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Georg Simmel's contribution to a theory of emotions

If one considers the number of recent re-publications of the works of Georg Simmel (cf. Simmel 1983a, 1983b, 1983c, 1984), it would almost seem that the work of this master of German sociological thought is experiencing a belated renaissance.

These recent re-publications of some of Simmel's works and the secondary analytical reinterpretations which followed them (cf. Dahme and Rammstedt, 1984; Bevers, 1985) created the preconditions to take up Simmel's ideas again and usefully develop them further. That it is not only interesting to follow on from Simmel from the point of view of the history of ideas, but that it is also fruitful, particularly from the point of view of content and systematic analysis, to refer back to Simmel, is shown by the topic "emotions". It is, among other things, the aim of this article to make this claim plausible.

The fact that Simmel even cast an analytical eye over the topic of emotions (and the manner in which he did so) is a peculiarity which differentiates him from other writers of his time. Until about fifteen years ago emotions played only a peripheral role in scientific inquiry; one gets the impression that science has undergone the same internal change that Max Weber and Norbert Elias described, with the concepts of "rationalization" and the "process of affect control", as typical structural characteristics of the rise of modernism: thus, for the most part, emotions were excluded from the proper concerns of science. Georg Simmel was in this respect an exception.

Where feelings and emotions have nevertheless been the subject of scientific enquiry, they have been relegated to the realm of psychology as part of the process of differentiation in the human sciences. For its part sociology past and present has abstained, and

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continues to abstain, from considering emotions as a topic of analysis. Here too, Simmel was an exception in so far as he analysed emotions from a sociological perspective. If one attempts to draw up a tally of the insights of a psychology of the emotions, the sum total is rather meagre. On the single question of what an emotion is there are as many answers as there are schools and there does not even seem to be a consensus on the proper subject matter for examination.¹

In view of this state of the art in research, it seems pertinent to ask whether a genuinely sociological examination of the emotional sphere could not be helpful here, as well as offering some useful results. Simmel used such a perspective, formulated research questions and presented some preliminary results. In what follows we will attempt to reconstruct and systematize Simmel's sociology of emotions by detailed reference to his writings.

Happily, such an undertaking does not need to start from scratch. Birgitta Nedelman's essay of 1983 provides a knowledgeable interpretation of Simmel's work on emotions. It none the less has some shortcomings which leave room for a more complete interpretation. I should like to illustrate my criticism of Nedelman's work by three examples.

(1) Not everything that Simmel lists under the heading "emotions", is, in fact, an emotion. Thus, for example, it is difficult to define tactfulness as an emotion. Tact is an empathetic knowledge of behavioural expectations of fine distinctions and nuances, in situations and definitions of situations, which, however, is not the same as emotional experience.

(2) Not everything that Simmel describes as *the* emotion is an ahistorical form of the emotion in question; it is merely one variant of a culturally-specific codified emotion. This objection is directed at Simmel's analysis of love and also at his analysis of jealousy. Nedelman accepts both of Simmel's wrong definitions uncritically.

(3) The manner of her quotations from Simmel is at times unscholarly and tends to distort the original because separating passages have been filtered out of various excerpts which have then been combined with one another, or with Nedelman's own ideas, to create a contextual meaning which is not to be found in Simmel's work.²

Despite these points of criticism, Nedelman's essay is certainly an important contribution to research on Simmel, and illustrates how fruitful it would be for a sociology of emotions, as yet in its infancy,

to carry on from where Simmel left off.

Simmel firmly accepts that emotions are a topic for sociological analysis by his definition of the different areas of psychology and sociology. It is not different subject matter that divides scientific disciplines from one another, but different methods of inquiry which lead to “a multiplicity of independent scientific objects” (Simmel, 1968, p. 18). The genuinely sociological perspective is that of an examination of emotions in the context of their reciprocal effects between individuals. According to Simmel, two different aspects of the emotional sphere can be distinguished: on the one hand, emotions are themselves forms of the creation of interactions, and, on the other hand, they are the outcome, the psychological effects of experienced interactions. Simmel speaks of primary emotions, when interactions are caused by emotions; he calls emotions secondary when they are the result of interactions (Simmel, 1922, p. 51).

In the next section, I shall introduce Simmel’s concept of the secondary emotions and then discuss the concept of the primary emotions. As for Durkheim and Weber, one of Simmel’s primary concerns was to attempt to understand and explain the emergence of modern societies. It was in this context that he returned to the notion of the primary emotions which he then applied in a macro-sociological manner. The attempt to reconstruct his thought on this issue is the subject of the last section.

