

THE THEME OF TRANSCENDENCE
IN
GEORG SIMMEL'S SOCIAL THEORY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is both an extension and a critique of Roy Hornosty's doctoral dissertation. In "Conceptions of Human Nature in the Sociological Tradition", Hornosty traces the development and career of two distinct concepts of human nature as they are reflected in sociological theory. Hornosty argues that sociology originally emerged with two competing ideas of man, one stressing the logical priority of the individual, and the other, the predominance of the collective.

In the course of his study, Hornosty discusses what he refers to as the second generation of European sociologists, comprised of Durkheim, Weber, Simmel and Pareto. Hornosty suggests that each theorist of this generation describes a conception of human nature based on an 'inner dialectic' between the individual, who seeks independent self-actualization, over and against the demands of the collective, which develops according to laws which are often in stark contrast to the dictates of individuality.

One chapter of Hornosty's study is devoted to Georg Simmel's sociological thought. In it, Hornosty argues that Simmel views man in terms of an antinomy between social and individual forces, locked in an irreconcilable struggle. For Simmel, Hornosty believes, man is both social and, at the same time, independent of society, although never completely. According to Hornosty's interpretation of Simmel, this dialectic is an ineradicable condition of mankind.

The present study focuses entirely on the writings of Georg Simmel. The author argues that while an undeniable dialectic exists between the individual and society, it is by no means irreconcilable as Hornosty and others have suggested. In fact, it will be argued that Simmel saw ways in which the dichotomous relationship between the individual and the collective could be overcome.

The author contends that Simmel, influenced by Nietzsche's philosophy, details avenues of consequence removed from the sociological nexus. By focusing on Simmel's four categories of human experience, two of which are completely removed from the social paradigm, this thesis outlines Simmel's attempt to find a manner in which certain talented individuals could transcend the dichotomy between the individual and society through devotion to objective goals which lie beyond the dialectic.

The author suggests that Simmel in fact reserves his highest praise for the creative genius, the individual able to tolerate, and in turn, transcend the tensions of his or her existence in the name of a higher good, whether artistic or intellectual.

By outlining Simmel's preoccupation with the creative process, and his search for viable expressions of individuality removed from society, the author attempts to illustrate the limitations of the sociological paradigm.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DESCRIPTIVE NOTE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v

Chapter

1. THE PROBLEM	1
2. THE LIFE OF GEORG SIMMEL	14
3. WHAT IS TRANSCENDENCE?	23
4. SETTING THE STAGE	36
5. THE INDIVIDUAL, SOCIETY, AND OBJECTIVE CULTURE	49
6. HUMANITY	73
7. CONCLUSIONS	101
8. NOTES	116
9. BIBLIOGRAPHY	132

CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

In a sense, a trip to the zoo provides the visitor with a feeling of ease and security. Behind the protective bars, contained, fed, and displayed before an audience, roam the animals. The cage ensures a sense of psychological comfort, a degree of superiority in so far as containment suggests understanding, knowledge and authority. In contrast, the human being stands at a safe distance, removed from the prospect of danger, the carnivorous, silent threat lurking behind the bars.

And yet who or rather what are we, the smug voyeurs of civilization standing safely beyond the perimeter? Are we perhaps merely prisoners in a larger prison, living beneath the scrutiny of other curious onlookers? What, if we may be so bold as to ask, is man?

There is a sense of desperation and immediacy in this question, for, while it seems that it has never been given a conclusive answer, we are in fact no longer even bothered to ask it. This is, on the whole, a rather bemusing phenomenon. The questions of man, or human nature if you will, are still with us--we simply do not bother to ask them, as if they were a nasty cold that given time, will disappear. Granted, one could argue that such questions are

unanswerable, given the limitations of human knowledge. However, this does not preclude the questions themselves, the dialogue between competing ideas and the continuous discovery of human experience.

The individual today sees everywhere what man does, the manifestations of human life, yet seldom does he or she encounter what man is, if indeed man is anything. We are surrounded by his or her accomplishments without knowledge of their origins. Man it seems, as Foucault points out in The Order of Things, has become irrelevant.

This work will assume a different angle. Essentially it marks a path back to an investigation of man, of human nature, which seems to have been ignored for the sake of more pressing intellectual concerns. We must agree with Friedman insofar as "What we mean by 'man', by human, is at once something we take for granted and something we must constantly rediscover"[1]. Our age suffers from a marked paucity of ideas regarding the question of human nature. Again, Friedman suggests that:

Rich as our age is in everything else, it is remarkably poor in providing sources for discovering personal direction and authentic human existence. The "ought" of modern man tends to be a mere aspect of the "is": instead of giving genuine direction to every expanding "is", it tends passively to reflect it [2].

The main challenge for contemporary man, Friedman suggests, is to live with the death of God, to find an authentic image of human nature in a universe without set

values [3]. Nietzsche, in the parable of the madman, announces God's death and urges man to find his own way out of the darkness. No longer created in His image, man is forced to find a meaning in existence independent of God. Friedman finds this search for authenticity reflected in the literature and philosophy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Contemporary scholarship on the other hand, is seemingly unconcerned with the question of human nature. In fact, as Allan Bloom points out, such inquiries no longer find their place within intellectual circles, perhaps as a result of their scope and generality. Bloom suggests that we no longer ask "the kinds of questions children ask: Is there a God? Is there freedom? Is there punishment for evil deeds? Is there certain knowledge? What is a good society?" [4]. Although these questions are essentially unanswered, if not entirely unanswerable, all too often answers are assumed, and we carelessly move forward from there. And yet as Bloom points out, the questions remain. "They only need to be addressed continuously and seriously for liberal learning to exist: for it does not consist so much in answers as in the permanent dialogue"[5].

Assumptions about the nature of man pervade all of the human disciplines and, if left unexamined, unconsciously commit us to highly selective angles of vision. In the process we lose sight of the very questions which generated

these inquiries in the first place. In "The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology", Wrong remarks that contemporary sociology, when it confronts the question of the individual at all, does so in such a way as to account for it purely in sociological terms. And yet the very foundations of sociology, its attempt to comprehend the individual within a social framework, emerged out of the paradoxical relationship between the solitary human being and the larger collective in which he or she dwelled. As Wrong points out,

Such questions--which are existential as well as intellectual questions--are the *raison d'être* of social theory, and man asked them long before the rise of sociology. Sociology itself is an effort, under unprecedented historical conditions to find novel answers to them [6].

This thesis then, intends to pose some of these fundamental questions. It takes us back to a very interesting period in intellectual history, a time in which questions of man, human nature, and the relationship between the individual and society occupied the forefront of social theory. Initially, this work developed out of an interest in the writings of Georg Simmel, a fin-de-siècle philosopher-sociologist, who maintained a wide range of interests and who refused to commit himself to a narrowly defined set of questions. The specific problem which we address in this thesis takes as a point of departure a chapter in Roy Hornosty's doctoral dissertation, "The Conceptions of Human Nature in the Sociological Tradition."

Hornosty makes clear the dialectical strain of Simmel's thinking, the latter's tendency to avoid an over simplified answer to complex theoretical problems, and the essential dualism found in his conception of individuality. This thesis is both an extension and critique of Hornosty's position.

In his dissertation, Hornosty analyzes and evaluates the explicit and implicit assumptions regarding human nature found in the sociological writings of ten classical theorists. His study traces the emergence and career of a distinctive image of human nature found within the sociological tradition. According to Hornosty, sociology emerged in Western Europe as a reaction to the chaotic aftermath of the French and Industrial Revolutions. Originally, the discipline represented an intellectual response to the disjunction between the individual and society which resulted from competition between two diametrically opposed intellectual currents. On one side, the Enlightenment intellectual tradition presented a strongly individualistic conception of human nature. Against this notion of free individuality, the post-revolutionary conservatives formulated a holistic image of human nature which stressed the priority of the social order. As Hornosty notes,

The dual intellectual heritage of European social thought left the founding fathers of sociology with antithetical views of the nature of man: man as an autonomous individual and man as a social

creature [7].

Hornosty argues that the first generation, represented by Comte and Spencer, responded to this individual-society disjunction by formulating a "law of progress" that would reconcile, in theory at least, these antithetical positions. "It was", Hornosty notes, "the abiding faith of the first generation that the latent qualities within man would, upon complete development, be consistent with the ideal construction of social life"[8]. These thinkers viewed the individual and society in terms of parallel entities unfolding in accord with the laws of social evolution. Hornosty suggests that "the law of progress bridged the conceptual gap between them but granted temporal status to both"[9].

However, according to Hornosty, the notion of unending progress was on the wane by the end of the nineteenth century. The second generation, namely, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel, and Pareto, no longer shared in the optimism of their theoretical forefathers. Forced to reformulate the individual-society question, this group did not echo the belief that these two entities were developing in tandem. Nor did they believe mankind to be destined for some state of absolute moral perfection. In fact, the relationship came to be viewed antithetically, and was "conceptually transformed into an inner dialectical view of human nature"[10]. While preserving the pre-social characteristics

of individuality inherited from the Enlightenment, this group also noted the important role played by society vis-a-vis the development of the individual. The dichotomous relationship between these two forces came to be viewed as an irreconcilable inner struggle between individual and social components of human nature. These thinkers, Hornosty claims, grappled with the conceptual disjunction between the individual and society, "providing a rich assortment of imaginative ideas", yet in the final analysis, "failed to work out a theoretical bridge between the two orders of data"[11].

Hornosty ends his analysis by arguing that the "inner-dialectical" view of human nature was dissolved in American sociological theory, particularly in the works of Cooley, Mead, Parsons, and Merton, giving rise to what Dennis Wrong referred to as the "oversocialized" conception of man. He concludes that sociology initially emerged as an alternative to one-sided social theories, and, in its infancy, embodied two distinct viewpoints, namely the individual and society. In the course of its development, it renounced its Enlightenment inheritance and, as a result, eradicated any notion of a pre-social or an extra-social self. Following Dennis Wrong, Hornosty argues that contemporary sociology has thrust itself into disaccord with its very origins.

The central focus of the present thesis is the assumptive image of man in what Hornosty labelled the

"second generation" of European sociologists, particularly the dialectical relationship between the individual and society. Within this genre, we find two conflicting images of human nature. According to Hornosty,

Both the autonomous individual, solitary and self-sufficient, who roamed freely, in the natural landscape of the Enlightenment social thinkers' imagination and the monophobic man of the theocrats, indelibly embedded in the fabric of collective life, were recast in the latter part of the century as homo-duplex [12].

How are we to understand this notion of homo-duplex? Hornosty maintains that although these thinkers--Weber, Durkheim, Pareto, and Simmel--concerned themselves with the individual-society disjunction, "they failed to resolve the antithesis between man as an individual and man as a social creature"[13]. Furthermore, this group tended to view the relationship between the two components as "fundamentally irreconcilable; none was conceptually able to transcend this antithesis" [14]. According to Hornosty, each member of this cohort presents an image of human nature approximating Durkheim's notion of homo-duplex or 'man as double'.

As Simmel fits squarely into this analysis, we should expect to find the dichotomous relationship between the individual and the collective reflected in his sociological works. And indeed, Hornosty argues that all of Simmel's sociology is informed by the notion of "an irreconcilable struggle for autonomy between the individual and society"[15].

Simmel's sociology, Hornosty claims, is primarily concerned with the face-to-face interactions which take place between individuals continuously. The contents of these interactions however, are not social; rather they stem from the pre-social nature of the individual. Interests then, whether erotic or economic, impel individuals to seek collective existence. It so follows that Simmel attributes qualities to the individual which are logically prior to the processes of socialization. As Hornosty notes, "purely personal and social elements intersect in the social process, but in Simmel's theoretical formulations the individual is not totally absorbed in the social forms he creates"[16]. While the individual is in part a social creature, he or she "is not fully absorbed into the social whole; in fact he must oppose it to retain a sphere of autonomy"[17].

As the content of human existence becomes expressed through social forms, something of a transition takes place. The latter, Hornosty notes, gain "an autonomy which subsequently plays back upon the individual and determines the manner in which his motives and interests can be actualized"[18]. The relationship between the contents of human interaction and their representative forms is constant and unavoidable. Furthermore, the twin poles of this dialectic can be isolated in a theoretical sense only; in reality they are inextricable. As Hornosty points out,

The two are dependent on each other for their very existence; yet the individual who supplies the "content" of sociation and the social forms which embody the content each seek completion and wholeness in terms which are mutually exclusive [19].

Therefore the processes of human interaction become crystallized "into forms which in varying degrees of permanence or transitoriness, develop an autonomy independent of the individuals involved"[20]. Society, then, seems to acquire the status of an entity which exists solely for itself. Through this process, society, Hornosty claims,

tends to become a thing in its own right And it is not simply a passive phenomenon resulting from the willful interplay of autonomous individuals; rather it plays a determinative role in interaction itself, generating social phenomena and influencing the behavior of the individuals as it unfolds according to its own inner logic [21].

The individual, Simmel tells us, desires to be rounded out in him or herself. At the same time, society seeks autonomy from its constitutive components. And while freedom is found within the dimension of extra-social determinants, the individual

cannot do away with society, for it is through society that he comes to express even his distinctive character as an individual. The two are inextricably intertwined and unalterably linked; yet they are antithetical in nature and can never be completely reconciled [22].

As Hornosty argues, a distinctly dichotomous relationship exists between the individual and society. Together, they are "conceptually linked opposites, which exist in a state

of inner tension but which rely no less on each other for both their sustaining force and their distinguishing qualities"[23]. Hornosty suggests that there is a strict degree of interdependence between the twin poles of the dialectic. We are dealing with "a problem of the complex intertwining of both the individual and society in a manner which retains within it a unity of opposites, a measure of autonomy for each"[24].

How then would Simmel describe human nature? According to Hornosty's interpretation, the individual in Simmel's world faces a truly paradoxical existence. He or she lives at the intersection of two equally viable modes of human actualization: the individual and the social. "Together", Hornosty writes, "they are constitutive of the nature of man"[25]. The twin components of human nature form an "inner dialectic", assuming two contradictory poles within the individual. "Human nature", Hornosty concludes,

consists of two basically antithetical parts, one derived from the structure of social relations, and the other derived from the individuality of the person; taken together they constitute the ineradicable condition of human existence [26].

Hornosty is not alone in commenting on this theme in Simmel's work. Lewis A. Coser, an authority on Simmel, notes that the latter "stresses throughout his work the dialectical tension between the individual and society"[27]. Coser further argues that "it was not granted to Simmel to solve the tensions and contradictions with which he grappled

throughout his life"[28]. And although Simmel attempted to construct a vitalist philosophy near the end of his years, celebrating the power of life over form, Coser concludes that "this did not serve to unify his philosophy, nor was it an answer to his many conflicting tendencies"[29].

The chief aims of the present study are threefold. Firstly, it represents an extension of Hornosty's thesis, insofar as it addresses the same fundamental question--the relationship between the individual and society. Secondly, it is a critique of Hornosty's position insofar as it presents what we believe to be Simmel's resolution of a theoretical problem deemed by others to be irresolvable. Finally, it seeks to make a modest contribution to scholarship in that it is the first extensive study of the theme of transcendence in Simmel's thought from the point of view of the relationship between the individual and society.

This thesis will demonstrate that while Simmel enunciates a dialectical relationship between the individual and society, he did not regard this relationship as an inescapable condition of mankind. It will be argued that, in Simmel's view, certain gifted individuals could transcend their existential limitations and overcome the contradictory elements of contemporary life by dedicating themselves to a single, overarching principle. In fact, we will find that Simmel reserves his highest praise and fascination for the few individuals able to bridge the dialectic between the

development of the self and the demands of the collective.

