

# From "Community" to "Society": the Change of Tönnies's "Community of the Will"

Xiaozhen Wang

Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, 430074, China

**Abstract:** As an ancient concept, the community has left its appearance at every stage of human social development. The community at each stage is not only the reflection of the times, but also the wisdom of the times. As the basic way of human existence, the community is the home of human beings and the realization of human nature. However, in the contemporary capitalist environment, there are crises in the process of community development, which caused community to be deconstructed and even replaced. Thus, through the in-depth discussion of the "Community of the Will" of Tönnies, we can explore the path of the construction of the contemporary community represented by the "Community of Human Destiny".

**Keywords:** Community; Society; "Community of Human Destiny"

## 1. Introduction

Tönnies is a famous German social philosopher. He is the philosopher who first introduced the idea of community into the field of social philosophy and combined with real social problems after Marx's community thought. In the understanding of the community's thoughts, Tönnies used the dichotomy theory to understand the community from the differences of will, and proposed a new concept of "Community of the Will". This unique perspective on the community will provide new ideas for solving problems arising in social development, as well as providing experience and lessons for the construction of our contemporary community.

## 2. Intention, Habit, and Memory: a "Community" based on Essential Will

"Community's life is mutual possession and enjoyment. It is the possession and enjoyment of common property." The production relations and ownership relations in the community are based on public ownership. People collectively produce various products needed for life and share the means of production, and the production results are owned by everyone. However, because this community is a relatively primitive community, its production materials are relatively primitive, such as trees, hunting areas, land, farming seeds, etc., which have become family property for generations. Therefore, the "community" of Tönnies may be just a family or a village.

In the "community", in addition to sharing and enjoying the means of production and labor, the people also share and enjoy the spiritual belief that the essence of "default agreement". "The mutual and common, constrained

thoughts and beliefs as a community's own will, here should be understood as the concept of default agreement", the "default agreement" as the community's will, reflecting the most essential feature of relationship between blood and geography. In the "community", people have the same thoughts, beliefs and wills. Such thoughts, beliefs, and wills can be embodied in customs and faiths determined by blood and geography. These customs and faiths are derived from natural closeness, such as the mother's language. "Mother's language is most easily and vividly produced. The deep default between the mother and the child", this natural closeness forms the experience and habits, memories and beliefs, and also forms the essential will of "default agreement". The essence of this "default agreement" is in turn enhanced this habit, which has enabled this social relationship to be organically circulated and strengthened.

## 3. Machinery, Purpose, and Rationality: "Social" based on the Choice of Will

The development of capitalism is indispensable in the process of "community" becoming "society." Although there are exchanges in the "community", the exchanged items are only used to satisfy daily life. While the "society" is different, in the "society". Exchanges are gradually transformed into transactions, which give birth to commerce, and the purpose is to obtain profits. At the same time, the traditional farming economy was gradually replaced by the industrial economy. Under the impetus of capitalist commerce and industry, property ownership gradually replaced common possession. "Whoever owns and enjoys, his possession and enjoyment excludes all others", thus, the creation of private ownership decon-

structured the common foundation of the "community" and promoted the collapse of the "community".

"Society" is determined by the choice of will. The choice of will is an idea that aims to achieve its purpose, controls all other thoughts and considerations, controls the actions of all choices in "society", screen out for his service, and benefit the realization of purpose. The actions ultimately sum up the various purposes as one purpose, which is the choice of will to control the various relationships in "society". The choice of will reflects the rational "spirit of the new era" and determines the essence of "society": a unity of purpose relations. "Society" is a combination of purpose, the mechanical polymerization and artifacts, different from the original or natural state "community", the people in the "society" coexist in the same communities or the same block, but they are only living, not combined, they are separated from each other in nature, people will only act for common purposes, and people's lives and spirits are independent of each other.

#### **4. Inheritance, Evolution and Development: The Historical Approach from "Community" to "Social"**

"Society" has evolved from the "community", in this evolution, the "community" has almost disappeared. Only a small part of the tradition was preserved, the agricultural economy as the basis of the "community" has been replaced by the capitalist economy, the traditional blood and geopolitical relationships are reconstructed into modern communities or regions.