Secondary emotions

Simmel’s analysis of the secondary emotions, understood as the emotional product of previous interactions, is based on a theory of the psychic system. The use of the concept of a system seems to me to be legitimate in this context because Simmel had already developed important ideas towards formulating a theory of the psychic system (Gerhards, 1984). According to Simmel, psychological identities are formed by interplay with and demarcation from the environment. All psychological processes are generally based on an evaluation of external stimuli, which, like a filter, distinguishes the important from the unimportant, so defining an internal structure and delimiting the internal from the external (Simmel, 1977, pp. 4–7). What is felt to be valuable is subjectively variable and not dependent on the quality of the object but on the range of the

evaluation categories. In the realm of emotions, this means that not only socio-structural conditions, but the interplay of social structure and the subjective schemata of interpretation of these conditions, produce emotions (Simmel, 1977, pp. 7ff.). In this way Simmel rejects the positivist attempt to define emotions as the result of social factors in favour of an interpretative approach.

The ontogenetic prerequisite for the development of evaluation patterns is the division between subject and environment and the difference between the subject and his perception of the environment as environment. The basal evaluation category is the dichotomy between desire and aversion. In this context Simmel asserts that the search for desire is an anthropological determinant of man (1977, p. 147). Simmel formulates the thesis, based on the theory of marginal utility from economics, that the salience of desire will decline, the greater the stimulus from the environment. Rarity is one of the most important elements conducive to the production of desire. This rarity may, however, not be absolute; but the desired object must be located in the middle distance. Thus a “certain middle position between rarity and non-rarity is in most cases the condition of value” (Simmel, 1977, p. 21). The basic valuation does not follow any objective scale of evaluation but depends on the preference of the subject. Secondary emotions are thus psychic reactions to perceived discrepancies between subjective structures of evaluation and social environmental stimuli. This general definition takes specific forms depending on the emotion under consideration.

I will now reconstruct Simmel’s analysis of secondary emotions, in order to outline the typology which underlies it.

Gratitude

Giving and receiving are the basic modes in which men relate to one another.

In that the other either receives or refuses, he exerts a quite specific effect on the first. The manner in which he receives, gratefully or ungratefully, as if he had expected it or was surprised, as if satisfied with the gift or remaining dissatisfied, as if feeling insulted or exalted by the gift — all of this has a decisive effect on the giver, even if this cannot be expressed in particular concepts or measures, and so every act of giving is an interaction between the giver and the recipient (Simmel, 1983b, p. 444).

The social situation which gives rise to gratitude can be described as an excess of services, given by Alter to Ego and so evaluated according to the subjective evaluation structures of Ego.

Simmel distinguishes the cause of gratitude from the function of the gratitude thus created in maintaining interaction: the internal obligation to have to balance out the unequal relationship between giving and receiving implies a potential for further action. Thus gratitude takes on the function of continuing interaction and is thus essential for the stability of a society. The obligatory character of gratitude remains independent of external or internal changes and it is this which distinguishes gratitude from other, similar, feelings of obligation.

Even if our internal reality, of itself or in response to an external one, has made it impossible for us to go on loving, honouring, valuing — aesthetically, ethically, intellectually — we can still continue to be grateful to someone who has once earned our gratitude (Simmel, 1983b, p. 447).

In this way, gratitude is one of the most important emotions over time for the cohesion and stability of interactions.

Shame

As in his sociological description of gratitude, Simmel distinguishes in his analysis of shame between the social triggers of feelings of shame and the functions which they assume for the continuation of interactions. As in his description of gratitude, his description of the constellation of triggers is based on the notion of perceived system–environment discrepancies. Even if the individual occurrences triggering shame are heterogeneous, “such as a minor excess of praise and honour accorded us, and a tactless act perpetrated by a stranger in our presence” (Simmel, 1983a₂, p. 140), they nevertheless have a common basic pattern.

In that one feels ashamed, one feels one’s personal identity brought to the attention of others and, at the same time, that this involuntary prominence is tied up with the transgression of some norm (factual, moral, conventional, personal) (Simmel, 1983a₂, p. 141).

Erving Goffman, one of the few to have later taken up the topic of shame from a sociological perspective — although without making

reference to Simmel — speaks in this connection of a discrediting of the self (Goffman, 1975, p. 116). But in general, Goffman's considerations add nothing new to Simmel's insights.

Behaviour which the Ego itself interprets as the transgression of a norm must be of such a kind that Ego can accuse Alter of interpreting Ego's behaviour as representative of his whole person. Simmel makes this explicit by the example of a congenital physical disability and a disability acquired as a result of an accident:

for we feel our own Self as belonging to the former, to the latter, however, only as an accidental occurrence, as if to the world outside of ourselves. Only the former, then, lets us experience a dual Self: The real, which appears as a result of the abnormality, and the normal, the whole, compared to which the former is devalued (Simmel, 1983a₂, p. 144).

The transgression of a norm and the anticipation that Alter will interpret the norm-transgressing behaviour as an expression of the make-up of the whole personality are accordingly constitutive components of the occurrence of feelings of shame. Shame is a reaction of the subjective constitution to this constellation of conditions. Feelings of shame occur when the Ego becomes conscious that he has failed to act with tact.

