashioned another person out of

⁸ *Näivität*, used by Tönnies in the Romantic sense to imply spontaneous creativity.

⁹ *Idealbild*, one of the few occasions where Tönnies uses this term, his preferred expression being *Normalbegriff*, which he regarded as more concrete and less prone to 'idealist' misinterpretation.

¹⁰ A deliberate play upon the words *künstlerisch* and *künstlich* (meaning 'artistic' and 'artificial').

Section 3: Practical implications

himself, and thinks it useful and beneficial to carry this 'person' around in front of him.¹¹ If woman seems more like 'natural man', and man seems more like 'artificial man' (each of them corresponding to an ideal type) then the male in whom natural will is predominant will certainly be influenced by the female spirit. But through rational will he frees himself from it and stands forth as the prime embodiment of pure masculinity. The rational woman is the latest phenomenon in this series of things, which the free masculine spirit has re-made in its own image, or at least as something very similar to itself.

Poets and thinkers are inclined to praise the unself-consciousness of woman, the secret depths of her mind and being, the devout simplicity of her soul; and from time to time we have a presentiment of what we have lost in becoming cold and calculating, superficial and enlightened. Yet once again we have to admit that nature destroys only to let vital elements burst into new life. Thus when science becomes philosophy, man may recover through the purest and highest knowledge that joy in contemplation and love which has been ruined for him by all kinds of intellectual pondering and ambition.

If we want to demonstrate these dichotomies with reference to the concepts suggested above, we can set out their key factors as follows:

The temperament

Of the woman	Of the man
Through sentiment	Through ambition

The character

Of the woman	Of the man
Through heart and mind	Through calculation

The style of thought

Of the woman	Of the man
Through conscience	Through conscious deliberation

There are, however, *certain* general expressions of natural will which cut across these opposites; for example, we can conceive of passion and courage, in a relationship analogous to that of genius, in both the feminine

¹¹ Like Hobbes's artificial man, he carries his 'persona' around in front of him, like an actor wearing a mask in a theatrical performance. (For a sustained explanation of this idea see David Runciman, *Pluralism and the Personality of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 223–61.) The passage was completely misread by Loomis, who thought that the *artificial man* was created by the *artist*.

and masculine natures. Passion, because it belongs to vegetative life and the power of reproduction, prevails in the female; whereas courage, which belongs to animal life and nervous vitality, is stronger in the male. Nevertheless, passion, which in theory is a 'passive' feature of the will, takes a much more active form in the man; whereas courage, which in theory is a more 'active' quality, in woman takes a more passive form (like patience and endurance). Genius, which is the intellectual or spiritual aspect of our will-power, has an equal part in both characters; rooted in the female nature but fulfilled in the male, it is as much the inner, dark and passive side as the outer, brilliant and active side of life and thought.

35

In most respects we find the same relation between *youth* and *age* as between male and female beings. The youthful woman is the 'real' woman; the elderly woman becomes more like a man. And the young man still has much that is female in his nature; the mature, older man is the 'real' man. Women and children belong together because they have the same mentality and understand each other easily. Children are simple and guileless, they live in the present, confirmed in their way of life and in their simple occupations by nature, home and the will of those who love them and care for them. The growth or development of their dormant talents, inclinations and abilities forms the proper content of their lives. Because of this they seem truly *innocent* creatures, any evil that they do coming from some alien spirit working within them. Only through thought and knowledge, or through having learned what is right and morally binding, that is through memory and *conscience*, does man become fully himself and become responsible, i.e. know what he is doing. This does not happen in full until he has taken some pre-meditated action to his own advantage in cold blood, like a totally rational being. After that, law and principle are no longer over him and within him, but extraneous or subject to him. He will follow them no longer, if and when he thinks he can better achieve his *end* in some other way, and he accepts the consequences of his violation, whether certain or probable. He may miscalculate and be criticised as a fool for preferring *one* kind of bad outcome to another, or inferior goods to better ones. And he may perhaps see it the same way himself and feel a sense of regret when he has achieved his purpose.

But in laying his plans and making his decisions he was perfectly

capable, so we have to suppose, of dealing with the data known to him and at his disposal, simply with his own intellectual power. Thoughtful consideration of these data was precisely what he was there for; he *might* have judged differently – and *could* have done so, not just because he wanted to, but if his knowledge had been greater and more extensive. Therefore correcting and improving your judgement remains the only thing worth doing, if you want to find a smarter and, from your personal standpoint, ‘better’ way of doing something. Through unhindered, calculating thought a person becomes free: free from the impulses, feelings, passions and prejudices which otherwise seem to overrule him.

With advancing age the passion of love and friendship declines, and so do hatred, anger and animosity (though, of course, to a large extent those feelings themselves initially come alive through the fact of growing older: with, for example, sexual love and its correlate, jealousy). In addition, it is only when things have remained the same for a while that habit and a steadily growing feeling of its value become a mighty power for binding people together. This is even more true if we take account of intellectual development and maturity. Thus a man of overriding passions clamouring for an outlet will apply his stock of talents to thinking up ingenious schemes and plans, uninhibited by other motives; but this is more likely to happen with a young man than an older one. To achieve his purposes the younger man will be readier to incur dangers to life and limb, since he has youthful courage which goes with natural recklessness to help him. Nevertheless, the overwhelming precondition for completely free rational calculation remains the independence of the thinking mind and its *resources*. A person then has at his disposal a wealth of experience and knowledge formed from those resources or acquired from outside; he acquires prudence, and recognises what is good for himself and his bodily needs, and perhaps eventually even for the salvation of his soul. It is this quality of prudence which is peculiar to the older man, particularly if his thoughts and interests are concentrated on certain simple goals which it seems can be achieved through prudence; like, for example, the accumulation of property, or a rise in status, influence or rank. These are natural aims, which as objects and pleasures, are welcomed by all men in all circumstances. But they acquire unique value and charm (1) when they have already been tasted and become familiar, and (2) after other, less discreet and rational pastimes in which young men are prone to indulge themselves (all that phase of youthful, exuberant excitement and zest for living, fighting and playing) have been worked out of the system. This is

how we should take the saying, chosen as a motto by Goethe who often pondered about such matters, that “what you want in youth, you get in abundance in old age”.¹² We are talking here about the means and methods of finding happiness; but the real enjoyment of happiness, and its inner condition, is youth itself and all that belongs to it – and no arts can bring that back again.

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The contrast between the sexes is a rigid and inflexible one, and for that very reason actual examples are rarely found in an unalloyed form. The contrast of age is probably more crucial, but at the same time is extremely fluid and can be observed only in the course of development [from one age to another]. The contrast between the sexes is rooted in vegetative life, which influences women much more strongly; the second contrast relates to animal life, which as we have seen is more important for men, because it is a more dominant feature of the latter rather than the earlier half of an average life, and is therefore more important in the male life cycle. In comparing the sexes, the contrast is between sentiment and ambitious endeavour; whereas, in comparing youth and age, the contrast is between spontaneous feeling and rational calculation.

The third distinction coming up for discussion belongs primarily in the *intellectual* sphere, and is concerned with ways of thinking and with knowledge. It is the contrast between *ordinary folk* and *people of education*. Like our first contrast, it is a very rigid and inflexible one, because it differentiates entire classes; but it is nevertheless a fluid one, in that these classes can only be defined artificially and there is constant movement from one to the other, with many different stages in between. Its validity is obvious even to the casual observer, yet it is difficult to understand in its true and abstract meaning; it must be said, however, that *conscience* is truly alive only among the common people. It is a quality and a faculty that is essentially communal, though it may nevertheless be possessed by the individual in a certain way. It depends on the general will and spirit, the traditional way of thinking, and may be inherited by the individual as a trait of character. It develops along a whole way of thought and as an essential part of memory in relation to particular instincts and habits. It confirms and hallows the growing love felt for others, it appears as a

¹² Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, in *Werke*, Abth. I, Band 27, p. 1.

feeling for what is good and evil in oneself, and as discrimination in relation to good and evil in others: between what is natural, familiar and generally approved as fair, and what is unnatural, alien and an object of censure. Within the circle of people to whom it spontaneously extends, conscience – by and large – sees friendliness and kindness as good, conflict, bad temper and malice as evil. It demands obedience and complete surrender to the will of those who are older, stronger or endowed with authority, and regards disobedience as wilfulness and delusion. All such feelings are reinforced and encouraged by example and teaching, by the arousing of fear and hope, and by training in respect, trust and faith. They are further extended and refined by being applied to higher, more general powers and authorities, to the dignitaries and nobles in the community and to the customary laws which they represent; and above all they are consecrated to the invisible sacred deities and spirits.

Even in a child, however, these sentiments of piety can decline as well as flourish. They can be repressed as well as developed, if all the favourable conditions are absent, especially in the case of weak or deficient character. And the weaker this outlook becomes, the more easily it will succumb to hostile forces in the struggle for life. Thus it will increasingly be swept out of the way by the practitioner of rational will, who regards conscience as a mere maze of prejudices and is bent on doing away with it. But [this can] only be done by a supremely cultivated, wise and enlightened being, in whom nobility, cultivation and power of thought have attained the highest unfolding and most delicate flower. Only such a paragon could totally and radically annihilate conscience within himself, and repudiate the beliefs of his forefathers and his people, because he had come to understand their underlying principles. Such a man will know how to set about replacing those principles with better-founded, free and scientific opinions about what – for himself and maybe for any other rational being – is right and permissible or forbidden and false. He will be resolute of purpose and feel quite justified in ordering his actions, not by blind and stupid sentiment, but solely according to clearly understood first principles. Such a freely choosing, individualist view of life is what we here understand as *ultra-self-consciousness* – this being the freedom of the unlimited arbitrary will in its most extreme expression.¹³

¹³ *Bewußtheit*, a term adopted by Tönnies from Schopenhauer's *On the Freedom of the Will*. The passage also contains echoes of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, published while Tönnies was writing *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* in 1886. Tönnies had earlier been much taken with both writers, but became increasingly critical of their irrationalism and pessimism (Tönnies-Paulsen, *Briefwechsel*, p. 98, 162–3; *Selbstdarstellung*, pp. 218–19, 226).

Conscience, on the other hand, appears at its simplest and most profound as *shame or modesty*, a reluctance to do or say certain things, a vexation with oneself after some disagreeable occurrence, and possibly even against others whose behaviour can be identified with one's own. As repugnance or embarrassment it is rather like fear, whilst in the shape of vexation or indignation it is akin to anger: it is always a mixture of these two emotions, whichever order they may follow. Modesty is particularly linked to covering up, concealment, and secrecy; to embarrassment in the face of nakedness and public exposure; and is therefore closely related to sexual, marital and domestic life. It is a quality associated with women, especially maidens, children and even young men, and regarded as a virtue in them, because it is normal and fitting for them to live in small groups in a dependent, respectful and unassuming relationship with husband, mother, father or teacher.

But the lord and master going out into the street and market-place, into public life and the wider world, must overcome this modesty to some degree or transform it into something quite different. Shame is a force constantly emanating from natural will, which restricts and prevents a man from going where other drives might lead him. It is an acknowledged master with unconditionally binding authority; it is always in the right and always has right on its side. We may not say and do and show to everyone certain things that we can reveal to some; nor do we have to put up with things from everybody that we accept from a few, regarding them [in the latter case] as delightful habits or even demanding them as our due. Shame covers a very wide range, from what is naturally repellent or generally offensive through to the strictly forbidden. It includes things that overstep the bounds of our individual freedom and rights, and are felt and thought to be unjust and out of order – including any kind of embarrassing, intemperate or licentious speech and behaviour. In this connection, it is not a case of an *extraneous* will reacting negatively against an invasion of its sphere; nor is it just an expression of some communal will, which assigns to everyone his part, prevents transgressions of its own rules, and for that very reason cannot allow someone to have whatever he wants. Rather, it is a product of an individual's *own* natural will in *concurrency* with the communal will, in *opposition* to some other product of that self-same natural will or to rational calculation pulling in a *different* direction. Shame in this case is either the painful *experience* of disapproval from

oneself and from friends, or else it is the fear that this may happen; like any fear, it is pain experienced in advance. And, like all pain, it is a weakening of one's own powers, making one feel small and helpless. Whoever suffers shame feels humiliated, injured, sullied; the well-being and grace of his *honour* and his spiritual self are no longer intact. Honour is experienced and thought of as a reality, and is identical with natural will itself, in so far as it is part of what the community believes in and approves of as the *good* – which must not only be good but must be seen to be good. This means that anyone who does something shameful damages his own self. This is both the primitive and the sophisticated notion of morality, until such time as man may emerge as an 'individual' and the pure subject of his own arbitrary will.

Such a 'natural' way of reasoning can also be explained like this: no one wants to have a bad reputation because it makes him feel disgusting and wretched; the literal meaning of the word shame reveals the functions to which the feeling of shame was originally related, and still is.¹⁴ [But] the opposite line of reasoning, in which moral concepts become conventional and ossify, suggests otherwise. In the life of market society, which is useful and even essential for attaining your ends, you have to curtail your own freedom with reference to that of others; but you do this specifically in order to maintain and perhaps even extend your own ground, to keep yourself respected and feared by others, as they weigh up your strength. You must therefore *appear* to be morally good and noble, honest and just, if and for as long as the *appearance* of those qualities is worth something. *Only appearance can* be valued where everybody thinks about himself and esteems such qualities in terms of their general or personal *consequences*. Since the *same* consequences can arise from very different motives (stemming from either natural or rational will), the real causes are irrelevant and only at first are the traditional and conventionally preferred ones assumed. For indeed, if everyone in the market-place acted in accordance with the principle that honesty is the best *policy*, it would not matter whether his *thoughts* were honest. If people *behave* in a polite, modest and obliging fashion in the drawing-room, they will get by perfectly well. Only country bumpkins refuse to accept¹⁵ such 'paper money', although it has actually come by convention to have the same value as hard cash.

¹⁴ i.e. *die Scham* = both shame/modesty and genital organs.

¹⁵ *sich weigern anzunehmen* – also used for refusing to accept a bill of exchange. A typical example of Tönnies's play upon meanings, linking conventional morality and money.

The rules of market trading erect merely formal barriers to ambitions which by nature are boundless. Similarly the drawing-room, that is, polite society, sets certain limits to the shameless mania for self-assertion. The nature of such prescribed rules must become more evident as social circles develop in accord with their own internal conventions and thus become estranged from their origins in the community, as we see in history in the case of princely courts. The rational 'subject' who comes to the fore in these circles has in fact no qualities other than a greater or lesser degree of expert knowledge about his own goals and the best way to pursue them. Objective knowledge is the necessary condition for pursuing such ends, and knowledge of available or obtainable means is a precondition for using them. Thus expansion of knowledge entails increasing and multiplying desires. The clearer and surer the certainty that a given means will lead to a given end, the easier it is to overcome any resistance or doubts that may make themselves felt. Shame is mere foolishness for the person who knows what he is doing, who weighs his actions and calculates their value against their certain or probable results. If he expects to encounter censure from others, he will assess how big a problem this would be for him and whether the ultimate advantage would be more than adequate compensation for the pain and damage (the latter meaning simply the consequent pain in the future). For this way of looking at things there is no such thing as absolute evil or absolute good, only the abstract principle of pain and pleasure.

Shame, however, is obstinate, and absolutely forbids certain inclinations or preferences with absolute disapproval. This explains why the feeling is not acceptable among the educated, enlightened classes. We must remember that shame is at its strongest in conjunction with *sin* and sinfulness, and that *conscience* generally finds its most thoughtful expression and support in religious *belief*. It then becomes clear how the conflict described here adds up to a question of intellectual attitude, and is apparently of more weight than its purely *theoretical* significance. It does not follow that an unbelieving person has no conscience. But the destruction of belief as the embodiment of objective conscience weakens the resistance of the subjective conscience. You can still stumble over the roots after the tree has been cut down, but you will not bump your head against it.

Belief is a characteristic of the common people, unbelief of the scientific

and educated classes. A poet and prophet has defined the struggle between belief and unbelief as the true *Theme of World History*,¹⁶ and the grain of truth in this thought indicates an element in the struggle between the common and the educated people. The difference between the male and female sex has the same significance: women are believing, men are unbelieving. And certainly we shall find a similar contrast between the different generations. Innocence and devoutness belong to childhood, and continue to lodge in the contemplative, poetic, feeling for nature found in the adolescent. The mature man is more inclined to scepticism and scientific thought, although the meditative, philosophical *older man* sometimes returns to the serenity and submissive trustfulness of childhood when he finds his heart renewed in his grandchildren. In an organic co-existence people who have knowledge and wisdom enjoy honour and standing among the common people, as long as they do not *stand apart* from them as outsiders. And, in the same way, the old are respected by the young and men by women. Wisdom belongs to the old with regard to the young, to the man with regard to the woman; and popular teachers and scholars move around as elders and sages in the midst of rustic simplicity and piety. All these antitheses should be understood only as *latent* contradictions which are smoothed over in a living culture but will be unleashed in a dying one. Sooner or later the tragic conflict will unfold itself as inevitable in the evolution of Community into Society.

39

From all this discussion it emerges that natural will contains the preconditions for Community, whereas arbitrary rational will gives rise to market Society. And consequently the sphere of life and work in the close-knit community is especially suitable for women, even essential for them. The natural place for their activity is the home and not the market-place, their own or a friend's living-room and not the street.¹⁷ In the village the household is independent and strong; and in the town too the burgher household keeps going and cultivates its own peculiar attractiveness.¹⁸

¹⁶ Goethe, 'Israel in der Wüste', *Noten und Abhandlungen zu besserem Verständnis des west-östlichen Divans* (Hamburger Ausgabe) vol. II, p. 208.

¹⁷ The 1887 edition had *der Salon*, the drawing-room, in place of *die Strasse*, the street.

¹⁸ *Schönheit*, meaning 'beauty' or 'fineness': a hint of Tönnies's view, more strongly expressed in other works, that moral goodness had an aesthetic quality and vice versa (Ferdinand Tönnies, *Custom. An Essay on Social Codes (Die Sitte, 1909)*, pp. 144–5.

But in the city it becomes sterile, narrow, and empty, and is reduced to being a mere lodging-house, the likes of which can be had anywhere for any period of time in return for money. It is nothing but a shelter for those travelling through the world.

Staying at home is as natural for women as travelling is unbecoming, according to traditional popular sentiment. "A journey-man who hasn't been around is no better than a virgin who has", as craftsmen used to say. And the saying of the mystic, that "No reason to go out is ever as good as the reason for staying in", is a typically feminine thought.¹⁹ All woman's activity involves turning creative energy inwards rather than outwards. Its purpose lies in itself, not in some outside aim. For this reason personal services seem to be woman's lot, because they are complete in themselves and cannot have a tangible object as their *consequence* or outcome. Many tasks in *agriculture* are also suitable for women, and in the most flourishing popular cultures have been left to them, though often to an excessive extent. For farming is work in its most basic form – it does not count the cost and keeps going by virtue of the breath of heaven. It can be seen as a service to nature; it is close to the household and rich in blessings for it.

Among the arts, those connected with *speech* are more feminine than the plastic arts. Or rather, we should say, those connected with sound, for music, principally singing, is woman's special gift. Her high, clear, soft and versatile voice is an instrument of both defence and attack. High-pitched and dramatic sounds, rejoicing and lamenting, like all the sonorous, overflowing, laughing and weeping that finally pour forth in words – these burst from her soul like a spring from the rocks. Music is the audible expression of emotions, as mime is the silent expression. All the Muses are women, and *Memory* is their mother.²⁰ In the middle, between music and mime, comes *dance*, those pure, passionate, graceful movements which are a woman's way of encouraging her daughters to develop their strength (which if done as a systematic fitness regime would certainly cause complete exhaustion). But how *easily* they learn all these delightful rigmarales, these ingenious and amazing happenings. This explains their ability to retain forms, rites, old melodies, proverbs, riddles and charms, tragic and comic stories. They love to imitate, they delight in make-believe and in everything playful, charming and uncomplicated. But they are also inclined to moods of deep and melancholy seriousness, to pious

¹⁹ Possibly Jakob Böhme, but the quotation has not been identified.

²⁰ A reference to Mnemosyne, the goddess of Memory and mother of the nine Muses in Greek mythology.

dread, prayer and premonition, and, as we have said, to dreams, contemplation and poetry.

Song and poetry are in origin one and the same thing. Likewise singing and the spoken word were only gradually differentiated and separately developed, and real *oratory* still retains many of the intervals and cadences of singing. (We have already ventured to suggest that speech itself, as the natural understanding of the *meaning* of words, was invented by mother-love. But perhaps it would be more correct to say that this was [merely] the strongest stimulus, for sexual love has also had a large share in it, even in the animal world, and an even greater influence on the musical aspect of song and speech and their power to arouse emotion.²¹ Something that stirs the soul so deeply demands expression in joy and sorrow; it makes people eloquent and communicative; and when inchoate feelings seek and find their form it is transmuted into art. The woman's heart pours itself out more directly in rejoicing and lament; and Love, her special sacred concern, is the passion which fills her thoughts and moves her to wiles and intrigues, which are always the weapons of the *weaker* sex. Her simple and spontaneous way of behaving then changes into a premeditated one, and this then develops into a conscious shaping of means, to a sharper differentiation of means from ends, and ultimately to the playing-off of the one against the other.

Among the plastic arts, using the term in its most general sense, working with *textiles* is thought to be most appropriate for the female temperament because of its domestic application. This is a type of work which demands close sight, assiduous carefulness, exact reproduction of a design, faithful and patient adherence to a traditional style, but also freedom in inventing and working elegant patterns and purely abstract²² decorative flourishes. We see here the intensification of a taste devoted to warmth, gentleness and comfort – all of them joys and virtues of the female soul. The portrayal of real things which we like and admire – particularly of forms that personify love and beauty, and preserving their memory for people to contemplate – is a labour of love, as we know from

²¹ The 1887 edition here reads: 'This is evident in the animal world – *remember the work of Darwin*. How much more serious, more holy a matter such love is for a woman than for an ambitious young man. Sisterly love too is communicative and imaginative. For this reason women have always been dubbed talkative and gossipy, although there are plenty of thoughtful types who have swifter minds and regard silence as their ornament.' This passage was removed in 1912.

²² *bedeutungslos* – literally 'meaningless', but probably meant here to indicate non-representational.

the delightful legend of the Hellenic era about the invention of portrait-painting.²³ But it seems to me, I confess, that female genius is limited to the shadowy projection of forms in two dimensions, from which the art of writing also emerged. The constructional form of the plastic arts demands a more heavyweight, more 'conscious' imagination, and more powerful control over the resistance of raw materials.

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Arts of this latter kind are man's work, where the material is unfamiliar and difficult to handle, and has to be transformed, or even subdued [by brute strength]. It is true that all work belongs within the sphere of natural will, as long as it is not done with a bad grace or consciously designed as an instrument to some goal; and so all work is by its nature the business of the whole community. But some kinds are more prone than others to be regarded merely as a means to an end, especially when the work involves pain and suffering, as with heavy, masculine work rather than the lighter female kind. The driving forces in this dialectic thus stem partly from objective reality and partly from the human mind.

Nevertheless all art intrinsically belongs, like rural and domestic pursuits, to the realm of warm, fruitful, instinctive²⁴ activity of a vital and organic kind, which thus comes naturally to women and consequently to the life of *Gemeinschaft*. The Community, as far as possible, turns all disagreeable work into a kind of art form in tune with its own nature, giving it style, dignity and charm, and a particular status within its social structure, in the form of a 'calling' and honourable estate. As a result of payment in money, however, and of the sale and stock-piling of ready-made goods, this process tends to be continually subverted; and [as this happens] the individual, together with the intellectual baggage that accompanies him, becomes the sole occupant of free commercial Society. Such an individual, as we have observed earlier, is by nature and inclination a dealer or merchant. The opposition and mutual exclusiveness of

²³ Possibly a reference to Laodamia, who made a wax likeness of her husband Protesilaus, later slain by Hector at Troy; or to Pliny's story of a young woman of Sikyon who traced the outline of her lover's shadow on a wall (Pliny, *Natural History*, 35, 151 and 37, 9). For the vogue of this latter story in the history of art, see M. Craske, *Art in Europe, 1700-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 246 and 284.