##### **4.1. Art and religion: the inheritance of "community" to "society"**

In the process of "social" transformation from the "community", some "community" heritages have been preserved, the most important of which is art and religion. Although Tönnies's "community" is represented by the traditional rural community, Tönnies does not deny that the early city or urban germination is also a "community." "The city, along with its language, its customs, its beliefs, like its land, its houses and its treasures, is a long-lasting thing that has undergone many generations of change and lasts forever." The "lasting things" retained by the "community" of the early cities are art and religion. The inheritance of art in "society" is concentrated in the handicraft industry, and also in the exchange of art. "Art is based on a religious consciousness" (Goethe), so in the process of artistic inheritance, religion has also been passed down, but the form has changed, from the original family superstition worship to a systematic religious ideas and religious systems, the development of religion reflects a change in the relationship between people and god and also provides "society" a spiritual force in addition to the will to choose.

##### **4.2. Alliance: the bond between "community" and "society"**

The bond between the alliances is mainly reflected in the marriage relationship. "There are many important relationships between the combination and the alliance. The most important thing is marriage. Marriage is the foundation of the new family on the one hand...This kind of coordination can only It is understood from the concept and spirit of the family." Marriage is the bond of the "community" in the process of becoming "society". The husband and wife jointly possess and enjoy the living space and property, share the means of production, and enjoy the fruits of labor together. Such a alliance remains intact even after the "society" is fully formed.

This bond effect is also reflected in the germination of the "society" choice will born in the alliance relationship in the "community". Although there is mainly a separation relationship in "society", there are also a few combinations. This is because the alliance in the community has gestated the germination of the will of choice to some extent, therefore, this combination is actually inherited from the alliance in the "community". There are many alliances in the "community", such as alliances between families, alliances between tribes, etc. These alliances condense the family types and concepts in the "community", while the associations exist in "society" and Cooperative associations, trade associations, guilds, etc., although they differ from the "community" in form and characteristics, "in all these combinations, the type and concept of the family are retained." Therefore, in the process of the evolution of "society", the alliance between the type and concept of the family not only embodies the inheritance of "society" to "community", but also embodies the germination of the will of choice in the "community" to achieve a common goal.

##### **4.3. Organic to mechanical: the evolution of "society" to "community"**

Due to the rapid changes in economic forms, the improvement of traffic convenience has shortened the regional distance. The rapid development of capitalism has broken the "community" that was originally maintained by blood emotions. The old social organization form can no longer meet the needs of capitalist development. A new form of social organization that serves the development of capitalism and is linked by a common goal — a mechanical "society".

The new form of social organization has subverted and encroached on the former "community". In "society", people's behavior is determined by the will of choice. The will of choice is a rational will, a rational way of existence and expression for a particular item, activity or individual self-realization. The will of choice is mechanical, and its mechanicality is mainly manifested in the process of "deliberation", "decision" and "concept" to

produce "society": "deliberation" is the purpose, "decision" is the behavior the way, the "concept" is the order of behavior. The process of choosing the will is that people "deliberate" on the purpose, "determine" how they act, and then follow the "concept" to produce actions. The actions and thoughts of this process all revolve around At the core of the purpose, once a subject has chosen a purpose, it will combine with several subjects with the same purpose to form a "society." People in "society" have no blood, no emotions, only the same goal. The maintenance of their relationship can only be based on the realization of the goal. Once the goal is realized, it will be disbanded. The various subjects inside will continue to search for the next "social". During the cycle, the "community" of organicity was disintegrated, and the mechanical "social" gradually became the main organizational form of society.

## **5. Dialectical Negation: An Investigation of the Value of Tönnies Community Thought**

The core of Tönnies's understanding of the community is the difference in the will of the "community" and "society", that is, the difference between the essential will and the choice will, so the will is the core of Tönnies's community thinking. Tönnies's idea of community is the result of applying the idea of community to solve real problems, so it has its rational side, but because historical factors have its limitations, it must be examined with dialectical or not.