In every case when there is a failure of tact, and this has been interpreted by the Ego *as* a failure, when the discrepancy between behaviour and the behavioural expectations of the current forms of socialization is perceived, feelings of shame will arise. Simmel tries to document this decomposition of this general social context further, by more closely specifying both sides, the social expectation context as well as the make-up of the evaluation structure of Ego. The crucial question is that of the specification of the conditions of interactions which are important for the triggering of feelings of shame. Two structural principles come into play here: on the one hand, the extent of the *social distance* between Ego and Alter, and, on the other, *the level of development of individuality*, of the emergence of the individual from the collective, the community.

A cause for shame is created by situations in which the relationship between Ego and Alter is at the level of the middle distance. The occurrence of feelings of shame between individuals who know one another very well or who do not know one another at all is unlikely. Anonymity in the second case and familiarity in the first serve as buffers to shame. Where there is little distance

between the interacting partners, as in the case of lovers, the potential for shame-eliciting behaviour by Ego is compensated for by the small number of unknowns in the mutual life experiences of Ego and Alter. A single item of information, a potential mistake in behaviour by Ego, has little meaning for Alter within the net of total information about Ego and is not taken as indicative of the whole personality. Knowing and anticipating this, Ego feels no shame.

It is the blessing of relating to people quite close to us, that it brings us into equilibrium with ourselves, that it also does not bring the disparaged, rudimentary Self into friction with the idea of the normal and norm-making Self, but that it always opens the way for a reconciliation of both (Simmel, 1983a₂, p. 146).

Even when there is extreme distance between interacting partners, the occurrence of feelings of shame is most unlikely.

This explains the remarkable openness with which travelling companions, who were unknown to one another until an hour ago, and who will not see one another again an hour later, are often prepared to entrust one another with intimacies. This is a situation of mutual anonymity, the Self as such is excluded from the relationship which can then be accorded various contents, which with someone close to us would give cause for shame (Simmel, 1983a₂, p. 146).

Single encounters have no consequences for Ego and Alter. Even if a potential mistake by Ego, which is not in accord with the norms and expectations of Alter, is interpreted as such by Ego and causes Alter to draw conclusions concerning the total personality of Ego on that basis, Ego can ignore it if this typification by Alter cannot re-occur in other situations.

But neither the protection of intimacy nor the protection of anonymity operates in middle-distance relationships. Here mutual typifications are still relatively open, so that every act of behaviour by Ego can be evaluated by Alter as an expression of the personality of Ego; at the same time, the interaction is not so inconsequential that Ego can ignore the possibility that Alter will draw conclusions from Ego's behaviour as to his personality. A lack of congruity of behaviour by means of mutually shared world view on the one hand, and a lack of equanimity — present because of the unimportance of mistakes between anonymous interacting partners — on the other hand make the occurrence of feelings of

shame in relationships between actors at the middle-distance level very likely.

The second structural principle, which is decisive to the likelihood or unlikelihood of feelings of shame occurring, relates to whether Ego acts as an individual or as a member of a collective. If the occurrence of feelings of shame is connected with the prominence and exposure of the self, then this primarily presupposes that actions giving cause for shame can be attributed to an individual and not to the collective. Actions perpetrated shamelessly as a member of a group would cause shame if they were attributed to an individual — if they were perpetrated at all.

Some clubs and associations lay claim to privileges, which an individual would probably blush to demand. In the administration of North American cities it is the practice, in order to avoid administrative abuses, to fill official posts not with an individual, but with a board of several members: but it immediately became evident that, the moment no one in particular was to blame (Bryce) the abuses grew in an even more shameless manner (Simmel, 1983a₂, p. 147).

A precondition for the occurrence of feelings of shame is the perceived discrepancy between Ego's actions and Alter's behavioural expectations. If the individual is wholly submerged in the group then such perceived discrepancies are not even possible. If, on the other hand, the individual feels himself responsible for the behaviour of the whole group, in that he perceives a discrepancy between the group's behaviour and the expectations of another group or individual respectively, and relates the group's behaviour to himself, then the individual will also experience shame. Simmel illustrates this by the example of a sparsely attended meeting in which those present are ashamed before the speaker that so few have turned up. Those present blame themselves for the absence of the others and are ashamed (Simmel, 1983a₂, p. 148).

Although Simmel, with his description of the factors influencing the occurrence of feelings of shame (which, confusingly, he entitled "Zur Psychologie der Scham" (On a psychology of shame), has laid the basis for a sociological approach to the phenomenon of shame, he makes slight use of this work subsequently. It would have been helpful here to have established connections with a macrosociological discussion. According to Simmel, the process of increasing functional differentiation, which is decisive in the emergence of modernism, leads, at the personal level, to the emergence of the individual. The increasing number of

heterogeneous spheres within which the individual must interact in a society marked by the division of labour makes a collective sense of a meaning which transcends individuals unlikely. Identity is constituted as an intersection of social circles within which the individual interacts; identity only becomes individual by virtue of the fact that no one else resides in a similar intersection. But thereby, one could argue, the probability of the occurrence of shame-creating situations is enormously increased. The freeing from the collective and the increase in individual accountability which results from the emergence of modernism is, at the same time, the reason for the occurrence of feelings of shame.