Simmel's belief that the chasm can be overcome forms part of a larger theme which runs throughout his writings--the notion of transcendence--a notion which in large part is due to Nietzsche's influence on Simmel. It suggests that certain strong personalities are able to overcome the chaos of their lives, forging an original and creative interpretation of the world, thereby enriching humanity through their contributions.

While a handful of commentators have remarked on the theme of transcendence in Simmel's thought, none has analyzed this theme as a process through which the dichotomy between the individual and society can be overcome. The limitations of their analyses will be discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: THE LIFE OF GEORG SIMMEL

Georg Simmel was born in the heart of Berlin, at the corner of Leipzigstrasse and Friedrichstrasse, on March 1, 1858. Georg was the youngest of seven children, son of Edward and Flora, née Bodstein. His father was Jewish by birth but travelled to Paris at the age of twenty and there converted to Catholicism. He later returned to Germany, married Flora and started a successful chocolate firm [1].

Simmel's birthplace, as we will see, was quintessential to his work. He spent the greater part of his life in Berlin, and its metropolitan culture often provided the necessary inspiration for his observations. As Simmel noted near the end of his life:

Perhaps I could have achieved something that was also valuable in another city; but this specific achievement, that I have in fact brought into fruition in these decades, is undoubtedly bound up with the Berlin milieu [2].

Young Georg lost his father early in life, and never had a particularly close relationship with his mother. According to his father's wish, a guardian was appointed for Georg, enabling him to embark on an academic career. Friedlander, a friend of the family, owned a large music publishing house in Berlin, and quickly assumed responsibility for Simmel's scholarly future.

After graduating from the Gymnasium, Simmel commenced

his studies at Berlin University in 1876. He was fortunate to study "with some of the most important academic figures of the day"[3]. Simmel worked with the historians Mommsen, Treitschke, Sybel and Droysen, the anthropologists Lazarus and Steinthal, and the philosophers Zeller and Harms. He also developed a fascination for psychology and ethnology which he studied under Adolf Bastian. Most of his early work was in the fields of philosophy and psychology [4].

Simmel was awarded his doctorate in 1881 for a dissertation entitled "The Nature of Matter According to Kant's Physical Monadology". An earlier submission, entitled "Psychological and Ethnographic Studies on Music" had been rejected due to its rather unorthodox orientation, and the paper on Kant accepted in its stead.

Simmel's intellectual curiosity was formidable, and his interests many and varied. By the time he had finished his dissertation, he was acquainted "with vast fields of knowledge extending from history and philosophy to social sciences". His whole career, Coser notes, "was marked by this catholicity of tastes and interests"[5].

While Simmel was still a student, he married Gertrud, née Kinnel, a strong and supportive woman who gave birth to Simmel's son Hans Eugen. Although inwardly committed to his wife, Simmel later fell in love with another woman and spent his last fifteen years living "the life of a bigamist in a monogamous society"[6]. Gertrud Kantorowicz, a talented

writer and critic, was the mother of Simmel's daughter Angela.

Simmel's adult life was one of culture and refinement. The Simmels, Laurence notes, had a weekly 'jour', where they entertained friends including "such men as the poets Rilke and Stefan George, and the great lights of Berlin University"[7]. One of the frequent participants in Simmel's salon, Margaret Susman, describes these events in the following manner:

The receptions in the Simmel household, the weekly jous, were conceived entirely in the spirit of their common culture. They were a sociological creation in miniature: that of a sociability whose significance was the cultivation of the highest individuals . . . only exceptional people, distinguished by intellect or even beauty, took part in these social events [8].

Artists, intellectuals and women of exceptional beauty attended these gatherings.

Although he never ventured beyond European destinations, Simmel travelled extensively, "partly to lecture, partly to study and enjoy works of art"[9]. He made a visit to St. Petersburg to view a collection of Rembrandts, and voyaged to many inspiring Cathedrals in France, Italy and his native Germany. Art, as we shall see below, was to play a quintessential role in shaping Simmel's life. As Laurence suggests, Simmel felt that he belonged "with the artists who live in order to see, while ordinary mortals must see in order to live"[10].

Simmel started teaching at Berlin University in 1885,

and before long was drawing great attention to his lectures. With astonishing intellectual breadth, his courses ranged from sociology and social psychology to ethics, from logic to the history of philosophy. He lectured on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Kant and Darwin. As Coser notes, "often he would survey new trends in sociology as well as metaphysics during a single academic year"[11]. His lectures quickly became intellectual events for both students and the cultured elite of Berlin. It is of interest to note that Simmel was one of the first to allow women to attend his lectures, long before they could officially enter Prussian universities as full students in 1908 [12].

Simmel's early academic years were heavily influenced by French and English positivistic thought. This period was characterized by a Spencerian optimism in the progressive perfectability of mankind [13]. Under the influence of Julian Lippert, the young Simmel came to view society as the avenue for individual growth and fulfillment [14].

Simmel's middle period was marked by a growing interest in Kant's philosophy. He became intrigued with the question of how the individual relates subjectively to the external world, and the manner in which he or she functions within a larger social context. This stage in his intellectual development was characterized by a keen interest in enduring social forms which served to channel the fluctuating energies of the individual [15].

In the final years of his life, Simmel turned from the fields of sociology and social psychology to the construction of a panvitalist philosophy under the teachings of Bergson and Nietzsche. As Frisby points out, Simmel, in his later years was increasingly preoccupied with the "philosophy of pessimism derived from Schopenhauer and, in the 1890s, an increasing interest in the philosophy of Nietzsche and its consequences"[16]. His last book, written in the shadow of death, is a lyrical celebration of the volatility of life and its ability to smash the static 'forms' that could not hold its overflowing forces [17].

For the sake of clarity, we have divided Simmel's career into three relatively distinct periods. While it is instructive to bear these distinctions in mind, we will have more to say with regard to the periodization of Simmel's thought in the concluding chapter.

According to Laurence, the latest Simmel bibliography lists 31 books and 256 articles as well as 100 translations of his works [18]. While Soziologie (1908) and Philosophie des Geldes (1900) are considered to be his most influential works, Simmel's interests certainly transcended sociology. As Frisby suggests, Simmel was somewhat less than enamoured with the title of "sociologist".

It is in fact somewhat painful to me to find that I am only recognized abroad as a sociologist--whereas I am indeed a philosopher, I see philosophy as my life-task and engage in sociology really only as a subsidiary discipline [19].

And although Simmel is recognized primarily as a sociologist, his philosophical inclinations did have an influence on the development of European philosophy. Coser suggests that Simmel's preoccupation with philosophy, from the Kantian positivism of his early years to the vitalism of his last, influenced the thought of Heidegger and Jaspers [20]. In addition, Simmel's work in relation to the methodology and philosophy of history parallels and in certain areas antedates "the works of Rickert, Dilthey and Windelband"[21].

Aside from the strictly metaphysical dimension of his thought, another aspect which is evident in Simmel's early writings, but which assumes greater significance in his later years is, the philosophy of art. "Indeed, one of his unfulfilled intentions was to produce in his later years a major philosophy of art"[21]. His aesthetic inclinations led him to publish volumes on Goethe and Rembrandt, and to cultivate the friendships of Rodin, Rilke and Stefan George [22]. George, whose influence on Simmel will be discussed below, was one of the latter's idols. In fact, according to one commentator, Simmel "sought to imitate the charismatic poet in posture and dress"[23]. In addition, Frisby maintains that Simmel's views on contemporary culture "may well have influenced the George circle's own programme for elitist cultural renewal"[24].

One would imagine that perhaps with such far-ranging

influence and breadth of knowledge Simmel's intellectual career would have been brilliant. However, "in spite of the fascination that he called forth, Simmel's academic career was unfortunate, even tragic"[25]. For fifteen long years, Simmel remained a "Privatdozent", unable to supervise doctoral candidates. It was not until 1901, when Simmel was 43 years of age, that he was granted the title of Ausserordentlicher Professor. While this raised Simmel's status somewhat, it was in truth a purely honorary title, one which prevented him from partaking in the general affairs of Berlin's academic life.

There can be little doubt that Simmel's Jewish roots influenced the remarkable stagnation of a brilliant career. At one point, his contemporary Max Weber, supported Simmel's candidacy for Chair of Philosophy at Heidelberg. However, another contemporary, named Schäfer, was vehemently opposed to Simmel's appointment, referring to the latter as "an Israelite through and through, in his external appearance, in his bearing and his mode of thought"[26].

It was not until 1914, four years before Simmel's death, that he was given a full professorship in Strasbourg. Simmel was grieved at the prospect of leaving Berlin, finding in his new surroundings "some interesting minds but the faculty as a whole a half witted bunch"[27]. Simmel died of liver cancer in Strasbourg, on September 26, 1918. And although his life had been in many ways a frustrating

and lonely one, "when he passed away", Laurence notes, "he still thought of himself as a darling of the gods"[28].

A tangible sense of tragedy surrounded Simmel's life. There is little doubt that his Jewish background played a contributing factor in his frustrations. Yet this in and of itself was not the sole reason for Simmel's tragic plight. Quite simply, Simmel was thought to be somewhat of a dilettante. In addition to his varied interests, his ability to "move with apparent effortlessness from one topic to another" perturbed many of Simmel's colleagues [29]. On the whole, rigid academic specialization had taken hold of Berlin's intelligentsia, suggesting that only narrowly defined problems could be addressed.

How could one deal with a man who might, in one semester, offer a profound course on Kant's epistemology and in the next, publish essays on the sociology of smell, on the sociology of meals, on the sociology and coquetry of fashion? [30]

Countless critics deride what they have interpreted to be Simmel's lack of a systematic approach to social theory, and his seemingly haphazard investigation of everything from an ethnographic study of music to an essay analyzing the aesthetic impact of classical ruins [31]. Coser for one, claims that Simmel's use of the essay format suggests "the anti-systematic impulse of creativity that proves annoying to orthodox members of the scientific community"[32].

As we have noted, Simmel's thought matured in the chaotic and colourful times characteristic of Europe prior

to the First World War. In this cultural milieu, he met journalists, writers, playwrights, and of course, artists. Indeed Berlin was a city in which intellectuals lived in partially overlapping circles, sharing ideas and experiences [33]. Perhaps as a result of partaking in this rich cultural life, Simmel's curiosity wandered over many disciplines. "Even within a short piece of work", Frisby writes, "Simmel was not merely the master of the essay form but also of the shifting perspective of the philosopher, the sociologist, the psychologist, and the aesthete"[34].

Simmel's theoretical investigations were in part determined by his marginality. He was forced to balance his participation in the aforementioned Berlin counterculture against the structured rigour of university life. Simmel's vast array of interests coupled with the fact that he was a Jew living in an increasingly anti-Semitic social climate only exacerbated his sense of isolation. Ironically, Simmel was what he himself describes as "The Stranger", an individual in one sense very near, yet in many others, far away.

CHAPTER THREE: WHAT IS TRANSCENDENCE?

This chapter will be devoted to the construction of a working definition of transcendence. To accomplish this task, we will sketch a picture of this phenomenon, adding brush strokes from various artistic and intellectual sources, and then draw these notions together in the conclusions.

To begin, let us turn to the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American individualist of the late nineteenth century, who is often referred to as the founder of transcendentalism. For Emerson, modernity posed an immediate threat to the development of independent thought. Society forced the individual into a regrettable conformity, an impersonal mould demanding the renunciation of uniqueness, originality and self-will. To counter these malevolent effects, the individual is forced to overcome this dilemma, to preserve and in fact intensify his or her independence, through devotion to an 'inner calling'. As Emerson notes in "Self-Reliance"(1841),

High must be his heart, faithful his will, clear his sight, that he may in good earnest, be doctrine, society, law to himself, that a simple purpose may be as strong as an inner necessity is to others [1].

Transcendence is an individual phenomenon. The transcendent being rises above the petty concerns of day to

day living in order to adhere to the inner calling, to rebel against the stultifying demands of social conformity. To this end, the individual must distance him or herself from the demands of society. As Emerson remarks,

Your isolation must not be mechanical but spiritual, that is it must be an elevation. At times the whole world seems to be in a conspiracy to importune you with emphatic trifles. Friend, client, child, sickness, fear, want, charity, all knock at once at thy door and say--"Come out to us". But keep thy state; come not into their confusion [2].

In order for the individual to achieve transcendence, he or she must rise above social concerns. It is after all, these very concerns which threaten to strip the individual of his or her unique characteristics. On the whole, Emerson's philosophy can be seen as a repudiation of society, a heroic striving to overcome its banality. "And truly", Emerson concludes, "it demands something godlike in him who has cast out the common motives of humanity, and has ventured to trust himself as a taskmaster"[3].

The fear of modernism was not only a problem in America. We find certain European thinkers articulating similar sentiments. In Fear and Trembling (1843), the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard presents a scathing attack on modernity and its lack of religious conviction. Social concerns, Kierkegaard maintains, have come to replace the individual's immediate relationship with God. Fear and Trembling explores God's famous request of Abraham, Kierkegaard's "knight of faith".

Isaac is little more than a foil to Abraham's greatness yet the likeness is not, as in the traditional reading, Abraham's willingness to be an instrument of God's omnipotence. Kierkegaard's Abraham is great because of what he suffers in a trial of faith. And far from epitomizing social virtues, this Abraham's suffering and greatness seem to isolate him in a very radical way from society and its social ways [4].

Kierkegaard, like Emerson, applauds the fortitude required to overcome the praises of society in the name of a higher calling. Like Job, Abraham's existence is full of suffering, yet never does he lose faith in his God. Quite simply, his temporal existence is given meaning through devotion to a goal which lies external to any social consideration--his overarching love for God.

To be sure, Emerson's notion of transcendence is fundamentally opposed to religious contents per se, in marked contrast to Kierkegaard's discussion in Fear and Trembling. For our purposes however, what is important is that both men allude to a sphere of consequence removed from the social, suggesting that through dedication to an objective goal, whether spiritual or philosophical, the individual is able to transcend society.

While a sense of cultural malaise pervaded all of Europe, as Ringer notes, "the general anxiety was certainly most intense in Germany"[5]. Ringer claims that sometime around 1890, academics began to question the status of cultured life in Germany. "They spoke of a decline in the vitality of their intellectual traditions, a loss of meaning

and relevance"[6]. Generally speaking, German academic life was in decline and in search of a regenerative force. William Stern, a fin-de-siècle psychologist, suggested that only a new Weltanschauung could provide Germany with "the strength to master the new technology without losing [its] humanity"[7].

Transcendence offered a solution to the problems associated with contemporary social life. Arthur Mitzman, commenting on this theme, points to its origins in terms of a dialectical response to the processes of rationalization. In the rather stultifying society of fin-de-siècle Germany, a creative solution emerges.

In short what we find in this reaction to rationalization is a value on the transcendence, the Faustian side of man, a great concern over the reification of culture as the source of estrangement of man from the world, of subject from object, and a solution which is, for the most part, centred around individual struggle [8].

The tools necessary to counteract the formalistic tendencies of German society were to be found only within the creative individual. Mitzman argues that over and "against the menace of cultural reification, one upheld the Renaissance genius, against the creations of reason, their creator. In short the solution was unceasing individual struggle"[9]. Once more, we see that the task of transcendence involves individual struggle against an impassionate, deadened world. Moreover, the individual occupies an adversarial position vis-à-vis the rationalization inherent in contemporary

society. Confronted with the overshadowing darkness of society, the individual is forced either to rebel or perish.