²⁴ Literally 'warm, soft and wet' – all words that in the 1880s had acquired negative connotations of effeminacy, but are used here by Tönnies in a more archaic sense to conjure up mellowness, fruitfulness and fertility.

means and ends becomes more evident, because the means are *not* 'work', even though they involve unrewarding, sterile and monotonous activity. And what is worse, the risk, even though only a potential risk, of having his wealth unexpectedly diminished, is as unpleasant in its nature as profit would be attractive.²⁵

We can understand from this how unappealing trade must be to the *female* nature. The business-woman, not an uncommon sight in the town life of earlier times, stepped outside of her legally prescribed natural sphere to 'come of age', to be the first emancipated woman.²⁶ Commerce can, of course, like any other occupation, be carried out honestly and conscientiously. But the more it is pursued with calculation and on a grand scale, the more it leads to the use of deception and lies as effective means to achieve higher profits or to cover losses. The out-and-out desire to become rich makes the merchant ruthless and turns him into the type of egocentric, self-willed individual who sees all his fellow men, apart from his closest friends, only as instruments for his purposes; he is the very embodiment of the inhabitant of *Gesellschaft*. The very language he uses expresses in the clearest possible way the presence of rational will. He chooses words that are calculated for their effect; even truthful words, if they prove inadequate, are soon turned into lies to make them more effective. That sort of lie is regarded as permissible in business; it is not seen as deception, because it is not intended to sell the commodity above its value, simply to stimulate buying. But in the system of commerce many carefully studied words, though not actually lies, have none the less become essentially untruths, because the words have lost their qualities and, as can happen with anything, have been degraded into mere quantities of applied means. Thus in a broader sense the lie becomes a characteristic element of free commercial society.

The woman's relation to trade is the same as that to any semi-forced labour and system of service that does not accord with her preference and habit and does not arise from her sense of duty. This applies to all hired labour, which derives no reward from its own products and serves not people or nature but lifeless machines with dreadful overwhelming power – in other words, factory work. It is precisely for operating machines that

²⁵ The 1887 edition adds at this point: 'It is the same for the soldier in time of danger. He gambles with his life to win a laurel wreath. A foolish speculation indeed!' Removed by Tönnies from the 1912 edition.

²⁶ The wording of the rest of this paragraph differs slightly from the 1887 edition, but the substance remains the same.

female labour seems best suited in the eyes of the leaders of capitalistic production. It corresponds most closely to what is thought of as simple, average, mediocre human labour, lying between the deftness and malleability of child labour and the dependable strength of the adult male.

And this ordinary factory labour is indeed *easy*, in the sense that many aspects can be done by children, if the work is mechanical, requiring repeated applications of small quantities of muscular energy. But it is also *heavy* and demands men capable of concentration, and immense exertion and steadiness to manipulate Cyclopean machinery. Everything that cannot be done by children but does not need men falls to the lot of women. All things being equal, they are preferred to children because they are more reliable, and to men for the obvious reason that they come cheaper. Since wages represent the average upkeep of a family, women as well as the available children must compete in the labour market with their “bread-winners”, the original representatives of human labour. (Indeed, from the commercial standpoint the family is no more than a co-operative society for the reproduction of the labour force and the consumption of food.)

Trade first and then industrial employment have recruited woman into the struggle for basic survival. It is evident that the freedom and independence acquired by the woman worker as a party to contracts and as a possessor of money have demanded and encouraged a development of her consciousness so that she has to think in a thoroughly calculating manner. Woman becomes enlightened, cold-hearted, self-conscious. Nothing is more alien and terrible to her basic nature which, despite all the process of continually acquired modifications, is *inborn*. And nothing perhaps is more characteristic and significant for the construction of mass commercial Society and the dissolution of community life.²⁷ Through this development “individualism”, the underlying principle of *Gesellschaft*, comes into its own. But therein lies also the possibility of overcoming it and reconstructing communitarian forms of life. The analogy between the fate of women and the fate of the proletariat has

²⁷ In place of the following paragraph, the 1887 edition reads here: ‘You may either lament the unnatural character of this monstrous example of progress or hail it as splendid! But do not imagine that progress depends on how you feel towards it, or on your opinions, or the fuss you make about it. It is the simple, inevitable consequence of facts which lie far beyond the range of your fervent desires or feeble wishes. It is quite certain that the intellectual expression of these general changes is the very one which least deserves to be seen as the cause of what is happening; but nevertheless – in tune with an easily explained preference – it is most frequently and readily explained in this way.’ This was removed in 1912.

long been recognised and emphasised. Their increasing consciousness, like that of the isolated intellectual, can evolve into the moral consciousness of humanity.²⁸

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It would also be possible to generate a corresponding set of conclusions from the contrast between youth and age and between common and educated people. It is obvious how children need home and family and how their character flourishes in town or village, but is exposed to every sort of destructive influence in the city and the great world of Society. Work of a kind which lets them play, exercise and learn is appropriate, even essential for young people while their physical and mental powers are growing. Trading, making profits, and being a capitalist are not right for them; they resemble women in their lack of understanding of what such things are all about. They will not easily get the message that their labour power is a commodity in their hands and that work is simply the form in which it must be traded.

In contrast to the youthful desire to *become* something, to acquire skill by the gradual development of brain and hand, capitalistic production is concerned only with the state of the labour force at any given moment – is it, or is it not, employable? “In so far as machinery dispenses with muscle power it becomes a means of using workers who have little physical strength or are not yet fully grown but have greater suppleness of limb. The labour of women and children was therefore the first move in the capitalistic use of machinery! This powerful substitute for labour and labourers was changed at once into a means of increasing the number of hired workers by enrolling every member of the worker’s family without distinction of age and sex under the direct dominion of capital. Compulsory work for the capitalist usurped not only the place of children’s games but also of free labour at home within decent limits for the good of the family” (Karl Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 13, 3a).²⁹

How the childish, youthful mind reacts to scientific knowledge is obvious enough. It requires a certain dryness of the imagination, which

²⁸ Tönnies’s introduction to the first edition recorded his debt to Auguste Comte, though he regretted Comte’s lack of a sense of history. His idealised picture of women, children and industrial workers as mediators of communitarian values reflects that debt.

²⁹ Marx, *Capital* (London: Dent, Everyman edn, 1978), pp. 418–19. The translation here differs slightly from this version.

may be helped by energetic use of a *pre-existing* bent, to comprehend *mathematical* diagrams and formulae. Mathematics is the prototype of all real science, which in its inmost nature is artificial;³⁰ and for that reason it is the best school for thinking. The future subjects of capitalist society must be educated to this kind of accurate thinking. This could of course be perfectly compatible with the encouragement of a community-like spirit, with inculcation of a social sense, and with enriching the mind and educating the conscience; and things would naturally develop in this way, were it not that social forces were working in the opposite direction. These powerful forces are much more interested in maintaining the contradictions between the moral strengths and mental attitudes of a gradually dying and increasingly ineffective communitarian culture, and the scientific knowledge to which they attach the highest degree of importance. They acknowledge and desire a satisfactory solution to these contradictions and conflicts, but they do so through a systematically cultivated *hypocrisy*, which is a matter partly of personal outlook and partly of social convention. In all these respects the powers of resistance in the will and character of the *mature man* will have weakened or disappeared, especially if they were quite weak in the first place and their strength has been further broken in the course of life. In every way such a man is a true *citizen of Gesellschaft*, whether he conceives of himself as untrammelled master of his own fortune or only of his labour power and other practical capacities. He is invariably ambitious and calculating, accepting opinions critically and using them to his own advantage. As far as he can, therefore, he behaves towards others simply as a salesman, and sees himself as a hedonist; though he does not like to go around without wearing his mask.³¹

³⁰ The 1887 edition includes here: 'To some degree the "scientific" education – though this is on the whole a meaningless term – received by young people, certainly of the higher, i.e. capitalistic classes, through the agency of civilisation, is also for its part a kind of forced labour. It easily nips in the bud an original intellect, freezes out feeling and deadens conscience. Although education is supposed by its very nature to be music and gymnastics, i.e. harmonious development of the whole person, body and soul, it is or becomes that special, one-sided training of the memory that equips a person for rational thought – for consciously applying drummed-in rules, and teaching him to operate with words and sentences, even with methods, in a mechanical fashion. But in fact such well-drilled, casually superior, hard-boiled people are what is required – or at least are most employable – in the greater part of those occupations which young folk of this kind would prefer, or are obliged to follow in the service of Society or the state (the latter being the personification of *Gesellschaft*).' This was removed in 1912.

³¹ The reference to the mask was not in the first edition, but was added in 1912.

The common people are similar to women and children, in that for them family life, together with friends and neighbours who are closely linked to their intimate circle, is what life is all about. Among the *educated*, these connections retreat further and further before the rationally based freedom of individuals. They increasingly detach themselves from the ordinary common people and make their own arrangements quite independently (something which is hard to do in every respect, and is partly concealed by the conventional maintenance and renewal of outmoded ideas). The family becomes an accidental form for the satisfaction of natural needs, while neighbours and friends are replaced by special interest groups and conventional socialising. The life of the common people finds its fulfilment in home, village and town; whereas educated people are metropolitan, national, international. To expand these contrasts more fully, only one point needs to be stressed. In any autochthonous home-based culture, *commerce* is an alien phenomenon not much liked. The trader combines all the typical characteristics of the man with an education – he is a traveller without a home, familiar with foreign arts and customs, but with no love and devotion to those of any particular country. He speaks several languages, is glib and double-tongued. He is clever and adaptable, but always keeps his aim in sight. He moves swiftly and easily here and there, changing his character and attitudes (beliefs and opinions) like fashions in clothing, as he crosses from one district to another. He meddles in affairs and settles them, turning old and new to his own advantage. He is the direct opposite of the peasant clinging to the soil, or of the worthy burgher plying his craft. They are provincial, unsophisticated, uneducated in comparison. We are told: “If a people is mature enough to need trade but not advanced enough to have its own national merchant class, then it is in its own interests for a *more highly developed* foreign people to fill the gap temporarily through more wide-ranging commercial activity” (Roscher, *N. Oe.* III, p. 134).³² But in reality this is never a relationship between one people and another, merely between the people properly so-called and individual, scattered foreigners (although they may form an ethnic community *among themselves*). For a real people cannot be imagined without a country to live in, even if they do not cultivate it.

³² Wilhelm Roscher, *Geschichte der National-Oekonomie in Deutschland*, vol. III: *Handels und Gewerbfleisses* (Stuttgart, 1881), p. 134.

Even where the businessman is not a foreigner, he is regarded as one. "The Grain-dealer (in India) is never an hereditary trader who is an integral part of the village community, nor is he a member of the municipality in towns which have developed out of one or more villages. The trading businesses remain as such outside the organic group and bring in their goods from distant markets" (Sir H. Maine, *Village Communities*, p. 126). On the other hand, if the common people and their labour become subject to trade or capitalism, beyond a certain point they cease to be a people or nation. They adapt themselves to alien influences and conditions and become 'civilised'. Science, which is really the province of the educated, is continually fed into them in various forms and combinations as a medicine to cure their boorishness. The common people are thus transformed into the "proletariat". And, much against the will of the educated (or of those among them who identify with capitalism), the proletariat is encouraged by education to think and acquire 'self-consciousness'³³ about the conditions which chain them to the labour market. From their awareness spring resolutions and efforts to break their chains. They unite for co-operative and political action in parties and trades unions. These unions are first found in the great cities, then become national, and finally international in scope and character, just like the associations of educated people and capitalists of the real *Gesellschaft* which preceded them and provided them with models.³⁴ Thus the common people also become active members of competitive market Society, and settle for the same ways of thinking and behaving. Their aim is to become the joint owners³⁵ of national and international capital as the material redress for their labour. And since this would put a stop to the production of goods and foreign trade, it would mean the end of 'Society', at least in the economic sense of the term.

Note 1. Since this book starts out from the psychology of the individ-

³³ i.e. *Bewußtheit*, the state of mind that Tönnies has earlier defined as the mental hallmark of inhabitants of *Gesellschaft* (above, pp. 119–20, 161).

³⁴ There is a play on words in this and the previous sentence, which is difficult to convey in translation, relating to the various senses of *Gesellschaft* and *gesellschaftlicher* – meaning 'journeymen's guild' or 'co-operative' or 'workers' association' as well as 'competitive market Society'.

³⁵ *Miteigentümer*: It is not entirely clear here whether Tönnies is talking about workers becoming 'joint owners' in the sense of 'stake-holders' in capitalist society, or 'common owners' as in the 'common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange'. His use of *Miteigentümer*, which normally means 'joint proprietor', seems to imply the former, but his envisaging, in the following sentence, of the end of 'Society' in its economic sense seems to imply the latter. See below, p. 260.

ual, the parallel but contrasting account – of how Community fosters and nourishes natural will while restraining and confining arbitrary will – is missing. Society on the other hand not only unleashes the arbitrary will but also actively requires and promotes it. Indeed it makes unfettered use of competitive rational calculation a prerequisite for the survival of the individual, thus causing the fruits of the natural will to wither and die. This is not just a spontaneous urge to adapt to Society's conditions and to imitate the actions of those winning profit and success; it becomes imperative to act like this, on pain of going under. Community by contrast requires and cultivates in its prominent citizens, who act as continual role models, an art of leadership and of overall living together. The only danger that threatens it is the break-up of natural relationships, brought about by some alien or felt-to-be-alien force. If there is excessive preponderance of strength or other power to do damage on one side, the more those who are oppressed will be stirred to develop their intelligence into rational strategems of resistance. For one antagonist compels another to forge the same weapons and to invent even better ones. That is why everywhere, in times of strife, women conspire against men, young folk against the old, the lower against the upper classes. And, like force, rational calculation has always been used against *enemies*, and regarded as permissible, even praiseworthy.

But only market Society makes such behaviour general and necessary, because in its fundamental relationships at least one of the sides sets goals that justify any means. Consequently these relationships are not just potential sources of hostility; they *are in actuality* states in which hostility is natural and only thinly veiled, therefore highly likely to break out at the slightest provocation.

Note 2. The connection between societal forms of life and the individual forms of will leads to their systematic expression in forms of law. Practical law does not originate in theories and opinions about justice. Instead, life creates both these expressions of its reality simultaneously; and they then interact with and influence each other in innumerable different ways.

Book Three

*The sociological basis of
natural law*

In the 1887 edition this book was entitled 'Prelude to natural law'. It was suffixed by a quotation from Plato's *Republic*: 'Do we not realise that all this is merely the prelude to the main theme which we have yet to learn?' (*Republic*, 531d).

Definitions and propositions

I

The human *self* or the 'subject' of human natural will is, like the system of natural will itself, a *unity*.¹ That is to say it is a unit within a larger unit, as well as containing other lesser units within itself. Like an organism and its component parts, however, it is a unity because of its inner self-sufficiency, *unum per se*,² and because its parts are all related to it as a living entity. It maintains itself by changing these parts, discarding old parts (robbing them of *their* life and their particular unity), and creating new parts or assimilating them from inorganic matter. Thus nothing is a unified system that is merely a 'part', and everything that is a 'whole' forms some kind of unified system. As a whole it is not just part of another whole and dependent upon it, but is also a representative of its kind or species, or of its 'ideal type',³ since all organic entities are ultimately included within the general conception of organic life. This latter can then itself be seen as simply a facet of the 'infinite energy' or 'universal will', from which it has managed to develop under certain given conditions.

For it is a fact that advanced scientific research has shown that all

¹ *die Einheit*, meaning any kind of self-sustaining unitary system, from a single cell through to a complex organism in the natural world, and from a single individual through to a whole society in the social world. The argument of this section closely follows that of Herbert Spencer's *The Principles of Sociology*, vol. I, part II (London: Williams and Norgate, 1876). The section demonstrates very clearly why so many readers have assumed that Tönnies's organic model of social organisation was literally a 'biological' one.

² *unum per se* = a structured whole, as opposed to *unum per accidens* = a mere aggregate.

³ *reale Begriff*—another of Tönnies's terms for an analytical model or 'ideal type'.

organic beings are also aggregations of more basic organisms, known as cells, which are determined both by inheritance and by the way in which they relate to each other. When that *relationship* is stable they represent the 'form', and constitute the overall system, of the whole to which they belong. The whole at any moment in its *existence* may appear to be their creation or 'product', yet even so it is thought of as a substantial or metaphysical essence which transcends them, i.e. as the overall unity that holds those stable relations together. And indeed it is the whole that sustains and creates the cells, which are merely incidental components and may be destroyed by being used up.

Such a contradiction gives us only an approximate idea of the actual inter-relation and interaction of the related wholes, which wax and wane within the larger whole and seem as mere component parts to be subordinate to its life and will. Although independent as wholes, it is only through co-operation that they participate in an over-arching whole, whose inner principle is represented by their subjection to a common 'will'. This is the peculiar characteristic of an organic entity whose basic components are themselves [lesser] organisms. Even the most complex tissues which constitute organs and organic systems have the same composition and structure as their constituent parts. The latter have their own life, which is sustained by and dependent upon the energy of the total system, whilst at the same time they themselves sustain, contribute to, and are an integral part of that larger whole.

We can apply these ideas to the very important concept of *purpose* or *ends*. For every whole is in itself an end – this is simply another way of expressing its inner coherence, its existence as a stable entity which is maintained from moment to moment by its own inner force, even though it may be assisted by other forces through a favourable conjunction of circumstances. Life is a constant struggle to assimilate such energies and to withstand countervailing forces, to overcome or to make the most of problems, to eliminate inner obstacles and surmount external ones. Just by being alive, the organism proves its *fitness for life*, i.e. that its energies or parts are functioning properly. But mere ability to survive must be distinguished from fitness for life in a particular form or manner, and consequently from life under particular favourable or unfavourable *conditions*. Where conditions are favourable, even the weaker organism can go on living, or live longer than it otherwise would; where they are unfavourable even the strong will go to the wall.

When inherited characteristics serve no purpose, the organism may

survive by altering them, thus by 'adapting' to circumstances. This applies not only to the individual but to every group linked by common origin, if it constitutes a unified whole. An individual and his particular characteristics may be more or less fitted to represent, maintain and perpetuate the group to which he belongs. Disregarding variations in circumstances and assuming average, equally favourable conditions, there is no other criterion but survival for the fitness of a living thing, both on its own and in relation to some larger whole. What survives, however, is not the matter but the 'form'. In this respect the forms of organic structure and the forms of natural will are on exactly the same footing; neither can be perceived by the senses, neither can be conceived in merely material terms.

The form, which constitutes the whole, is always made up of its elements, which in relation to it are 'material'; they support and propagate themselves by means of this relationship. For the whole (as the undying 'form'), the part represents simply a more transitory variant of itself, which expresses its nature in a more or less complete way. The part could be seen as merely a means to the life and purpose of the whole, were it not for the fact that, while it exists, the part is itself identical with this life and purpose. The parts are all alike in having a share in the whole; but they are distinct and different in so far as each of them expresses itself and has its own particular function. The same relation exists between generic categories, such as the species, and the classes and individual specimens contained within it. And it is also true of individuals and of every group that encompasses them, which may be just coming into existence or already in decline or in transition to some higher form, but which must always be understood as active, living and developing.

We may therefore take as our starting point the basic characteristics of mankind, not as an abstraction but as the concrete embodiment of the human race, and as effectively the most universal of species. We then move on through the basic characteristics of race, people, tribe and smaller groups to arrive in the end at the single individual, who is, so to speak, the centre of these many concentric circles. The closer the circles come together which bridge the gap to the individual, the better he may be understood. The intuitive and theoretical understanding of each of these groups can conveniently be made easier and more concrete by classifying them according to *types*, each of which may be seen as comprising the characteristics of all examples of this group *before* they became differentiated. Thus they include both those in which evolution is com-

plete – whose capacities and powers are withering away through lack of use – and those which are still evolving – which have undergone some specialised adaptation.⁴ The concrete picturing and description of such a typical example is a surrogate for being able to grasp the real essence of these meta-empirical wholes in the realm of abstract theory. In real life, however, the full spirit and force of such a whole in relation to its parts can only be naturally and realistically portrayed through the *spontaneous interaction* of real bodies continuously living together in a wider group. It could also be revealed through a select group of notables (or even a single individual) who embody the character and will of the rest of the community.

2

The *person* or ‘subject’ of arbitrary will, being himself a creation of arbitrary will, has a merely accidental (*unum per accidens*), mechanical identity. That is to say, arbitrary will itself possesses reality and coherence for the person concerned only through its relation to possible consequences. Thus the concept of the ‘person’ is simply a *fiction*, or (more concretely) an invention of scientific thought; it is designed to give some kind of coherent foundation to such an artificial construction and to impose order on the complex interaction of force, power and means. This foundation is merely pieced together by the process of thought out of a multitude of separate possible acts, wherever these can be seen as having some kind of unity. Therefore the existence of the person, which is purely a creation of the mind, is dependent on the existence of those many separate acts, which are quite external to and abstracted from it. It has to be supposed that, in this multitude of separate acts, elements are contained which strive upwards to attain unity, in the form of agreement over common aims, i.e. towards some kind of ideal pattern or synthesis (for we tend to imagine pure thought as floating in the air above concrete reality). This is in striking contrast to the unity found in organic existence, which lies not just in a mass of facts, but must be seen as the underlying root of those facts – as lying in the depths beneath them, without being separate and distinct from them. In the case of arbitrary will – if we may draw a general principle from such a heap of empirical-cum-hypothetical entities – the unifying factor relates to these diverse activities like an arithmetical sum

⁴ In this difficult sentence, the term *volkommen* (complete or developed) is used to imply a less advanced stage than *unvollkommener* (incomplete, undeveloped), in which the evolutionary process is still going on.

to its individual parts. The ‘universal’ is *post rem* and *extra res*; which means that a common identity is constructed by means of concepts and categories, and is purely nominal, hypothetical and artificial.

Within the system of thought in which it is situated, the ‘person’ will desire and do all manner of possible things, and must be thought of as the agent of *genuinely* voluntary acts, pursuing real ends and having real means at its disposal. If we are thinking of a human being, the person must either be an actual man, or it must be a group of people who think, desire and act like him, pursuing aims and employing means *on his behalf*. It may be a single person or a group, for the many can think together as one and “formulate” their rational intentions. (1) They may deliberate together, with one or another expressing his opinion about what he wants and thinks that all the others should want. This stimulates the others and gets them thinking, so that they advocate the same thing or something similar, or perhaps they speak against it. (2) They may reach a decision, with all of them – or at least as many as wish to do so – declaring by certain words or signs that they want or do not want, approve or reject, some course of action (those who remain indifferent forgoing their power of their own free will). As every voice or every rational mind is considered to be of equal weight, either a stalemate is reached and no decision is made, or else a majority emerges on one side or the other, for yes or no. This always means a positive decision, whether the advice or suggestion is accepted or rejected.

The individual human being has to be regarded as always *capable* of making a decision. This means at the very least that it is always *possible* for him to give a positive or negative answer or decision, when he is questioned or advised by himself or others. It also means that if he wants and tries “to make a decision”, he sets in train a process which must succeed and be brought to a conclusion. This is not only possible, but quite easy, when considered as a job to be done. We do of course say: ‘He can’t make up his mind’, or ‘I find it very hard to decide’. But this simply means that in that case circumstances are not strong enough to elicit the will to act, or that the question has not been posed with sufficient urgency. If someone sees that he has got to make up his mind (e.g. in order not to starve), it is well-nigh certain that he will overcome this *inner* resistance. The result, with regard to some proposed action, will not be an empty nothing, it will be either yes or no.

