

Georg Simmel and Modern/Postmodern — A Sociological Response

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Abstract

This paper aims to reinterpret Simmel's sociological reflection on modern society. Simmel's analysis of modernity has usually been limited to cultural diagnosis and cultural critique. This article suggests that to understand Simmel's discourse on culture correctly, one has to go back to his early phase: the theory of social differentiation, in which Simmel gets to the heart of modern society-individuality. This article tries to indicate that the main idea of his widely accepted work, *Philosophie des Geldes*, should be traced back to Simmel's early writing: *Ueber Sociale Differenzierung*. There is an immanent relation between his three main concepts: social differentiation, the objectification of culture (Objektivierung der Kultur) and the form of life (*Lebensform*) in his later phase. Simmel has analyzed modern society from the perspective of "reciprocal effects" or "interaction" (Wechselwirkung). This article argues that this perspective could be a better way to grasp contemporary modernity, which could avoid the problem of grand narrative behind classical sociological theory.

Key Words: reciprocal effects/interaction (Wechselwirkung), social differentiation (sociale Differenzierung), modernity (die Modernitaet), individuality (Individualitaet), post-modern perspective