In radical opposition to the rise and influence of technology which acted to diminish individuality, art took on a renewed importance. In response to the mechanical, alienating process of social routine, the German intellectuals called for greater inner freedom. There was, as Stern notes, a demand "for greater freedom, for self expression, for more experience and less theorizing, for a fuller life"[10]. In Rembrandt als Erzieher (Rembrandt as Teacher), first published in 1890, Langbehn praises the ideal of free individuality as embodied in the German aristocrat desiring to revive the glories of the German past [11]. For Langbehn, "art, not science or religion, was the highest good, the true source of knowledge and virtue"[12]. On the whole, Rembrandt als Erzieher was a diatribe aimed at the

hothouse intellectualism of modern Germany which threatened to stifle the creative life, a cry for the irrational energies of the folk, buried so long under layers of civilization [13].

The sphere of human creativity came to represent an antidote for the entanglements of industrialization and the growth of mass society. In contradistinction to the contrived aspects of modern life, art revealed the irrational sources of the creative process, the inexplicable foundations of spontaneity which were continuously threatened by society.

The ultimate goal of transcendence, the notion that the creative individual could overcome the tensions of his or her existence, can be traced back to the popular philosophical currents of the day. For instance, Kant's influence on German thought is clearly detected in the Faustian response to cultural reification. Kant's emphasis on the unknowability of the Ding an Sich, the "thing in itself", shifted the fundamental philosophical concern inward, to the knowing subject. Secondly, by positing as the ultimate goal of his ethics "the unending quest for absolute moral perfection", Kant had supplied German romanticism with one of its primary concerns: "the infinite striving of the individual"[14].

Fichte, too, emphasises the ideal of transcendence, focusing on the distinction between subject and external object. His notion of the absolute ego "first set up the external world as an obstacle to its own activity, and then gradually but endlessly triumphs over this obstacle"[15]. In Fichte's hands, the notion of infinity supercedes the finite and determinate, and as a consequence, he elevates "the category of becoming over that of being"[16]. It so follows that Fichte gives precedence to the ideal of activity over and against achieved completion, and supports "the mood of endless longing, over that of quietude and collectedness of mind"[17]. This notion that the external world is static and rigid, while the individual is a source

of creative energies which can intensify and in turn overcome these crystallized paradigms is a fundamental assumption of transcendence. The objective world is in every way opposed to the individual--thus, it must be overcome.

We find in Nietzsche's philosophy the ultimate statement of transcendence. Nietzsche shares with Emerson an unequivocal disdain towards society and stresses the goal of 'self-reliance' as a panacea for the demands of social conformity. And although Nietzsche would perhaps disagree with Kierkegaard's adoration of religious faith, the former would certainly assent to the latter's claim that we live in a mediocre world where faith of any sort is of secondary importance relative to material comforts. Nietzsche's individual, faced with moral and spiritual degeneration on every side, is likewise forced to follow a 'this-worldly' goal or personal objective.

Who creates the goal that stands above mankind and the individual? Formerly one employed morality for preservation. But nobody wants to preserve any longer, there is nothing to preserve. Therefore an experimental morality: to give oneself a goal [18].

Indeed, the goal of transcendence is not to succumb to the antinomies of modern life, but rather to ingest them, to rise above them. The individual's disdain and despondency gives way to the possibility of a new expression of individuality.

Principle: There is an element of decay in

everything that characterizes modern man: but close beside the sickness stands signs of an untested force and powerfulness of the soul. The same reasons that produce the increasing smallness of man drive the stronger and rarer individuals up to greatness [19].

Emerson argues that the transcendent individual must be God-like in the mastery of his or her own unique talent [20]. And while he realizes that very few individuals possess the ability to follow the 'inner calling' without succumbing to external pressures, or the talent necessary to ensure originality, transcendence nevertheless signifies a goal toward which all should strive [21]. Emerson, it seems, is making a point which Nietzsche argues even more forcefully: transcendence is open only to the select few. Nietzsche writes that "the goal of humanity cannot lie in the end, but only in the highest specimens"[22]. "There is", Kaufmann notes, "no more basic statement of Nietzsche's philosophy in all his writings than this sentence"[23].

On the whole, Nietzsche feels that most men and women are like animals, and that there is essentially little difference between 'man' and a chimpanzee [24]. There are however, certain conditions under which the individual can "transcend" his or her animal nature to become what Nietzsche refers to as a "truly human being"[25]. However, as was suggested in regard to Emerson, this opportunity is available only to "some of the philosophers, artists, and saints"[26]. For Nietzsche, the uninitiated, "the unphilosophical, inartistic and unsaintly masses remain

animals", and only through a "superhuman effort" can they "ascend into the heavens, leave the animal kingdom beneath [them], and acquire a value and dignity without equal in all nature"[27].

The transcendent being is the individual set apart from the majority as a result of his or her unique characteristics. He or she possesses, Nietzsche claims, the ability to "wage war for the sake of ideas and their consequences"[28]. The transcendent individual is "silent, solitary, resolute", and has "an innate disposition to seek in all things that which must be overcome in them"[29]. It is the fate of particularly strong and gifted individuals to gain mastery over dire circumstances, transposing them into a kind of inner strength. One such individual, Nietzsche feels, was Caesar.

A passionate man who controls his passions: the man who, in the face of universal disintegration and licentiousness, knowing this decadence as part of his own soul, performs his unique deed of self-integration, self-creation, and self mastery [30].

Through sheer inner strength, the transcendent individual has overcome his or her animal nature, redirected base impulses and organized the chaos of his or her passions [31]. Another example Nietzsche cites is Goethe, an individual who "disciplined himself to wholeness", becoming "the man of tolerance, not from weariness, but from strength, a spirit who has become free"[32].

Nietzsche's ultimate statement regarding the theme of

transcendence is to be found in his discussion of the Übermensch (Superman). In Thus Spoke Zarathustra (1885), Nietzsche describes his disappointment with the bourgeois mediocrity of contemporary man. Zarathustra, Nietzsche's poetic alter ego, remarks,

The most cautious people ask today: "How may man still be preserved?" Zarathustra, however, asks, as the sole and first one to do so: "How shall man be overcome?"[33]

In Nietzsche's opinion, the individual living in contemporary society is bent on securing a comfortable career, and surrounding him or herself with the various comforts of modern technology. Unlike Zarathustra who lives an ascetic life in the mountains among his animals, modern man prefers the trappings of cosmopolitan living. For Nietzsche, society symbolizes decadence, a reduction of individuality to its lowest common denominator, where one becomes a cog in an impersonal machine. While addressing his disciples, Zarathustra laments,

You Higher Men, learn this from me: In the marketplace no one believes in Higher Men.--And if you want to speak to them, very well, do so! But the mob blink and say: "We are all equal"[34].

Zarathustra descends from his mountain lair to share his wisdom with a select group of disciples, the Higher Men. The Higher Men are dissatisfied with the plight of modern man yet do not possess the wherewithal to extricate themselves from the morass. The only viable solution, Zarathustra warns, is for man to move beyond himself. "I

teach you the Superman. Man is something to be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?"[35] In Nietzsche's opinion, Caesar is a Superman. Likewise, Goethe is a Superman, as is Napoleon. Through adherence to the inner calling, through the subordination of every other consideration to the dictates of the personality, the Superman is able to transcend man. To contemporary man, the external world represents a constant danger, an immense, impersonal weight threatening to engulf the individual. On the other hand, the Superman sees before him only the world upon which he will act. Society and its conventions represent fetters to his fate, limitations which must be overcome. To this end, the poet pursues his or her art regardless of social acclaim, the scholar dedicates him or herself to truth, and the saint overcomes his or her earthly existence through dedication to a relationship which transcends the world altogether.

It is essential to note that for Nietzsche, as well as for Kierkegaard and Emerson, the value of a human being is not to be measured within a social context. For instance, Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac is completely reprehensible until we realize that his actions are governed by considerations which transcend the social realm. Similarly, Kaufmann suggests that Nietzsche's Superman does not possess instrumental value for the maintenance of society. Rather, "he is valuable in himself

because he embodies the state of being that has the only ultimate value there is; and society is censured insofar as it insists on conformity and impedes his development"[36]. Nietzsche believes that the individual's contributions to humanity, whether artistic, intellectual or scientific, must be considered in complete isolation. Indeed, he claims that "the value of a human being does not lie in his usefulness for it would continue to exist even if there was nobody to whom he could be useful"[37].

We must, by way of conclusion, summarize the themes we have discussed in this chapter in order to form a clear idea of transcendence. In the first place, transcendence always involves devotion to an inner calling. It may concern a particular individual's interest in art, letters, science or morality. In each case however, these interests take on the form of an objective law which is followed at any cost. Secondly, the ideal of transcendence is predicated on goals which lie outside of society. Emerson, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche respectively, argue that society acts to dull individuality, to break it down for the sake of social convention. Through devotion to the ideals of truth, beauty, and spirituality, the transcendent individual overcomes society. Finally, we must admit that this ideal is unmistakably elitist. Only certain extremely strong individuals are able to tolerate the tensions of existence and rise above them in the name of some higher good.

Quite simply then, transcendence is the ability to move beyond the immediate, the potential to overcome what exists presently, in the name of some higher good. Simmel, it will be demonstrated, suggests that the individual can transcend society by devoting him or herself to objective goals which lie beyond it.

CHAPTER FOUR: SETTING THE STAGE

This chapter is perhaps most important in terms of its implications for what will be discussed in the last three sections of the thesis. The intention of this chapter is to provide the reader with three essential ideas which have a direct impact on our reading of Simmel. Firstly, any discussion of Simmel's thought must consider the epistemological questions which are manifest in his exploration of forms. Secondly, the distinction between life and form, the fundamental dialectic of life itself must be elucidated. In addition to enhancing our awareness of Simmel's dialectical thinking, this exercise will bring us into contact with his philosophy of life which has profound implications with regard to the theme of transcendence underlying his later thought. Lastly, the reader must possess an understanding of 'interaction' as the principle theme running through Simmel's work.

According to Simmel, reality exists external to the viewing individual although it never fully discloses itself to the viewing mind.

There is always one reality, and we cannot grasp it in its immediacy and wholeness but must consider it from a number of different viewpoints and thereby make it into a plurality of mutually independent scientific subject matters [1].

To this end, we construct conceptual representations, which

in turn are used to interpret our world. And yet, every form of knowledge constitutes a translation of reality into a new language, namely, the language of that particular form [2].

'Form' then, is that which is abstracted or lifted out of reality. For Simmel, form represents an epistemological category [3]. It so follows that forms such as art, religion, and philosophy inform us about our world insofar as they specify the conditions under which any type of knowledge is possible [4]. For instance, geometry, Simmel notes, studies the forms through which objective, concrete phenomena are converted into a conceptual field of analysis. Similar to sociology's interest in the forms of sociation, the science of geometry involves abstractions which represent the transformation of immediate reality into particular analytical models. However, our evaluative forms represent our own creative synthesis, and exist nowhere in reality [5].

Insofar as sociology is concerned, Simmel notes two perspectives through which its subject matter can be apprehended. We can interpret the data of sociology from the individual or the collective perspective, and "both frames of reference equally are standpoints"[6]. This of course follows logically from Simmel's discussion of reality which, as he notes, "becomes amenable to cognition only by means of categories such as, for instance, 'individual' or

'society'"[7].

Moreover, according to Simmel, a perspective is of quintessential importance in determining the validity of any given observation. The view or perspective articulated at a particular distance has its own justification. "It cannot", Simmel remarks, "be replaced or corrected by any other view emerging at any other distance"[8]. Consequently, when we observe human life from one point, we see only the individual. "But", as Simmel notes, "if we increase our distance, the single individual disappears, and there emerges instead the picture of a society with its own forms and colours"[9]. In the final analysis, the perspective chosen is determined by the purpose of our investigation. As Simmel suggests,

The difference between the two merely consists of a difference between purposes of cognition, and this difference, in turn, corresponds to a difference in distance [10].

Simmel's perspectivism requires a careful reading. In an article entitled "The Categories of Human Experience"(1908), Simmel describes a level of analysis which is removed from the sociological nexus. We must not, Simmel claims, be "misled into thinking that categories which directly or indirectly are sociological are the only and universally applicable, categories in terms of which we may contemplate the contents of human experience"[11]. Indeed, Simmel suggests that human experiences can also be evaluated

purely in terms of their objective content. The inner validity, coherence and objective significance of all sciences, technologies, and arts are completely independent of the fact that they are realized within and find their preconditions in a social life [12].

For instance, if we evaluate a particular theory, questions concerning its logic, assumptions and methodology fall outside the social realm. In fact, such questions, Simmel reminds us, "have no sociological criteria whatsoever. Such matters are nowhere influenced by the fact of their social historical emergence, but are governed exclusively by immanent, timeless, that is, purely objective norms"[13]. This applies to the social world as well. While human experiences can be viewed in terms of their social development, as something achieved through the processes of social interaction,

they can with equal justification be considered with respect to their objective content -- as elements of logical, technical, aesthetic, or metaphysical continua, possessing their meaning in themselves and not in the historical actualities which depend on social relationships [14].

Donald Levine suggests that there are four distinct categories or perspectives in terms of which human experiences may be viewed: (1) individual personality; (2) society; (3) objective culture; and (4) humanity [15]. During the course of this work we will touch on each of these four perspectives.

The second issue which relates directly to our investigation is Simmel's discussion of life in terms of an

infinite process. He notes that the nineteenth century lacked a central motivating idea aside from the notion of society [16]. From the social perspective, the individual was seen merely as a point of intersection. As Simmel notes, "complete submergence of the self in society was demanded; to devote oneself completely to society was viewed as an absolute obligation, which included morality and everything else"[17].

However, Simmel noted that at the turn of the century, there developed a new intellectual current. With the growth and influence of irrationalist philosophy, the concept of life was raised to a central place [18]. Simmel had noticed in the writings of Schopenhauer, Bergson, and Nietzsche, an emphasis on the notion of life as the volatile force behind the universe, constituting the precondition for every form of existence. Wildon Carr, commenting on Bergson's philosophy, captures the essence of this idea:

It seems as if a great movement were in progress, sweeping us along in its course. To exist is to be alive, to be borne along in the living stream, as it were, on the breast of a wave. The actual present now in which all existence is gathered up is the movement accomplishing itself. The past is gathered into it, as it presses forward into the future, which is continually and without intermission becoming actual. This reality is life. It is an unceasing becoming, which preserves the past and creates the future. The solid things which seem to abide and endure, which seem to resist this flowing, which seem more real than the flowing, are periods, cuts across the flowing . . . [19].

Simmel develops this theme even further, emphasising

the dialectical tenor of his thought. "We conceive of life", Simmel remarks, "as a continuous stream proceeding through sequences of generations"[20]. Simmel describes life in terms of a "restless rhythm" which, in its ascent and descent, its constant renewal, its incessant divisions and ramifications flows without cessation, opposing "the fixed duration of any particular form"[21].

Simmel's description of life puts one in mind of a mighty river overflowing its banks. And yet we must not imagine that the river flows without obstruction. For as it flows, life generates forms for itself and as soon as forms develop, they in turn demand an autonomy which stands over and against the fluid qualities of life.

Simmel describes three representations through which we can trace the processes of life. First, as Simmel notes, "life is more life and thereby fulfills its deepest function in a form of evolution"[22]. By virtue of its sheer force and continuity, life is always an increase, a perpetuation of itself, or what Simmel calls 'more-life'.