We may draw a second conclusion from Simmel's macro-sociological thesis on the emergence of modernism. The more varied the spheres of life of individuals, the greater the social distance between the members of a society becomes. Familiarity as a protecting mantle against shame-triggering situations becomes increasingly unlikely. Anonymous and middle-distance relationships become more frequent, and, at least for the latter, as we have seen, there is a greater chance of the occurrence of shame-triggering situations.

The question of the function of feelings of shame still remains open. If Ego feels ashamed and expresses this, then he counteracts the supposed typification which Alter applies to Ego on the basis of his wrong behaviour. By being ashamed, Ego signals that he holds his own behaviour to be an accident and so re-establishes his own self. If feeling shame shows the boundaries of the self to be something artificial, then giving expression to that feeling of shame re-establishes those boundaries and at the same time reconstructs the self. Simultaneously, the behavioural norm violated by the shame-triggering action of Ego is re-established as valid and the interaction can proceed.

The display of a feeling of shame has thus a double function: it re-establishes personal identity and stabilizes the social system, ensuring the continuation of interaction.

Jealousy

The situational trigger of jealousy is linked to two different interactions and so to two different emotional states. Jealousy occurs when Alter¹ accords to Alter² values which are important to

Ego and which had previously been accorded him. The first interaction between Ego and Alter² is characterized by enmity, coupled with feelings of anger and hatred (Simmel, 1983b, p. 211). Alter² is seen by Ego as an active competitor; Ego tries to assess the latter's advantages and to surpass him. The second interaction between Ego and Alter¹ is examined in greater depth by Simmel. The emotional states are characterized by love and hatred. Both emotions can simultaneously, superimposed on one another, determine Ego's state of mind; but they can also follow one another. Both emotions are the result of different social determinants. Love is the result of the free allocation of status and values by Alter¹ to Ego. Hatred is the result of the denial of these formerly accorded values and their redistribution in favour of Alter². Simmel is interested in the almost inescapable process of the destruction of relations between Ego and Alter¹ which is triggered and driven by Ego's jealousy (see Nedelman, 1983, p. 202).

Typology of secondary emotions

What do the three examples of secondary emotions have in common? What is at issue here is the network of social conditions which produces secondary feelings. Simmel himself never attempted to construct such a system, but it is contained by implication in his description of the individual emotions and is thus capable of reconstruction. Common to all secondary feelings is the perception by Ego of a discrepancy between his own structures of evaluation and specific characteristics of his environment. This perceived discrepancy gives rise to emotional states. What sociological category can be used to describe these discrepancies systematically?

If one selects "social status" as the central category of social relations and looks for evidence of favour, rewards and privilege which are freely exchanged between Ego and Alter — according to Kemper's (1981, p. 139) definition of social status — and if, in addition, one makes further differentiations about (1) who the giver and who the receiver of the exchanged social status is and (2) who is responsible for the amount of status to be given, Ego himself or Alter, then one can differentiate various social relationships according to whether they transmit an excess of, or too little, status to Ego. We shall now look at the three secondary

emotions classified by Simmel in the light of this distinction.

(1) *Gratitude*. Here Ego receives voluntary favours. Ego believes that Alter has accorded him an excess of status. Ego, as recipient, believes himself deserving of the perceived discrepancy between earned and received status. If Ego interprets a situation in this way, then he feels obliged to be grateful to Alter.

(2) *Shame*. Ego receives either too much or too little recognition. Too much recognition is accorded when, for example, Alter praises Ego to the skies and Ego perceives a discrepancy between deserved and received status. Ego blames himself for the failure to merit that status and feels shame. We can see that this social situation arises in a similar way to that of the gratitude-evoking situation. This is quite plausible and indicates the correctness of the dimensional analysis of the situation because a feeling of gratitude often goes hand-in-hand with a feeling of shame. If one is given expensive or excessive gifts one often feels ashamed, because one believes that one does not deserve it, and at the same time, one feels obliged to be grateful and to seek for ways of compensating the giver. However, shame can also be created by a situation in which Ego receives too little status from Alter and blames himself for it. This is the case in situations where Ego's behaviour is at variance with behavioural expectations and he anticipates that Alter will interpret his norm-breaking behaviour as an expression of personality and will therefore deny him status: Ego, on the other hand, considers the denial to be situationally correct but not the general evaluation of his character.

