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| Tönnies, Ferdinand (1855–1936) |
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| Ferdinand Tönnies was central to the professionalization of European sociology, co-founding the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie* (German Society for Sociology) in 1909, along with Max Weber and Georg Simmel (Adair-Toteff 2005). He was born in 1855 in rural Schleswig (present-day Germany) to a family of Lutheran pastors and cattle breeders; he died in urban Kiel, Germany, in 1936. He is best known for proposing that *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* form a constitutive binary of modernity (Tönnies 1957). *Gemeinschaft* (community) is an organic social form typified by village life historically and family life generally, where people are bound in mutual dependency, custom, and shared experience. In contrast, *Gesellschaft* (society) is an artificial social form where individuals enter and exit associations frequently and voluntarily; the city-dweller is famously freed from obligations of blood and tradition, which restrict and support the villager. Tönnies argued that such freedoms carry a cost to the city-dweller, who is prone to atomization and alienation. Tönnies’ portrait of *Gemeinschaft* served to highlight the shortcomings, even pathological attributes, of modern society (Löwy and Sayre 2001). Tönnies believed that the movement from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* was historically inevitable – the human values of village life were doomed to disappear. |
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| Further reading:  (Adair-Toteff)  (Liebersohn)  (Löwy) |