Secondly, the fluid torrent of life encounters opposition to itself during the transition from flux to form. Once ever-increasing life produces form for itself, it is transposed from 'more-life' to 'more-than-life'. The raw, volatile flux of life is indifferent to opposition until it turns toward the world seeking concrete objective expression. According to Simmel, this occurs due to the

demands of objectification which necessitates a compromise with the forces of the world [23]. The associated tension incurred, as life is converted to form, is a theme reflected throughout Simmel's works. In fact, the transition from flux to crystallized form is unavoidable. For Simmel,

The dialectic between life and more-than-life represents the very nature of human existence, the very destiny of civilization [24].

Thirdly, while Simmel delineates a dialectical relationship between 'more-life' and 'more-than-life', he grounds the opposition of life to the demands of form within an even more fundamental concept. In the quote below, Simmel articulates the final form in which life can be expressed:

Life is not just life alone, although it is nothing but life. We must employ a further, the furthest concept--that of absolute life, which includes the relative contrast between life in the narrower sense and content independent of life [25].

Quite simply, 'absolute-life' involves a synthesis between the dynamic flux of life and the content which stands crystallized above it. As Weinstein notes, 'absolute-life', for Simmel,

is able to comprehend and unify the opposite of flux and fixed, continuity and individuality, because it is defined as a self-transcendent process in the two senses that it perpetually generates more of itself (it is 'more-life') and objectifies itself in crystallized forms or individuals (it is 'more-than-life') [26]

For Simmel, life becomes an absolute principle, and all of its manifestations can be traced back to this single,

exuberant force. It is characterized in terms of an expansive energy which can in fact, be expressed through the individual 'form'. The individual represents a component involved in this distinction, for standing opposite to the fluidity of life, he or she represents life encased in form, or 'more-than-life'. "Life", Simmel writes, is "in its intimate and innermost essence, an increase, maximization, and growing concentration of the surrounding powers of the universe in the subject"[27]. Life in its infinite expansion "can become the goal of life"[28].

In Schopenhauer and Nietzsche (1907), Simmel discusses life in terms of an evolutionary, transcendent process. Not only does life possess the potential for infinite increase; in addition it is given a definite direction. Simmel claims that,

The image of life as a poetical-philosophical absolutization of the Darwinian idea of evolution . . . seems to me to be the expression of a sense of life which is ultimately decisive for every philosophy [29].

In speaking of life in terms of an embodiment of an evolutionary principle, Simmel is not referring to an 'other-worldly' transcendent process teleologically drawing humanity toward itself. Rather, human existence finds its meaning "not in something absolute and definitive, but in something higher that succeeds it, in which everything antecedent having been only potential and germinal, wakes up to a greater efficiency and expansion"[30]. As life

advances, it becomes richer, more intense, brimming over with nothing other than itself. In essence, life endlessly replaces itself with ever-increasing intensity. "Every constitution of life", Simmel writes, "finds its higher and meaning-giving norm in its next stage, that which its dormant and shackled power awakens"[31].

It follows logically that the evolutionary process of life cannot be defined in rigid, static terms. "Life", Simmel writes, is "incessantly productive and incessantly prolific"[32]. Once more, Simmel ascribes a teleology to this process. "The axiom of life", Simmel claims, is "to thrust forward what transcends life"[33]. In no instance does life's inherent energy function toward stasis or equilibrium, "but rather passes into the dimension that lies above it"[34].

As we have seen, life consists of the diametrical opposition between life and form. Yet as life replaces one representative form with another, it is forced to tear asunder its outdated forms. The destiny of life, Simmel writes, is

to pull down in its wake the bridges it has built for its own passage and to acknowledge that demolition itself as the most immanent necessity, as the ultimate fulfillment of its law as self-transcendence [35].

Life's fluid essence continually struggles to explode form, perceiving the latter as something coercively thrust or forced upon it. As Simmel remarks, life

would like to puncture not only this or that form, but form as such, and to absorb the form in its immediacy, to let its own power and fullness stream forth as if it emanated from life's own source [36].

In the final analysis, Simmel's description of life as a transcendent process overshadows the dialectical distinction between life and form. Spykman suggests that Simmel's conception of life subsumes the dialectical relationship between these two distinctions.

More than continuity and form, that which continually transcends itself and its creations, [life's] unitary function is its self-transcendence. Life is the final unitary synthesis which is the absolute of its own relativities [37].

Simmel's discussion of life is important in three distinct ways. First, he introduces us to the dialectical relationship between flux and form, an unavoidable condition of life itself which suggests simply that life is an energy inevitably embodied in finite, concretized representations. And yet he suggests that the fluid processes of life are able to overpower form, breaking them up in order to substitute new representations to replace the old. Life then, is stronger than form although it cannot exist without it--it is, in the final analysis, able to overcome form. It is an absolute process insofar as it is both flux and form and the inherent struggle between them. Finally, life is a transcendent process never moving towards closure or an absolute end yet continuously passing into a higher stage. On the whole, Simmel's discussion squares remarkably well

with the definition outlined at the end of the last chapter.

The third essential idea pervading Simmel's thought is that of 'interaction', an amalgam of two key concepts which constitute the substructure of Simmel's social theory. The first notion, one derived from Kant, is interaction or reciprocal effect (Wechselwirkung)[38]. The second idea, which follows logically from the first stresses the essential interrelatedness of all social phenomena (Wesenszusammengehörigkeit)[39].

David Frisby claims that "when we search for a key concept in Simmel's sociological work we can find only the concept of interaction or reciprocal effect"[40]. This notion stipulates that "no thing or event has a fixed, intrinsic meaning; its meaning only emerges through interaction with other things or events"[41]. To take an example, in order to understand cultural products such as art or music, we must not ignore the individuals who interact with them. Music, a cultural product, is a concrete expression of a particular composer. Upon production, it becomes accessible to an audience, which interprets it through creative interplay. For the budding musician sitting in the audience, this particular piece may influence his or her own composition skills. For Simmel, as Levine suggests, "cultural traditions attain true value in life only if they are balanced to a certain extent by creative power stemming from the individual"[42].

Simmel's discussion of power reveals a similar theme. As Levine notes, "in some cases a relationship gives the appearance of being wholly one-way--power, for example-- but closer inspection reveals that in some measure ego is being influenced by, as well as influencing, alter"[43]. For Simmel, the ruler needs the ruled as much as the ruled needs the ruler. In truth, one cannot exist without the other.

In this chapter, we have attempted to set the stage for an investigation into Simmel's discussion of the individual within his or her social context. Three important distinctions arise from this preliminary overview. Firstly, all knowledge is constituted by forms or categories of human experience, of which the individual and society are two primary examples. Of greater significance is the fact that these forms are not always sociologically anchored. As we have seen, the contents of human experience can be evaluated in purely objective terms.

Secondly, Simmel defines life in terms of a transcendent process. Consequently, we would expect it to produce an infinite number of qualitatively distinct human experiences and forms through which to acknowledge them. More importantly, we will see that just as life itself is a transcendent process, the same phenomenon applies equally well to certain individuals.

Thirdly, Simmel's social theory revolves around the notion of interaction. Meaning for Simmel is always

relational. As we shall see below, Simmel rarely speaks of any given phenomenon without considering that which stands against it, whether it is the relationship between subjectivity and objective culture or the development of individuality vis-à-vis the demands of the collective.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE INDIVIDUAL, SOCIETY, AND OBJECTIVE CULTURE

The first part of this chapter explores Simmel's ideas concerning the individual and society. The relation of these concepts to objective culture is considered in the latter part.

To begin our inquiry, we must recall that according to Simmel, both the individual and society are methodological constructs which allow us to approach the complexity of life from two distinct points of view. It follows that while both the individual and society are real, both are also abstractions from reality. We use these two concepts in order to divide given events along equally viable lines, or as analytical models to "deal with the unity of the given which we cannot directly comprehend, by organizing it under two different points of view"[1]. In order to illustrate this phenomenon, Simmel borrows a quotation from Spinoza: "Una eademque res, sed duobus modis expressa", or, "one and the same thing but expressed in two modes"[2].

Keeping in mind Simmel's description of life as it was outlined in the last chapter, we see a rather striking continuity emerge insofar as the nature of the individual is concerned. The reader will recall that Simmel describes the processes of life in terms of an eternal flux. One cannot help but notice the core of this idea as it is transposed

into Simmel's discussion of individuality. Oakes claims that for Simmel, "the chief virtue of man is to act, to achieve, or signify something. This means that he is always in a condition of flux, a state of restless becoming"[3]. The individual is described in terms of a dynamic force. Simmel maintains that "a man, taken as a whole, is so to speak, a somewhat unformed complex of contents, powers, potentialities"[4]. Depending on events encountered during the individual's existence, he or she is "articulated into a differentiated, defined structure"[5].

Simmel distinguishes between men and women in terms of what he perceives to be general, archetypal characteristics. "The woman", Simmel remarks, "represents being and the man represents becoming"[6]. The male species is, according to Simmel a "born transgressor of limits"[7]. Man's nature is "an unceasing process of becoming and expansive activity"[8]. Simmel claims that he is not relegating women to a subservient position, for in fact, he maintains that they achieve a much more authentic human experience [9]. Women, according to Simmel, dwell closer to "the true, the being of the cosmos", whereas "the man's nature sees itself juxtaposed to all this, as something to be accomplished . . . as an imperative or an intellectual task"[10].

In terms of the general development of human personality, Simmel again stresses the notion of becoming. On the whole, the personality "is never what it represents

at a given moment, it is always something "more", a higher and more perfect manifestation of itself, unreal and yet, somehow eternally present"[11]. However, an exact definition of personality would prove problematic, for it is not embodied in a single characteristic or mental state. "Rather it is something that we sense beyond those singularities, something grown into consciousness out of their experienced reality"[12]. Beyond the apparently fragmentary nature of our personality there exists,

a more deeply unitary individuality that lies at the determinative root of the diverse singularities, an individuality that we cannot become aware of directly, but only as the gradual experience of these multiple contents and variations [13].

It appears that for Simmel, the individual's personality constitutes more than a sum of his or her parts. The personality acquires an inner consistency which cannot be derived analytically from its constituent elements [14]. However, as Simmel notes, the unifying principle of one's personality remains a mystery and is not amenable to any theoretical law or rule[15].

The personality consists of a mixture of social and personal characteristics. In addition to impersonal, socially regulated qualities, the individual possesses an "extra-social nature" consisting of temperament, interests, fate, and, "worth as a personality"[16]. It is in fact our extra-social nature that guarantees our differentiation from others.

For innate qualities, personal relations, and decisive experiences inevitably make for some sort of uniqueness and irreplaceability in both the individual's self-evaluation and his interaction with others [17].

According to Simmel, each individual constitutes an inimitable phenomenon. Each person possesses a core of individuality which is qualitatively different from anyone else's [18]. However, it is impossible to fathom completely the individuality of another, for, as Simmel notes, the absolute unity of another's personality is beyond our comprehension [19].

We must now turn to an examination of Simmel's discussion of society. According to Simmel, society is not a tangible 'substance', but rather, an 'event'. In fact, he claims that "there is no such thing as society 'as such'"[20]. In simple terms, society exists where a number of individuals enter into interaction. As Hornosty correctly notes, the contents of these interactions are not social in their origin. "Strictly speaking", Simmel writes, "neither hunger nor love, work nor religiosity, technology nor the functions and results of intelligence are social"[21]. It is however these interests which impel individuals to form a collective. As Simmel notes, "to satisfy such urges, and to attain such purposes arise the innumerable forms of social life"[22]. Society consists then, of a web of interactions [Wechselwirkung], a dynamic reciprocal exchange between individuals [23].

And yet, society itself cannot be reduced to an atomistic analysis of solitary human beings. In society, these interactions taking place between individuals

have become crystallized as permanent fields, as autonomous phenomena. As they crystallize they attain their own existence, and their own laws and may even confront or oppose spontaneous interaction itself [24].

Any social phenomenon consists of two components. The social process is composed of

on the one hand, an interest, a purpose, or a motive; on the other, a form or a mode of interaction among individuals through which, or in the shape of which, that content attains social reality [25].

In abstract terms, we can identify two distinct parts of any given social act. The raw undifferentiated matter of the interaction consists of individual psychological motivations. However, the orchestration of these contents, the way in which they are transmitted from person to person within a social nexus is theoretically independent of the interests themselves. The forms through which psychological data are shared constitute the formal subject matter of sociology.

In one sense, society can be said to facilitate the development of individuality. The greater the number of groups to which one belongs, the less likely it is that anyone else possesses an identical web of group affiliations. The cumulative effect of this process "turns out to be increasing differentiation and

individualization"[26]. Simmel maintains that the psyche develops coterminously with an increase in the individual's social relations. "As that circle enlarges, so do the possibilities of developing our inner lives"[27]. The greater the number of opportunities given to the individual for personal development, the more is ensured his or her "intellectual, aesthetic and practical activity"[28].

In another sense however, the larger a particular group becomes, the more it poses a threat to the very individuality it is said to engender. As we have seen, the larger group encourages the development of individuality insofar as it accommodates the need for differentiation in an increasingly complex society. And yet, the larger group also

affords greater play to extreme formations and malformations of individualism, to misanthropic detachment, to baroque and moody lifestyles, to crass egoism [29].

Similarly, while the larger group fosters the development of personality, it also denies the individual the securities of the smaller group. In the former, the individual "is made to rely on his own resources to a greater extent and is deprived of the many supports and advantages associated with the tightly knit, primary group"[30].

We encounter a similar notion with regard to Simmel's discussion of the crowd. For instance, Simmel maintains that the excitability of the crowd deprives "the individual of the calmness and autonomy of reflection and action"[31].

In the crowd, we find ourselves bombarded with numerous incitations and "disproportionate impulses" which act to "eliminate the higher, differentiated and critical function of the individual"[32]. Similarly, the frightening aspects of a large group arouse "the darkest and most primitive instincts of the individual"[33]. The solitary human being falls beneath the hypnotic spell of the mass, "whereby the moral inhibitions of the low and brutal impulses are eliminated"[34].

On the one hand, Simmel discusses individuality in terms which suggest that social interaction is unavoidable and in fact, a prerequisite for the realization of inner potential. However, at other points in his analysis, Simmel appears to be less than enamoured with the promise of society.

The necessity to oblige the masses, or even habitually to expose oneself to them, easily corrupts the character. It pulls the individual down to a level with all and sundry [35].

This notion of a threat toward the development of individuality also permeates Simmel's discussion of the rapidly expanding division of labour. The increasingly complex economy demanded "an even more one-sided type of achievement which, at its highest point, often permits our personality to fall into neglect"[36]. Within such a setting, Simmel maintains that the individual faces an automaton-like existence whereby "he becomes a single cog over against the vast overwhelming organization of things

and courses which gradually take out of his hands everything connected with progress, spirituality and value"[37].

In attempting to assess Simmel's discussion of the relationship between the individual and society with regard to whether the latter actually facilitates the development of the former, one may agree with Liebersohn insofar as "Simmel's ambivalence was too great to permit anything less than a complex answer, always requiring correction from the other side"[38]. This "ambivalence", however, is entirely consistent with Simmel's notion of the dichotomous relationship between the individual and society. On the one hand, the individual is forced to seek self-actualization in the social process. On the other, society, which is seemingly unavoidable, threatens to destroy individuality, functioning as it does according to its own inherent logic.

Having analyzed Simmel's discussion of the relationship between the individual and society, we must now turn to an examination of the phenomenon which in fact makes society possible: Objective Culture. Society consists of the 'forms' of interaction which take place among individuals, forms which in time become independent of the individuals who created them. As Collins notes, for Simmel, "society is an invisible world with laws of its own. These laws are found in the flow of culture--language, technology, social institutions [and] art"[39]. Culture for Simmel, is any objective expression of the human experience. "We speak of

culture", Simmel notes, "whenever life produces certain forms in which it expresses and realizes itself: works of art, religions, sciences, technologies and innumerable others"[40].