(3) *Jealousy*. The dimensional analysis of jealousy is more complicated because the interaction here relates to Alter¹ and Alter², whilst at the same time Alter² is involved only via Alter¹. The previous balance of status between Ego and Alter¹ is turned by jealousy into a status discrepancy in so far as Ego receives less affection and recognition from Alter¹ than Ego believes he deserves. This is blamed on Alter¹ who is now giving the desired good to Alter². In such a situation, Ego feels jealousy. His relationship to Alter² is characterized by the fact that Ego perceives that Alter² has greater resources than Ego and sees himself as a beaten competitor. But this competitive relationship is not a direct relationship, but is mediated via Alter¹. It cannot be described in the status dimension, since no interactions exist between Ego and Alter².

If one complements this model of the analysis of social

relationships by introducing the power dimension à la Theodore Kemper, so that each potential social relationship may be quantified as a specific power and status relationship, which leads to differing emotional states, then we can also analyse the particular relationship between Ego and Alter² (Kemper, 1981, p. 139). When Kemper defines status as the *free* giving and according of favours, rewards and privileges, he understands power to be the opportunity (and also the possession of the necessary resources) to get his own way even *in the face of opposition* (Kemper, 1978, pp. 29ff.). If we introduce the power dimension to complement the description of behavioural patterns we find that even if there is no direct power relationship between Ego and Alter², it can nevertheless be usefully interpreted as one mediated via Alter¹. In Ego's eyes Alter² has the power and the resources to compete with him for a good which he values — namely the affection of Alter¹. A feeling of inferiority and hatred is the resulting reaction of Ego to a constellation of social factors.

If one examines Simmel's observations on the analysis of secondary emotions, one can see that they are implicitly based on a typology which can be reconstructed by resort to a description of social relationships in the status and power dimensions. Different status/power relationships between Ego and Alter will produce different emotions. In this way a sociological determination of the emotional sphere is achieved in that different emotions can be explained by different social relationship networks. One final point made by Simmel on the secondary emotions must be mentioned. Simmel assumes that social relationships have no independent existence; they exist only in the 'heads' of the subjects concerned. Social relationships exist only as *interpretations* of relationships. For the emotions this implies that it is not status/power relationships *per se* which produce specific emotions, but only subjects' interpretations of social conditions using the categories of status and power.

Primary emotions

In discussing secondary emotions we are concerned with the psychic results of social relationships. Simmel defines primary emotions, on the other hand, as constructions which produce social realities. That the distinction is often only an analytical one is self-

evident. If, for example, shame — as a secondary emotion — can be understood as an emotion arising in specific social relationship contexts, the expression of feelings of shame feeds back into the social relationship to reshape it in a specific manner and can thus be just as easily described as a primary emotion. In what follows I shall attempt to reconstruct Simmel's considerations on the question of what specific kinds of construction of reality give rise to emotions and how this modality differs from other kinds of construction of reality.

Like Durkheim, Simmel — in his *Sociology of Religion* — develops basic ideas for a sociology of the emotions (Simmel, 1922; Durkheim, 1981; Hammond, 1983). But also in terms of content, Simmel's ideas on the primary emotions are close to Durkheim's analysis of emotions as the form of construction of social reality. Neither morality, nor law, nor self-interest possess of themselves the power to permanently secure relationships between individuals and thus to constitute social reality.

Just as law alone, even if applied in a specialised and rigorous manner, can never hold a society together, if it were not complemented by morally free acts of kindness and decency, of peacefulness and good will, so even these free acts, combined with law, could still not create a society, were they not complemented by those "emotional dispositions" of love and affection, without which social closeness, the constant coming-into-contact with others, would be unbearable. Good-neighbourly relations, whatever one's view of their dependability, extensiveness and depth, are nevertheless an absolutely necessary cement for every group, even if perhaps not in the positive sense, but only in so far, that without them, social existence in conditions of already differentiated personalities would be hell (Simmel, 1923, pp. 87ff.).

Simmel's justification of why the social must be based on an emotional foundation is of an anthropological nature. Hobbes' premise of *homo homini lupus est*, even if valid, would for Simmel be unbearable for man. The anthropological necessity of human interdependence would be intolerable, were it not for the emergence of positive social feelings as a cementing element. In this context Simmel speaks of a priori forms which "weave lines of communications to other subjects" (1922, p. 51).

Primary emotions divide the world into the important and the unimportant, into near and far, into belonging and non-belonging, into communal solidarity and foreignness. It is easy to detect Durkheim's distinction between the sacred and the profane in this function of the basal construction of reality. Indeed Simmel, like

Durkheim, sees in the social, in society, the truly superhuman which goes beyond and transcends individuals and which in this transcendence represents the basis of all religions (Simmel, 1922, p. 56). The emotional ties between the individuals of a group, demarcating them from outgroups, represent the basal construction of the social world, and in religion are raised to the level of the sacred — Simmel and Durkheim are in agreement here also — and are produced and reproduced (Simmel, 1922, p. 5).