A *crowd* or *multitude*, on the other hand, is capable of making continuous decisions in this way only if its numbers are unevenly balanced. This

is therefore a necessary requirement for a large mass of people, if it is to resemble an individual in this respect. Of course, tacit or open agreement can result in unanimity in the form of a negative decision. This means that preference is given to those who want to do nothing. Or the decision can be left to the ballot. A multitude like this, with the will and the ability to decide as one, is called a *convention* or *assembly*. It may, like an individual, have a continuous existence, (1) if in theory it remains permanently in session but in practice convenes for discussions according to definite and known rules, and (2) if its members are summoned or recruited when the need arises.⁵

Every individual is the natural representative of his own person. The concept of a person cannot be derived from any empirical entities other than individual human beings – who are recognised as such by virtue of the fact that each one is endowed with the capacity of thinking and willing. Consequently, real and natural persons exist because there are people who think of themselves in these terms, who take on and play this “role”, each one taking on the “character” of a person like a mask held up before the face.⁶ And as natural persons all human beings are equal to each other. Each has as his birthright unlimited freedom to define whatever goals he likes and to use whatever means he can to achieve them. Every man is his own master, nobody is anybody else’s master. They are absolutely independent of one another.

3

An assembly too represents its own person. But its existence is not an empirical fact in the way that this can reasonably be said of the persons of individual, physically perceptible, human beings. When we think of an assembly we have to *assume* the reality of the person it represents; whereas, by contrast, when we think of a ‘person’ we get the idea from a real human being. An assembly, in so far as it represents itself, is an *artificial* person. It can act as a coherent ‘subject’ of arbitrary will only because the individuals, who as natural persons are contained within the assembly, themselves take on and simulate this abstract, artificially conceived, unitary, and personalised being; and it is they who harmonise the assembly’s yes and no

⁵ *ergänzen* = to supplement or replenish, but also in a military sense to ‘call up reserves’, implying that the assembly would be drawn from those able to bear arms.

⁶ Tönnies here again follows Hobbes – the ‘persona’ being originally the mask carried by the actor in the Roman theatre.

votes into a majority, thus constituting the arbitrary or ‘rational’ will. (The will is not that of those who agree, nor even of all of them, since either alternative would produce *many* wills.) Through such an act the assembly is put on a par with natural persons [i.e. ordinary people]; it exists for individuals in the same way as they exist for each other – that is to say, they mutually recognise and *acknowledge* one another as persons.

There are many grounds *in theory* for setting up other kinds of *personification*, which may be represented by either a natural or an artificially constituted person. But each person exists *for* all the rest and as part of a *system*, only because of such artificial “recognition” of their personhood and thus of their equality. The very fact of treating someone or something as a person necessarily implies recognition as a secondary factor. On the other hand, general recognition involves the specific recognition of the validity of a given *form of representation* where such a relationship is not self-evident, though it may be thought to be well grounded (like that between a particular rational individual and a constituted assembly). Wherever one real person is represented by another, it is always the transfer of power from the former to the latter (i.e. authorisation) which makes the representation valid. This is difficult to imagine where the person being represented is fictitious (because, *except* by representation, a fictitious person would be incapable of such an act of transfer in the first place). But it can be portrayed as a formally valid and well-grounded method of procedure, because the fact that something is done is taken as a normal and obvious reason for doing it.

A fictitious person can be imagined as *emerging* out of a system of real but solitary persons (human beings). It might be represented either by an individual or by an assembly, and its existence would depend on being recognised by all. It could only come about through the arbitrary will of *one* or more of its pre-existing subjects, who pool part of their resources (their freedom and material possessions) and thus *constitute* a separate person, with either an established or some newly created form of representation. Such a constituting act must be linked to some indication of who is to be the person who acts as representative. In the case of an assembly, the agreement of its “members” on how their will is to be validly expressed is taken for granted. But such a fictitious person will be created by rational subjects only as a means to a specific end, which must be common to the majority in order to unite them. The fictitious person is this end (or a combination of ends), now seen as unified and having its own independent existence, whereas previously it existed only as the

meeting point or link-up between separate ends. The existence of this person is in fact nothing more than the pooling of means in relation to these overlapping ends. But by being transformed (in the minds of its authors) both in practice and in theory into a *person*, these means become an end – a single, personified end. This end is not, however, distinct from the means; indeed the ‘person’ does not think and has no purpose of its own. The ‘fiction’ is that it has no purpose other than the one for which it was thought up and appointed.

Since, however, the concept of the abstract person is itself an artificial product, literally a ‘fiction’, it has more in common with the artificial subject of arbitrary or rational will than with that of natural or essential will. No human being can be imagined as so entirely bent on his own advantage, so exclusively focused on profit and on gearing his actions to preconceived goals, as is the case with a deliberative and decision-making ‘thing’⁷ that exists as such *purely* in the imagination. For that reason both individuals and assemblies can more easily act in this way “in the name” of such an invented being, than they would on their own behalf.

4

Every relationship within *Gemeinschaft* resembles, in the root or kernel of its being, the prototype from which individual selves (or ‘souls’ as we may loosely call them) and their freedom are derived. By contrast, every relationship in *Gesellschaft* represents the latent possibility of [the emergence of] an artificial superior person, who will have command over a certain quota of means and resources; indeed Society itself is thought to need such a body in order to function as an effective whole. In general terms *Gemeinschaft* is made up of the union of natural wills, while *Gesellschaft* is made up of the union of rational, arbitrary wills. However, in order to be seen as an independent and permanent unity, in practical relationships with its similarly unified parts, *Gemeinschaft* must have advanced beyond the stage in which it cannot be distinguished from the multiplicity of inter-related minds that actually make it up. Instead its distinguishing mark should be an exceptionally enduring will that reflects the unanimity of the whole or a fair number of its members. This is an evolutionary process; it is the job of the observer to discern when it is complete. By contrast, the separate existence of the artificial person [that constitutes *Gesellschaft*] has

⁷ There is another play on words here, in that *das Ding* was the old Teutonic word for a parliament or assembly.

to be willed and established for a particular preconceived purpose by a specific act of free contract. The simplest example of such a purpose is the guaranteeing of other outstanding contracts; the desire to fulfil these, previously assumed to be the desire of the parties involved, now becomes the desire of this unified artificial person. That artificial person then has the task of pursuing the end with the means allotted for the task. If objective *law* is defined as whatever is willed by any alliance of wills in relation to its members, then *Gesellschaft* plainly has its *own* law by which it upholds the rights and obligations of its constituents. It must, however, be a product of their original absolute freedom, which is what arbitrary will is all about. Community, on the other hand, which is best understood as a metaphysical union of body or blood, possesses *by nature* a will and a life force all of its own. It therefore has its own law with regard to the will of its members, so much so that its members may appear to be nothing more than adaptations and sub-divisions of this all-embracing organic mass.

On the basis of this distinction we have two diametrically opposed systems of law: one in which people are related to each other as natural members of a whole, and one in which as individuals they are entirely independent of one another and enter into relationships only of their own free will. In practical jurisprudence, particularly the Roman-modern school, which is a science based on the recognition and validation of law as understood in *Gesellschaft*, the first system survives under the name of family law, an area in which a fully 'legal' characterisation of the basic relationships involved is lacking. This is in clear contrast to the other quite different body of the law which relates to *commercial obligation*. For it is here that a precisely mathematical and rational 'mechanics of law' is possible. It can be reduced to a set of standard propositions dealing simply with various acts of exchange and with the resulting command (or claim) of one person over (or against) certain actions to be performed by another. Actions and claims change hands like goods or coins, so that whatever is subtracted on one side is added to the other, just as in simple arithmetic. The two bodies of law, however, reveal their nature most clearly in the area in between, the *law of property*, where they inevitably engage with each other. The following definitions focus upon this area.

5

The *sphere* of human *natural will*, as I understand it, relates to all the vital forces that belong to a human being or human group – in so far as these

forces constitute a coherent whole, with a 'subject' that draws together and unites all their inner and outer conditions and variations, through memory and conscience. The *sphere* of human arbitrary will I consider to be everything that an individual person is and has – everything that he thinks of as being determined by and dependent on his own thought, and that he retains in his individual consciousness.

The sphere of natural will – the 'sphere of will' properly so-called⁸ – is the same as its subject matter, wherever the latter relates to external beings and objects. If the general concept of will can be defined with reference to *freedom*, this more particular application can be defined with reference to *property*. The sphere of arbitrary will is related to its subject matter in exactly this way. True property in the true sphere of will is what I call *possession* [*Besitz*]; whereas in the sphere of arbitrary will I shall call it *wealth* or *riches* [*Vermögen*].⁹ Thus possession is to natural processes what wealth is to rational, calculative ones. We are talking here about external objects only in so far as the will of an individual is embodied in and related to them. The processes of will are clearly defined powers and possibilities of action; and likewise possession and wealth are clearly defined powers and possibilities of enjoyment or use.

The twin categories of 'organ' and 'instrument' can help us to understand this dichotomy. Possession can be seen as deep, organic property, wealth as superficial and mechanical property. From a purely psychological point of view, possession is an extension of the individual's intrinsic being; it is itself a necessary reality, and most fully so when it consists of things that are alive. By contrast, the psychological value of wealth lies in extending the range of objects that a person can think about or of actions he can take. Wealth in itself has a purely abstract character, which can best be realised by objects that present only a subjective possibility of useful application. This is the kind of enjoyment¹⁰ and use that is characteristic of wealth.

⁸ *Die Willenssphäre*: an untranslatable word coined by Tönnies, and applied by him to natural will but not to rational will. The most likely explanation for this is that, while the sphere of rational will applies only to ideas in an individual's mind, the sphere of natural will – like the *atmosphere* – is all-embracing (cf. above, pp. 96, 114–15).

⁹ *Besitz* and *Vermögen* – terms whose range of usage is less starkly contrasted and mutually exclusive than Tönnies implies. The distinction he is making is between unself-conscious use of space and resources, like a horse grazing in a meadow, and the deliberate use of such space and resources as potential media of exchange. *Das Vermögen* also means 'power', enabling Tönnies to make a play on words later in the paragraph that is lost in English.

¹⁰ *Zweck* (purpose) in the 1887 edition was altered to *Genuss* (enjoyment) in later editions.

Possession, as we normally understand it, is entirely one with the individual and bound up with him and his way of life. At the same time it does have a life of its own, and qualities which express that life in a variety of ways. It is a natural and indivisible unity, which cannot be alienated and estranged from the individual at will, but only reluctantly and painfully by force or necessity.

By contrast, wealth, as we understand it, appears as a great heap or balance-sheet of individual objects, each representing a certain quantity of power, waiting to be transformed into individual pleasures. These quantities can be divided and combined however you wish and for whatever purpose you choose. And, in addition, not only are they capable of being alienated or disposed of, they are positively intended to be treated in this way.

6

Leaving aside the question of freedom (either as possession of one's *own* body and its organs or as power over one's own actions) the idea of 'possession' is most clearly expressed in relation to the body and life of *another* person; the idea of 'wealth' is seen in relation to the *possible action* of another person. The concept of property embraces both of these extremes. Possession fits in with the character of family law, whereas wealth is attuned to the field of commercial law. Family law is simply a manifestation of the natural right of the community over its members, which is its particular version of freedom. Commercial law is the appropriate expression of relationships in market Society, which consist in the transfer of bits and pieces of freedom from the sphere of one rational will to another. In both systems, true property, being a right to goods, means the expansion of freedom – which then extends to a different kind of freedom, in the form of a right over beings or persons as well as things. Thus the right of the Community over the bodies of its members necessarily includes everything that belongs to these members, because they are part of itself. It does not matter whether the partial sacrifice of freedom takes the form of active service or of the surrender of certain assets. The importance or value of services can be assessed in terms of the value of goods, which makes it easier to measure. Of all the things that are regarded as organic property in a community, the most immediate to man are live animals. As working partners they must be reared, sheltered and cared for; they belong to the *household*, which is the very body of the basic

community. The primordial thing, however, which is owned by and is quite intrinsic to human communities, is the land itself. Parts and parcels of land belong to every separate free family that has its roots in the wider community as the natural sphere of its life and work. As the *people* [*das Volk*] develop and divide into branches, so in a parallel development the *land* is parcelled out and cultivated, but it remains a unity and common property, however far this process goes. However much labour is put into it, it can only improve conditions for the free growth of crops; it conserves and enhances the productive capacity of the soil itself, and prepares the ripe fruits of the earth for consumption.

It is a quite different matter, however, when labour *creates* new things, in which the final shape contributes as much to their usefulness as the raw material, if not more so. An object is shaped by the mind and hand of the individual, the artist or craftsman. But *through him* the whole household works and produces for its own benefit – he himself being a member of it, as father, son or hired man. The same is true of the Community where he is a citizen, or of the guild where he is a companion and master. The Community retains overall ownership in his work, even though he may be granted exclusive use of the object as a natural right or privilege, because he made it. In the natural and regular course of events, however, ‘actual use’ may be use by the community or by some single individual. ‘Natural use’, as far as the object as such is concerned, means either its immediate use or its preservation for future use or for further production. In each case the object is fully *appropriated* [by the community]. This is true even in the case of precious metal buried like treasure in the depths of the earth, if the ground itself is the organic property of the community.

Diametrically opposed to this is use through *sale* or *alienation*, which in fact is the opposite of use. There is a famous passage in a classical author which makes this distinction. “For example, a shoe is used for wear, and is used for exchange; both are uses of the shoe. He who gives a shoe in exchange for money or food to him who wants one, does indeed use the shoe as a shoe, but this is not its proper use, for a shoe is not made to be an object of barter.”¹¹ But from another angle, exchange is the only totally rational usage. It is the appropriate expression of a simple act of rational will, a premeditated action. It thus presupposes the weighing, calculating individual, operating all on his own, not in alliance with some other person but in competition with him. Where several people together make up one

¹¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 9.

side of an exchange, they must be seen as a collectivity capable of making decisions, and thus equivalent to a natural person. As an object for sale or as an exchange value, a thing becomes a commodity. A commodity is for its owner simply a means of acquiring other goods. This essential quality makes all goods, *qua* goods, equal and reduces the differences between them to a question of quantity. Money is the expression of this equality. All commodities are potential money, power to earn money; and money is the power of all commodities, the power to buy anything whatsoever. Thus money is really the material embodiment of rational will. Even an isolated action quite separate from the realm of freedom, which becomes the object of a contract and so of an obligation, acquires thereby an exchange value and is equivalent to a certain sum of money. "The only acts suited to the law of obligation are those which can take on such an external character and so become capable of being subjected like goods to the will of another. But this assumes that those actions have a property value or can be evaluated in terms of money" (Savigny, *Obligationenr.* 1, p. 9).¹²

Conversely, those things that hold out a promise of exchange value, and thus a promise of money, such as a bill of exchange or promissory note, can serve and circulate as money. The promise, as an expression of one of the forms of rational choice, namely decision, is itself power; if it is *accepted*, it is the power to obtain goods or money – it is wealth. Universal acceptance [of negotiable instruments] must be thought of as the object of a tacit agreement, a convention within market society. The grounds for giving a person such "credit" is the degree of *probability*, howsoever based, that a promise of this kind will be kept, that the obligation will be fulfilled, the "bill of exchange" discharged and encashed. Such tokens of credit are, therefore, like money, and function more perfectly as such the closer the probability [of repayment] comes to certainty and security. Money as a form of obligation, and obligation as form of money, is the perfect abstract expression of property in market Society. It is wealth in the form of assured power over the wills of others, who may be free by nature but are 'bonded' or 'bound' by wealth.

7

From the preceding chapters we can construct the following table of corresponding and contrasting concepts:

¹² Friedrich Karl von Savigny, *Das Obligationenrecht als Theil des heutigen romanischen Rechts*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Veit and Co., 1851–3).

<i>Gemeinschaft</i> [Community]	<i>Gesellschaft</i> [Society]
Natural/essential will	Arbitrary/rational will
Self	Person
Possession	Wealth
Land	Money
Family law	Law of contracts

A further contrast should be mentioned which is contained in all these familiar concepts, and that is the distinction between the legal forms of 'status' and those of 'contract', which has been examined in recent writing. A passage from a learned and discerning English author deserves to be quoted as having promoted a broader interest in this interpretation (although not up to now translated into German). Sir Henry Maine states in a summary (*Ancient Law*, seventh edition, p. 168):

The movement of the progressive societies has been uniform in one respect. Through all its course it has been distinguished by the gradual dissolution of family dependency, and the growth of individual obligation in its place. The Individual is steadily substituted for the Family, as the unit of which civil laws take account. This advance has been accomplished at varying rates of celerity, and there are societies not absolutely stationary but where the collapse of the ancient organisation can only be perceived by careful study of the phenomena they present . . . Nor is it difficult to see what is the tie between man and man which replaces by degrees those forms of reciprocity in rights and duties which have their origin in the family. It is Contract. Starting, as from one terminus of history, from a condition of society in which all the relations of Persons are summed up in the relations of Family, we seem to have steadily moved towards a phase of social order in which all these relations arise from the free agreement of Individuals. In Western Europe the progress achieved in this direction has been considerable. Thus the status of the Slave has disappeared – it has been superseded by the contractual relation of the servant to his master, *of the worker to his employer*.¹³ The status of the Female under Tutelage, if the tutelage be understood of persons other than her husband, has also ceased to exist; from coming of age to her marriage all the relations she may form are relations of contract. So too the status of the Son under Power has no true place in the law of modern European societies. If any civil obligation binds together the Parent and the child of full age, it is one to which only contract gives its legal validity. The apparent exceptions are excep-

¹³ *des Arbeiters zum Unternehmer* was an interpolation by Tönnies.

tions of the stamp which illustrate the rule . . . The great majority of Jurists are constant to the principle that the classes of persons just mentioned are subject to extrinsic control on the single ground that they do not possess the faculty of forming a judgement on their own interests; in other words, that they are wanting in the first essential of an engagement by Contract.

The word Status may be usefully employed to construct a formula expressing the law of progress thus indicated, which, whatever be its value, seems to me sufficiently ascertained. All the forms of Status taken notice of in the Law of Persons were derived from, and to some extent are still coloured by, the powers and privileges anciently residing in the Family. If then we employ Status, agreeably with the usage of the best writers, to signify these personal conditions only, and avoid applying the term to such conditions as are the immediate or remote result of agreement, we may say that the movement of the progressive societies has hitherto been a movement *from Status to Contract*.

The relevance of this clearly stated view should be amply demonstrated by the propositions that have been set out here. Meanwhile it may serve as the theme for the following discussion.

8

Control of human beings over other human beings is here singled out and examined in intimate connection with the concept of property. Control under family law is essentially control of the whole over its parts. It is the control of one part of the family over other parts, e.g. of the father and master of the household over sons and servants, but only because that one part is the visible embodiment of the invisible whole. This is true of all Community property, especially the possession of land. In Society, by contrast, control, like property, belongs *a priori* to the individual person. But since the law of contract assumes the involvement of some other party, this other party will be the co-author of a particular act of transfer, so long as the action is freely performed. He shares joint ownership of the object or sum of money covered by the agreement until the contract expires on completion; or else he gains actual possession because the contract has illegally fallen through, in which case it is no longer property in the legal sense (though *de facto* possession or proprietorship may still continue in law, subject to special rules). In a similar way, the enterprise, professional service, or labour offered for sale becomes in

law *his* property – the property of the recipient – from the moment that commencement [of the contract] is fixed and agreed.

It is certainly correct, as natural law theory has it, that a person cannot sell *himself*, since it is a prerequisite of any exchange that a (presumptive) equivalent should be received on both sides, and so a continuing, freely assenting will must be there to participate in it. On the other hand it is quite conceivable that a human being might sell his labour power for the duration of his life, whilst in other respects remaining free and capable of holding property. And there is nothing in theory to prevent someone from becoming himself an item of property and being treated as though he were an object to be used. Indeed, absolute affirmation and absolute negation of personhood are two sides of the same coin. Therefore out-and-out slavery is by no means *legally* incompatible with a *Gesellschaft* system, for it is an entirely artificial, man-made institution, while the premise that all adult humans are equal through their capacity for free will is implicit in nature and thus in the simplest and most basic scientific knowledge. In *Gesellschaft* items of every measure and value, including things that are inherently valueless (like bits of paper), can be *turned into* objects of wealth and made marketable by convention. And, in point of fact, human bodies are more naturally suited to be commodities than human labour power, even if only the labour and not the actual body can be offered for sale by its natural owner. On the other hand, such total slavery is no more compatible with the essence of *Gemeinschaft* than is total personal freedom. The servitude imposed by community law is basically a kind of attachment to some larger group such as the household, though it is more like a passive relationship with a possession, than an active one with people who run their own lives. In practice it occupies a middle position between the two, with at least the possibility of getting the benefit of the common peace and common laws, and the chance of earning special rights through long residence and constant loyalty. This is the practical essence of a culture which is dominated by agriculture and labour instead of by trade and usury. All forms of dependency and servitude are conceived and devised on the pattern of domestic relationships, and their obverse is a kind of patriarchal dignity and power.

The office of lord and ruler has a twofold character. It is mainly his duty to *care* for his subjects – through protection, leadership and instruction. In relation to him they are subordinates; and, although they certainly desire *their own* welfare as much as he does, it is appropriate for him to *command* their wills as if for *his* good, since they are thought of simply as

a part and parcel of himself. Or it may be that the ruler devotes himself first and *foremost* to his own cause, and that he is [simply] the main originator and leader of an enterprise for which he needs *help*. He then, if he can, recruits people on a par with himself, while at the same time placing them under his own care and command. In this case the *polite request* (in the form of an invitation to superiors, or summons to equals, or commission to subordinates) is the form most suited to such essentially mutual dependency. In the context of a total *Gemeinschaft*, dominion of the first kind is found in its purest form in the power of a father over his children (*potestas*); the second sort can be seen in the power of the husband in marriage (*manus*). All relations between authority and service which are not so deeply rooted nor so emotionally binding can still be traced back to one or other of these models or to a mixture of both. The state of being a *subordinate* may seem like the position of a son or dependant, or it may be more akin to that of an assistant, vassal, follower or friend. In both forms it can get close to servitude, to a state of complete dependence. But servitude itself varies according to those two types, especially where it develops into recognised membership of the family. It becomes more like the status of a child, or even like the easy-going companionship of marriage. The two aspects quite clearly vary again in the case of the master-craftsman, where he has a different relationship with his apprentice or 'boy' from that with his fully qualified journeyman, who now assists him at his work and carries out his ideas.

9

A recent study describes highly developed, purely *Gesellschaft* relationships as "egotistical", and attempts to define the lever of all these relationships and of all commercial transactions as a form of *reward*¹⁴ (R. von Ihering, *Der Zweck im Recht*, vol. I).¹⁵ I have nothing against this point of view, but the way of putting it is misleading. For anyone who – like the present author – is concerned to get at the underlying meaning of words, will perceive that it is not appropriate to define a commodity offered for sale as a 'reward' in return for payment in coin, or the price as a 'reward'

¹⁴ *der Lohn* – translatable as pay, wages, reward, compensation, requital, recompense – allowing Tönnies a play on words that is difficult to capture in translation. From Old High German, *lehn* or *lehen* = a gift or reward from a superior.

¹⁵ Rudolf von Ihering, *Der Zweck im Recht*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Hartel, 1877), ch. VII. Ihering in fact argued that there were not one but four 'levers' that kept the 'social mechanics' of *Gesellschaft* going – i.e. reward, coercion, feelings of duty, and self-denial.

for handing over the commodity. Admittedly, in an age where no one hesitates to think of labour as a commodity and the labour contract an act of exchange, it has remained normal usage to dignify the sums of money involved with the name of 'reward' or 'wage' [*der Lohn*]. But the real meaning of *reward* is a favour or kindness offered of one's own free will – in this case springing from natural will – yet clearly granted on a regular basis, in consideration of services well rendered and of highly esteemed qualities of conduct and character such as carefulness, industry and loyalty. But this process is always one-sided, dependent on discretion, liking or appreciation, and must therefore be regarded as a gift, a favour or an act of grace. It is, in short, the business of the superior person to give, and to reward according to *deserts*, which implies that he does so *after* getting the benefit or help. In expectation of the reward or wage, the servant may, of course, exert himself and do everything *in his power* as though he were trying to *buy* a high remuneration, just as in a race everyone tries to outdo the others. It is just the same in commerce, as we know, where people are all competing for the glittering prizes of ambition.