In most cases, the individual cannot develop his or her inner potentiality without interaction vis-a-vis the realm of objective culture. "A man becomes cultivated", Simmel claims, "only when cultural traits develop that aspect of his soul which exists as its most indigenous drive and as the inner predetermination of its subjective perfection"[41]. Objective culture then, shapes the latent potentialities which lie buried in the individual. As Simmel notes, the gestation of objective culture "leads the path to its own fulfillment or indicates the path to be traversed by individuals or collectivities on the way to a heightened existence" [42].

Culture simply lends form to the creative subjective processes. When the poet puts pen to paper, he or she is converting a personal subjective experience into an objective cultural artifact. Once objectified it in turn becomes objective culture for any other individual seeking to become cultivated. At the same time, its objectification in form gives it a life of its own which is independent of the subjective processes which created it.

A dialectical relationship exists between subjective life and objective culture. The former, Simmel notes, "is

restless but finite in time" while the latter, objective cultural forms, "once they are created, are fixed but timelessly valid"[43]. Once again we are confronted with a situation wherein the individual is essentially torn in two opposing directions.

It is the paradox of culture that subjective life which we feel in its continuous stream and which drives itself towards inner perfection cannot by itself reach the perfection of culture. It can become truly cultivated only through forms which have become completely alien and crystallized into self-sufficient independence [44].

One of the characteristics of modern society, Simmel suggests, is that, as the sphere of objective culture expands, an increasing number of cultural artifacts exceed the individual's ability to assimilate them subjectively. This phenomenon, according to Simmel's definition, signifies the process of reification. Rather than achieving subjective perfection through the absorption of objective culture, the individual "becomes its tool. Instead of culture becoming part of his personality and its integration, he becomes an epiphenomenon of culture"[45].

Simmel refers to this phenomenon, the overgrowth of objective spirit, as the sociological tragedy. Often, in contemporary society, the individual feels that he or she "is surrounded by an innumerable number of cultural elements which are neither meaningless to him, nor in the final analysis, meaningful. In their mass, they depress him since he is not capable of assimilating them all"[46]. In this

instance, the individual is no longer able to master the objective realm of culture subjectively. He or she "experiences the overwhelming influx of culture as a realm that has lost [its] humanity and confronted him with a deadening objectivity, bearing down with overwhelming force on the tiny realm of inward, individual feeling" [47].

Simmel claims that the individual in modern society is surrounded by a world of objects which have little intrinsic meaning to his or her existence. "Technology creates "unnecessary" knowledge, that is of no particular value but is simply the by-product of the autonomous expansion of scientific activities"[48]. To this end, the consumer is bombarded with petitions to purchase useless appliances. Similarly, the scholar is surrounded by a plethora of books which would take more than a lifetime to read and digest.

Simmel's discussion of culture is, on the whole, quite general if not somewhat vague. Where he does attempt to delineate the formal contents of culture, his descriptions entail vast fields of human creativity.

There are objective spiritual forms--art and morality, science and purposively formed objects, religion and law, technology and social forms--stations as it were, through which the subject has to go in order to gain that special individual value which is called culture [49].

For the purposes of this investigation, we must take note of a distinction which Simmel implicitly makes: the difference between high culture and low culture. An individual who designs and creates an automobile has indeed contributed to

the realm of objective culture. After all, he or she has conceptualized a project subjectively and then given it an objective tangible expression. And yet in Simmel's work one finds very little discussion of such things as mechanical technology or the need for every individual to assimilate the rules of social institutions. It would appear that Simmel regards the aforementioned items as 'low culture'. On the other hand, artistic and intellectual pursuits appear to constitute the realm of 'high culture'. Simmel is primarily interested in the latter. As we have seen and will see below, Simmel is particularly interested in aesthetic questions. And as we probe the question of culture further, we will see that Simmel most often makes references to artists in order to illustrate his arguments.

However, before we turn to an analysis of the implications of Simmel's cultural explorations we must address the subject of creativity. Admittedly, an individual who is able to follow his or her path from potentiality to actualization based solely on the strength of subjective energies is not cultivated in the Simmelian sense. Interestingly however, the individual who is able to complete this process without utilizing the realm of objective culture gains Simmel's highest praise. "When viewed from the highest perspective", Simmel notes, "these processes of perfection are perhaps the most valuable. But this only proves that culture is not the only value for the

human soul"[50]. For some, independent self-actualization is possible--we simply cannot call it cultivation in its purest sense.

Indeed, if there is one human activity which fascinates Simmel, it is the ability to create. It is clear that Simmel admires the ability to create objective culture, to lend form to the powers of human imagination, more than he does the assimilation of objective cultural ends as a means to individual subjective perfection.

In the happiness of a creator with his work, as great or insignificant as it may be, we find, beyond a discharge of inner tensions, the proof of his subjective power, his satisfaction over a fulfilled challenge, a sense of contentment that the work is completed, that the universe of valuable items is enriched by this individual piece. Probably there is no greater personal satisfaction for the creator than when we apperceive his work in all its impersonality, apart from our subjectivity [51].

Thus far we have noted Simmel's view of opposing forces in social life. In this chapter we have outlined Simmel's ideas concerning the relationship between the individual and society, and, by association, the dialectical link between the subjective life of the individual and the realm of objective culture. In the course of this discussion, we remain fairly well entrenched within Hornosty's dialectical paradigm. However, upon closer examination of Simmel's work we will see a synthesis emerging out of these seemingly irreconcilable forces. For instance, while Simmel quite clearly distinguishes between subjective spirit and

objective culture, it is within this realm that "the conditions finally emerge through which culture resolves the subject-object dualism"[52]. Culture, as we shall see, is always a synthesis. And while Simmel describes the frenzied overgrowth of objective culture, he does, as we will see below, suggest that certain individuals are able to reconcile these two seemingly disparate realms.

Let us turn to an example to illustrate this point. Simmel notes that a sunrise which goes unseen adds little to the value of the world. However, once the painter converts the flux of life into form, infusing "his emotion, his sense for form and colour, his power of expression", we have before us "an enrichment, an increase in the value of existence as a whole"[53]. In this instance, Simmel notes,

The world seems to us somehow more deserving of its existence, closer to its ultimate meaning whenever the human soul, the source of all values, has expressed itself in something that has become part of the objective world [54].

Indeed, "genius, which makes progress possible"[55], also resolves the dialectical relationship between the demands of subjective development, or subjective spirit and objective culture. Through "the expression of his essential powers" and the "exuberation of his nature", the intensity of the objective product "frees by itself the contents of cultural life"[56]. Through the creator's "passionate dedication to the cause", with its implicit demand for perfection, "the creative individual becomes indifferent to

himself and is extinguished"[57]. With regard to the diametrical relationship between subjective spirit and objective culture, in the hands of a genius, the

two streams are unified. To the genius, the development of subjective spirit for its own sake and compelled by its own forces is indistinguishable from the completely self-negating devotion to an objective task. Culture, as we have demonstrated is always a synthesis [58].

In the final analysis, the creative individual finds a way to overcome the dichotomy between the realm of subjectivity and objective culture. "The creative genius", Simmel tells us, "possesses such an original unity of the subjective and the objective which first has to be divided so that it can be resuscitated in synthetic form in the process of cultivation"[59]. The organic unity of genius must first be dissembled into an objective expression before it can traverse the path which delivers the soul to a heightened existence. For the genius, the sociological tragedy is not an inevitable predicament. "The great enterprise of the spirit", Simmel writes, "succeeds innumerable times in overcoming the object as such by making an object of itself, returning to itself enriched by its creation"[60].

The process of cultivation dismantles the tension encountered by the individual as he or she attempts to appropriate objective culture. As Weingartner notes, for Simmel, "cultivation overcomes the subject-object

distinction between the individual and objective spirit"[61]. When the process is successful, "it relates the individual to the objects which surround him", ensuring that he or she is "at home in the cosmos of human devising"[62]. In fact, with regard to the polarity between subjectivity and objective culture, as Weingartner suggests

the demands are not contradictory, for they may be the same. Indeed it is the mark of genius that for him the two roads, that of his own development and that of form, very frequently coincide. The genius is seldom torn between two ways of being "consequent": the same experience satisfies both claims [63].

Culture constitutes a coming together, a unity of the forces of life. It is the very point at which the mysterious continuity of life flows without obstruction. As Oakes notes, culture is, for Simmel

the point at which the subject--the individual personality as constituted by the energies and forces of life--and the object--the world as constituted by autonomous, irreducibly different and incommensurable forms--intersect [64].

Presumably, the chief aim of objective culture, which is a concrete representation of the human spirit, is to foster the development of subjective life which will in turn replace obsolete objective forms with new ones. At the centre of this phenomenon is the creative process. Although certain individuals, presumably those possessing exceptional skills, are able to perfect their subjectivity independent of objective culture, for the most part the path travelled by the creative individual is not an easy one. He or she

must be able to tolerate, and in turn, overcome the tensions of existence. To this end, he or she must be able both to produce and assimilate objective culture, allowing neither the requirements of personal contribution nor individual fulfillment to suffer. To cite an example, Beethoven, genius though he was, did not compose without revealing through his work the influence of Bach and Mozart; he simply added the influence of others to his own rich subjective energies, producing novel contributions to the realm of objective culture.

We shall have more to say about the artist in the next chapter. For the moment, it is enough to mention that for Simmel, the aesthetically inclined individual somehow looked beyond the contradictions of life. Indeed, Simmel claims that certain individuals recognize, in the most banal manifestations of life, that there exists something greater. By piercing beneath the superficial representation of things, the enlightened individual can perceive "the final unity of things from which beauty and meaning flow"[65]. As Simmel notes, "to the adequately trained eye, the totality of beauty, the complete meaning of the world as a whole radiates from every single point"[66]. The ability to perceive this unity, to hear, as Simmel writes, "the voice of God in a worm", is the path that leads to an appreciation for the totality and unity of life. According to Simmel, the truly enlightened individual

sees the harmony of things in their equality, so that the charm and ugliness of appearance, ridiculous chaos and meaningful form, represent only covering veils behind which he will always see identical beauty and the soul of being for which his mind thirsts [67].

Beyond the world of appearance there exists another, a world where the contradictions of life hold no sway and only beauty lives. Thus the world appears to the artist.

The reader will recall that Hornosty describes the sociological enterprise as having emerged with two antithetical images of man. Simmel too, comments on these two intellectual currents. Indeed, he maintains that ideas regarding individuality and human nature shifted from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. The Enlightenment thinkers focused on the ideal of equality among individuals. By contrast, much of nineteenth-century thought is undergirded with the notion of individual freedom and differentiation.

In order to redress the oppressive nature of antiquated social institutions, the Enlightenment thinkers called for absolute equality among individuals. On the whole, they believed that the eradication of stultifying social legislation would allow the individual's inherent potential to be realized. Locked deep within the individual was a common nature, which was shared with all and which only required freedom from social interference in order to flourish.

However, as Simmel suggests, "as soon as the ego had

become sufficiently strengthened by the feeling of equality and universality, it sought once again inequality"[68]. Indeed, the nineteenth century revealed the illusionary ideal of equality to be nothing more than a chimera. As Simmel notes,

Their equality, by which their freedom was justified, never did exist in reality as accomplished fact, and the instant individuals perceived unlimited freedom, unmistakable inequality would generate a new repression of dullards by the smart, of the weak by the strong, of the shy by the aggressive [69].

In essence there was a noticeable shift in thought between the two centuries. The Enlightenment thinkers emphasized equality, an end to oppressive institutions and the opportunity for the individual to realize his or her innate potentiality. The following century, informed with the notion of freedom, demanded the development of unique, differentiated individuality, functioning within an interdependent society. With the nineteenth century, the ideal of the individual gives way to the ideal of society.

It is however, interesting to note that even within Simmel's sociological writings, there exists a passage which suggests that the two aforementioned ideals, namely the solitary individual and the uniquely differentiated individual, are merely stages leading to a qualitatively new expression of being.

Perhaps however, beyond the economic form of cooperation between the two great sociological themes, individual and society (the only sociological themes that have thus far been

realized), there yet exists a higher form that might be the latent ideal of our culture. I should prefer to believe, however, that the idea of free personality as such, and the idea of unique personality as such, are not the last words of individualism. I should like to think that the efforts of mankind will produce ever more numerous and varied forms for the human personality to affirm itself and to demonstrate the value of its existence. In fortunate periods, these varied forms may order themselves into harmonious wholes. In doing so, their contradictions will cease to be mere obstacles to mankind's efforts: they will also stimulate new demonstrations of the strength of these efforts and lead them into new creations [70].

The notion that perhaps the individual and society were simply two representative ideas, together with the view that, given time, the creative human enterprise would find innovative forms with which to respond to the contents of the world, points us in the direction of a new expression of individuality. That Simmel was disappointed with the contemporary status of individuality is evident from his discussion of Nietzsche. In fact, it is here that we find Simmel detailing a new value--that of 'overcoming'.

Indeed, Simmel was very much intrigued with Nietzsche's ideas regarding the overman [Übermensch]. In Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Simmel takes up this theme at length. "Why", he asks, "should man stop on the way that has led him from a low animal form to humanity?"[71] Man, Simmel notes, must be engaged in a continual process of self overcoming. "The overman", Simmel comments, "is a task that grows with the process of civilization"[72]. Civilization which in its advance threatens the individual, makes it necessary for the

latter to overcome the haunting aspects of the former. As Simmel notes, "in every moment of his empirical existence and even at the highest imaginable levels, man is still a path and a bridge"[73].

Indeed, there is evidence in his writings to suggest that Simmel saw ways in which the stifling conditions of contemporary life could be overcome. Commenting on Schopenhauer's support of suicide as an alternative to the miseries of life, Simmel claims that "one who takes his own life only proves that he has not overcome it"[74]. In another essay, entitled "The Transcendent Character of Life" (1918), Simmel quotes Nietzsche directly from Thus Spoke Zarathustra. The former writes, "Der Mensch ist etwas, das überwunden werden soll", or "Man is something to be overcome"[75].

For the individual to be able to overcome or transcend his or her existential conditions, he or she must not dismiss the contradictions found therein. For instance, while comparing the respective world-views of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, Simmel is unwilling to dismiss the validity of either. Each in his own way presents a credible interpretation of the world and each perspective, although in many ways diametrically opposed to the other, is true. "Humanity", Simmel writes, "has developed such a magnitude of tension that it can include both of them"[76]. To this end, the individual must admit to both the tragic aspects of

Schopenhauer's pessimism and Nietzsche's celebration of life. In fact, a synthesis of the two seemingly irreconcilable positions can be achieved but only "by a subject who can regard both positions"[77]. The ennobled soul does not dismiss either Schopenhauer's despair nor Nietzsche's optimism. The soul converts these contradictions into a kind of strength regarding "the desperation and the jubilation of life as the poles of its own expansion, its own power, its own plentitude of forms, and it enjoys that embrace"[78].

Simmel is also fascinated by the moral fortitude of the saint. By "overcoming his will", the saint has "overcome the world . . . beyond morality as such and beyond the question of pleasure and pain, life here finds perfection in itself, leaving no trace of the world behind"[79]. It is significant to note that while discussing Schopenhauer, Simmel focuses not only on his examination of the will, but also on the sense of liberation associated with overcoming it, the strength ultimately necessary for its denial.