Feelings of closeness and sympathy are the ties of communities of solidarity; they stabilize groups internally and demarcate them from the outside; they do not integrate emotionally with the world outside. If Simmel describes emotions as a priori forms, the question as to functional alternatives and the relative specific viability of the various forms of the construction of reality poses itself. What are the specific qualities of emotions that lead Simmel to describe them as “basal” forms of appropriating the world? Even though Simmel developed no systematic answers to these questions we can nevertheless find some indicators in his *Philosophy of Money*. If primary emotions represent one form of the construction of social reality, then the intellect and money represent functionally equivalent forms of construction.

I shall now attempt to define those characteristics which, according to Simmel, distinguish emotions from the intellect and from money. The different respective forms of communication may be subdivided in their dimensional characteristics into a succession of “greater or lesser” so that we arrive at the series “emotion, intellect, money”.

(1) Emotions have a specific object to which they relate. One loves someone in particular, one hates someone, one is jealous of someone. It is true that the intellect is intentionally directed at an object; but this need not be a particular object and its specific individual characteristics are of no special interest. Thus mathematically logical connections are completely independent of the specific characteristics of the units which are connected — it is not important whether I add two and three apples or two and three pears. With money, this abstraction from the object is raised to the n th degree. Money, of itself, no longer has a purpose, it is purely a means to an end.

Money is the purest form of a tool, and especially of the kind described above: it is an institution, into which the individual can translate his activities and assets,

in order, by means of this point of transition, to achieve goals which he could not achieve by directing his efforts directly at them (Simmel, 1977, p. 205).

(2) Emotions relate to the totality of their object and perceive it in a complete and undifferentiated manner. Even if the starting point of an emotion is a single aspect of an object, this is then generalized to the whole personality.

An individual's jealousy or hatred, having its origin in political partisanship, extends to those points of the party programme which would be immaterial to him or to which he would react negatively; the love for a person which is occasioned by attraction for one of his characteristics, finally encompasses the whole personality and so includes many traits and expressions, with the same passion, which they, without such a context, would never be able to command (Simmel, 1977, p. 229).

Intellect and money exhibit a form of construction of reality diametrically opposed to this. They permit a perception of reality which allows of a differentiation of object. Separate areas may be extracted from the total context and examined separately and, at the same time, may be brought into relationship with separate areas from other objects. Simmel speaks in this connection of the lack of principle in the intellect and in money: it is not the personality of the other, and the emotional ties with him, that are important, but merely his function as vehicle of a particular material economic potential, "in which today's deadly competitor can become tomorrow's valued partner in a cartel" (Simmel, 1977, p. 486). Intellectual and monetary forms of communication are indifferent towards persons, in contrast to emotional forms.

(3) Intellectual and monetary constructions of reality have a universal and objective validity, whilst emotions remain subjectively imprisoned. Thus logical forms exist irrespective of who uses them, whilst emotions can only ever claim a subjective validity. "One can only escape a superior logic by a stubborn: I do not want to — whereby one nevertheless shows that one is the weaker." (Simmel, 1977, p. 491.)

(4) Intellect and money on the one hand, and emotions on the other, each have a different relationship to space. During the early development of mankind space and distance were in a determinant relationship to one another. The spatially close individual was at the same time socially close and vice versa. Only the development of intellect and the power of abstraction made possible an

uncoupling from spatial limitations and permitted social nearness over spatial distance to emerge (Simmel, 1983a₃, p. 233). Emotions are much more space-related than the intellect.

If accordingly, relationships between widely separated individuals primarily presuppose a certain level of intellectual sophistication, conversely the emotional nature of local relationships is characterised by the fact that one is generally inclined to adopt a generally positive attitude to close neighbours (friends and enemies) but one is rarely indifferent. Dominant intellectualism always denotes a reduction of emotional extremes (Simmel, 1983a₃, p. 234).

If the development of intellectualism results in an escape from spatial constraints on relationships, this is even more true for money. Money makes possible communications which transcend all spatial barriers and is thus the most unrestricted form of communication.

(5) In the course of evolution, emotions, intellect and money were developed in that order and are built up like layers, one over the other.

If one assumes a genetic and systematic serial order of spiritual expression, then one must take emotion (naturally not all emotions), as the primary, fundamental, the general expression, compared to the intellect. Pleasure and pain as well as some emotional drives, which serve to maintain the Ego and species, at least developed before any contact with concepts, judgements and conclusions (Simmel, 1970, p. 42).

That the creation of money and a money-based economy emerged relatively late in evolution is empirically well established, and leads Simmel to describe the rise of modernism with reference to this element. This is the subject of the next section.