But now we are beginning to confuse issues which must be kept separate. Where we are talking about prizes [or prices]¹⁶ to be awarded in reality, those fighting for them may well be either buyers or sellers, but that never applies to the person giving a reward. His promise is, as a rule, not that of a party to a contract; he is only 'obliged' in the moral sense of the term, not to renege on his promise when the conditions seem to have been fulfilled. But he himself is judge of what is performed, like a feudal lord (and for that reason he can even "delegate" his role to an umpire or judge). Whatever he gives, he gives subsequent to the good deed and on the strength of it. By contrast, exchange is essentially a two-sided and *simultaneous* act. It does not know of any before or after, any higher or lower (not at least of rank, for this notion is based purely on size, like the parent usually being bigger than the child, or the man than the wife). There is no before or after, because if the complementary action is to follow later in time, the real act of exchange consists in a reciprocal promise (accepted and believed) about the object in question. So in the first case [i.e. reward for desert] we have an act of *distributive* justice, in the second [i.e. exchange] an act of *commutative* justice. This important distinction is basically identical with our dichotomy of *Gemeinschaft* and

¹⁶ *der Preis* = a prize or reward, but also 'price' (one of the few cases where Tönnies's fondness for play upon words can be clearly rendered into English).

Gesellschaft, and opens up the prospect of new and significant ways of looking at the matter.

But to go back to our discussion: commercial competition, and any other competition (where everyone in the race is striving to become rich, powerful and important) is only metaphorical. It is not individuals who are ranged against each other, whether they are selling something¹⁷ or merely bestowing a gift, but the calculable or incalculable vagaries of fate or luck, which for known or unknown reasons reward the industry or audacity of one man, but let another come to nothing. Furthermore, the promise of a prize is equivalent to the notional awarding of the prize only when the thing to be performed has acquired an objective character, detached from the will of the person carrying it out. And likewise the exchange is complete only when the commodity has been transferred to the other party, resulting in a claim for the prize [or price] or in an obligation on the part of the one offering the price [or prize].

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In this as in other ways a purely contractual relationship *can* develop from any relationship based on service, as we know from experience. But we also know that no amount of effort or rational calculation can *manufacture* what spontaneous nature itself can *generate*, in conjunction with human natural will – and that includes all the qualities of natural intelligence as well as its peculiar achievements. Everything of *this* kind can certainly be rewarded, but cannot be ‘remunerated’. The only qualities that can be paid for are those expressed in certain acts that anyone *could* perform, even without such qualities, if he really wanted to, i.e. if he were induced to use his powers by some sufficiently enticing goal. This reasoning is of course fanciful, for people do not *by nature* have such extraneous psychophysical powers. But basic human capacities – of which everyone has a certain share, involving contraction of muscles in response to stimulation by the brain – are in this respect similar to external resources. Anyone who can handle these capacities and apply them to their proper use is on an equal footing – that is to say, every human being. Everything can be used in this way and it is therefore easiest to treat everything as commodities (where use becomes non-use and proper application is just a pretence). Again it makes no difference, because all that is required is the

¹⁷ *verkaufendes*, printed as *verlaufendes* in the 1979 edition.

exertion of general human muscle power. Here as before, the concrete-universal, which potentially comprises everything specific, meshes with the abstract-universal, where all particular elements have been artificially effaced by the act of thinking in uniformly *Gesellschaft* terms; universal trends and our ways of thinking about them thus coincide at this point.¹⁸

In practice, however, the fact that an activity is offered for sale does not guarantee that everyone is capable of doing it. It is only the individual person who can make something of it, and it only takes on the *form* of something that anyone can do. Whether and to what extent such tasks approximate to the capacities of general average labour is quite another matter. It is certainly the case that, once the labour related to a task is divided up within the manufacturing workplace, the different functions become more simplified and separate, until finally the work is done by machines which become more and more automatic and only need to be tended. The methods are like the machines – they tend at first to make skill and craftsmanship more perfect, but then to render them superfluous. As work increasingly requires merely labour pure and simple, so this fact more clearly determines its price, which is reduced to its value as an object of use and exploitation purchased by the entrepreneur. The average price [of labour], at first an imaginary mean between high and low, is gradually brought down to the lower level because of the dwindling bargaining power of the high prices appropriate to qualified labour. This process takes place within the system of production characteristic of *Gesellschaft*, which is based on separation of the worker from his materials and tools.

From this we can judge how inappropriate the term *wage-earner* [in the sense of *reward-earner*] is for the proletariat of market Society. It is about as apt as the term ‘patron’¹⁹ or ‘master’ for the entrepreneurial merchant or manufacturer, or for the still less patriarchal *joint-stock company*; least of all for the *tax-men*,²⁰ who are supposed to assert the interest of all, but in fact only do so on behalf of bare-faced capital – which they usually interpret as the interest on profit.

¹⁸ One of Tönnies’s most convoluted and difficult paragraphs, influenced by the account of the debasement of skill to rudimentary physical exertion in Marx’s *Kapital* (1867), ch. 10.

¹⁹ i.e. *der Brotherr* – an exact translation of the literal meaning of the English word ‘lord’, from O.E. *hlaford* = keeper of the bread. In German it came to mean ‘patron’ in the sense of master of a small business, and more recently ‘employer’.

²⁰ The word used here is *der Fiskus*. But it seems likely that Tönnies had in mind a play upon *der Steuerbeamte* (the tax-man) and *der Steuermann* (pilot, helmsman, person in control).

II

The granting of a 'wage' or reward as the gift of the superior to the inferior is the counterpart of the payment of a *tribute* or feudal *fee* as a contribution of the inferior towards the living expenses of the superior. Both forms of payment through practical usage may become *customary*, and under favourable circumstances (particularly as part of more general custom) go on to become *obligatory*, both in kind and in quantity. If they are voluntary payments, the wage is conferred when asked for, the fee in return for the promise of favours, if these have not already been granted. If they are obligatory, they constitute either a formal claim (*postulatum*), or entitlement to a privilege. In the end, however, both types turn into contractual relationships which are legally binding (although that aspect does not concern us here). They are then simply the negotiated and agreed equivalents for other goods or services received or anticipated. Both fees and wages are, in origin, concerned with the acknowledgment of a community-based relationship, and so they are both visible tokens of *gratitude* for favours received. We might therefore regard the fee as a wage which honours and elevates, and the wage as a gracious, condescending fee. In one sense it is gratifying to receive such gifts, quite apart from their value and usefulness, but in another it is irksome and burdensome. That is why the abolition of feudal dues, commuting and transforming them into taxes, etc., is a sign of a point when community-based relationships are beginning to decay. The status of the superiors, which was determined by those dues, is thereby destroyed. On the other hand, their pre-eminence *in market Society* can emerge for the first time, in the shape of complete independence for property obtained through fixed money incomes derived from trade or usury. An unencumbered landed property, even if not run entirely as a business, nevertheless develops into a business of this kind, in the shape of leases and resulting income from ground-rents.

This change has a dual aspect for the landlords – it is bad for their honour but good for their fortunes; and the abolition of the wage or reward works in a similar way for their dependants, but in the reverse direction. Even after all real ties between them and the people have been broken, the upper classes are keenly interested in opposing the full consequences of equality among all persons of rational capacity, since this would challenge their own superiority. In fact, this superiority not only persists, but becomes more rigid and more marked by being transformed

into a social superiority. It no longer resides in the individual, in the man himself, but rather in the extent to which he can assert his will, and especially his wealth. Such people are happy to use the term 'wages', and to pay lip-service to the notion of the wage as a reward. This lip-service, if not the term itself, is felt by the inferiors to be a sign of servitude and dishonour. In economic terms, however, this arrangement is in their favour in all those relations which can be reduced to simple exchange or contract. For whoever disdains to haggle about the price of a commodity or service, thinking it beneath his dignity, forfeits his principal advantage as a purchaser. If the service is already rendered, i.e. a tacit agreement has been concluded in accordance with the rules of market Society, the only way he can avoid the danger of having to deal with claims from the seller at a later date is by making a *generous* payment. Being over and above the value and price, it is deemed to include a free offering and may indeed be regarded as reimbursement and genuine 'pay' for qualities and activities whose value has not been or cannot be taken into account. Otherwise such [extra] payment has the character of *alms*, the voluntary contribution of the superior to inferiors, where the only reason for the offering is supposed to lie in the need of the inferior.

But even this sort of giving has a different meaning within the contexts of Community or Society, or rather it varies according to whether it proceeds from the individual's natural and essential will or from his arbitrary, rational will. In the first case it is done out of specific or general compassion, a specific or general sense of duty, a desire to help and encourage. It involves the idea of urgent necessity (something that one responds to spontaneously) or of an obligation (arising from ties of kinship or neighbourhood, from solidarity of civic status or craft guild, or finally from religious or humanitarian feelings of brotherly love). It is quite another matter if the donation is given with complete indifference for some external purpose, such as getting rid of the disagreeable sight of a beggar, or to display generosity, thus fostering a reputation for power and wealth (and one's own credit-worthiness). Lastly – and this is the commonest reason, though closely linked with the others – alms are given under the pressure of Society's conventional etiquette, which has good cause to devise and enforce such provisions. This is often the way in which charity is dispensed by the rich and grand – it is of a purely conventional nature, and thus quite detached and devoid of feeling.

From this perspective we may remark upon the interesting phenomenon of the *tip*, so earnestly discussed by modern writers. It is a curious

mixture of payment, reward and alms, in any case not the right way either to sustain or promote community among human beings. It could be called the last straggler or most debased example among all these phenomena. By contrast, their most ancient and most universal form is the *gift*, given by lovers, kinsfolk and friends to each other.²¹ Like perfect hospitality and all genuine help it is given as much for the sake of the giver as for the receiver, since they regard each other as belonging together. Like anything of this kind, the gift too can *become* arbitrary and conventional, but the *semblance* of true feeling is most anxiously retained, since otherwise the ensuing exchange of reciprocal goods, with no appraisal of their comparative value, would seem just too misconceived and absurd. Moreover, bestowing a public present of money can only be done without affront to all natural or refined sensibilities in cases where no return can be expected, since that would negate the purpose of the Gift either partly or completely. A superior with the power and the desire to increase the substantive wealth of an inferior could make a friendly gift to him, especially if the recipient is in some sense subject to the donor's control, as in the case of father and son. By contrast, a present of money made by a poor man to a rich one would be absurd and self-contradictory. For the same underlying reason the wage can retain its character when commuted into cash payment, but not the feudal tribute or fee. For *taxes* in monetary form, whether paid to the state or to a branch of the state, go into a common fund quite separate from individual persons. The public purse is a concept closely related to advanced commercial Society, and is linked with concepts of the state and all associations of that kind.

12

In the movement from status to contract we recognise a parallel between life and law. Law is, in every respect, no more than the common will; as *natural* law it is basically the form or spirit of those relationships that make

²¹ On the theory of 'the gift', see the classic text of Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don, forme archaïque de l'échange* (Paris, 1925); English edition: *The Gift. Form and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen and West, 1956). Though written many years after *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Mauss's work drew upon many of the same sources as Tönnies, particularly from Roman law. Tönnies's account is, however, strikingly different from that of Mauss, in that he portrays the purest form of 'the gift' as entirely disinterested and non-reciprocal; it closely resembles the classic modern account in Richard Titmuss, *The Gift Relationship* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970).

up the material substance of common life or, in the most general sense, the 'connecting-box' of the various spheres of will. From one perspective, the 'form' itself may be seen as what turns wills and their activities into a social unit, or as least as emanating from such a unit. In this view law is as real as the everyday life of which it is the subjective (mental or non-material) aspect. This may be true even if that everyday life is regarded merely as a product of common memory or social *imagination* (in the sense in which we commonly speak, even scientifically, of a poetic, creative folk-spirit). From another angle, however, law may be seen as the 'form' *added by* rational will to that same material life, or 'substance', which in this case is deemed to exist only in thought. Law is here viewed merely as the outward appearance of the way in which this material life holds together.

In the *first* case, the basic underlying fact is one of close physical relationship, conceived as something stable and permanent, as when people say: "Man and wife are one body." This relationship is essentially a union of natural wills and is identical with natural law – in the form of the married state and anything else like it which is seen as organically based material life. In the *second* case, by contrast, the basic and elementary fact is the transfer of property or exchange of goods. In numerous instances this is a totally detached and purely *mechanical* process, involving the shifting around of already existing objects; it gets its significance merely from the intentions and calculations of the persons who devise it and carry it out. Their positive rationality is what makes it a legal process and creates a form of law which may be called "natural" because it represents the simplest and most starkly rational structure of its kind. But any such mutual rational will based on contract, and hence this kind of law, exists only for those who are party to it – it is a particular conception or way of thinking that holds them together. In order to acquire a quasi-objective existence it needs to be recognised and affirmed by the general rational will, and it requires *Society itself* as the agent or subject of this general rationality. Society's will in its more natural and simple form expresses itself as convention, and it constitutes natural law in this quasi-objective sense. But neither through particular nor general contract is the content of this will and law acknowledged as a coherent *system*, distinct from the sum of many separate wills, unless it is legally enacted under special conditions. If that happens, legal arrangements such as contracts are linked into a system; the separate systems acquire objective reality *through* absorption into the general system; they need setting up *twice over*. But the overall system, if it is embodied in a unified person (like the state), can also set up and nom-

inate subordinate institutions which are not based on contracts between individuals, but are the agents of its sovereign power for those areas of 'will' with which it is permanently or temporarily concerned.

This leads on to the theory of *legal persons* and institutions. In neutral or technical terms, the two basic forms of social existence are the binding "union" (a close-knit system) and the "association" or "confederation" (a loose relationship).²² In *Gemeinschaft* (which is based on status), union comes first; unity precedes plurality, even though to all appearances unity and plurality may not yet have diverged. 'Association' comes later,²³ as an odd or exceptional case, in which unity is seen as *remaining* undeveloped (just as the concept of a man comes before that of a boy, who can be seen both as an evolving man and as a boy in his still embryonic form). Conversely, in *Gesellschaft* 'association' comes first, being the simpler form, and unions are merely associations of two or more people. Community degenerates from union into association: something which is only conceivable in the context of the rise of an objective, universal legal order, as wills come increasingly to resemble rational will. Society by contrast raises itself up from association into union. Loose association is the more appropriate form for agreements between separate individuals, and the only one possible for a simple combination. But for the uniting of many minds, involving associations of all with all, a close-knit union is more appropriate. In its highest development it may become more like Community; and the more universal it is in scope and aims, the more the rational will which rules it may come to seem like natural will. As that happens the contracts underlying this union become ever more difficult to trace and ever more complicated in their content and meaning.

13

Within a developing popular Community which is organised into many groups, the exchange of objects and thus the use of contracts must be thought of as being constantly on the increase. Nevertheless, enormous obstacles exist and are erected to stop them becoming the only or the

²² *die Verbindung* contrasted with *das Bündnis*. On Tönnies's somewhat erratic use of *Verbindung* see above, p. 17.

²³ *später* – translatable as later in time, but also as backward or behindhand, just as *früher* can mean both 'earlier in time', and 'more forward' or 'more advanced'. When Tönnies uses these terms in the context of social or biological evolution, *später* often seems to imply a 'less evolved' and *früher* a 'more evolved' stage of development.

dominant features. The entire development is at first only a variation and extension of existing community activities and ways of understanding things, or, as we would call it in natural law, of arrangements about 'status', which adapts to every new cultural development. Every status, like every contract, gives rise to rights and duties for individuals or persons. Status does not simply *presuppose* the existence of individuals, but exists in them and together with them. What *is* presupposed is the general idea and character of status, either as a principle in its own right or as derived from some other source, whereas contract is only contract properly so-called when it is seen as something made by individuals, as their intellectual creation and something distinct from them.

Law and life running in parallel will first display an advance from close-knit unions within the community towards looser associations, though still of a communitarian type. These then give way to more loose-knit associations in the style of *Gesellschaft*, from which unions of the kind found in fully-fledged market Society finally emerge. Relationships in the first class are basically concerned with family law and the law of possession; those in the other classes belong to the law of property and the law of contracts and obligations. The archetype of all community-based unions is the family itself, in all its manifestations. The human being is born into a family; he may choose to remain in it, but he cannot reasonably regard the basis of such relationships as the product of his own free choice. If we return to the three pillars of community – blood, soil and spirit (or kinship, neighbourhood and friendship) – we find all of them joined together in the family, but the first is what constitutes its essence. Community-based "associations" are best understood as friendships or fellowships: the community of spirit based on shared work or calling, and thus on shared beliefs. There are also, of course, unions dependent chiefly on community of spirit, where membership is not purely voluntary, but everyone concerned has to belong. These include primarily the corporations and brotherhoods of the arts and crafts, the communities and guilds, fraternities and ecclesiastical orders. The ideal and model of the family is retained in all of them. For this study the archetypal *association* within the community remains the relationship between lord and vassal or, better still, between master and apprentice, especially when it comes, either literally or metaphorically, under the same roof, as in the case of one of those more binding *unions*.²⁴

There are many important relationships which come somewhere

²⁴ i.e. the master–apprentice relationship, like marriage in the following paragraph, is both *binding* and *associational* in character.

between union and association. The most important of these is *marriage*, which on the one hand provides the basis for a new family and on the other is formed by a free agreement between man and wife, although this can only be understood in terms of the idea and ethos of the family. Marriage in its moral sense, i.e. monogamy, can be defined as perfect *neighbourhood* – living together in constant physical proximity. Its whole nature consists in community of place by day and night, and the sharing of bed and board; the spouses' spheres of activity and influence are not just adjacent but identical, like the communal fields of fellow villagers. And likewise their *joint ownership of goods* can be seen most clearly in their possession of the same farmland.

All these status relationships can, of course, become contracts, in life and in law, but not without losing their genuinely organic character. Human life of people within these relationships is determined by particular qualities of these people; therefore those who have been brought up in a different way are excluded. But contracts are not dependent on any personal qualities; they simply require people who conform to the concept of a 'person' by having certain *quantities* of measurable abilities or wealth. This is true of simple commercial contracts, where people making an exchange or doing business always meet on an equal footing. Their inner indifference to one another is in no way detrimental to the possibility or probability of making contracts; it is, rather, a favourable condition that the pure concept of a contract positively requires. Except when performance is instantaneous, contracts appear to rest on trust and belief, as is indicated by the very term 'credit'. This element, which belongs to and draws upon natural will, can still remain effective in an undeveloped stage of commerce. More and more, however, it is driven out and replaced by *calculation*. For objective reasons future compliance with the contract is regarded as certain or as more or less probable if it comes from the contracting party's own self-interest, either because he has deposited a valuable *security*, or because the likelihood of further business depends on his proven ability to pay. The *debtor* is therefore no longer a poor man or bond-servant, but a businessman, and conversely every businessman is a debtor. Alongside this go contracts of service, particularly the *labour contract*, which link the two main classes in Society and provide the medium that combines masses of people who work together.²⁵ The

²⁵ The 1887 edition reads at this point: 'a real lever of possible revolutionary socialism as well as of the constitutional method of association'. This comment was omitted in 1912 and replaced by the two sentences which follow.

labour contract starts as a contract between individuals and develops into a contract between groups.²⁶ As consciousness of the conflict of interests intensifies it becomes a contractual free-for-all, and as such the object of continuous struggle, from which a way to “social peace” is sought with extreme difficulty.²⁷

14

Societal unions or combinations can embrace all sorts of purposes which are designed to achieve a great variety of possible outcomes through the pooling of means and resources. An ‘artificial person’, however, can make use of human resources only if they are part of its property and thus comparable to any other sort of *wealth* through having monetary value. Like a natural person, a combination can either buy in labour, which assumes that it already exists and can own money; or else its founders, either at the time when it is set up or later, can grant it certain powers together with sums of cash. These can be of equal or differing value for each of the founders, though they may agree that *equality* means proportionate to the total resources of each individual. The desired outcome, the fixed aim of any such combination, will now consist in continuous production and incessant activity. The product may be divisible at will, like a yield in money. It must then be divided into *equal* shares, if the monetary and personal investments were *equal*, or in *proportion* if not. If the product is not divisible, the anticipated profit must again be equal or proportional. The same holds true for the *proceeds* of some continuous activity or function. In all these cases it is assumed that in the *best possible outcome* the expenditure of resources and means will be balanced by equivalent results, so that no amount of effort is ineffective or wasted. What those who form a combination want is only a turnover and return for their efforts such as is produced to a greater or lesser extent by activity in the natural sphere. For this reason a societal combination in *Gesellschaft* does not *in itself* indicate *higher-level* rational activity (which merely in form it is not) – that is not where it differs from a combination in *Gemeinschaft*, which can also through its principal or principals express its will in the form of *rational will*. But only within

²⁶ *die Gruppe* – a word that Tönnies specifically reserved for an aggregate of individuals rather than a cohesive union or organised body.

²⁷ Probably a reference to G. Schulze-Gaevernitz, *Zum sozialen Frieden. Eine Darstellung der socialpolitischen Erziehung des englischen Volkes im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1890), based on an 1886 *Habilitationsschrift*, which held out the relations between government and voluntary associations in Britain as a model for Germany.

Gesellschaft is it possible to have a form of association which is based on nothing but individual persons with rational wills who are otherwise quite separate from each other. It is quite different from a similar grouping within *Gemeinschaft* because all its activity must be restricted to a strictly *prescribed* aim, and to a prescribed means of attaining it, if it is to conform to the will of its members and thus be lawful. (By contrast, it is characteristic of the community-type union or combination to be as all-embracing as life itself and to derive its powers from within itself, not from outside.)

There are, of course, many such social arrangements which were set up for a definite purpose, but where the rationale for a contract is no longer clear, because no legal obligation ensued, that is to say, the general legal system would not recognise it as such. In this category belong other associations which have the outward appearance of a straight contract, but without the usual consequence of a tangible obligation that can be expressed in terms of money. "It is possible to imagine an agreement on the part of several people to meet regularly for instruction in science and art. This agreement may bear the outward form of a contract and, let us add, found an association, but no obligation concerning the agreed activity can ensue" (Savigny, *op. cit.*)²⁸ Thus an association may come into being which its members regard as a real person but which has no existence in the legal system (it is an 'artificial person' without legal capacity). This may be contrasted with the truly legal associations, and those most important for advanced commercial society, whose design and *purpose* is property. Their object is to *increase* wealth through a pooling of means. This applies particularly to combinations of *capital* for the purposes of money-lending, trade and production. Such an association wants to make a profit, just like the individual trader. To this end it will have acquired warehouses or ships, or machinery and materials. All its property belongs to the members, not as individuals but as a single undivided person. As such they have an interest in procuring, maintaining, and increasing their equipment. This is quite apart from their interest as individuals in the *income* to be distributed, which is, in fact, the ultimate aim to which the joint interest is subservient, and the reason why the whole agreement has been made. In the case of a real human individual, this division of roles could be made only in the abstract. Thus the device of the association demonstrates the basic community of motives even among individual rational actors in very clear way.

²⁸ Savigny, *Obligationenrecht*, vol. I, p. 9.