Simmel's discussion of the individual who thrives on conflict and struggle is not limited to his examination of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. In other works, we find Simmel detailing the joys of overcoming adversity. For certain individuals, the journey is more enchanting than the arrival. Along the path that leads to their goal, these few cherish "the joys of creation, of overcoming difficulties,

frequently that of contradiction, which expresses itself in the process"[80]. For certain individuals, Simmel notes, "the aesthetic results of ascending the high Alps would not be considered worth further notice, if it did not demand extraordinary effort and danger"[81].

This notion of overcoming is equally applicable to the sphere of morality. True moral merit, Simmel claims, is predicated upon actions in which "contrary wishes and impulses" are "fought down and sacrificed"[82]. A praiseworthy moral resolution rests on the dismissal of competing, self-serving alternatives in the name of a higher objective good. As Simmel notes,

Only through the sacrifice of the lower and still so seductive good is the height of moral merit attained, and a more lofty height, the more attractive the temptation and the deeper and more comprehensive the sacrifice [83].

The individual able to tolerate the challenge of existence without despair must possess courage, fortitude, and faith in his own purpose. Simmel provides us with an example of this character type through his discussion of the adventurer. The willingness to confront life, to test the fickle hands of fate and fortune requires a strength that emanates from the self alone. The adventurer is not merely a rugged athlete pushing him or herself to the point of exhaustion. As Axelrod notes, "the adventurer may also be the adventurous scientist, who, upon relying on his or her own strength, violates the support of the community paradigm

and makes each experience of science an adventure"[84]. Moreover, Simmel suggests that the adventurous type thrives on opposition. It is after all, adversity that pushes the individual to greater heights. As Simmel remarks,

"Whoever is not for me is against me" is only a half truth. Only the indifferent person is against me--one whom the ultimate questions for which I live move neither to a For nor an Against. But whoever is against me in the positive sense, one who ventures onto that plane where I exist and combats me on that plane--that person is in the highest sense--for me [85].

In this chapter we have detailed Simmel's discussion of the individual, society and objective culture and have suggested that he saw ways in which the contradictory elements of contemporary existence could be overcome. That the individual can in some way overcome the contradictions of modernity without necessarily renouncing them is the subject matter of the next chapter. It will be argued that certain individuals can in fact transcend the dichotomy between the individual and society. We will suggest, as Lipman has, that Simmel looked beyond the chaotic conditions of modern life, hoping "for a higher synthesis, a form which would transcend both individual and society . . . celebrating the idealized possibility of humanity itself"[86].

CHAPTER SIX: HUMANITY

In the last chapter it was argued that Simmel suggests that the contradictory aspects of contemporary life could be overcome. This chapter will demonstrate the way in which this transcendence may be accomplished and the manner through which transcendence can be evaluated. Yet before we can pursue an examination of this idea, we must first discuss Simmel's conception of humanity.

The reader will recall that in the fourth chapter, we noted categories of human experience as seen by Simmel. In addition to the two sociological perspectives of the individual and society, Simmel suggested a third category--that of objective culture--whereby life's contents could be evaluated objectively in terms which stand outside the social-historical climate in which they are manifest. To this third category, we must add a fourth, which for our purposes is perhaps the most important of all: humanity.

Humanity is, quite simply, an evaluative idea. Yet we must not, for this reason take it any less seriously. Simmel suggests that

to say that this "humanity" possesses no concrete context, no unified consciousness, no continuous development is by no means a valid objection to using the concept. "Humanity" is, if you will, an "idea", just like "nature", perhaps also like "society"[1].

Simmel makes a clear distinction between society and humanity [2]. Viewed from the social perspective, he notes that "each individual is merely a point at which the lines of society intersect" and the "individual is irrelevant because he does and should exist only as a one-among-many and as a one-for-many"[3]. On the whole, society is interested only in our actions for the collectivity.

The distinction between humanity and society, which he finds worked out in Kant and Nietzsche, suggests that the intrinsic worth of an individual as a human being is not the same as his or her value as a social being. While social material tends to be pragmatically oriented, humanity judges us by our contribution to the development of mankind and to what extent human life is enriched through our existence [4]. "We can", Simmel notes,

ask of every human condition, quality or action:
What does this mean as a stage of the development
of humanity? What preconditions must the entire
species have attained for this to be possible?
What has humanity as a biological, ethical and
psychic type thereby won or lost in value? [5]

One of Nietzsche's major contributions to philosophical thinking, Simmel writes, is "displayed by how the concept 'humanity' stands against that of 'society'"[6]. Whereas the search for value above the individual tends to stop at the level of society, Simmel suggests that "'society' is but one of these forms through which humanity plays out its power, its vital contents, and its interests"[7]. Nietzsche's significance, Simmel claims, lies in the

discovery of "values in the life of humanity that in their fundamentality and importance are independent of social formation, even though they are obviously only realized through socially formed existence"[8]. In order to pose the questions of humanity, we must keep in mind its distinct orientation. It must be said, Simmel claims, that

the whole of humanity is in principle different from that which proceeds from the viewpoint of society, and that both viewpoints are independent of one another in their underlying motives, however much they may consider one and the same fact, or human being, or cultural content in terms of their respective hierarchies [9].

The perspective of humanity is strictly concerned with the objective contributions of particular individuals. The various products of human creativity can be evaluated using criteria which judge them in terms of their meaning for mankind in general. As Simmel notes,

The material of this idea of humanity and the questions based on it are individual. It is only a matter of secondary importance whether the activities of these individuals contribute to the condition and development of humanity in the form of sociation or in that of a purely personal activity in thought, sentiment, or artistic works, in the biological improvement and deterioration of the race, or in the religious relationship to Gods and idols [10].

The contents of humanity are constituted through individual acts of creativity. The objective products derived from these acts are valued in terms of their originality and ingenuity. Oftentimes, the ability to give expression to a novel idea necessitates the renunciation of social fetters. As a consequence, humanity, or the realm of human ideals, is

"often in sharp contrast to society's demand that we conform to the average and mediocre"[11].

Simmel himself notes that it is possible to love the human being as an idea and yet not necessarily share these sentiments for the entire race. It might even be the case, Simmel contends, that love for the individual as an idea is incompatible with the notion of philanthropy [12]. Indeed, one can imagine admiring Goethe or Mozart and the peaks of human achievement each of them attained while at the same time viewing the majority of mankind as petty, vulgar and conformist by nature. In this light, the latter group actually impede the development of genius by demanding a code of social constraints entirely antithetical to the demands of creativity. "Nietzsche", Simmel notes, "possessed and preached love for the human being in this sense with a most passionate intensity. However, he completely rejected universal philanthropy in his doctrine and probably in his personal feelings as well"[13].

This is not to suggest, however, that humanity does not benefit society on the whole. Simmel, in his discussion of humanity, claims that we can perhaps determine the way in which a particular objective contribution assists in the development of mankind. How then, is this possible? Through the processes of cultivation, the individual subjectively assimilates a specific cultural product, thereby enriching his or her human experience. In this

manner, humanity can exist in the individual. As opposed to a life of mere subsistence, the cultivated person experiences various artistic and intellectual works, and these in turn foster the development of the individual's innate subjective strengths. In addition to presenting us with the idea of humanity as a way in which to view the contents of the world, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that for Simmel, this perspective actually supercedes the social. "The different forms of society", Simmel maintains, "and their specific values and conflicts are secondary in comparison with the two basic concepts of humanity and the individual"[14]. Whereas society in its totality cannot exist in one person, "humanity can exist in the individual"[15]. While every human activity has to assume a particular form, "which provides the technique or the connecting link through which individuality can become a practically effective element of humanity", Simmel remarks that "humanity and the individual remain the polar concepts for the observation of human life"[16]. Society is, if you will, the channel or force through which humanity travels. However, Simmel notes that

From this ultimate point of view society as a whole appears a special form or aggregation beyond which, subordinating their contents to the other forms of observation and evaluation, there stand the ideals of humanity and the individual [17].

What are we to make of this idea of humanity? In what manner does it offer a resolution to the dichotomy between

the individual and society? Simmel provides us with an extensive analysis of the individual and society. By comparison, his ideas pertaining to humanity are by his own admission, "much more incomplete and . . . [the concept's] theoretical generality is restricted in actual cognition to a very few considerations"[18]. Therefore, the task falls upon our shoulders to fill out this ideal, using Simmel's own analysis.

To illustrate this phenomenon, we will examine a famous anecdote from the life of Ludwig van Beethoven. One fine day in Vienna, Beethoven and the poet Goethe were said to be walking through the gardens behind the Hapsburg Palace. Along the narrow path, the artists encountered a few members of the Royal Family. Goethe, it is reported, stepped aside, removed his hat and carefully bowed before the nobility. Beethoven, on the other hand, sauntered directly through the centre of the tiny group without as much as acknowledging their presence. Although this is perhaps a seemingly insignificant event, for our purposes it is very important. If one were to judge Beethoven's behaviour from the 'social' perspective, his actions appear to be nothing less than reprehensible. In fact, Beethoven's life was full of impoliteness, tantrums and at times, irascible behaviour. Yet once we alter our perspective, approaching his life from the viewpoint of humanity, an altogether different picture appears. We are no longer concerned with his social graces,

but rather, inquire into his contributions to mankind. After all, the same Beethoven who pestered his young nephew Karl to distraction, gave the world his Ninth Symphony, an artistic work which is performed quite frequently today, almost 200 years after Beethoven's death.

It is within the notion of humanity that we find a resolution to the dialectic between the individual and society, as described by Hornosty and Coser. Yet before we turn to this discussion we must first make clearer the distinction between and among transcendence, objective culture, and humanity. It is our contention that Simmel felt that the individual could overcome the dichotomy between the individual and society by transcending it. To do this the individual must devote him or herself to an objective goal, whether artistic, moral, or intellectual according to the dictates of the soul which are manifest in the form of an 'inner calling'. The products of this transcendence are embodied in objective culture, which suggests that the subjective energies of the individual have been synthesized with objective form. And while objective culture is a manifestation of the human spirit encased in form, humanity addresses the implications of a particular contribution for the development of mankind. For instance, in what sense, if any, did Goethe's Faust contribute to our understanding of human nature? In what way did the works of the Impressionists bring us closer to the emotive core of

the soul? Or, to take another kind of example: How has a discovery of a vaccine for polio changed the world? Or, if you will: Has Marx's vision of a more equitable society influenced our ideas regarding the injustices of a capitalistic one?

The notion of transcendence implies an ethical or moral 'Ought' which is above and independent of the realm of the individual and society. There exists, according to Simmel, an "Ought which man finds above himself"[19]. As a consequence of its connection with an objective realm of morality, the 'Ought', Simmel suggests, "is separated from the question of the 'I' and 'Thou' "[20]. And although Simmel points out that innumerable individuals never go beyond obedience to the 'Thou', he remarks that this stage serves merely as preparation for subordination under an objectively ethical law [21]. Finally, Simmel comments that the ethical law to which the individual subordinates him or herself, "transcends the 'I' as much as the 'Thou', and only in its own initiative admits the interests of the one or the other as ethical contents"[22].

Simmel attempts to safeguard the discussion of ethics from the sociological apperception altogether. "Ethics conceived of as a type of sociology is robbed of its deepest and finest content"[23]. Simmel suggests that the realm of ethics encompasses the behaviour "of the individual soul in and of itself which does not enter at all into its external

relations"[24]. The individual's soul is geared primarily towards goals which are not necessarily social in their orientation. Simmel feels that the soul is concerned with

its own salvation or damnation; the devotion to objective values of knowledge, beauty, significance, which transcend any connections with other people [25].

Simmel's discussion of morality also alludes to an objective realm which is qualitatively distinct from either the individual or the collective. He refers to a "higher stage of morality" where "moral necessities flow beyond the contrast between individual and totality"[26]. In fact, Simmel claims that in the individual, "they only have their bearer" whereas

their power of obligation stems from these necessities themselves, from their inner, super-personal validity, from an objective ideality we must recognize, whether or not we want to . . . [27].

While it is certainly feasible that moral edicts may contain requirements which are socially motivated, in this instance, they have been transposed to a higher realm. Simmel points out that it is as if they have "undergone a metempsychosis into [norms] which must be satisfied for [their] own sake, not for my sake, nor for yours"[28]. It is precisely in this respect that the individual becomes transcendent. In ethical terms, he or she converts a personal norm into an objective law which is followed at any cost. As Simmel notes,

It is precisely the fully unified process of the

moral life which surpasses every lower state through a higher one, and again this latter stage through a still higher. That man overcomes himself means that he reaches beyond the bounds which the moment sets for him. There must be something at hand to be overcome, but it is only for the purpose of being overcome. So also as an ethical agent, man is the limited being that has no limit [29].

Let us consider for the moment, the case of Socrates. Indeed, in this particular choice we have before us an excellent example of transcendence. Socrates pursued the knowledge of 'the good'. This pursuit was in accordance with his 'inner calling' or 'daimon' as he called it, which for all intents and purposes guided his life and eventually resulted in his death. Insofar as Simmel's discussion of morality is concerned, Socrates was fully committed to the objective realm which transcends the 'I - Thou' dialectic. The pursuit of knowledge was, for Socrates, stronger than his inclination for self-preservation; thus the infamous trial and the bitter hemlock.

Socrates shunned any notion of social conscience as far as he himself was concerned. His philosophy would have in fact been impossible had he abided by the rulers of the Athenian State. His self-professed role as a 'gadfly to the state' depended entirely on his opposition to it. That Socrates contributed to the development of humanity goes without saying. The Socratic dialogues, preserved by Plato's meticulous penmanship have endured exposition and criticism for more than twenty centuries. Indeed the

development of Western thought, right down to Simmel's discussion of 'form' owes a great deal to the philosophy of Socrates.

Earlier in the chapter, it was argued that in order to achieve transcendence, the individual must dedicate him or herself to an objective goal. To this end, the philosopher is devoted to the pursuit of ethical knowledge while the scientist, on the other hand, races after truth. Yet Simmel's analysis of morality and scientific knowledge pales in comparison to his discussion of art. For it is within the realm of art that we find the essence of the struggle between life and form and the riches of the human experience arrayed before us. It is within this realm that the process and product of transcendence are most evident.

Throughout his life, Simmel expressed an appreciation for artistic originality. He was

especially intrigued by the creative individual, the virtuoso or genius of cultural innovation who attempts to interpret and transform the conflict between life and form in a novel fashion, or even a revolutionary direction [30].

Indeed, Simmel displays a fascination toward the creative individual who can tolerate this contradiction and produce something original from the tension. Oakes claims that Simmel admired "the manner in which human experience could create a novel form of individuality that either resolves the conflict in a new synthesis or suspends it in a new field of force"[31]. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Kant and

Goethe, Rembrandt and Michelangelo, Auguste Rodin and Stefan George, were among Simmel's cherished cultural innovators; all were individuals who harnessed the flux of life with sparkling ingenuity [32].

Art, for Simmel, is more than an objective expression of certain gifted individuals. Rather, the realm of art constitutes a complete world in and of itself. "From the outset", Simmel notes, "art places itself beyond reality. It frees itself from reality by means of a perspective that is utterly averse to reality"[33]. Art provides us with a new set of data, an infinite universe of contents that are integrated into harmonized representations. "Art", Simmel remarks, "achieves transcendence of the real significance of things by inquiring exclusively into their form with unequivocal confidence"[34].