If one summarizes the characteristics which differentiate emotions as forms of the construction of social reality from intellect and money, and attempts to systematize them, one realizes that the difference lies in the differing levels of abstraction and differentiation which can be achieved. Intellect and money are more independent of the object at which they are directed, more independent of the subject using them and also more independent of any spatial constraint, than emotions. Emotions, on the other hand, are expressions of subjective states, are tied to real objects, are intentionally directed at these objects and are so directed in a total and undifferentiated manner. At the same time they are more spatially constrained than intellect and money. Of course, such a

phenomenological description of various modes of the construction of reality only makes sense sociologically if it can be applied to the explanation of social phenomena. Like Durkheim and Weber, Simmel's sociological curiosity is aimed at an explanation of the emergence of modernism. It is in this context that he again takes up the analytical discussion of various forms of the construction of reality.

Modernism as a society structured by money

Simmel does not attempt an historically empirical interpretation of modernism; he gives a structural description of an ideal type of modern society which he analyses as the culmination of an historical development, viz. a money-based society. Almost without any reference to historical dates and occurrences he intellectually develops the structural characteristics and effects on individuals and social relationships of a society founded on, and interacting on, the basis of money (for the structure of his argument, see his introduction to *Eine Philosophie des Geldes* (A Philosophy of Money), 1977, p. vi), and at the level of a simple dichotomous social typology, he differentiates the type of the modern, rational, money-based economy from the pre-modern, emotionally-based type of society.

Before I proceed to discuss the effects of a money-based society on the sphere of the emotions, I should like briefly to sketch the structure and development of modernism.

Historically, the creation of money is closely linked to the development of the division of labour; they are in a complementary relationship with one another. Simmel explains the development of the division of labour by an analogy with the laws of physics. He applies the thermodynamic law of the constant sum of energy to the social sphere. The principle governing evolution is the principle of energy conservation. For different systems energy is conserved by reducing friction between the parts so the system survives (Simmel, 1980, pp. 117 ff.). Such an attempt at explanation (based on Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer) is able, Simmel believes, to throw light on the reasons for the development of the division of labour. However, differentiation as a structural principle of societies can only survive if there is communication between their various parts.

For how is it possible to place values on the individual products, as long as there is no common measure of values for the most miscellaneous things and qualities. How could barter proceed smoothly, as long as there was no medium, which could compensate for differences and into which each product could be converted? (Simmel, 1983a, pp. 81ff.).

Now money is able to mediate between Ego and Alter, because it can be converted to types of goods that Ego and Alter mutually exchange. The importance of money lies in its power of mediation between partners willing to transact an exchange. What are the qualities that make money a pure means? According to Simmel, money makes possible an objectivization, quantification and equalization of goods produced. Goods which were produced by the various individuals have a subjective value placed on them. If they are to be exchanged through the medium of money, they must be liberated from their subjective valuations and brought to a level of comparability, i.e. they must be objectivized. In this way, what were originally subjectively differently valued units are equalized by reference to a common reference point. Since the monetary system allocates value to goods on the basis of the decimal system, a precise determination of value by parcellation is possible and subjectively different qualities become convertible (quantification) (Simmel, 1977, pp. 205ff.). According to Simmel, money becomes the principle structuring everything in modernism and affects lifestyles, social interactions and culture. What are the consequences of this and how do they relate to the emotions?

(1) If formerly subjective valuations, modified by the emotional content placed in goods, were the basis for exchange, with the introduction of money they lose their emotional content and are equalized and made quantifiable according to objective criteria. The direct relationship between man and objects, which in its immediacy is an emotional one, is replaced by a special communicable one, determined by the intermediacy of a symbol (Simmel, 1977, p. 123).

(2) If money becomes a dominant medium of communication in modernism it alters the character of man. A money-based economy involves the necessity of constant mathematical/arithmetical operations in daily life. The life of many individuals is filled by such decisions, assessments, calculations and reductions of qualitative values to quantitative ones. This certainly contributed towards the rational, calculating character of modern times compared to the more impulsive, all-embracing, emotional

character of earlier epochs (Simmel, 1983a₁, pp. 90ff.).

(3) The application of rational thinking does not remain confined to the economic sphere. “The spiritual energy” (Simmel, 1977, p. 480), which produces the money economy with its specific characteristics, is reason. In all areas, rational assessments suppress subjective, emotionally coloured judgements. This is true for the legal system (here one is reminded of Durkheim’s differentiation between repressive and restorative law) just as much as for calculations of utility in the economy and for the logic of science.

(4) Communications between individuals, mediated by money, lead to total abstraction from the personal characteristics of the exchanging partners. Only the fact that they are sellers/consumers of goods is relevant to the communications and every emotional perspective, referring to the whole person, is excluded (Simmel, 1983a₁, p. 83).

(5) Money makes communication beyond spatial boundaries possible; it even encourages this process, since the likelihood of finding an exchange partner close to hand is smaller than that of finding one further away. Thus the money-based economy, besides leading to a conversion of relationships mediated by money into material terms, also leads to devaluation of spatially close, emotionally-stabilizing organic relationships, such as family and relatives. These become less important when compared to the exchange of goods mediated by money.