The actions of such an association are directed partly outwards and partly inwards to itself and its members. In the person of its representative, the association is primarily *responsible* to the members for actions directed towards third parties. For purposes of control over such actions they can set up a special representative body, which is most easily done in the shareholders' *annual general meeting*. This body in its turn is responsible to the members, bound like the 'person' of the association to proceed according to the fixed rules of a 'contract of mandate'.²⁹ But the internal activity of the association, i.e. the *distribution* on fixed dates of available profits between itself and its members (the results of its business transactions) also comes under the same special or generally recognised legal rules, and therefore, as far as the individuals are concerned, looks much the same as an external action. As such it is not the fulfilment of an obligation incurred by the association, but is only the consequence of its general [legal] obligation to administer the property of the company in an appropriate manner and in particular to the greatest possible advantage of the shareholders. In reality the share of every member is only a notional piece of his own property, placed under management over whose conduct he may or may not exert an influence. In this way someone can treat his business or business activities as if they belonged to another person (even though that imaginary person may be himself) and treat only his private property and income as his very own.

Nevertheless while those businesses may (in commercial law) feature as specific legal persons in relation to the outside world, they can never publicly proceed against their own principal, let alone against each other, because the principal is simply themselves in specific and recognised forms; so that, in most important respects, they are in fact one and the same person. Associations *differ* in this respect from *corporations*, at least as regards their legal status. Even though an association may have been formed for a *fixed* purpose, and may be identical with its principal, as an unlimited partnership it exists only for its members and is not distinct from them. It does not therefore represent a unified legal person, but simply a majority of the partners functioning in certain cases as a unit. It cannot be a *universitas*,³⁰ just as a business separate from its owner cannot

²⁹ Arrangements that were central to the 1880s' proposals for legal codification, eventually embodied in para. 662 of *Bürgerliches Gezetzbuch* of 1896.

³⁰ *universitas* – the later Roman law term for an undying corporation; for a succinct statement of its purchase in later political thought, see Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 203–6.

(although as a “firm” it may perpetuate his person). A corporation, on the other hand, or any company having legal capacity, will prove to be free and autonomous whenever it appears as a party requiring representation. It is inconceivable that it should not have obligations towards its shareholders or “actionaries”³¹ (so-called precisely because they can bring an action against the company) but it has complete ownership of the wealth contributed by them and, like any other person, is liable with its entire *property* for obligations incurred.

Other forms of legal persons or corporations, such as the co-operative company, where the partners have unlimited liability or liability exceeding their shares, are totally derived from special contracts; but in reality they must, like the unlimited partnership, be founded on community-type relations between the members in order to survive. Because of this they are not suited to *Gesellschaft*-type law, as experience confirms. Either they retain their character as unregulated legal persons, which becomes intolerable for their members, or else they lose it and degenerate into mere partnerships, which have been discussed already. By contrast, the *joint-stock company* – which is liable only for itself, and limited almost exclusively to making a profit – is the perfect type of all possible social and legal constructions based on rationality. This is precisely because, even in its origins (which can sometimes be misleading about the real nature of things) it is a *Gesellschaft* association without any admixture of the elements of Community.

Addition 1912. During recent decades co-operative associations consisting mainly of people without property have gained considerable influence and recognition, first for purchasing goods collectively and then themselves producing things of practical value for their own needs. In Germany these associations are called guilds or co-operatives, although they are known elsewhere by other names. Many small groups of this sort are coming together as co-operatives for wholesale purchase and even for mass production. The legal form of these co-operatives is based on limited liability and thus follows the pattern of the joint-stock company. Yet it is clear that a principle of communitarian-style economy has acquired a new lease of life. In a form adapted to the living conditions of mass commercial society, it is capable of development of the highest significance. This “antipodean” movement (as Staudinger³² calls it) is of

³¹ actionary – a shareholder in a joint-stock company.

³² Franz Staudinger, a close friend of Tönnies and authority on the co-operative movement, who died in 1920. His influence was acknowledged in the 1922 edition of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Karl Kurtius, 1922), p. viii.

great interest for the pure theory of social life as well. A renewal of family life and other forms of community, in conjunction with a deeper understanding of its nature and way of life, may be able to take root here, if anywhere. Since this book was written the moral necessity of such a renewal has impressed itself more and more upon the consciousness of those who have shown themselves capable of making clear and unbiased judgements about trends in modern society.

Addition 1922. After the terrible destruction which the system of market Society based on world capitalism has undergone, it is now marshalling its destructive forces even more ruthlessly. In the face of these events the call for 'Community' has grown louder and louder, very often with explicit or (as in the case of British guild socialism) tacit reference to this book.³³ This call is likely to arouse more confidence if it is not just voicing a Messianic hope based on "spirit" alone, for spirit as a special entity exists only in the world of ghosts. In order to come *alive*, it must be incarnate in a living principle capable of development. One such principle is the idea of co-operative self-sufficiency, if only it can guard itself against relapsing into management of a mere business concern.

³³ Tönnies was annoyed by the lack of reference to his work in the major text of British guild socialism, G. D. H. Cole's *Social Theory*, (London: Methuen, 1920). His ideas seem to have been known, however, within the British guild socialist movement (Peter Grosvener, 'A Mediaeval Future. The Social, Economic and Aesthetic Thought of A. J. Penty 1875-1937' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1997).

The natural element in law

15

The ancient philosophy of law was concerned with the problem of whether law was a product of nature (*physei*) or of artifice (*thesei* or *nomô*).¹ The response of modern theory is that everything originating from the human mind or formed by it is both natural and artificial. But in the course of development the artificial overtakes the natural, and the more specifically human – particularly the mental power of will – gains in scope and importance, until in the end it attains at least relative autonomy from its natural base and may even come into conflict with it.

Thus all community-type law is to be understood as a creation of the reflective human spirit. It is a system of thoughts, rules and maxims, comparable to an ‘organon’ or a productive process, which originated in a mass of inter-related activity and *practice*, and adapts previously undifferentiated material by means of development from the general to the particular.² Hence *Gemeinschaft* law is an end in itself, although it necessarily relates to that social whole to which it belongs, from which it originates, and of which it is in itself a special manifestation. It takes for granted a certain solidarity among human beings as a natural and necessary mode of existence; indeed, it assumes that a *protoplasm of law*³ is a

¹ *thesei* or *nomô* – literally ‘by adoption or custom’.

² cf Herbert Spencer, ‘Specialized Administration’, *Fortnightly Review*, 1871, reprinted in *Essays: Scientific, Political and Speculative*, vol. III (London: Williams and Norgate, 1891), pp. 401–44.

³ *Protoplasma des Rechts* – meaning that, by analogy with the biological sphere, the basic ‘elements’ of law will be present in any communal existence, waiting to be forged into a legal system.

spontaneous and inevitable product of collective life and thought. Further elaboration of this legal thought is due essentially to what could be called its own intrinsic development, that is, to the reasoned application of it by whoever first began it. This is what is meant by the theory that there is a law which nature teaches to all sentient beings and which as such is common to all mankind.⁴

Even though we are here thinking about law in a rather indefinite way, more precise implications can be drawn from it. Certainly the instinct which brings man and woman together is the nucleus of the common will that unites them and creates the family. Starting from this idea, it is possible to discover through analysis of all the different types of positive customary law the basis of those norms which regulate relationships within the household between man and wife, parents and children, masters and servants. These are, on the whole, independent of the idea of property, which gains greater importance only with the development of agriculture. Property as the visible domain of will forms the nucleus of a law of its own, which is more concerned with the relationships *between* families than between individual members *within* the family. An in-between area deals with relationships between representative family members, particularly heads of households, who have a certain superior status in common and are implicitly or explicitly governed by a certain common will or purpose. As this area of law expands they become separated and lose touch with each other, until finally father and son, man and wife, master and servant are ranged against one another as individuals of equal standing. By contrast, sellers of goods who are quite remote from and indifferent to one other, even naturally hostile, will meet with a mask of bonhomie to barter and exchange contracts. This *freedom* to get together, the *readiness* to do business, and the fundamental *similarity* of reasonable men will then seem to them quite 'natural'.

16

Natural law in this *latter* sense prevailed over the civil law of the Romans and of all political communities in ancient civilisation. It is well known that it was defined as the law common to all mankind, established by natural *reason* among human beings and therefore observed by all peoples in the same way, and even referred to as the 'common law' or the *jus*

⁴ A central principle of Roman law, *Digest*, paras. 1–9. On Tönnies's debt to Theodor Mommsen's translation of the *Digest*, see above, p. xxiii.

gentium.⁵ Starting from the normal assumption that development progresses from the general to the particular,⁶ the conclusion could be drawn that this ‘common law’ came earlier in time than the specific law of the cities. But what really happened is not consistent with this view. The ‘common law’ served the needs not of relations between cities or between citizens, but of everyone against everyone else, as naked individuals shorn of their different civic costumes. It was thrown into the melting-pot as a chemical reagent designed to dissolve all the widely varying subject matter into the same basic elements. Thus it came *later* than particular law; it was not its basis or underlying presupposition, but its sequel and antithesis. For the ‘common law’ is just a nuisance and obstruction to particular law; it is so simple and natural that it seems to have existed time out of mind, with no prior assumptions, and to have become obscured by the artificial devices and dogmas of positive law – whose removal would mean that the *original, natural* character of ‘common law’ would be restored.

At this point some unravelling of the contradiction is required, for confusion is almost inevitable here. The fact is that the primordial character of the ‘common law’ is *not really* to be understood as a question of time: on the contrary it is an *aeterna veritas* – an eternal truth existing in the mind as an ideal that could just as well be located in the distant future as in the past. To say that such a ‘common’ or ‘general’ law actually *existed* at any one time is not a view about what has happened in the historical past; it is a convenient hypothesis that will serve to translate the concept into reality in the future. Such a useful fiction is made more convincing by the notion that some element of universal humanity forms the kernel of all diverse practices and customs; and that a conscious understanding

⁵ The following sections draw heavily upon Maine’s account of the *ius civile* and *ius gentium* (Sir Henry Maine, *Ancient Law. Its Connection with the Early History of Society and its Relation to Modern Ideas* (London: John Murray, 1861) – Tönnies appears to have used the revised tenth edition of 1884. The German phrase that Tönnies uses for *ius gentium* (translated by Maine as ‘the Law of Nations’ or ‘Law of all the Nations’) is *das gemeine Recht*, which is often translated back into English as ‘common law’. But the idea of a ‘common law of nations’ is something quite distinct from regular English usage of the term ‘common law’, meaning the ‘common law system’, based on judge-made case law, that prevails in England and Wales, much of the USA, and many parts of the British Commonwealth. On pp. 219–20 Tönnies adds to the possible confusion by implying, quite erroneously, that English common law is a form of *das gemeine Recht* in the sense of *ius gentium*. In the text we have placed Tönnies’s use of ‘common law’ (meaning *ius gentium*) in single quotation marks to distinguish it from his references to English common law.

⁶ i.e. Spencer’s ‘law of increasing heterogeneity’ (Herbert Spencer, *A System of Synthetic Philosophy*, vol. I, fourth edition (London: Williams and Norgate, 1880), chs. xiv–viii).

of this kernel, quite apart from general experience, coincides with the dictates of reason. To quote Sir Henry Maine:

Jus Gentium was, in fact, the sum of the common ingredients in the customs of the old Italian tribes, for they were *all the nations* whom the Romans had the means of observing, and who sent successive swarms of immigrants to Roman soil. Whenever a particular usage was seen to be practised by a large number of separate races in common, it was set down as part of the Law common to all Nations, or Jus Gentium. Thus, although the conveyance of property was certainly accompanied by very different forms in the numerous commonwealths surrounding Rome, the actual transfer, tradition, or delivery of the article intended to be conveyed was a part of the ceremonial in all of them . . . [*and seemed, I would add, to represent the essence of the matter*] . . . It was consequently interpreted as an institution of the common law (H. Maine, *Ancient Law*, p. 49).⁷

Even when the range of experience became wider and included the more highly developed Greek legal system, the basic elements in the many different versions of contract were found in all of them to be purchase, rent, deposit and mandate,⁸ as well as the institutions of marriage, guardianship, etc., albeit in a motley of variegated guises. And so the basic framework of matching legal forms was acknowledged as being necessary and universal in all cultures.

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The conclusion reached from all this was that it was essential for everyone to be able to *trade* and form *relationships* with one another as and when they wished. Everyone was to have total freedom, apart from obligations undertaken, contracts made, or relationships entered into, of his own free will. But this freedom would have been incompatible not only with an institution like slavery, but also with paternal authority (other than that over children and the insane) and with all the laws that in any city, such as Rome, put the indigenous citizen and his property in a position of privilege over

⁷ This is Tönnies's somewhat doctored version of Maine's text. The words in square brackets were interpolated as a comment by Tönnies. The final half-sentence, 'diese wurde folglich aufgefaßt als Institution des gemeinen Rechtes', is also an abbreviated and distorted version of Maine's text, which reads '*Tradition, therefore, being in all probability the only common ingredient in the modes of conveyance which the juriconsults had the means of observing, was set down as an institution Juris Gentium, or rule of the Law common to all Nations.*'

⁸ *Mandat* = the authorisation of an agent or deputy.

the foreigner. As ideas changed over time, so it came to seem that the law-makers had arbitrarily erected all those barriers [of privileges conferred under civil law] *contrary* to the dictates of nature. Nevertheless, the basic principle of this view – that human beings are by nature intrinsically rational, free and equal – was overridden by the view propounded by Ulpian and other jurists, which claimed to be more deeply grounded in history.⁹

Ulpian's approach *distinguishes* between natural law and the 'common law', and even asserts that there is an essential *opposition* between these two layers. For although the 'common law' is portrayed as an *intermediate* stage between natural and civil law, at the same time he treats civil law as simply an appendage to and specialised development of that earlier natural law. On this view natural law is the embodiment of arrangements which are also found among animals, while those of the 'common law' are peculiar to mankind. The latter are therefore based, not on natural reason, but on a much more general necessity entailed in social life. It might have seemed obvious to infer that some of this element of necessity might also be present in the specifically human institutions of common or civil law. And when it was claimed and conceded that it is precisely the general element, and only that, which includes necessity and as such has to be taken into account, the sceptical question might then have been raised: what is this general element all about? The answer would have been that there are indeed separate peoples and kingdoms, forms of slavery and property, business deals and obligations, and that only *some* of these institutional growths and variations can be ascribed to *civil* law.

It is clear that we have here a quite different view of the general or universal element, which produces quite different conclusions. Certain types of bonding and close relationship are indeed inherent in the very conception of man as an animal, which are not prompted by any will, let alone by any human will. But it does not follow that they exist among other animal species or that a human being could or should have such relationships with an animal. Neither does it follow that, *because they are common* to all mankind, everyone could make these relationships with everyone else if only he wanted to. Nor can such conclusions necessarily be applied

⁹ A reference to Justinian's *Digest*, para. 1. Tönnies's comment on the triumph of Ulpian's account is rather puzzling, since Maine himself states that Ulpian was overridden by Gaius ('a much higher authority'), and later authorities see Ulpian's view, that natural law was shared with animals, as quite untypical of Roman law theory (Maine, *Ancient Law*, pp. 52–3; H. F. Jolowicz, *Historical Introduction to the Study of Roman Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. 105.

to specifically human institutions. On the contrary: the idea of man relates to the idea of the animal, or to a strictly defined genus of animal, in the way that the idea of, say, the Hellene relates to that of humanity in general. Thus human beings mate only with human beings, although mating is also customary among animals; in the same way the Greek man has to live in *legal union* with the Greek woman, although marriage is a general custom among human beings. I admit of course that intercourse may occur with any human female; indeed even with animals (though revolting to mention) it is physiologically *possible*.

18

The *universal occurrence of marriage among human beings* means two things: firstly, that such sexually based living together between men and women is generally going to occur *anyway*; and secondly, that each people or nation, or even each city, expresses this universal idea in a particular way and attaches certain conditions to marriage that make it valid according to its own will and law. Consequently just as every human *qua* human is born subject to a definite law, so the Roman *qua* Roman is subject to an even more definite one. There is no reason in this instance why the universal law should be the more correct and rational. The ‘universal’ in its former sense assumes a legal order which rules over mankind as Roman law rules over Roman citizens. But even in its latter sense the ‘common law’ of nations can be seen as an order which is not just imposed and recognised in an objective way, but lives in the human heart as a feeling for what is necessary and good, and a revulsion against evil; that is, as the law of conscience. As Cicero’s rhetoric puts it:

This law is not written but inborn; we have not learned, acquired or read it, but received and drawn it from Nature herself, who imprinted it on us. We were not instructed in it but created for it, not educated in it but endowed with it (Pro Milone, c. X).¹⁰

Both humans and animals have a maternal instinct, but in human beings the instinct has also been developed into a sense of duty. Thus matriarchy [*Mutterrecht*] is a part of the ‘common law’.¹¹ The illegitimate child belongs to the mother and takes her social status. This order of things is

¹⁰ A reference to Cicero’s famous appeal to natural law on behalf of the tribune Milo, who had killed the gangster, Clodius, in self-defence.

¹¹ Johann Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht, eine Untersuchung über die Gynokokratie der alten Welt nach ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur* (Stuttgart: Kreis und Hoffman, 1861), was acknowledged by Tönnies as one of his major sources (above, p. 23).

made more weighty and venerable through being embodied in commandments and prohibitions, giving it greater moral significance. Incest likewise is forbidden in ‘common law’ as an abomination; extra-marital relations of other sorts are seen as an evil in sacred law chiefly because of their undesirable consequences. For natural law is also holy law – it is God’s law, and comes under the control of the priesthood.

It is a different matter, however, when the comparable case of the civil law is extended into an unlimited sphere so that it becomes a global system of law. This may happen if the umbilical connection that bound it to the more primitive and quasi-matriarchal ‘common law’ has been severed (or if one process precipitates the other). For from then on the civil law is merely an arbitrary system of legal restraint which has set limits to and goes on limiting the continuing practical freedom of human beings. This restraint can also be thrown off, just as two parties to a contract can dissolve the link which binds them. *Arbitrariness* is a characteristic of every particular legal order, *necessity* only of a general or world order – though even this does not mean necessity in the form of concrete reality, but as a means to a rational way of life which the thinking person *is obliged* to take for granted and affirm. The more people come together as “mere people”, or to put it another way, the more people of diverse kinds come together and recognise each other as rational human beings or as equals, the more probable and ultimately necessary it becomes that a universal order and system of Society be established among them. This intermingling takes place practically through trade and commerce. The rule of Rome over the *orbis terrarum*, which has its material foundation in commerce, brings all cities closer to the one city, and gathers together all the shrewd, bargaining, prosperous individuals, the entire ruling elite of this boundless empire, all haggling together in the Forum. It erases their differences and inequalities, gives them all the same outward appearance, the same language and form of expression, the same currency, the same culture, the same covetousness and the same curiosity. The *abstract human being*, that most artificial, ‘routinised’ and sophisticated of all machines, has been conjured up and constructed, and can be observed – like an apparition – in the bright unglamorous light of day.

In this new, disintegrating, revolutionary, levelling sense, universal natural law is an out-and-out regime of *Gesellschaft*, manifest in its purest form in the law of trade or commerce. To begin with it appears quite

harmless; it is just 'progress' – things are refined, improved, and made easier; it represents fairness, reason and enlightenment. Outer structures remain the same, even amid the moral atrophy of the empire.¹² On the one hand we have the perfecting, widespread application, and universalisation of *law*, culminating in its systematisation and codification; on the other we see the decline of *life* and morals within the splendid edifice of the state, with its mighty *pax romana* and its swift, sure and liberal administration of justice. Both trends have been described often enough for our edification. But few seem to recognise that these movements necessarily hang together as a piece and interact with each other. Even learned scholars are scarcely ever able to free themselves from making judgements based on personal likes and dislikes, and to arrive at an impartial, strictly objective understanding of the physiology and pathology of social life. They admire the Roman empire and its law; they deplore the decay of the family and of morality. They are unable to look further and train their sights upon the causal connection between the two phenomena. And certainly, in the real organic world there is no distinction between cause and effect (they are like ball-bearings which both push and are pushed). Rational, scientific, liberalised law did not become possible until individuals were in fact emancipated from all ties of family, country and home town, of belief and superstition, of inherited tradition, custom and duty. This meant the decline of the working and sharing communal household in village and town, of the agricultural community, and of civic art fostered in the religious-cum-patriotic craft guilds. It meant the triumph of egoism, insolence, falsehood and affectation, of avarice, pleasure-seeking and ambition. But it also meant victory for the clear, sober, speculative self-consciousness with which learned and educated people can dare to confront things human and divine.

This process can never be regarded as complete. To some extent it finds its ultimate and crowning expression in the imperial declaration which conferred Roman citizenship on all free men within the empire, granting them access to law-courts and freeing them from taxes. That this was not followed by a constitution which declared all slaves free as well, was perhaps an expression of extreme honesty – or extreme stupidity – on the part of the emperors and jurists. For they might have known that this would *not* have made any difference to the peace and prosperity of social

¹² *das Kaiserreich*. The rest of the paragraph indicates that Tönnies is here referring to the Roman empire; but the implied analogy with the German empire in the 1880s is emphasised by the fact that the passage is in the present tense.

conditions. The old system of household service had long since vanished, or was in a state of collapse. Formal slavery was a rather apathetic and ineffectual matter, as formal freedom would also have been, at least in terms of civil law. Absolute freedom of the individual and absolute despotism (whether of Caesar or the state) are not opposites. They are simply two sides of the same coin. They may quarrel to a certain extent, but by nature they are allies.

20

Within Christian civilisation a process is being repeated similar to that of the ancient world: namely the breakdown of life and law (although the law preserves its integrity as a *formal system*). We see the same sequence of intermingling and universalisation, of levelling and mass movement on an ever-grander scale, as territories themselves become greater. Trade across the oceans is more diverse and far-reaching than in the Mediterranean, industrial technology has become more complicated and science more powerful. In its control over external resources our whole civilisation looks like a continuation of the classical world. Making use of this heritage it may project its edifice towards the stars, though at the cost of harmony in style and way of life. Similarly the adoption of the ready-made system of *global Roman law* has served, and still serves, to further the development of mass commercial Society in a large part of the Christian-Germanic world. As a scientifically developed system of great clarity, simplicity and logical consistency, it seemed to be the “written word of reason” itself. This ‘reason’ favoured all those with wealth and power, enabling them to make their wealth and power absolute and unconditional. It was necessary for merchants, but equally so for all the grandees who wanted to transform their rents in kind or service into cash incomes; and likewise for the princes who needed new revenues to cover the costs of larger standing armies and an expanding establishment at court. It would be wrong, however, to regard Roman law as the [crucial] cause or influence in bringing about this whole development. It was only a serviceable tool, ready to hand, employed not as a rule with deliberate calculation, but in the honest belief that it was right and appropriate. In England the same development has been taking place even down to the present day without Roman law, or with only relatively slight influence from it. English common law (the law of *Gemeinschaft*) has been gradually overshadowed by statute law (the law of *Gesellschaft*), and the principle

of personal property has emerged victorious over the principle of real property.¹³

The general private law relating to contracts is only another aspect of the general contractual process of trade and exchange, and grows in tandem with it until it is properly set out in a codified commercial and maritime law. This is obviously limited to national interests, and is merely accidental and provisional in character. In this form it is independent of Roman law, since the facts and circumstances have moved on beyond that original basis. Indeed, it has largely evolved from the day-to-day practices (including money-lending and the discounting of bills of exchange¹⁴) of those using it. But Roman law has played a decisive part in the break-up of all aspects of *Gemeinschaft* that are opposed to the construction of private law as it relates to commercially competent individuals. Property tied to a community or subject to obligations is an absurd anomaly for rational legal theory. The statement that nobody can be kept in a community against his will (*nemo in communione potest invitus detineri*),¹⁵ strikes at the very roots of community law. Family law is preserved only in so far as the family is envisaged as being composed of legal minors, which means that the wife falls into the same category as children, and children into the same category as servants. The concept of the servant as a slave who could be freely bought and sold (which he was not, in Roman law, as long as the *res mancipi* remained distinct) is a rudimentary principle of market Society.¹⁶ And since women eventually achieve social independence, and hence civil emancipation, marriage with its joint ownership of property is bound to degenerate into a civil contract. Even though this contract is not for a fixed period, it must still be capable of being termi-

¹³ Tönnies was here echoing a rather misleading throw-away line in Maine's *Ancient Law*, p. 273. The statement about the victory of 'personal' over 'real' property refers to the fact that in post-feudal England the law of real property gradually shed many features that prevented land from being treated as a pure commodity. But this was as much the work of the common law as of legislation; and in English law the 'commodification' of land did not mean that it ceased to be 'real property'.