Insofar as art functions as a separate world, it shapes its dimensions according to its own inherent criteria. Consequently, the artistic perspective emerges "according to the artistic needs of viewing and feeling, of significance, which lie entirely beyond those of reality"[35]. Moreover, the value inherent in an artistic work does not lie in terms of our acceptance of it. For instance, the fact that Van Gogh's paintings were initially poorly received is not a reflection upon the work itself. As Simmel notes,

Its cultural meaning is completely independent. A work of art is supposed to be perfect in terms of artistic norms. They do not ask for anything else but themselves, and would give or deny value to

that work even if there were nothing else in the world but that particular work . . . Whether and to what extent they can be substituted in the development of subjective souls has nothing to do with its importance, which is measured through purely objective norms which are valid for it alone [36].

The relationship between life and form is an inevitable condition of human existence. However, the ability to reconcile the two components, the artist's capacity to harness his or her subjective energy within a concrete form, is perhaps the greatest achievement attainable by the individual. The work of art, Simmel remarks, "is a qualitatively unique point at which--as we might put it--individual mental elements are crystallized in such a way that they produce the unity of a personality"[37]. The creative transition from life to form "transforms the fortuitousness of the individual experience of the artist into an event that has universal significance or validity"[38]. Moreover, the artist is privy to the secrets of human life. His or her interpretation of the world reveals "the innermost meaning of existence, the ultimate mystery of things, and their external ineffability"[39].

Just as the forces of life are able to overpower form, art, for Simmel, often exceeds its representative boundaries. "Every major artist and each great work of art contain more breadth and depth which flow from hidden sources than art is able to express"[40]. In other words, art, like life, often surpasses the forms it constructs for

its expression. For example, Simmel suggests that Beethoven's last compositions, by virtue of their innovation, transcend his earlier works. The demands of Beethoven's "inner fate" prove too strong for the old forms of expression: "The old artistic form is not broken up; rather it is overpowered by something else, something which breaks forth from another dimension"[41]. Like the churning sea, the mysterious creative energy of life inevitably washes over its own shores. As Simmel notes, "there is more in human products, perhaps in every single one which derives fully from the creative powers of the spirit, than is contained in its forms"[42]. Indeed, Simmel finds a perfect expression of this idea in the works of Van Gogh. The latter's "burning life" which "swings far beyond the limits of pictorial art" may "just as well have given life to practical or religious, to poetical or musical, activities"[43]. As Simmel remarks, it is his subjective power "which sometimes enters into a destructive contrast with its obvious form--that makes Van Gogh so fascinating"[44].

Simmel's interests in the field of art perhaps finds its most definitive expression within his relationship with Stefan George. Simmel met George, an impressionist poet whom he had long admired, in 1897. Both men were estranged from Berlin's official culture [45]. However, as Liebersohn remarks, both "felt that they belonged to their society's

true elite, one based not on birth, but on talent and shared sensitivity"[46]. In 1903, Simmel invited George to join an elite club which was to serve Berlin's cultured society. This project marked an attempt on Simmel's behalf to preserve the endangered remnants of German culture. In his invitation to George, Simmel writes,

You can see from the enclosure what it is about-- an enterprise that I have joined because I hope it will turn into a cultural centre such as we bitterly need; for it grows clearer everyday that we live among barbarians [47].

As Liebersohn notes, it was the intention of this group to preserve an "interest in the higher things in life" (in den Interessen geistigen Lebens)[48].

Simmel's analysis of George's work raises an important distinction which is relevant to our investigation. In a paper written in 1898, Simmel, according to Liebersohn, distinguishes between two primary sources of art: "the natural ego, which produced mere outbursts of emotion, and the higher self finding objectification in higher form"[49]. In assessing George's poetry, Simmel claims that the former's "soul or higher self" fuses the "fragments of experience into a unified whole"[50]. This notion of a higher self is also found in an essay praising George's The Tapestry of Life. During the prelude of this work, an angel visits the exhausted poet, in order to rejuvenate his lost creativity. This angel, according to Simmel, was not a vision from another planet, but rather, resembled George

himself. Liebersohn suggests that for Simmel the angel symbolized "that higher inner self overcoming disordered reality"[51].

It is interesting to note that a rupture later occurred between these two thinkers, directly involving this notion of a 'higher self'. In 1909, George published The Seventh Ring, a work which apparently did not meet with Simmel's aesthetic standards. In an article published shortly after the appearance of this work, Simmel remarks, "George's poetic soul sings only of itself, not the world, not the world above"[52]. It is essential to note that Simmel's aesthetic sensibility stops short of praising artistic egoism. Liebersohn notes that at one point in the critique, the disappointed Simmel admits, "George's higher self had always been a human ego swollen to epic proportions"[53].

Simmel quite clearly distinguishes between the 'self' the centre of emotions and sentiments, and the 'higher self' which is capable of finding objectification in concrete form, providing order to the chaos and fluidity of human life. Within the creative genius there exists a realm which transcends the ego and is able, through its power, to order the experiences of human life according to its own dictates. Every major artistic and intellectual achievement signifies nothing less than an accomplishment of this task.

Like Schopenhauer before him, Simmel recommends the aesthetic realm as a release from the contradictions of

human life. In fact, the former's notion of salvation through art informs Simmel's analysis of Rodin's sculptures. The true value of art, for Simmel, lies in its ability to move us beyond the turmoil of our lives. For the aesthetically inclined, art is synonymous with reconciliation. With regard to Rodin, Simmel writes,

If one . . . regards salvation from the trouble and whirl of life, the peace and conciliation beyond its movements and contradictions as the permanent goal of art, then one must think that artistic liberation from the disquiet and unbearableness of life is achieved not merely by a flight into its opposite, but also in the fact that by the most complete stylization and increased purity of its own content . . . Rodin saves us precisely because he shows us the most perfect image of this life that emanates in the passion of movement Insofar as he allows us to experience our deepest life once more in the sphere of art, he saves us from precisely that which we experience in the sphere of reality [54].

For Simmel, the greatest works of art resemble life itself. Just as we can never know the contents of the world from one particular perspective, the great art work offers us an infinite number of possible interpretations.

To us modern people, whose life, sensibilities, estimations and desires have diverged in countless oppositions, and constantly stand between a yes or no, a yes and no, and conceive of their inner life, just as the external world, in sharply differentiated categories: to us an essential element of any great art appears to be that it reconciles contradictions, undisturbed by the necessity of an either-or [55].

In order to participate in the aesthetic sensibility, one has to be able to regard a particular event or moment from a variety of perspectives without renouncing the validity of

any of them. As we noted above, "a view gained at any distance whatever, has its own justification. It cannot be replaced or corrected by any other view emerging at another distance"[56].

The artist, then, is able to transcend the dichotomy between the individual and society. In the first place, the work of art is itself a synthesis between the subjective powers of the individual and objective culture. And secondly, through art, life is raised above the tensions of everyday existence. Simmel remarks that

Whoever is capable of seeing things artistically has countless pleasures that raise life to a higher level, is not exposed . . . to many coarse aspects of life to which the aesthetically uneducated are subjected [57].

Frisby maintains that even in his early writings, "Simmel saw the aesthetic perspective as reconciling the contradictions of modern life"[58]. This perspective, however, is not open to everyone. As Frisby concludes, "The aesthetic perspective is located within individuals. Nor is it located within all individuals, merely the aesthetically educated"[59].

Thus far in this chapter we have seen that Simmel discusses a sphere of human experience which is completely removed from the sociological paradigm, namely, that of humanity. Secondly, we noted his assertion that the human soul is fundamentally concerned with goals which are not connected directly with other people. In addition, we have

seen that Simmel describes a moral sphere which transcends the 'I-Thou' distinction. And finally, we summarized Simmel's exploration of art and found that it constitutes a world in itself, complete with inherent objective standards once again removed from any social considerations. Indeed, if one were to attempt to find a common thread running through our discussion, it would surely relate to Simmel's effort to stake out a field of human activities which is not socially determined.

This effort finds its most pronounced expression in Simmel's discussion of 'Vornehmheit' or distinction. For it is indeed the individual of distinction who is able to transcend the dichotomy between the individual and society, overcoming his or her existential conditions through dedication to an objective goal. Moreover, the ideal of distinction presents us once again with a qualitative state of being completely removed from any social consideration.

Liebersohn correctly notes that Simmel's conception of Vornehmheit was derived from some of the ideas discussed in Nietzsche's major work, Beyond Good and Evil (1885). As Liebersohn states, the word 'Vornehm' "referred literally to separation from a crowd and was traditionally a synonym for nobility of persons or objects"[60]. In the aforementioned work, Nietzsche details the need for a contemporary response to the depersonalizing characteristics of mass society. "What", Nietzsche asks, "beneath this heavy overcast sky of

the beginning rule of the rabble which makes everything leaden and opaque, betrays and makes evident the noble human being?"[61]. The expansion of what Weber referred to as the "Iron Cage", forced Nietzsche to search for a creative solution to the dilemma of individuality in modern society. In certain individuals, Nietzsche notes, the rigid conformity of mass society produces

the craving for an ever new widening of distance within the soul itself, the development of even higher, rarer, more remote, further stretching more comprehensive states--in brief simply the enchantment of the type 'man', the continual self-overcoming of 'man', to use a moral formula in a super-moral sense [62].

In Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the book he considered to be his most important work, Simmel claims that the concept of Vornehmheit is Nietzsche's most important philosophical contribution [63]. However, Simmel actually began to defend the Nietzschean position as early as 1897, ten years before the publication of this volume. In response to criticism labelling Nietzsche as an immoralist, Simmel argues that the former criticized traditional moral values in order to make way for a superior morality [64]. In a debate with Tönnies, Simmel, Liebersohn remarks, derided the "rational welfare of the whole" in preference for Nietzsche's ideal of "devotion to impersonal individual discipline"[65].

In The Philosophy of Money, Simmel describes the negative effect of the money economy on the development of

individuality. In modern society, the individual is evaluated solely in terms of monetary worth. By assessing the individual in terms of an undifferentiated quantitative measure, the money economy acts on the one hand to remove "differences and distance of one from another and on the other of the right to reject any relationship or any qualification by comparison with others"[66]. These two factors, the right to claim difference in terms of inherent worth as a distinguished human being, and the right to maintain independence by virtue of that distinctness, combine to determine the ideal of distinction [67].

According to Simmel, the money economy is entirely antithetical to the realization of distinction. Within it, money ensures that the personal differences among individuals are levelled to an irreparable degree. Poets, artists, scientists and other talented individuals are no longer esteemed for their gifts, but only in terms of an indifferent quantitative measure. As Simmel notes, "The tragic consequences of any levelling process inescapably takes effect when the higher level is pulled down to a greater extent than the lower level is raised"[68]. Money, Simmel feels, as the sole denominator in an advanced economy, robs the individual of any sense of personal merit. This levelling process however, is in fact the inevitable result of any attempt to enter into a collective existence. Simmel remarks that

Where an area of communication is formed--particularly of an intellectual kind--in which the majority of people find understanding and common ground, the standard must be considerably closer to the person of the lowest than of the highest level. For it is always easier for the latter to descend than it is for the former to ascend [69].

If, then, the superior individual wishes to enter into interaction with the large group, he or she must renounce any sense of personal merit. Affiliation within a large group involving "the higher and the lower elements can be accomplished only if the higher elements are able to disclaim their individual superiority"[70]. There can be, it seems, no question as to whether Simmel perceives a fundamental equality among mankind. As Axelrod notes, for Simmel, the diffuse elements of personality are necessarily "intellectually inferior. Conversely, qualities that are intellectually superior are possessed by a few or perhaps by only one individual, and as such do not emerge within the collectivity"[71]. It so follows that the lowest, most accessible human traits are found within the collectivity. In contrast, "Simmel locates the grounds of the highest intellectual achievement as the unity of the individual. In other words, the individual is the source of the highest intellectual standard"[72]. Axelrod argues that Simmel's ideas regarding the lack of intellectuality in the masses were derived from Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra. In this volume, Nietzsche argues that collective efforts of any sort inevitably contaminate the development of the stronger

individuals. As Axelrod remarks, "For Nietzsche as well as for Simmel, the collectivity does not constitute the fulfillment of the higher of human qualities, but the lower"[73].

In response to the levelling process associated with the money economy, Simmel traces the emergence of a new ideal. Consistent with his discussion of life as a transcendent process, Simmel claims that "The development of our species continuously creates new possibilities for responding to the world both sensually and intellectually and new categories for evaluating it"[74]. The notion of distinction represents Simmel's response to the dilemma of individuality within a complex socio-economic nexus.

The ideal of distinction can apply to various fields of activity. In each example, however, what is emphasized is a particular quality which sets the distinct individual apart from the majority. As Simmel notes, it is concerned "with ways of thinking, as well as works of art, with lineal descent as well as literary style"[75]. Moreover, the ideal of distinction does not apply only to the individual, for an animal of noble stock or a rare antique may also be considered 'distinguished'[76]. The key component of distinction relates to the talent or quality which indicates "a specific and concise form of power" stressing the "incomparability and uniqueness" of the distinguished individual or object [77].

With regard to our interest in the relationship between the individual and the collective, Simmel maintains that the ideal of distinction must in fact be completely removed from the sociological perspective. "The social meaning of distinction", he remarks, implies "an exceptional position set apart from the majority, the separation of the individual phenomenon with its autonomous area, which would be immediately destroyed by the intrusion of any heterogeneous element"[78]. The notion of distinction is predicated on the complete incomparability of the distinguished individual whose uniqueness is automatically diluted with the introduction of competing considerations. On the whole, the ideal of distinction "accentuates the positive exclusion of being interchangeable, of the reduction to a common denominator and of 'common activity'"[79].

We must not imagine that the ideal of distinction represents an evolutionary stage in the development of mankind. While life itself is a transcendent process, insofar as it is able to overpower form and is in fact the very source of form, the ideal of distinction is something altogether different. For Simmel, distinction signifies an ultimate goal, perhaps the only worthy pursuit available to the individual living in a contemporary society. And yet the qualitative achievement of distinction outweighs any consideration regarding the generalizability of this

phenomenon. As Simmel remarks, "the purely qualitative significance of this ideal is relatively unaffected by whether more instances achieve this level or not"[80]. The decisive point "is that life has succeeded in accomplishing distinction, and to be its single valid representation in itself gives the specific character to the distinguished being"[81].

On the whole, the social process represents an antithesis to the goal of distinction. The ideal of distinction can be identified only through the value inherent in the individual's isolated activity. As Simmel concludes, society represents "that extreme opposite of the category of distinction--doing things in common with others (Sichgemein-Machen)"[82].

The phenomenon of distinction depends upon the complete preservation of the personality. As Simmel notes,

. . . distinction should not be so conspicuous as to entice what is distinguished away from its independence, its reserve and its inner self-containment and to transpose its essence into a relationship to others, be it only a relationship of difference [83].

To this end, the distinguished individual is devoted to the development of the personal characteristics which signify distinction. The cultivation of subjective development is internalized in the form of an objective law. As Liebersohn notes,

Its law was a unique stage realizing a unique individual potential. The person of distinction was possessed by a sense of the absolute worth of

his own soul without regard for the world and was ready to sacrifice everything to remain true to himself [84].

Finally, we must address the phenomenon of distinction insofar as it represents a solution to a contemporary social dilemma. While the dialectic between life and form is inherent to our existence, the rapid expansion of objective culture is a problem of modernity. Liebersohn suggests that Simmel, confronted with the fragmented, confusing demands of contemporary society, emphasizes "the harsh asceticism required by true obedience to inner necessity"[85]. Simmel, the former maintains, believes that contemporary society places the individual in a rather desperate situation, "facing a real choice between heroism and degradation"[86].