(6) Closely linked to this point is Simmel’s thesis that in a money economy, compassion, “the humane and sympathetic feelings of poverty” (Simmel, 1977, p. 259), declines. A money economy produces its own logic, which brings with it egoistical thinking and behaviour.

(7) With the introduction of a money economy, the pace of a society (i.e. the pace at which change takes place) changes. The fact that money makes both the qualities of the objects and those of individuals abstract, makes the manner of dealing with them more flexible, so enabling changes to be made much more quickly (Simmel, 1977, pp. 568–583). A society stabilized primarily on the basis of the emotions is more rigid and less capable of change. A rapid change of life-styles is only possible if emotional content is relatively small and flexibility thus possible.

(8) Although originally a means of exchange, in the development of a money economy money itself increasingly becomes a good to

be exchanged. The lines of application become more extended and the original goal, the exchange of two goods, is forgotten. The free extension and development of lines of action are only possible with a medium of communication such as money, since by its abstract nature, and its independence, money ignores emotional ties to people and objects and thus achieves enormous flexibility (Simmel, 1977, pp. 481, 491).

Money, with its specific qualities which demarcate it from emotions as a different mode of constructing reality, is the structural principle of modernism, suffusing and determining every sphere and separating modernism as a money-based society from the pre-modern, emotionally structured societal forms.

It is surprising that Simmel — usually so sensitive to contradictions, to the unusual and to the dual nature of social phenomena — should develop such a one-dimensional picture of modernism in his *Philosophie des Geldes*. The fact has obviously escaped Simmel's attention, at least as far as my knowledge of his writings is concerned, that, in parallel to the development of social spheres of utility mediated by money, the sphere of the *petit bourgeois* family developed. This is primarily governed by emotions while at the same time being relieved by other rationales of behaviour. Both lines of development are in a complementary relationship to one another, the one being unthinkable without the other. Simmel does not even embark on Durkheim's quest for the non-contractual elements of a contract, the question of whether money does not require an emotional crutch (e.g. trust). This is all the more remarkable when we consider that the fundamental concept of the anchoring of primary emotions as an a priori form, would have required reconsideration by macro-sociology. Simmel's analytical strengths appear to lie in the micro-sociological determination of emotions; the theoretic potential applied there is never used in an analysis of modernism. By limiting himself to one certainly dominant structural characteristic — the development of the money economy — Simmel fails to sufficiently encompass the complexity of modern money-based societies.

If, finally, we review Simmel's reflections on a theory of emotions in order to evaluate the results and the pointers which it would be profitable for a sociology of emotions to consider, we can conclude that Simmel is one of the few theorists who have sociologically examined the "emotions" at all. At the level of fundamental concepts, he distinguishes two possible attitudes

which sociology can take towards the subject “emotions”.

(1) Firstly he looks for the social relationships which, by their peculiar make-up produce specific emotions (secondary emotions). Simmel separates such relationship structures within a discrepancy model from their valuation structures and specific environmental characteristics. Although he only analyses secondary emotions by examples and not in a systematic way, his analysis is implicitly based on such a systematic approach. This can be reconstructed and more closely defined by using the status and power dimensions. However, the concept remains fragmentary and requires closer definition and development. Theodore Kemper, in his *Social Interactional Theory of Emotions* (1978) has attempted this, although without explicitly basing himself on Simmel.

(2) Simmel defines the second perspective of a sociology of the emotions by his concept of primary emotions. By primary emotions, Simmel means a priori forms, by means of which individuals relate to their social environment. Emotions here produce a specific type of construction of reality, which Simmel identifies by the distinctive characteristics of two functional alternatives, the intellect and money. This idea too, is dealt with in an only fragmentary way and is not later taken up by him. Simmel himself reconsidered the idea of the primary emotions in his attempts to analyse the development of modernism. Even if Simmel’s analysis of modernism is limited to one dimension, it nevertheless points the way to a macro-sociological discussion of emotions. Simmel related the various forms of the construction of reality to different forms of society. Using the example of money, he illustrates the structural advantages of an abstract, symbolically mediated form of communication in a functionally differentiated society and the simultaneous disadvantages of emotions in such a society.

A discussion based on Simmel’s dual approach to a theory of emotions, developed further, would without doubt have a good chance of producing useful results not only for sociology, but also for psychology. I have tried to show that Simmel has laid the foundations for such a discussion.³

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Notes

1. Mandl and Huber, 1983, p. 4, also come to this conclusion; see also the numerous contributions on the emotions in issues of *Social Science Information* 21 (4/5), 1982 and 24 (2), 1985, which hardly have the same frame of reference.
2. See Nedelman, 1983, p. 176, the second quotation and the combination of quotations from two Simmel texts on p. 177.
3. A further development in the direction of a systematic theory of emotions will be pursued in a work now in preparation.

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