¹⁴ Tönnies employs here the single word *Usance*, which can mean (a) money-lending; (b) the period allowed for redemption of a bill of exchange; or (c) simply 'custom' or 'practice'.

¹⁵ Not a standard phrase in Roman law. It may refer to a principle, propounded by Ulpian, that individuals could not be compelled to remain in business partnerships (*Vocabularium Iuris Prudentiae Romanae* (Berolini: Georgium Reimerum, 1903), vol. I, p. 91).

¹⁶ A reference to the two distinct procedures for the sale of property under ancient Roman law. The *res mancipi*, which applied to land, slaves and beasts of burden, involved a ceremonial act of conveyance before witnesses, whereas for other goods the *res nec mancipi* allowed a much simpler process of transfer. The two procedures were combined and simplified under Justinian (Maine, *Ancient Law*, pp. 273-9).

nated at any time by mutual agreement, and the restriction to monogamy becomes merely fortuitous. These are some of the most important trends in the continuous advance of unstoppable disintegration.

Alongside Roman law and twinned with it, we find the philosophical and rationalistic *natural law* of modern times.¹⁷ From the start this modern natural law found that the most important areas in which it might have had an effect were already occupied either by the revival of Roman law or by case law. It was relegated to the task of building up public law as its own particular sphere; and here it has remained in vogue (albeit somewhat surreptitiously), despite the mortal blow supposedly dealt to it by the *historical* interpretation of Roman jurisprudence. As a medium for the influence of public on private law, or of the state on Society, the natural law revival was of course earlier employed for purposes of codification and legislative reconstruction; and this role has not yet come to an end.¹⁸ Having served the evolution of the ruling classes, it is making a new appearance as part of the programme of the oppressed classes, in demands for the full product of a worker's own labour, and in opposition to unearned incomes acquired by cunning or luck. This amounts to a revival of the mediaeval church's proscription of usury. This struggle is being waged in the most direct and far-reaching way against free and absolute private ownership of land, because of the coming to light of the most flagrant malpractice in land speculation. And in addition, the ancient and inborn memory of a community right, that has remained slumbering in the popular mind like a grain of corn in an Egyptian mummy, is still capable of sprouting. For natural law, if understood as the idea of justice, is an eternal and inalienable possession of the human spirit.

¹⁷ i.e. the school of Grotius, Pufendorf and their successors.

¹⁸ A reference to the post-1870 debate over the introduction of a common legal code for the German empire, which resulted in rejection of the draft code of 1888. In this controversy, rationalistic legal theorists influenced by Roman and natural law clashed with an opposition led by Gierke, who claimed that the proposed code would sacrifice customary communal rights to absolute rights of property. A revised version, making certain concessions to defenders of communal rights, was passed by the Reichstag in 1896, and remains the basis of modern German law (M. F. John, "The Final Unification of Germany": Politics and the Codification of German Civil Law in the *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* of 1896' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1983). For Tönnies's criticisms of both sides in this debate, see Tönnies to Harald Höffding, 19 Oct. 1888 (*Ferdinand Tönnies, Harald Höffding, Briefwechsel*, ed. Cornelius Bickel and Rolf Fechner (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1989), pp. 38–9).

Inter-related forms of will – commonwealth and state

21

If the theory that I am putting forward is going to retain the concept of natural law in its twofold sense, it must include the proposition that law can be understood as a *collective* expression of both natural will and rational will. The root of individual natural will, however, is to be found in the sub-conscious vegetative life, whereas individual rational will stems from the possibility of combining two conscious ideas of similar or competing utility. The root of the will of a Community thus lies hidden in the vegetative life, for family and kinship affairs are 'vegetative' in the sociological sense, in that they form the substantive basis of human life together. The root of Society's will, by contrast, is the meeting of individual minds, intersecting at the point of an exchange which is rational or right for both of them. Just as sympathy and mutual understanding are always derived from a more general principle, which we have termed concord, so we have learnt that isolated rational calculation needs the basic conception of the rational will of Society for its complete fulfilment. In the case of natural will, a real objective 'esprit' or common spirit arises out of the material life and constitutes its way of thinking and developing. In the case of the rationally calculating will, a tiny fragment of objective purpose is formed, which has to fit into a whole that is totally unconditioned and has an objective existence quite independent of the person doing the willing.

We shall now go on to expand upon other processes of will found within *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. In doing this we must remember that these wider processes can be examined only where they possess binding inner force, or where they influence individual wills. Seen in this

way, the process of mutual understanding corresponds to personal liking or preference, while the process of social concord is related to individual outlook and disposition, and the one can be explained in terms of the other. Similarly I shall define the general counterpart of habit as *custom*, and the general counterpart of feeling and emotion as *manners and mores*. Custom and mores thus make up the 'animal' faculty of human Community. They presuppose a regularly repeated common activity; whatever its origins may be, through practice and tradition such activity becomes easy, natural and taken for granted – and hence in certain circumstances is taken as binding *necessity*. The most important customs of a people are connected with the events of family life – birth, marriage, death – which occur with regularity and, although they most closely affect individual households, also concern all those living nearby, whether they will or no. Where clan and community are one and the same, the community itself is one large family. It comes to look upon the individual families as its members or component parts; and the more any particular family attains a position of prominence or nobility, the stronger and readier is its general involvement in the community (if no disruptive factors intervene). This is what custom always implies. Its original meaning, however, which is in part simply spontaneous action, in part the symbolic expression or outward sign of some underlying purpose, can become an empty form or (like everything to do with memory) sink into oblivion. The underlying purpose may be to consolidate or preserve a community; then comes the desire to foster and exalt the feelings relating to it, such as love, respect and commemorative piety. Or it may be an attempt to achieve some good and to ward off evil, in a form that reflects the prevailing belief about relations of cause and effect. Among a primitive and imaginative people this will usually mean communication with good or evil spirits.

22

For a *settled* people the true substance of the will of the Community, embracing numerous individual customs, lies in its *moral assumptions*.¹ We

¹ The following section constitutes one of Tönnies's most sustained rhetorical passages – the effect being built up by a series of *be*-words to indicate the march of agriculture – *bewohnt, bebaut, besessen* – the land is inhabited, then cultivated, then possessed. The passage also illustrates some of the ambiguities, mentioned in the introduction, in Tönnies's portrayal of his own outlook and method.

have noted that in addition to the Community of blood we have the Community of homeland or *native soil*, which exercises new influences on people's minds and hearts and so acts partly as a substitute for kinship and partly as a complement to it. Land has a mind of its own which tames the roving spirit of nomadic families. The woman giving birth, adding a new link to the chain of life, is symbolic of the link in time between human beings; in the same way land signifies the close relationship of a group of people co-existing together, who have to live by rules which are, metaphorically speaking, embodied in the land itself.

At this point in time the *inhabited* earth enfolds the people, as a child is protected by the figure of its mother. Nourishment flows like a free gift from her broad bosom; as well as trees, plants and animals, she seems from the dawn of time to have brought forth mankind from her womb, and they see themselves as earth-born, the aboriginal inhabitants of this territory. The land supports their tents and dwellings, and the firmer and more durable the buildings become, the more the people become attached to their own particular plot. The relationship grows stronger and deeper when the land is *cultivated*. When iron bites into its flesh and the sod is turned, wild nature is conquered and tamed just as the animals of the forest are domesticated. But all this is the gradual, constantly repeated work of countless generations, like a well-developed physical organ, and it is handed on from father to son, both as the son's biological inheritance and as a challenge to his own industry and powers of improvement. The territory *possessed*² and claimed is thus a common inheritance, the land of fathers and forefathers. In relation to this land the people perceive themselves and relate to each other as true heirs and successors and blood brothers. Seen in this way the land can appear to be a living substance which endures with its spiritual or psychological values while human beings, essential but transitory, come and go.

As a domain of common will the land represents not only the connections between those who are living at the *same* time, but also the unity between *succeeding* generations. Next to the ties of blood, *habit* is what forms the strongest link between contemporaries, and in the same way *memory* is what keeps the living and the dead together, so that the dead are known, feared and honoured. Home as the place of cherished memories binds the heart, makes parting difficult, and lures back those in distant parts with homesickness and longing. Home is where the *ancestors*

² *besessen* = both the past participle of *besitzen*, 'to possess' in the legal sense, or to 'sit down upon' in the physical sense, but also 'possessed' in the sense of psychological obsession.

lived and lie buried, where the spirits of the departed still linger, hovering over the roofs and around the walls, protective and caring, but with the power to command that they should be remembered. Such a place has a special and enhanced significance for simple and pious minds. This feeling already existed in home and family even when tents were carried from one camp to the next and the land was valued only for its free and copious gifts, which did not require men to be settled; it bore trees and plants, harboured animals for hunting, and eventually provided grazing for domestic animals. But the feeling for the land grows stronger the more house and farm become permanent and seem to be one with the earth. When it has been cultivated, the earth contains the living energy, the veritable blood and sweat, invested in it by those now dead, and it claims the grateful *thanks* of those who now enjoy it. The *metaphysical character* of the clan or tribe, and even of the village, market and town community, is, so to speak, wedded to the land – they live with it in a lawful, permanent union like the marriage bond. Customary mores in this instance correspond to the growth of habit in marriage.

23

In ancient beliefs and myths, the husband fulfilling the duties of a legal union was likened to the work of the farmer who ploughs and sows. The children of such a union are like the fruit of the cultivated field, while illegitimate children are likened to reeds growing in the bog. Hence social mores, together with the law of custom based on them, are as much concerned with the regulation, strengthening and hallowing of true marriage (especially where it develops into pure monogamy), as with apportioning, protecting and utilising the fields. Where these two spheres are linked, possession and privilege for individual families and their members, together with dowry and succession by inheritance are regulated by *customary law*.

[In such a setting] our mores, the mores of our fathers, of the country and the people are all one and the same thing. These customary moral assumptions have more to do with practice than with feeling and opinion; when they are broken or transgressed, they proclaim their vigorous emotions of pain and indignation in the form of deed and doom. The more noticeably they are threatened with change, the more strongly opinion sticks up for them – the opinion of older people against that of younger ones. It is mores and customary law that chiefly rule in a village community and in the countryside around the villages. This is the authentic,

communal, general will, and the people who are bound by it, both masters and servants, run their lives in their greater or lesser spheres according to its precepts, believing that they must do this because everybody does it and their fathers did it; it is right because it has always been that way.

Social concord and social mores are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, but they can come into conflict and their boundaries may change considerably in relation to each other. They necessarily have in common the fact that they are concerned with keeping the peace; they seek first of all (in a *passive* way) to ward off the numerous causes of *strife*, but also to settle and reconcile existing quarrels. Social concord, being the spirit of families and close groups, is mainly responsible for the first of these tasks, social mores for the second. In the confined domestic circle all sorts of squabbles and frictions are more likely to occur because of constant close proximity – especially where contenders are equally matched in age, strength and demands – but they also pass more quickly. With changing moods and emotions, they are soon repented of and forgiven, and they are more readily submitted to the head of the household, the (in this case wholly unquestioned) natural authority who unites in himself a variety of powers in a concrete and clearly understood fashion.

Over the course of time such authority may become something of a formality, passed on as a merely conventional notion, and the circle may expand so that the ties of kinship are replaced by no more than relationships between neighbours. When this happens discord may become less frequent but it will be correspondingly deeper and more bitter. It will arise from arrogance, and love of power and possession, as well as from hatred, envy and vindictiveness. In such cases the power of traditional norms, embodying both ascertained facts and the stored-up experience of precedent, must play its part in healing divisions which spring from violations of, or challenges to, existing spheres of freedom, property or honour. But social concord and social mores may also work together for peace in a *positive* way; they reinforce individual relationships that exist naturally or are based on habit, and make it a duty to be friendly and helpful. They provide a more direct expression for family spirit, that primordial and ideal unity and harmony of heart and mind, and a more graphic, symbolic expression for customs, thus both invoking them and keeping them alive. This is the meaning and value of festivals and ceremonies, which provide orderly and harmonious forms for the sharing of joy and sorrow, and for the community to worship a higher divine power.

Social concord allows an order and harmony, contained in its very nature and inner core, to develop as the form and content of community life, so that every member does what is right for him, what he must or is obliged to do; each of them enjoys what is his own, and what is right and proper for him to enjoy. This means that concord is part of the instinctive, animal nature of man; it therefore *precedes* all human culture or history and for its development needs only unhindered *growth*, which requires no more than favourable *external* conditions – though these may also depend, of course, on *historical* circumstances. By contrast, the inner character of social mores can be understood only in terms of the developed mental capacities of human beings and the work which they do. Social mores develop in conjunction with this work, especially, as already described, with agriculture, and become more extensive the more these and other arts are practised with skill and intelligence. Thus in an ordinary community everything like duty and privileges, and all particular matters of this kind, must derive from a general consensus of power and natural will, developed through its own special skills and activities. Insofar as the community itself has collectively given rise to such activities, and demonstrates the power and will to do so through its institutions (differing rights and privileges being related to the whole), then the community's will constitutes the prevailing system of mores and (positive) law. By these means the community relates to individuals or to individual groups in the same way as an organism relates to its tissues and organs. This gives rise to the concepts of 'offices' and 'estates', which, by being *permanent* and even *hereditary* in families, increase and confirm both their dependence upon the whole and their special privileges.³ But this will happen only if the one is not done at the expense of the other, in view of the constant probability and danger that the serving, subordinate members may become more 'dependent', while the ruling authorities acquire the 'privileges'. For it is natural that even subordinates should have some decisive influence on the whole, and rulers too should be defined as organic parts who serve the whole and must be guided by it.

All these relationships and the arrangements connected with them, however they may appear, are laws of custom and belong to *positive* law, i.e. they are part of the general will in so far as it represents custom and

³ *die Freiheit* in the sense of privilege, immunity, special entitlement (as in 'freedom of the city').

customary morality. The people of a country, as subjects and upholders of this positive law, are what I shall call a *commonwealth*. A commonwealth is the people *organised* as a particular, individual 'self' or 'person', which may relate to its members or organs in a variety of possible ways. For these people the existence of a commonwealth represents an institution of *natural* law, yet by the very act of its creation it may be thought of as crossing over into the sphere of positive law. For every bonding together to form an independent entity depends on a mutual understanding – while the fact that it already exists in common memories and language gives it objective psychological reality for most people. And similarly the primordial organic connection between human beings, which is maintained by social concord, develops at a certain level and under certain conditions into the idea and essence of a commonwealth. This cannot come into being by means of a moral code, since the very existence of a moral code presupposes that a commonwealth already exists.

We must now identify which of the characteristics and qualities in the arrangements or constitution of a commonwealth are essential, necessary and (in the more precise sense of the term) 'natural' to it, and which are merely accidental, artificially constructed, and therefore changeable. Here the following types come to mind: 1. the patriarchal commonwealth, where the basic institution of common ownership of land exists, but is *not yet* wholly essential; 2. the rural commonwealth, where that basis exists and is wholly indispensable; 3. the town commonwealth, where common ownership still exists, but is *no longer* absolutely essential. These terms can only do partial justice to the fluid and many-sided nature of the arrangements that they cover. Household, village and town – each of which can be a commonwealth – are also prototypes for larger complexes within which they may live and grow. The isolated household is the most remote from the character of an independent commonwealth, the separate town is the closest. Thus we can imagine that a very wide, general area could see itself as a patriarchal, ethnically homogenous, commonwealth, that would include many more limited rural or village neighbourhoods, a very few of which would eventually grow into narrowly confined urban areas. This is how we think of a whole realm, which divides into large provinces or tribal areas; and these in turn divide up into country estates, villages and towns. The town will not contain several commonwealths within itself – unless it be made up of villages – but it will divide up into corporations and households or ultimately into individuals. At the same time there may be domains, villages and towns which belong directly to

the kingdom and its legal system; and likewise there may be corporations and [religious] foundations which come directly under a particular province and provincial law.

25

The notion of a commonwealth relates to that of a Community in the way that ‘animal’ (*zoon*) relates to ‘plant’ (*phyton*). The general notion of a living being is embodied in a simpler form by plants, in a more advanced form by animals. In the same way the idea of a *social* body is conveyed more simply by the term Community, but more completely by the term commonwealth. The community of a household concentrates entirely upon itself and is active in relation to itself, just as a plant fulfils its life in mere existence, nourishment and propagation. The commonwealth by contrast is like an animal, and in an animal there are specially developed organs which are directed outwards for purposes of defence, hunting and conquering – always *fighting*, but fighting so as to preserve its essential physical or ‘vegetative’ functions. The animal’s nervous and muscular systems equip it with co-ordinated perception and movement. The parallel within the commonwealth is the *army*. From among the many units, some will be sent out in advance and become skilled in *reconnaissance* of friend or foe, booty or danger. They develop into leaders and communicate the signals they pick up to the others. Thus the authority of leadership is operative in every circle. The paramount authority of this kind is that of the *king*, which will be more or less clearly distinguished from all the rest. Commonwealth and army will remain at a low level of development as long as the whole people or tribe is nomadic and always ready for fighting or raiding. Only the menfolk can be warriors, and a proper army will be made up of adult males. It must be replenished from the boys who are left behind, so its strength depends to a great extent on the ability of the women to bear and raise strong male children. The commonwealth is not just the army, but the whole system of families, clans and communities; the army, however, acts on its behalf, being a united force directed towards and interacting with the outside world.

The organised assembly of the menfolk, is marked out as a leading, decision-making group from the basic multitude of reasonable *adult* persons (who as ‘the people’ form a natural unity that excludes children, old people, foreigners and servants, but *includes* women). The assembly enjoys its privileges and its prerogative only *as* an assembly of those able

to bear arms, and as such it *could* entirely oust and replace that larger and more basic group. Each of its sections is organised around its chieftain or leader, and all groups together rally round their common chieftain, prince or king, whether he is a man chosen by election or preordained to his role by tradition and religious belief. It is this hereditary element which is proclaimed as the essential one through the collective feeling of the kinship group, so that election only confirms the tradition or supplies a substitute when the line has failed or the tradition has been lost. The less the selection appears open to free choice,⁴ the more it seems to require divine help and inspiration for its success – just as the casting of *lots* entrusts the choice to fate or to an unseen power. These notions live on so long as a sense of objective unity actively protects them from being destroyed by self-consciousness on the part of those who hold them. This unity is most perfectly represented by the agreement and unanimity of the multitude, then by the joint discussion and resolutions of the leaders, and finally by the decisive will of the individual prince. And these forces must be coordinated in order to achieve concerted action. This is unlikely and difficult to achieve if they do not have familiar and trusted binding norms that are independent of any particular decisions that they might make. Thus none of these organs, nor all of them together, however inwardly or outwardly united, can ‘make’ justice; they can only discover it. They are under the law, not above it.

26

An army which exists to defend or conquer land must consist of men who have a direct share in the *ownership* of the land, for only such men could naturally have a strong desire to fight for it and feel in duty bound to do so. Nevertheless, it is agriculture which first makes the land valuable. A martial community may be involved in serious fighting or merely in tournaments, or it may apply the same cast of mind to the war against the animal world in the age-old pursuit of hunting; but such people are hardly suited to devote themselves to the toil of running a homestead with its ploughing, sowing and reaping. Wherever fighting is in general a necessity or a habit, work in the fields and stock-rearing will be left to women and servants. But in settled times where the commonwealth of a whole

⁴ *Je weniger aber die Wahl als willkürliche gedacht wird*; i.e. it is the free choice of a leader by his followers that is ‘arbitrary’, whereas divine choice or casting lots is the reverse of arbitrary.

people is spread over a wide area, only the *borders* of the realm have to be protected – with the result that eventually heavily armed *mounted* troops become the regular army unit, though there will be far fewer of them. Then a special *warrior caste* is formed from men who were formerly only the leaders of smaller or larger sub-groups. Since this caste unites lords of the most ancient lineage with the most direct descendants of the clan's ancestors, it becomes identified with the order of *nobility*, and this is what it comes to be called.

The nobility enjoys certain privileges and freedoms in a special extended sense, i.e. in relation to the entire realm, or, in a more limited sense, to the region which it is called upon to protect or even to extend. Compared with the nobility, the freedom of the *common people* is more restricted, unless they continue to be themselves willing and able to serve in the army or to send suitable substitutes – or if they belong to a smaller commonwealth which remains free of such commitments and needs only to prove its attachment to the larger realm by material services to the sovereign. The nobility may in part manage their own property, in which case they are much on a par with the villagers; or – what is far more common – they manage through a class of totally dependent serfs, recruited originally from a conquered population, from immigrant foreigners or from the offspring, particularly illegitimate ones, of the free people. If this is insufficient, then the nobility are fed and cared for by contributions, dues and services from the peasants who live around their castles. Even though imposed by custom, such contributions can be considered *voluntary* so long as the village communities are held by sacred, long-standing tradition to be the lawful owners of their common land. The baron or knight is lord over the peasants in the political sense, i.e. in relation to the commonwealth; but in the economic sense, i.e. in the sense of the original patriarchal community which must form the basis of every commonwealth, he is their subordinate. In his relation to them, he is dependent on their good will and is maintained by them so that he may act as the Community's instrument and servant.

27

Every commonwealth forms a region which is composed of many estates, villages and towns, or it may be divided up into a confederation of such regions. Each of these lesser regions, if it is firmly settled on its own land and is capable of defending itself, is liable to become a commonwealth in

its own right. If it succeeds, and is not itself in turn composed of potential smaller commonwealths, it offers the most perfect and profound expression of a commonwealth. When people are living close together and there is less likelihood of the kind of internal frictions that threaten to arise among independent armed factions, they can act as an effective military assembly and hence as a competent judicial body as well. In this sense the city which dominates a certain region is the embodiment of the idea of commonwealth. Like the *polis* of Hellenic civilisation, it may even be the sole true commonwealth, which shares in the setting-up of any higher commonwealth only as a member of a confederation. This notion of a higher commonwealth may be thought of as an original and suggestive idea that can exist only through the medium of the creative visionary imagination found in myth. Or, like the free city of Germanic culture, it can be seen as part and parcel of a province or empire, where it stands out from the rest of the country because of its wealth and power – and, together with other cities of a similar kind, takes its place as a constituent part of the confederation in a manner analogous to that of the Greek polis. In this case, however, the *a priori* and transcendent character of the relationship is able to save it from becoming a unity of a merely artificial and abstract kind.⁵

The same kind of relationship that links the town to its confederation links the town to the individual citizen as a free man capable of bearing arms. Citizens as a whole regard the civic commonwealth as their own creation, as a product of their own art and skill. Thanks to it they have their freedom, their property and their honour. Nevertheless, its existence depends on their concerted ‘reasonable wills’,⁶ even though it may be an inevitable and unintentional product of those wills – founded not merely on the fact that they happen to agree at any moment in time, but on the essential unity of the commonwealth that lasts throughout the generations.

The will of a commonwealth is usually represented in its assembly by one man (the prince), by a number of people (the nobles and elders), and by many (the masses, the people) acting in concord. In an extensive, patriarchal commonwealth it is the monarch who takes precedence; in a more limited, rural context it is the nobility, and in the most narrowly confined

⁵ There may be an implied reference here to Tönnies’s views about late nineteenth-century German identity, though the passage is directly concerned with the free cities of the later middle ages.

⁶ *vernünftige Willen*, as distinct from the abstract rationality of *Kürwille*.

setting, the town, it is the people. The monarch originally represents the head, or the brain within the head, the nobility are the ganglia of the spinal cord, and the people may be thought of as the centres of the sympathetic nervous system.⁷ Ultimately, however, the people will take over as the dominant intellectual power, like the brain in a body that exercises perception and will. They are better able to do so than the other groups, because through free and frequent mingling together they confront more serious problems and constantly sharpen their wits by learning from practical experience. This makes it more likely that they will produce the greatest and finest political and cultural thought.