### **5.1. Difference in will: the historical value of tönnies community thought**

The historical value of the Tönnies's community thought is mainly reflected in the understanding of "will". This unique perspective has far-reaching significance. This understanding of the "will" level of the community introduces Marx's community thinking into the spiritual dimension from the reality level, and makes people realize the importance of the will emotion in the community. In the capitalist environment, people's simple relationship is separated by capital, paying more attention to material enjoyment and power acquisition, focusing on the protection of private property and the inviolability of the private sphere. Therefore, the "community of the will" of Tönnies has realized people's understanding of the community. The spiritual turn provides a new perspective for the study of the community.

The historical value of Tönnies's community thought is also reflected in its research method of combining social philosophy with social reality. Tönnies's community thought is formed in the real environment and social problems. It is a profound reflection on social issues, especially its criticism of "society". It not only absorbs Marx's critical theory of capitalism, but also criticized the way people exist in the capitalist environment. Tönnies's

critique of "society" is mainly reflected in two aspects: On the one hand, the critique of the "society" constitutes that "society" is a combination of purpose, mechanical. The interaction between people is based on interests and purposes, and it is a group of people combined in the process of capitalism. and the interaction between people with interests and purposes. As a link, it is a group of groups that are combined in the process of capitalism and profit-seeking. It is a short-lived, loose structure; on the other hand, Tönnies's critique of "society" is also reflected in the critique of the "spirit of the new era", that is, the critique of capitalist rationality, which are all Tunis's After the in-depth thinking on social reality issues, it has realistic characteristics and profound practical significance.

### **5.2. Idealization and narrowness: the historical limitations of tönnies community thought**

Tönnies advocated the "community of the will", which was based on the connection of will and emotional identity. Although Tönnies did not completely ignore the influence of human practice on the community, but ignored the essential changes of the community brought about by human practice, but he ignored the germination of a new community in a capitalist environment. He only stayed in the nostalgia for the traditional community, stayed in the influence of the will and emotion on the community, and did not realize the essential factor of the development of the community - human practice. Therefore, the community of Tönnies lacked practicality.

The historical limitations of Tönnies's understanding of the "community" are also reflected in its idealization of the community. Because of the pursuit of a "pure" community, Tönnies ignores the influence of many factors in reality on the community, ignoring the possibility of a new form of community existence in a capitalist environment, which determines the community of Tönnies with a view to pre-capitalist The traditional community, without realizing the germination of the new community brought about by the development of capitalism, nor the realization of the common human vision that must be possessed in the process of globalization, which also determines the narrowness of the community of Tönnies and the lack of goals for the future community. This is one of the important manifestations of the separation of the idea of the community between Tönnies and Marx. Therefore, the idealization and narrowing of the community is the limitation of the Tönnies's community thought.

## **6. Conclusion**

Tönnies's view of the community of differences is of deep practical significance: the construction of the community needs to be linked by common will and emotion, but the "community of the will" also has its limitations. Therefore, in the process of constructing the "community

of human destiny". In addition to the need for a common will and emotional care to overcome the social problems brought about by the disturbance of capitalism, it is necessary to have a historical perspective of Marxism and to see the warnings of the historical destiny that the "community of the will" has been replaced. Therefore, the community cannot be confined to emotions and wills, but should be rooted in the real soil to become an advanced community that conforms to the development of the times without being swallowed up by capitalism.

## References

- [1] Ferdinand Tönnies. *Community and Society*. Lin Rongyuan, Beijing. The Commercial Press. 1999.
- [2] Adair-Toteff, C. Ferdinand Tönnies - Ways and Goals of Sociology. In *Sociological Beginnings. The First Conference of the German Society for Sociology*. Liverpool University Press. 2005, 57-73.
- [3] Aul Thomas. *Property's Properties: From Hegel to Locke*. Representations. 2003, V01.84, No.1.
- [4] Kenneth A. Megill. *Community in Marxist Philosophy. Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. 2011, 30(3).
- [5] Podoksik, E. Ferdinand Tönnies: Hobbes Scholar. In C. Adair-Toteff. *The Anthem Companion to Ferdinand Tönnies*. Anthem Press. 2016, 119-140.