But the full *majesty* of the commonwealth proceeds above all from the co-operation of these three organs, even though to all appearances one of them may be in the ascendant and another may be withering away. Of course in more recent times 'common people' has acquired a newer and more specialised meaning as a particular class or rank,⁸ but it may retain its older universal role of visibly representing the whole commonwealth, from which other centres of representative power originate and on which they depend. So in the last resort the people consists of *all* who in some way live together in Community, and includes women, children and old people, vassals and servants as integral parts. Though it constantly changes in appearance, the Community remains.

28

It follows from all our previous discussions that every corporation or association of human beings can be considered both as a kind of organism or organic creation, and also as a kind of tool or machine. For in reality the essence of such things is simply either enduring common will of a 'natural' or 'essential' kind or artificially constructed common will of an 'arbitrary' or 'rational' kind; both of which are to be understood as unitary rather than pluralistic. If we use the term *fellowship* for the first concept (a *Gemeinschaft*-type relationship) and *association* for the second (a *Gesellschaft*-type relationship), then a fellowship has to be portrayed as a natural product; it can be understood only through its origins and the way in which it has developed. This also holds for the concept of a commonwealth. An association, on the other hand, is an arrangement consciously thought up or invented, which helps its creators to express their

⁷ i.e. the system that controls reflex, as opposed to cerebral, responses. See above, p. 232.

⁸ *ein koordinierter Faktor*: literally, a sum made up of equal parts.

common rational will in any respect they may choose. In this latter case our main task is to enquire about the end for which that rational will decides the motive and means. The term can then be applied to the concept of the *state*, as the most general and universal embodiment of a *Gesellschaft*-type association.

The psychological or metaphysical essence of a fellowship or co-operative group, and hence of a commonwealth, arises from the will to exist, i.e. to have a life of its own and to hold its members together for an indefinite period. Therefore it is always traceable back to the original solidarity of the natural will, which I termed concord or *mutual understanding*. In whatever ways the fellowship may have evolved from its origins, its inner core will always be proportional to the strength with which it holds its own in [the struggle for] existence. This inner core, in the form of mores and laws, has absolute and eternal validity for its members. They derive their own laws from it, for use both in relations with each other and with the fellowship itself as a corporate being which cannot alter its own settled will in an arbitrary fashion. Moreover the range of activity of a whole fellowship must be imagined as existing *prior to* each individual will and as including them all. Thus the freedom and property of the people exist only as variants of the freedom and property of the commonwealth. And within the wider community the sphere of each particular fellowship would be further prescribed and regulated by prior and higher fellowships of which it is a member. The highest would ultimately be a commonwealth which must be imagined as including the whole of mankind. This was the ideal conception of the *Church* and the universal kingdom of the spiritual world. That ideal is eternal; through an enhanced awareness purified by knowledge it could, and perhaps will, be revived to live again.⁹

By contrast, every association rests upon a set of rules agreed between its members. This set of rules constitutes the agreement by which the fictitious 'person' of the association is endowed with life; it is called its 'statutes' or 'articles of association'. The statutes endow the association with a mind and will by nominating a particular representative body. They give it a purpose, which must be an end on which the contracting parties are agreed. And they also provide the means to pursue or achieve this end – means that have to be contributed by the

⁹ Possibly a reference to the religious views of Auguste Comte. But Tönnies's prime religious interest was in a new 'religion of the Holy Spirit', probably stemming from the prophecies of Joachim of Fiore; see above, p. xii, and his *Selbstdarstellung*, pp. 237–8.

members. In part, these means represent rights in relation to certain actions by individual persons – over which the association can or may legally exercise control (just as every individual in his own sphere exercises control over himself). These rights are thus constituents of freedom, but they are also rights to compel someone to do something. We have already seen how such rights result from every obligation; but an association is by nature no more able to exercise such compulsion than a man by himself. It can only act through its representative, be it either an individual or some kind of assembly. If an individual, he is in the same position as if he were trying to enforce something in his own name. An assembly can certainly form resolutions as a body, but in practice it fragments into many individuals who have to be moved or compelled to do what the assembly wills, since in itself it is incapable of action. It is by no means certain that even the majority, as an aggregate of individuals, is capable of corporately enacting the will of the assembly. In order to enforce its will, the association, like any other person, must therefore have at its disposal a superiority of human force *employing means other than coercion*. In a *Gesellschaft* this can be done only by acquiring these powers via a contract. The ‘person’ of the association must therefore have at its command adequate supplies of the universal means of purchase, in the form of money. And even then the exercise of compulsion depends on one main condition. This is the co-operation of the *entire* Society, at least in a negative sense. Compulsion can only be exercised in a safe and lawful manner if nobody is willing or can be persuaded to assist the constrained person in his resistance, or if the number of resisters is minimal compared with the powers of enforcement, so that the recalcitrant group is defeated as surely and successfully as the original ‘delinquent’.

Society is involved in every contract or exchange, both in the economic aspect – to ensure its validity – and in the legal aspect – to ensure its obligatory effectiveness. By its *neutrality* it makes resistance impossible even if the claimants have superior power. The superiority of one individual over another is effectively irrelevant in the average case, because any one individual has sufficient strength to oppose any other.¹⁰ The claimant must therefore secure assistance for himself. This means that any association that came into conflict with real persons would be powerless if it had no wealth or income – meaning, in a developed society, if it had no money.

¹⁰ cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. XIII, p. 110.

The money must be given or granted to the association in advance, and it must be free to dispose of it in any way it chooses. In this way the association will also be able to deploy human resources. It may need these in any case for other purposes as well as internal or external enforcement, and perhaps *only* for those which arise from its own principal purpose of running a commercial business.

The form in which an association spells out the rationale of its underlying purposes to its subordinates is called a *charter* or 'rules of association'. The carrying out of such rules as norms binding upon them is in theory part of the services for which subordinates are paid. The rules themselves need not be regarded as obligatory, more like the equivalent of something offered at the moment of an exchange. An individual person may also express and carry out his wishes by giving and carrying out general orders in this way. Every principal is a 'legislator' for his agent or proxy. But the formally spelt-out character of a charter is better suited to [an] association because, even when represented by an assembly, it needs a definite procedure, provided for in the statutes, to give general shape to its wishes and validate its decisions. For this reason a very *general* formulation [of rules] is the most common, allowing for the most efficient use of time and leaving application to individual cases and groups of cases to be dealt with by the persons involved.

29

The state has a hybrid, dualistic character. It is *first of all* the most universal *Gesellschaft*-type association, existing and *virtually created* for the purpose of protecting the freedom and property of its subjects, and so of representing and enforcing the natural law based on the validity of contracts. It is thus a fictitious or artificial person, like any other man-made association, and as such it is, under the system of law, on an equal footing with all other persons. A natural law governs relations *between* it and the individual, which are the same as those between a principal and his agent. This law, as the will of Society and as natural law embodied in convention, is *above* the state. The state's entire constitution, through which it gives valid expression to its will, is part of that law. Like any law, this law may give rise to disputes, and so a special person or office for the purpose of settling the matter may be appointed and recognised by the contracting parties (by the state on the one side, and by the individual, i.e. by Society, on the other). This *judicial* body is required to recognise no other law,

because its will is supposed to be nothing but the scientific truth concerning what the law is, its action nothing but the pronouncing of judgement. It therefore has, even less than any other particular individual, neither the right nor the power of *coercion*. It represents pure social rationality to the highest degree, and for that very reason it is divested of any other powers. By contrast, the state, precisely in accordance with its own legal definition, is sheer force, possessing and representing all the natural rights of coercion. The state itself *needs* the recognition of the law in order to exercise coercion. It makes natural law its instrument, absorbs it into its own will, and becomes its interpreter. The state can also *alter* whatever it has under its control, and not just in practice – it *has to* be able to do this in accordance with the law. In that way it can turn the rules, of which it is the interpreter, into regulations legally binding upon its subjects. The state's exposition of what the law is, amounts for these subjects to a declaration of what the law *shall* be, with all the practical legal consequences. In this sense the state can make law *at its own pleasure*,¹¹ by ordering its judges to be guided by it and its officials to carry it out. The unlimited extension of this *legislative power*, or the supplanting of natural law and convention by *raison d'état* or *policy*, may be *opposed* by Society, as the sum of individuals asserting its own rights (Society in this sense being as it were outside the State and below it). In that case a *legal* resolution would only be possible through the kind of court of arbitration indicated above.

However, a *second* aspect of the question is that the state is *the same thing* as Society, or at least that it embodies the social rationality implied in the idea of Society as a single all-embracing rational 'subject'. This is Society as an intrinsic unity, not as a specific person distinct from and side by side with other persons, but as the absolute person from which all other persons derive their whole existence. In this sense there is *no* law against the law of the state – the law of 'policy' *is* the law of nature. We cannot conceive of any higher tribunal pronouncing judgement between state and Society – because, like the state itself, it would have to be a product of Society. The entire jurisdiction becomes dependent on the state and exists to administer the state's laws. For it can scarcely be claimed that Society is capable of exercising a general will independently of the state – or, if it were so, it would only be to the extent that Society acknowledged the will of the state as its *own*.¹²

¹¹ *beliebiges* = 'at its own pleasure' (see n. 26 on p. 117, above).

¹² A line appears to have been omitted here from the 1935 edition, so the translation follows the text of 1887.

Hence the natural order turns out to determine [the position of] individuals in a positive rather than a purely negative way. The state invests some of them with mandatory authority which they are empowered to pass on, until in the end every person participates in the will of the state by being indirectly dependent on it. This idea is found to a limited extent in the system of *public administration*. If it were applied in all spheres, the entire production of goods would become part of public administration; and that, in theory at least, is a possible form of (ostensible) *Socialism*. This can be envisaged without needing to remove the fundamental division between the social classes. The state would become a coalition of capitalists that excluded all competition, and production would continue to be for their benefit. In the international division of labour regulated by the world market, the united body of capitalists would continue to operate as producers and sellers of overall production. Even though the means of production belonged to the state, the capitalists, as formal agents and organisers of labour, would remain in possession of all the surplus value which was not required for *replenishing* capital goods. But as soon as market Society had extended beyond all frontiers and thus a *world state* had been established, the production of commodities would come to an end, and with it the legitimate ground of “entrepreneurial” or trading profit and all other forms of surplus value. Goods produced, as formerly, by the lower classes could then be appropriated by the upper classes only for as long as and in so far as they represented the state, and in the *name* of the state. And, likewise in the name of the state, they could distribute among themselves that share of the total product not required for maintenance of the workers.

The roots of law in economic rationality become clearer once public and statutory law has swallowed up all societal and private contractual law. This rational basis is always there, but it is only fully apprehended when even natural law comes to be seen as a wholly artificial legal person capable of continuous rational choice. Even according to the first approach, where the state is seen merely as the agent of Society, the impression given by the activities of *commodity traders* – that natural law is rooted primarily in practice rather than policy – is a false one. Similarly the sale of one’s labour power appears to turn it into a commodity: but in truth it is the rational will of all sellers of *real* commodities [i.e. the whole *Gesellschaft* system] that really transforms natural law in this way. The state is thus a capitalistic institution, and remains so as long as it identifies itself with market Society. If the working class were to make itself the

agent of the state's will in order to destroy capitalist production, it would therefore cease to exist. It follows from this that the political ambitions of this class lie outside the framework of market Society, which includes the state and its policies as essential expressions of its will. However, the most profound social and historical contradiction exists between the two concepts of the State that we have just sketched out. We could say that the system of popular sovereignty is opposed to the sovereignty of the rulers; or that the sovereignty of Society is opposed to the sovereignty of the state; or that both systems are blended, confused and intermingled in a multitude of ways.

30

The third and final form of common, unifying will lies in the realm of thought. In theory, and for the sake of greater clarity, it too can be endowed with a corporate existence, and this can be thought of as a 'spiritual'¹³ (or even a sacred and religious) association or union. And if it is deemed to be universal, it can be classified as a spiritual or religious commonwealth or state. The forms of such will can be classified as follows: (A) within a *Gemeinschaft* – in the individual through *faith*, and in the group through *religious practice*; (B) within a *Gesellschaft* – in the individual, through *dogma* or *theory*, and in the wider group through popular belief or *public opinion*.¹⁴

These are influences which do not assert themselves through human physical force, nor through external things (such as money), but simply through thought and imagination, which are intended to influence people through their mental activities. Their most important social functions are judgement and guidance, i.e. they assess the deeds, actions and intentions of those around them on their merits or with reference to their basic principles, maxims and rules; and they scrutinise in particular the designs and intentions of the commonwealth or state. Religion therefore ranks above the commonwealth, and public opinion above the state. Religion assesses manners, morals and customs as good or bad, true or false. Public opinion

¹³ *geistig* – meaning here, belonging to the mental and intellectual sphere, possibly but not necessarily including religious opinion. Tönnies's purpose in this passage is simply to emphasise the role of ideas as an expression of will, regardless of whether they occur in either *Gemeinschaft* or *Gesellschaft*.

¹⁴ *die Lehrmeinung* and *die öffentliche Meinung* – both terms with an older religious and a more recent secular meaning.

approves policies and legislation as sound and prudent or condemns them as stupid and wrong.

Faith or *belief* is to be found essentially among the masses and the lower orders; it is liveliest among children and women. *Dogma* or *theory* is something that only a few can grasp and even fewer can fully comprehend – and they are sophists and casuists, lofty and detached individuals, mature or older men. Faith and abstract theory have the same relation to each other as poetry and prose, poetry being the right mode for singing, storytelling or acting, prose for mathematical reasoning or other conceptual combinations. The connections of religion with family life and mores have already been mentioned. Religion is very akin to family life, in that its practice involves intimately related, benevolent beings who are always present in spirit. On the human side honour is offered with pious gifts, donations and sacrifices, while from the divine side come favour, protection and aid. Fatherly or motherly authority is the fount and origin of all godly or god-like authority and remains as its innermost truth. Religion itself, then, is part of morality, handed on as real and necessary by custom, tradition and antiquity. The individual human child is born and brought up in it, as he is in his own dialect of the language, way of life, and the varieties of clothing, food and drink normal in his native land. This is the faith of his fathers, belief and custom, inherited sentiment and duty.

Religion everywhere, even in its highest form of development, retains all its genuine influence over the mind and conscience of mankind by its hallowing of the everyday happenings of family life – the bond of marriage, joy over the new-born, honouring the elderly, mourning for the departed. In the same way it sanctifies the commonwealth. It strengthens and enhances the importance of law, which is already worthy of respect as the will of the elders and ancestors, but as the will of the gods becomes yet more powerful and infallible. Thus the earlier attitude requires and begets the later one, which in turn reacts upon the earlier. The religious commonwealth in particular embodies the original unity and equality of a whole people – the people as a family, keeping up the memory of its kinship by means of common ceremonies in common places of worship. This is the meaning of the religious commonwealth in its broadest sense; but it attains its most intensive power in the *civic* commonwealth. This is where a decisive part is played by the weight of faith and the interpretation of divine will in backing up customary morality, adapting it for the more complicated conditions of town life, and partly replacing or reworking it. This happens particularly through the use of *solemn oaths*, when the presence of the

divine being is evoked more out of fear than love, so that men are exhorted to be loyal and truthful, for deceit and lies will be avenged. Thus it is no mistake to see *marriage*, the centre of gravity of family life and the union of male and female spirit, together with the swearing of oaths, as the twin pillars by which religion supports the structure of the commonwealth and a heightened community life. They are the chief components of *ethical doctrine*, whose special character is just as much a product of religious practice as law is a product of customary usage and habit.

31

Public opinion aspires to lay down universally valid norms, not on the basis of blind faith but of clear insight into the rightness of the doctrines that it recognises and accepts. In both form and orientation it is scientific and enlightened. Although it can be formulated with regard to all possible problems that may engage the human mind, it is primarily directed towards the life and business of Society and the state. Everybody who consciously participates in this life and business must necessarily be interested in such concepts and ideas; they should help to form them and to resist false and harmful ones. What is or is not permissible in conducting business; what view should be taken about the viability of any particular firm, commodity, promotion, currency or “security”; and likewise how to weigh up current values, persons, and their capacities in other social circles, which are pictured in the same terms as market and bourse – all this, erected into general maxims, constitutes a kind of moral code. It is, of course, a very variable code, depending on what are supposed to be the most advanced ideas, and it may encounter much opposition, but it is none the less strict in its prohibitions, condemnations and penalties. Since it is not concerned with the sentiments behind actions but only with formal correctness of procedure, it reacts only when rules are transgressed. Acknowledgement of positive worth is well-nigh impossible, because no more than strict adherence to the rules is either expected or desired. Admiration is no concern of public opinion, which is much more bothered about reducing all appearances to the level of its own understanding. It is not at all concerned with correct and good actions, but – quite specifically – only with ‘correct opinion’. It has got to claim that individual private opinion is on its side, so that people who are assumed to be intelligent and rational free agents will be the more inclined to regulate their actions in accordance with its views.

Among these opinions many are a matter of indifference. But this is certainly not the case with *political* opinions, for in the end it appears to depend on them which laws the *state* will pass or uphold and which policies it will pursue at home and abroad. If Society is only partly united on these matters, and in violent dispute on many counts, then each party must strive to establish *its* opinion as the public opinion, or at least to make it look like that. Each party must present its wishes as the general reasonable will, intent on furthering the common welfare, so as to get its hands on “the helm” of government and its “hand on the latch” of legislative power. On the other hand, the state itself or the government, i.e. the party which represents the sovereign power or exercises the strongest influence on it, has got just as great an interest in “moulding” and “cultivating” public opinion, in tuning it up and bringing it round to another view.

Whatever public opinion is or means, it confronts the individual opinion-holder as an alien and disembodied power.¹⁵ This occurs chiefly through that type of communication in which all human contact – the good faith and trust existing between the speaker or teacher and listener or student – is, or may become, extinguished: I mean communication by means of the written word – the form in which judgements and opinions are wrapped up like goods in a corner shop and offered for consumption in all their objective reality. Take, for example, the *daily press*: we modern people are offered the swiftest production, multiplication and distribution of facts and ideas, perfectly prepared and packaged like all other consumer goods in the world. Newspapers are set before us just as the kitchen of a hotel serves up food and drink in every conceivable form and quantity. The “press” is the true instrument or “organ” of public opinion, a weapon or tool in the hands of all who know how to use it and needs must do so. It has universal power as a dreaded critic of events and changes in the condition of Society. It is comparable with and in some respects superior to the material power which states can wield through their armies, exchequers and official bureaucracies. Unlike them, it is not restricted to national boundaries, but is totally international in its propensities and possibilities, and thus comparable in power with permanent or temporary alliances between states. It can be claimed that its ultimate aim is to do away with the many different states and to replace them with a single *world republic*, equal in extent to the world market, which would be ruled by intellectuals, scholars and writers and could dispense with all

¹⁵ A theme later developed much more fully in Tönnies’s *Kritik der öffentlichen Meinung* (Berlin: Springer, 1922).

means of coercion other than those of a psychological kind. Such tendencies and purposes may never perhaps find clear expression, not to mention realisation, but recognising them helps us to understand many things that are actually happening and to grasp the important fact that the development of nation states is only a temporary barrier to an international market Society without national boundaries. The most modern *Gesellschaft*-type state, the United States of America, can lay scarcely any claim to anything like a truly national character, nor does it wish to do so.

However, it is worth noting that the artificial, even contrived, character of these abstractions must always be kept in mind; and so must the close inter-relationship which all the forces of *Gesellschaft* retain with their basis in *Gemeinschaft*, i.e. the original, natural and “*historical*” forms of common life and will. Only in theory can the entire rational self-consciousness of an individual be separated from his spontaneous and instinctive will, as though it were objectively little more than a product of memory: and the same is true of the rational self-consciousness of Society. All its rules and norms have a certain similarity to the commandments of religion. Like them they spring from an intellectual or mental expression of the collective spirit, and the supposed abstraction and independence of this spirit is perhaps never actually met with in a complete and all-embracing form. Thus an oath is originally the guarantee of a contract, and the “binding force” of contracts is not so easily detached from faith and trust in the *consciousness* of men; although at the same time these qualities are not really required, because the simple reflection on his own self-interest should be enough to impress upon the rational man the necessity of fulfilling this basic condition of life in *Gesellschaft*.

It is not easy to make this point of view clear, nor to understand it. But in grasping and penetrating its meaning we shall find the key to solving the most important problems of the growth and decline of human civilisation. For civilisation’s very existence is change, and this means both the development and the breakdown of existing forms. All change can only be grasped from the blending into each other of concepts in a constant state of flux.

Appendix

*Conclusions and future
prospects*

Conclusions and future prospects

I

We have on offer two contrasting systems of collective *social order*. One is based essentially on concord, on the fundamental harmony of wills, and is developed and cultivated by religion and custom. The other is based on convention, on a convergence or pooling of rational desires; it is guaranteed and protected by political legislation, while its policies and their ratification are derived from public opinion.

Furthermore, there are two contrasting *legal* systems. The first is a mutually binding system of positive law, of enforceable norms regulating the relationships of individuals one with another. It has its roots in family life and its concrete embodiment in the ownership of land. Its *forms* are basically determined by custom, which religion consecrates and transfigures, if not as divine will then as the will of wise rulers who interpret the divine will in trying to adapt and improve those forms. The second system is also a system of positive law which is devoted to upholding the separate identities of rational individuals in the midst of all their combinations and entanglements. It has its natural basis in the formal regulation of trade and similar business but attains superior validity and binding force only through the sovereign will and power of the state. Law of this kind becomes one of the most important instruments of policy; it is used to sustain, restrain or encourage social trends, and is publicly contested or upheld by public doctrine and public opinion, through which it is altered to become stricter or more lenient.

Finally we must add the two contrasting conceptions of *morality* as a purely intellectual or non-material system of rules for living together. On

the one side morality is essentially an expression and organ of religious ideas and forces, causally linked to the conditions and realities of custom and family spirit. On the other side it is entirely the product and tool of public opinion, and refers to all relations arising out of general social intercourse based on contracts and from political striving and ambition.

Law as spontaneous order is natural law; whereas ordinary, everyday law is the equivalent of positive law, and morality is the equivalent of ideal law.¹ For law as the embodiment of whatever may or ought to be, whatever is commanded or permitted, is entirely the object of social will. Even natural law, wherever it exercises real and tangible influence, must be seen as positively enacted and enforced, but it is enacted in a more general and less detailed way. It is the general principle as opposed to the specific, or the simple fundamentals of law in contrast to its many complex applications.

2

The core of social existence and social purpose consists of concord, custom and religion. If circumstances are favourable, highly complex modes and forms of these develop in the course of life, so that every independent human being (and every social group) absorbs a certain amount of them into his own way of thinking and behaving. Thus they form part of his general disposition, emotions and conscience; they affect the circumstances in which he finds himself, his possessions, and the normal, everyday things that he has to do. He can draw on a common source and centre. The roots of his strength are here, his rights are fed from this single source, which is something both natural and divine that enfolds and sustains him, just as it first gave him life and will eventually leave him to perish.

But in certain conditions, and in many connections particularly salient to us here, a human being in his voluntarily chosen activities and relationships is clearly a free man and must be regarded as a 'person'. The substance of the communal spirit has become so weak, or the link binding him to others so tenuous, that they no longer matter. In comparison with the ties of comradeship or family life, what we are considering here is the general character of the relation between people who are not close associates. In these relationships, and ultimately in relationships in general,

¹ 'Morality = ideal law' omitted from the 1979 edition.

there is no common understanding, practice or belief to bring about union and reconciliation. It is a state of war – of the unlimited freedom of everyone to destroy another, to exploit, pillage and enslave as one wills or, on the other hand, recognising one's advantage, to form alliances and associations.² Such a state of affairs may exist between exclusive groups or Communities and the people who belong to them, or even between mates and rival gangs within a single Community. But, if that is so, our study is not concerned with it. Instead, we are talking about a kind of social life and situation where individuals live in such isolation and concealed mutual enmity that they refrain from attacking each other only out of fear or prudent calculation. As a result, even relations that in practice are peaceful and friendly must be regarded as resting on a war footing. This is the state of *Gesellschaft*-based *civilisation*, as defined in our terms. Peace and social intercourse are maintained by convention, and by the mutual fear which it expresses. This situation is under the protection of the state and reinforced by legislation and politics. Science and public opinion seek both to theorise about it as necessary and timeless, and at the same time to glorify it as progress towards perfection. But *national character* and its *culture* are far better preserved by the order and way of life of *Gemeinschaft*. The *apparatus of the state* – a concept that sums up and puts in a nutshell the whole situation of *Gesellschaft* – consequently opposes these residues with veiled, often disguised, hatred and contempt, the intensity of which depends on how far it has become estranged and distanced from the national culture. In much the same way we find natural and rational will sometimes linked intimately together, sometimes running in parallel, and sometimes in direct opposition to each other, in the social and historical life of humanity in general.

3

Thus the natural will of the individual generates from within itself the abstract way of thinking and rational calculation which tend to break it up and make it dependent on these new forces. In the same way we observe among historic peoples the development process of market Society and the system of market rationality evolving out of the original

² Hobbes, *De Cive*, ch. 1, and *Leviathan*, ch. XIII. But, as noted in the general introduction (above, pp. xxvi–xxvii), Hobbes was talking about human relations *prior to* civil society, whereas Tönnies was referring to human relations created by civil society.

Community-based forms of life and will. In place of the culture of the people we get the civilisation of the state.

This process can be sketched out according to its basic characteristics in the following way. The people, as the original sovereign power, basically constitute the households, villages and towns of a region. From among them emerge powerful individuals with minds of their own who appear in many different guises, as princes, feudal lords and knights, and also as churchmen, artists and intellectuals. Nevertheless their social power remains limited and restricted, so long as it is restrained in the economic sense by the communal presence of the whole people, which is itself represented in those very social arrangements, through its will and power. The unification of these exceptional people at a national level, through which alone they can become paramount as a group, is itself tied into economic conditions. Their true, essential dominion is economic dominion, which the business class acquire in advance of and in conjunction with them – and partly even over them. This is done by subjugating the nation's labour force in numerous ways, the chief of which is planned capitalist production or heavy industry. Establishing the commercial conditions for the national unification of men with the power of free and independent choice, and establishing the conditions and forms of capitalist production, are both the work of the business class, which by nature and inclination, and above all by origin, is as much international as national or metropolitan; and that means, geared to competitive market Society. Following the businessmen, all the older status groups and dignitaries go the same way, and finally the whole of the former 'people'. That, at least, is the general tendency.³

People change their *temperaments* with the place and conditions of their daily life; their outlook becomes rushed and unsettled through restless striving. Concurrently with this revolution in the social order a parallel development takes place – a gradual transformation of the *law*, both in its content and in its form. Pure contract becomes the basis of the entire system; and the rational will of market Society, defined by its own interests, acts increasingly both as an end in itself and as the executive will of the state – as the sole author, upholder, and impresario of the *legal order*.

³ A reference to the German nationalist movement of the 1860s – where liberal intellectuals unexpectedly threw in their hands with big business, and both threw in their hands with Bismarck to bring about national unification. Tönnies as a very young man had been an enthusiastic supporter of this process, and only in the late 1870s and 1880s became critical of its social effects (above, pp. xi–xv).

It is then held to have the power and authority to change Society totally, however it pleases, so as to produce whatever will be useful and expedient for its own interests. Statecraft frees itself more and more from the traditions and customs of the past and from belief in their importance. Thus the forms of law change from being a product of the law of *custom* into an exclusively positivistic law, a product of *policy*. Instead of many varied fellowships, communities and commonwealths that have grown up organically, the only remaining actors are the state and its departments on the one hand, the individual on the other. In this way the very *characters* of the people, which were influenced by those older institutions, are altered as they accommodate to new and arbitrary legal constructions; they lose the foothold provided for them by the old customs and by conviction of their rightness.

Finally, as a result of these changes and as a reaction to them, a complete *bouleversement* takes place in intellectual life. Originally rooted entirely in the imagination, it now becomes dependent on systematic thought. Once belief in invisible beings, spirits and gods formed the focal point; now it is the study of observable natural phenomena. Religion, which has its roots in the life of the people and is still intertwined with it, has to yield its position of leadership to science, which derives from a sharpened consciousness that belongs to the educated and is far above the heads of common folk. Religion is directly and quintessentially moral, because it is most intimately concerned with the physical–spiritual bond that links generations of mankind together. Science acquires moral content only by examining the laws of human co-existence and attempting to deduce rules for a system based on reason and private rational choice. The *cast of mind* of the individual becomes gradually less and less informed by religion and more and more by science. On the basis of research that has been accumulated through centuries of exhaustive study, we shall try to identify the inter-relationship of these tremendous contrasts and movements as we find it in history and at the present time. As a preliminary, however, a few scattered comments may serve to clarify the underlying principles.

4

The external forms of co-existence, as determined by natural will and community life, may be distinguished as household, village, and town or city. These are by and large the enduring types of concrete historical *life*.

Even in developed Society, as in the earlier and middle stages, people live together in these different ways. The town or city is the highest, i.e. the most complex form of collective human life. In its local structure it has much in common with the village, in contrast to the family character of the household. But both retain many characteristics of the family, the village more so, the town less. Only when the town or city develops into a *big city* are these almost entirely lost. Individual persons and even families become separated from one another, and share the location only as a place of residence, whether chosen accidentally or deliberately. But just as the small city lives on within the big city, as the name implies, so community ways of life live on in market Society as the only real ways, even though they are decaying and even dying out. On the other hand, the more universal a market Society becomes within a nation or group of nations, the more this entire “country” or this entire “world” will tend to resemble one single giant city or metropolitan area.

In the big city, however, and hence in market Society generally, only the upper classes, the rich and educated, are really active and alive.⁴ They set the *standards* which the lower classes must conform to, partly with the intention of overthrowing their superiors, partly in order to be like them if they are going to win for themselves economic and social power. For both these groups the big city, no less than the “nation” or the “world”, consists of free persons who in the course of business constantly come into contact and exchange and collaborate with one another. But they do so without any Community – or community-like intentions – developing between them, except sporadically or as a left-over from still-lingering earlier conditions. On the contrary, many aggressive inner feelings and antagonistic interests are concealed by these numerous external contacts, contracts and contractual relationships. This is especially true of the notorious antagonism between the rich or the ruling classes and the poor or subservient classes, who try to obstruct and destroy one another. According to Plato, this antagonism turns the “city” into two cities, a body divided within itself; but according to our analysis, this is precisely what makes it a ‘big city’, and it is reproduced in every large-scale relationship between capital and labour.⁵ The communal life of the small town persists

⁴ On the background to Tönnies’s impressions of the ‘big city’ in this and the following two sections, see *Tönnies-Paulsen, Briefwechsel 1876–1908*, pp. 36–9, describing his visit to London in August 1878.

⁵ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1993), 422a–423a, 462b, 551d. The account in this section seems to conflict with Tönnies’s earlier

within the community of family and provincial life, doubtless too in agriculture, but devoting itself particularly to the *art* and handicrafts based on those natural needs and attitudes. Expansion from small town into great city, however, creates a sharp contrast – those basic activities coming to be viewed and used only as means and instruments for the city's purposes.

The big city is the archetype of pure *Gesellschaft*. It is essentially a *commercial centre* and, to the extent that commerce controls its productive labour, a *manufacturing town*. Its wealth is capital wealth – that is, the increase of money through its use in the form of commercial, financial or industrial capital. Capital is the means for acquiring the products of labour or for extracting profit from labourers. In addition the big city is also a centre of science and culture, which invariably go hand in hand with trade and industry. Here the arts must make their living and turn themselves to account in a capitalistic fashion. Ideas and opinions are produced and exchanged with great rapidity. Mass dissemination of the spoken and written word becomes a channel for the spread of large-scale agitation.

The big city is in general to be distinguished from the national *capital*, which as the residence of a princely court and centre of a state government will display many of the features of a big city even though, going by its population and other conditions, it may not yet be one. But eventually, and indeed sooner than elsewhere, the highest form of this kind will be arrived at through a synthesis of big city and national capital: that is, the *metropolis* or *international city*. This will contain migrants drawn not just from a particular national society but from a whole range of peoples, that is, from the “world”. In the metropolis money and capital are unlimited and all-powerful. It has the capacity to produce goods and scientific knowledge for the entire globe, and to make valid laws and form public opinion for all nations. It represents world markets and world trade. World industries are concentrated in it, its newspapers are international papers, and people from all parts of the earth gather in it, avid for money and pleasure, but also for novelty and new ideas.

5

Living in families is the usual basis of the Community way of life. This keeps on developing in villages and towns. The village Community and the town can themselves be regarded as large families, the various clans

claim that he was not concerned with the ‘pathology’ of social life, only with its perfect functioning (see above, pp. 17, 249).

and kinship networks forming the basic organisms of the common body; the guilds, corporations and offices are the tissues and organs of the town. Original blood relationships and inherited fortunes remain an essential or very important condition for sharing fully in the communal property and privileges. Outsiders may be accepted and protected as guests or as members who perform services, either temporarily or permanently. Thus they can belong to the Community as passive members, but not so easily as its agents and representatives. Children during their minority live in the family as dependent members, but even in Latin they were termed “free”⁶ because they were considered potential future masters, which is what in normal circumstances they certainly become – i.e. “their own heirs”. Neither visitors nor servants have this status in either household or Community. But welcome and honoured visitors may be accorded something like the status of children; if they are treated as adoptive children or granted civic rights, they may belong to the Community and enjoy the right to inherit. Servants may be respected and treated like guests; indeed, because of the value of their functions they may share in government like members of the community. It may also happen sometimes that they become natural or appointed *heirs*.

In practice there are many gradations, lower and higher, which are not amenable to legalistic formulae. For, from another angle, all these *Gemeinschaft* relationships are capable in certain circumstances of being transformed into mere mutual interchanges, self-interested and easily broken, which are made by contracting parties who remain independent of one another. In the big city such a transformation is quite normal, at least as regards all relationships that involve some form of service, and it becomes more and more common as the city develops. The distinction between natives and strangers becomes irrelevant. Everyone is what he is because of his personal freedom, his wealth and his contracts. Thus he is a servant only in so far as he has conveyed certain services to someone else, and a master in so far as he receives them. In fact, ownership of wealth is the only effective and fundamental distinguishing mark. By contrast, in all organic communities property means sharing in common ownership; and, as a particular sphere of law, property in a Community is entirely the consequence and product of freedom or of free birth,⁷ either original or acquired. It therefore corresponds as far as possible to an individual’s degree of personal freedom.

⁶ i.e. *liberi* = a Latin term for children.

⁷ *Ingenuität* – an old-fashioned word for ‘free-born’, derived from the Latin *ingenuitas*.

In the big city, in the capital, and especially in the metropolis, family life is in decline. What remains of it must appear increasingly incidental the more the influence of the cities is brought to bear. For few people in this context will confine all their energies to so narrow a circle as the family. Everyone is drawn to the outside, and away from each other, by business, private interests and amusements. The great and powerful, feeling themselves independent and free, have always had a strong desire to break through the barriers of conventional morality. They know that they can do whatever they want. They have the power to make changes to their own advantage, and this is proof positive of unfettered arbitrary power. The mechanism of money, under normal conditions and operating under sufficiently high pressure, seems to overcome all resistance, to accomplish all desires, to eliminate all dangers and to heal all ills. This is not, of course, invariably true. Even when all the Community-based influences have been discounted, there are still certain societal controls that loom over free individuals. For 'Society' (in the narrower sense), 'convention' to a great extent takes the place left vacant by customary morals and religion. It forbids many things as detrimental to the common interest which old-fashioned morality condemned as downright evil.

Within narrower limits the will of the state functions in the same way, through law courts and the police. The laws of the state apply equally to everyone; only children and lunatics are not responsible to them. Convention seeks to maintain at least the *appearance* of morality; it is still linked to the moral and religious sense of what is right and fitting,⁸ although this feeling has become arbitrary and stereotyped. Inner morality is hardly a direct concern of the state. Its task is only to suppress and punish aggressive and anti-social behaviour, or actions which appear dangerous to itself and Society. It can, however, vastly extend its activities in this direction, and may even attempt to alter people's motives and sentiments for the better. Since the state has to administer the public good, it must be able to define this as it pleases. In the end it will probably come to the conclusion that no increase in knowledge and culture will make people any kinder, less egoistical and more content, and likewise that dead morality and religion cannot be revived by coercion or education. On the contrary, in order to cultivate moral powers and moral people, it must itself

⁸ *der Schönheitsinn* = literally sense of beauty in the aesthetic sense, but Tönnies is here talking about moral goodness. On Tönnies's view that moral decency was an aesthetic as well as ethical virtue, see his *Die Sitte* (1909). There is a phrase *recht und schön*, meaning 'right and fitting', which partly expresses what he wants to convey.

prepare the ground and provide the conditions for this ideal, or at least eliminate the forces working against it. The state, as the faculty of 'reason' in Society, should really decide to destroy *Gesellschaft*, or at least to transform and renew it. But such attempts are extremely unlikely to succeed.

6

Nevertheless, public opinion, which reduces the morality of Society to phrases and formulae and by this means can become elevated above the state, shows a distinct inclination towards pressing the state into using its irresistible power to compel everyone to do what is useful and refrain from what is obnoxious. Extension of the penal code and of police powers are seen as the right way to counteract the evil impulses of the masses. Public opinion moves easily from demanding freedom (for the upper classes) to calling for measures of despotism (against the lower). For certainly, as a surrogate for moral control, convention has very little influence over the masses. Their striving for pleasure is as common as it is natural in a world where the interest of capitalists and businessmen anticipates all needs and incites people to spend money in innumerable different ways, all in the name of competition. In all of this they are limited only by the meagreness of the means which the capitalists give the labouring classes as the price of their labour. A distinct and numerous group, going far beyond professional "criminals", is hindered in its craving for the key to all vital or superfluous pleasures only by fear of discovery and punishment, i.e. by fear of the state. The state is their enemy. They see it as a hostile, alien power. Although they have themselves ostensibly 'authorised' it to embody their will, it is opposed to all their needs and desires. It protects property which they do not possess and forces them into military service for a native land which offers them hearth and altar only in the shape of poorly heated lodgings at the top of a tenement block. For 'home sweet home' it gives them the pavements of a street where they have the privilege of gazing at glories beyond their reach. Meanwhile their own lives are divided between two equally deformed versions of work and leisure – the misery of the factory, the joys of the pub.

Thus the big city, and *Gesellschaft* conditions in general, are the ruin and death of the people. They struggle in vain to achieve power by numbers, and it seems to them that they can use their power only for riot and insurrection if they want to be quit of their misery. The masses come to self-consciousness with the help of education offered in schools and

newspapers. They progress from class consciousness to the class struggle. This class struggle may destroy the Society and the state which it wants to reform. The entire culture has been overturned by a civilisation dominated by market and civil Society, and in this transformation civilisation itself is coming to an end; unless it be that some of its scattered seeds remain alive, so that the essential concepts of Community may be encouraged once again and a new civilisation can develop secretly within the one that is dying.⁹

7

To conclude our overall assessment; we have two contrasting *epochs* in the grand overall development of civilisation: an *epoch* of market-based civil Society follows an *epoch* of close-knit Community. *Community* is signified through its social will as concord, custom and religion; *Society* is signified through its social will as convention, policy and public opinion. These concepts correspond to certain types of external social arrangements, which I shall identify in the following tables:

A. Community [*Gemeinschaft*]

1. Family life = concord. Man is involved in this with all his being. Its core is the *tribe, nation* or *common people*.
2. Village life = custom (traditional morality). Man is involved here with all his heart and soul. Its core is the *commonwealth*.
3. Town life = religion. Man is involved in this with his entire conscience. Its core is the *Church*.

B. Society [*Gesellschaft*]

1. Big city life = convention. This is based on the individual human being with all his ambitions. Its core is *competitive market Society in its most basic form*.
2. National life = politics and policy. This is based on man's collective calculations. Its core is the *State*.
3. Cosmopolitan life = public opinion. This is determined by man's consciousness. Its core is the *republic of letters*.

Each of these categories is closely bound up with a predominant occupational sphere and a predominant mental outlook, which may be paired together as follows:

⁹ *Es sei denn . . . entfalten*; this half-sentence was not in the 1887 edition, but was added in 1912.

A. Community

1. Domestic economy and household management: based on liking or preference, i.e., the love of nurturing, creating and preserving. The norms for this are set by sympathy and mutual understanding.
2. Agriculture: based on routine and habits, i.e. on regularly repeated tasks. The extent of working co-operation is revealed in custom.
3. Art and craft: based on memories, i.e. of teaching received and rules absorbed, and of original ideas. The minds of the artists and craftsmen are united in a belief in their work.

B. Society

1. Commerce: based on foresight: i.e. attention, comparison and calculation are the basic conditions for all business. Trade is the essence of rational action. Contract is the custom and creed of commerce.
2. Industry: based on decisions: i.e. rational productive deployment of capital and sale of labour. Regulations rule the factory.
3. Science and learning: based on conceptual thought, as is self-evident. From hypotheses it develops its own laws and presents its facts and theories, which pass into literature and the press, and thus into public opinion.

8

In the earlier era family life and household management provide the keynote, in the later period commerce and city life. When, however, we examine the period of Community more closely, we can observe several phases in it. Its entire development involves progression towards market Society; but nevertheless the power of Community, even in decline, is maintained into the era of Society and remains the true reality of social life.

The first phase is shaped by the influence of the new basis for communal life, which comes from the cultivation of land. This is when neighbourhood becomes a factor alongside the old enduring blood relationship – the village is added to the clan. The next phase begins when villages develop into towns. Villages and towns share the principle of living together in space, unlike family and tribe, which live primarily through time. The family has invisible metaphysical roots – located metaphorically under the earth – because it is descended from common ancestors, and the sequence of past and future generations unites the living members. In the village or town it is the actual physical earth, the fixed

place, the visible territory, that necessarily creates the strongest ties and relationships.

During the era of Community this recently developed spatial principle is kept in check by the older principle of time. In the era of *Gesellschaft* it breaks free, and we have the life of big cities. The big city, as its name implies, is the ultimate and extreme version of the spatial principle in its urban form. This exaggerated form becomes sharply contrasted with the rural version of the same principle, the village settlement, which remains essentially and almost necessarily confined within narrow bounds. In this sense the whole process of historical evolution can be seen as a shift towards an increasingly *urbanised* style of life. "It may be said that the entire economic history of Society, i.e. of modern nations, is summed up in the shift of the relationship between town and country" (Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, I, p. 364). That means that from a certain point in time the cities become much more influential and important in the life of the nation than the rural, village organisation in which they have their roots. From this point onwards the country has to expend more energy on supplying and supporting the cities than it can spare for reproducing itself. As a result it begins to disintegrate, with the inevitable consequence that the arrangements and activities based in the countryside then break up as well.

This is the general law of the relationship between organic or vegetative life and animal or sentient life as it is invariably found in both the normal and the most favourable conditions of animal development. In mankind, where animal life takes the special form of the life and conscious purpose of the mind, this law can acquire a particular significance as well as the more general one. In the first place, man is capable of destroying himself by his reason, both directly *through* reason, and because he is in a position to determine his own fate by pursuing planned aims and ends, which means that he can either prolong his life or shorten it. Furthermore, in his declining years as well as in his prime, his mental sphere can be seen as extending beyond his merely animal existence, and even perhaps as surviving it. So far as these phenomena are concerned, the actual 'animal' element lies somewhere in the middle between the mental and vegetative life, sometimes adhering more closely to the one, sometimes to the other. Thus in the normal course of life an earlier, *ascending* period can be distinguished, where the vegetative element predominates over the animal, and a later *declining* period, where the relationship is reversed. This applies to nature generally, and is also true for

mankind; but in the human case it may acquire the added significance that the process is completed by the animal element *finding expression in the mental sphere* (whereas all other animal existence is classed with and seen as an aspect of the 'vegetative' life).

Thus in the ascending phase of life, when the vegetative-cum-animal element predominates, three categories and stages can be distinguished – the vegetative, animal and mental. And there is a corresponding threefold division on the downward curve, in which the animal-cum-mental element is predominant. Applying this pattern to the life of a nation, rural existence would correspond to vegetative-cum-animal life and urban existence to animal-cum-mental. The first type of life, in places where it still remains active in the town or small city, is truly the finest flowering and highest development of the entire organism. The second type, as it breaks away to become the big city, seems to exist independently, both producing and consuming; yet at the same time it increasingly dominates the whole country, drawing all existing forces into itself and thereby tending to destroy them.

9

The whole movement, from its first appearance and through all its subsequent stages, can also be understood as a transition from original, simple, family-based *communism*, and the *small-town individualism* that stems from it – through to an absolutely detached *cosmopolitan and universalist individualism* and to the state-based and international *socialism* generated by it.¹⁰ Socialism is already latent in the very concept of *Gesellschaft*, although it begins only in the form of practical links between all the forces of capitalism and the state, which is specifically employed by them to maintain and advance the commercial order. Gradually, however, it turns into attempts to impose centralised control on business and on labour itself through the mechanism of the state – which, if they were to succeed, would put an end to the whole of competitive market society and its civilisation. This same trend necessarily implies a simultaneous break-up of all those ties which bind the individual through natural will rather than arbitrary will and free choice. These are the ties that restrict personal freedom of movement, freedom to sell property, freedom to change opinions or to adapt them according to scientific knowledge – all of them

¹⁰ Tönnies's original emphases have been slightly altered in this sentence to bring out the meaning more clearly.

viewed by autonomous rational will as mere impediments. The same view is held by Society itself, where trade and commerce require easy-living, irreligious people, untroubled by scruples, and so they press for property and property rights to be as freely disposable and divisible as possible. It is also held by the state, which hastens this development, finding worldly-wise, profit-seeking, practical-minded subjects to be the most useful for its own purposes.

Such forces and counter-forces, their unfolding and clash, are common to the two mass cultures and social strata of which we may claim to have an astronomical knowledge – namely, the earlier, southern European culture of the ancient world, which reached its apogee in *Athens* and came to an end in *Rome*; and the later northern European, ‘modern’ culture which followed it and borrowed much from it. We discover these analogous developments in an enormous variety of actual facts and conditions. Within the general all-embracing process to which all elements contribute, each of these elements has its own peculiar hidden history, which is brought about partly by that overall development and partly by causes peculiar to itself, intervening to impede or further the whole.

The concepts and findings presented in this book will enable us to understand the currents and struggles that have come down from earlier centuries to the present age and that will run on into the future. To this end, we have in view the entire development of Germanic culture, which rose upon the ruins of the Roman empire and was its heir – and which, with the general conversion to the Christian religion, advanced and expanded under the beneficial influence of the Church. It was thus caught up in a continuous process of simultaneous progress and decline. In this process it gave rise to those very conflicts which are the subject of this book. In contrast to all historical theory that draws its conclusions from the remote past, we shall take as our actual, indeed essential, point of departure that moment in time when the contemporary observer enjoys the unique advantage of being a participant, of experiencing for himself the events *as they happen* and observing them with his own eyes. Although shackled to the rocks of time, he is aware of the sound and smell of the approaching daughters of Oceanus (Aeschylus, *Prometheus v. 115*).¹¹

¹¹ Where the daughters of the sea-god Oceanus warn Prometheus, nailed to his rock, that ‘a new master holds the helm of Olympus’ and is bent on destroying ‘the great powers of the past’. In many Greek legends the Oceanides were also presagers of earthquakes and volcanic destruction.

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