The degradation surfaces as society presses the individual into an existence robbed of any degree of individual self-fulfillment. The heroism, on the other hand, is achieved through dedication to a sense of difference, a unique talent which separates the distinguished individual from the majority. As Liebersohn concludes,

The person of distinction worked in the world but not for the world. He abhorred social conscience and acted out of loyalty to the higher discipline, the calling, imposed from within, relentlessly bearing the suffering imposed by the secular path of the cross [87].

Alfred Laurence also comments on the notion of an 'inner calling'. Indeed, Laurence suggests that Simmel views life in terms of a single overriding principle. Simmel, the

former remarks, perceives "life itself as man's ultimate task according to his "individual law"[88]. This, in turn, involves devotion to one's own 'calling'. As Laurence notes, such an elevation necessitates

creating outside form, which life could again destroy; yet listening to the inner voice, the individual law, the subjective demand regardless of fate or acclaim [89].

Through his discussion of distinction, Simmel provides us with a tangible expression of humanity. The individual is given a means of consequence which transcends any relationship with others and is derived exclusively from his or her inherent worth. Distinction, like the experiential category of humanity, measures the individual according to values which lie outside the social paradigm. And while humanity evaluates the individual's existence in terms of his or her contributions to the development of mankind, distinction is constituted by the very qualities which raise certain individuals above the majority. The genius which ensures distinction is the same genius which, when appropriated subjectively, lifts mankind above mere subsistence, enriching human life through its gifts.

The artist, dedicated entirely to beauty, is distinct. Likewise, the scientist who pursues the truth regardless of the consequences for his or her own well being, overcomes the social paradigm by transcending it, by surrendering him or herself to a cause lying beyond any social consideration. As Aron notes,

As an artist, the creative individual knows nothing other than his work, and as a scholar he cares for nothing but the pursuit of the truth. In a sense this is one way to transcend himself . . . [90].

It is here that we find a solution to the dichotomy between the individual and society as outlined by Hornosty and Coser. As concerned as he was with the stagnating characteristics of contemporary society, Simmel believed that a few individuals, including perhaps himself, were able to transcend society, to put aside its petty concerns and disappointments, and rise to the sphere of idealized endeavour.

The solution to this dichotomy is found in Nietzsche. For it was through Nietzsche that Simmel discovered a meaning for individuality removed from social considerations. As Simmel concludes in Soziologie,

For Nietzsche it is the qualitative being of the personality which marks the stage of development mankind has reached; it is the highest exemplars of a given time that carry humanity beyond its past. Thus Nietzsche overcame the limitations of a merely social existence, as well as the valuation of man in terms of his sheer effects. It thus is not only quantitatively that mankind is more than society. Mankind is not simply the sum of all societies: it is an entirely different synthesis of the same elements that in other syntheses result in societies [91].

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

Reading between the lines of Hornosty's dissertation one finds a theoretical paradox that has profound implications for this study. The only way, it seems, that sociology has been able to deal with the problem of the individual is by reducing it to an emaciated appendage of the social process. The true value of Hornosty's study lies in his uncovering of the rather mysterious 'leap' we find between the second generation of sociologists who struggle with the individual-society dialectic and the Americans, who explain away the individual in terms of social determinants. This thesis represents a return to the dialectic, a journey back to the troublesome "I".

If one were to apply Hornosty's conclusions regarding Simmel's sociological works to the latter's social theory in general, they would necessarily require some degree of revision. While we encounter in Simmel's work an undeniable antinomy between the individual and society, it is by no means irresolvable, as Hornosty suggests. In fact, we have seen that Simmel reserves his highest praise for the individual genius who overcomes the tensions of his or her existence. By introducing a category of human experience removed from the sociological perspective, Simmel's discussion of humanity suggests that the antagonism between

the individual and society can be transcended. We must agree with Lipman's interpretation of Simmel insofar as

The conflict between society and the individual is resolved . . . by transcending both, by surmounting the vacillations of egoism and altruism and rising to the objectivity of idealized endeavour [1].

By introducing an evaluative criterion which is removed from the sociological paradigm, Simmel overcomes social considerations. Again, Lipman notes that

Although the antinomy cannot be resolved in its own terms, it does not preclude a third interpretation--one that Simmel finds in Goethe and Nietzsche--which is that the individual can best perfect himself when he devotes himself to be the instrument of a cause greater than himself [2].

It is interesting to note however, that while Lipman notices this theme, many of his comments seem to dismiss this notion as a poorly conceptualized ideal. He claims that while Simmel hints at a qualitatively distinct form of individuality, "he does not specifically indicate" the way in which "individuality might be suitably enhanced"[3]. Quite clearly, the intention of this work has been to demonstrate that Simmel believed that dedication to an objective ideal which is to be followed at any cost, as Lipman himself notes, is the way in which the individual could overcome himself. For instance, Beethoven, through dedication to artistic excellence was able to rise above penury and deafness to occupy a position of distinction and revolutionary artistic influence.

Secondly, Lipman points out that Simmel's work, on the whole, demonstrates a "profound commitment to the nineteenth century conception of differentiated individuality"[4]. And yet the reader will recall that even within his sociological writings, Simmel expresses a desire to move beyond both the ideal of the free personality and the unique personality, towards a novel realization of individuality. One might even argue, as we have in this thesis, that Simmel sought desperately to locate a sphere of individual consequence entirely removed from either of the aforementioned types, and in fact completely independent of social consideration.

Finally, Lipman warns the reader not to "too hastily assent to Simmel's contention . . . that society generally cultivates mediocrity"[5]. Yet such a statement reveals total disregard for Simmel's own attitude towards the masses and his formulation of a mode of evaluation independent of the social nexus. Lipman it seems, is attempting to defend society from Simmel's criticisms, while ignoring the latter's alternatives to it.

In Lipman's closing remarks, he dismisses the interpretation that this thesis has followed. He asks,

Did Simmel wish to formulate a paradox? Or was he seeking to demonstrate that individuality contains a fundamental ambivalence, an equivocality which makes it susceptible to several modes of interpretation? Or did he really believe in the possibility of a higher synthesis? These three theories appear equally plausible as interpretations of Simmel's intent. But the second, with its suggestion of the subtle, ambiguous depths of the self, may be the most

fruitful for future inquiry [6].

With this statement, Lipman actually returns us to Hornosty's dialectic. Although he touches on the theme of transcendence and in fact considers its plausibility, he fails to push the issue further. A theme which appears underdeveloped to Lipman in fact provides us with the solution to the supposedly irreconcilable dichotomy between the collective and the individual. The latter, by following his or her own genius, sheds the cloak of society, becomes indifferent to it, and in the end, overcomes it. Not only did Simmel believe in the possibility of a higher synthesis; it is the ability to transcend this equivocality which garners his highest praise.

We noted in the sixth chapter that another commentator, Raymond Aron, examines the theme of transcendence, claiming that the artist and the scholar can, through dedication to idealized endeavour, overcome their existential limitations. In the same article, Aron goes on to remark that

Simmel insists on the literal inevitability of the dichotomy established by the process of objectification. Certain extreme situations may permit the individual to lessen the opposition between the objective and personal culture, but the antinomy is essential and insoluble [7].

As was demonstrated in the last two chapters, this predicament does not apply to the genius, who typically has no trouble assimilating the influences of his or her contemporaries and forging something original from the synthesis. We cannot agree with Aron that "the individual

of today is condemned to be a slave of either things or the collectivity"[8]. The genius is slave to neither. Nor can we accept the conclusion that "the rhythm of objective development and the rhythm of being can never coincide"[9]. With regard to the genius, the two paths always coincide.

Finally, we must credit Liebersohn with discerning the connection between Nietzsche's Vornehmheitsideal and Simmel's discussion of distinction in The Philosophy of Money. Yet while he notes the decidedly aristocratic flavour of this discussion, Liebersohn fails to examine the implications it inevitably poses vis-à-vis the individual's relationship to the collective. Rather, Liebersohn details a Christianized version of this ideal, suggesting that Simmel, in other works, presents a democratic alternative to the elitist model of distinction examined in The Philosophy of Money. With regard to Simmel's essay, "The Soul's Salvation", Liebersohn concludes that "in contrast to the aristocratic tone of his discussion of Nietzsche's Vornehmheitsideal, this one was broadly democratic"[10].

One wonders, however, how such an ideal can call itself distinct and democratic at one and the same time, given the underlying theoretical assumptions which accompany this concept. The reader will recall that Simmel disregards the quantitative impact of this notion, claiming that "the purely qualitative significance of this ideal is relatively unaffected by whether more instances achieve this level or

not"[11]. What is of the utmost importance is that certain individuals achieve distinction. Presumably, the notion of distinction is predicated on uniqueness, on the special qualities which set the individual specimen apart from the masses. Secondly, Liebersohn's democratic presentation of this ideal ignores Simmel's introductory remarks, wherein the latter makes a point of deriding the levelling process which forces the highest specimens to conform to the level of the lowest. As Simmel notes, the ideal of distinction is antithetical to the social process which revolves around doing things in common with others.

Liebersohn's study intends to paint Simmel as somewhat of a utopian thinker, necessitating the notion of a perfect world in which the individual and society function as one. Consequently, the former writes that for the individual of distinction, "society's objective order turned into the condition of freedom as soon as man's inner nature was in harmony with it"[12]. Furthermore, Liebersohn notes that

Vornehmheit's inner law, too, eradicated every spontaneous impulse in the name of an artificial order. Absolute personal autonomy offset the social order only by internalizing its logic, creating to be sure, a style setting the bearer apart, but doing so only through a pattern of radical repression [13].

Ironically, Liebersohn seems to be ignoring an earlier part of his analysis, which was cited above, suggesting that the individual of distinction works in the world but not for the world, and that he or she abhors social conscience. The

validity of this ideal depends upon the renunciation of the social perspective, regarding the distinct individual in complete isolation. In no way is the individual forced to internalize the logic of society through radical repression. Through adherence to the 'inner calling' the distinct individual overcomes society--society itself is no longer a consideration. Simmel's notion of distinction represents, after all, an antidote to contemporary society which forces each individual into an impersonal coercive mould. Once the distinct individual is forced to reintroduce the social paradigm, and by association the levelling process inherent to it, the whole notion of distinction implodes.

The reader will recall that in the first chapter, we characterized Simmel's thought in three different stages of development. Frisby claims that Simmel's interests in sociology were on the wane by 1908, the year in which his volume on sociology was published [14]. It must also be noted that Simmel left the German Sociological Association in 1913 due to more pressing philosophical concerns [15]. Frisby remarks that Soziologie, "when first published in 1908", signified "the end of Simmel's preoccupation with sociology"[16]. Liebersohn marks the turn of the century as the point at which "Simmel's thought underwent a subtle transformation"[17]. It was at this point, according to Liebersohn, that Simmel

ceased writing on social issues. Students who knew him between 1900 and World War 1 thought of

him as a disinterested aesthete, largely detached from contemporary social and political conflicts [18].

Perhaps this periodization accounts for Simmel's preoccupation with the dialectical relationship between the individual and the collective in his sociological writings, and his concern with the notion of transcendence in his later philosophical and aesthetic works. And yet Coser notes,

This outline of the three stages in Simmel's thought must not be taken too literally. The periods overlap Certain vitalistic statements can be found in writings considerably earlier than Lebensanschauung [19].

Indeed, for our purposes, we must recall that Simmel's debates with Tönnies over Nietzsche's philosophy began in 1897. Moreover, the former's volume on Nietzsche was published one year prior to the publication of Soziologie. In addition, The Philosophy of Money, where we find an elaboration of Nietzsche's discussion of nobility, was first published in 1900, eight years before his major sociological work. In truth, one would be hard pressed to argue the issue of periodization too far.

It is the conclusion of this work that Simmel, through his association with Nietzsche's writings, saw a way in which the dialectical relationship between the individual and society could be overcome. The latter, by introducing categories of experience removed from the sociological perspective, influenced the development of Simmel's thought

insofar as he too describes creativity in terms which suggest that it has little to do with social considerations. Presumably, had Simmel upheld an irreconcilable dichotomy between these two elements, as Hornosty suggests, he would have taken Nietzsche to task. Yet even within his sociological writings, Simmel acknowledges that Nietzsche had found a manner through which the dichotomy could be overcome.

While Simmel does not alter Nietzsche's ideas qualitatively, he does consider their implications with regard to the question of sociology. Although Nietzsche was not in any way sympathetic to the sociological paradigm, he spent little time justifying his distaste. Quite simply, for Nietzsche, sociology was yet another sign of immanent decay. No longer was the individual regarded in terms of his or her personal attributes--with the dawning of sociology, only the collective, the mass, or the group matters and the individual fades into the twilight. Simmel, with his strong background in sociological thought simply evaluates Nietzsche's ideas with direct reference to the sociological apperception. In effect, Simmel uses Nietzsche to sketch the limits of sociology, the range of its comprehension and the barriers beyond which it cannot proceed.

Simmel, like Nietzsche, despaired over the fate of individuality in contemporary society. Both men viewed

society as a potentially dangerous source of conformity and constraint upon the powers of creativity. Finally, both desired to move past society, to overcome it, in order to reassert the fundamental strength of the individual. Simmel remarks,

As man as individual, and so his attributes as man qua man, come to replace man as a social element in the foreground of interest, the bond must tighten that pulls him over the head of the social group, as it were--toward all that is human, suggesting to him the ideal unity of mankind [20].

While the creative individual overcomes the social paradigm we must in fact question whether he or she overcomes the dialectic itself. We saw earlier that culture is not the only way in which the individual can become consequent and that in certain cases he or she may achieve subjective perfection without objective artifacts. We also found that for Simmel, the dialectic between subjective spirit and objective culture is diminished in the case of the genius; the truly creative individual stands at the centre of these two divergent sources. Presumably, the challenge which is rather formidable for most of us, the difference between the idea and its realization, potentiality and actualization, is less of a concern to the genius. Nevertheless, the genius does maintain a dialectical relationship vis-à-vis the realm of objective culture. It is, after all, within this sphere that the creative individual's consequence is measured. Moreover, when the scholar is interested in a particular question, or

an artist in a particular object or theme, relevant material which has been produced by other individuals must be assimilated and often forms the starting point for his or her own original contribution. In a sense then, while society can be overcome through personal devotion to a goal which lies outside of it, the creative individual does encounter a dialectic vis-à-vis the realm of objective culture. However, it must be added that this dialectic is indeed transcended whenever a work of genius is produced. The creative individual has harnessed his or her subjective energy with form, thereby producing an objective artifact.

Another issue which must be addressed concerns the question of whether an evolutionary principle is implicit in the theme of transcendence. Simmel defines life itself in terms of a transcendent process. Life is able to smash static form in the same manner that the subjective energies of certain individuals are able, through their creative powers, to surmount the requirements of objective culture, rendering original artifacts which surpass and indeed replace older ones. The reader will recall that in the last chapter, we noted that Simmel argues that the number of individuals able to achieve distinction is far less important than the qualitative achievement of this status in itself. The experience of distinction is predicated on its rarity; the very word suggests a qualitative state removed from the majority. There is indeed very little in Simmel's

writings to suggest that every person can transcend the dichotomy between the individual and society. For most, it is entirely irreconcilable. Yet for what Nietzsche calls the "fortunate accidents of genius"[21], the dialectic is inconsequential. This is not to suggest that mankind does not benefit from the spoils of genius: its gifts are ultimately gifts to us. Yet it is these few beacons of light, these shining examples of human potential that propel humanity onward. One would suppose that Simmel would agree with Nietzsche who claims that "the brief spell of beauty, of genius, of Caesar, is sui generis: such things are not inherited"[22].

While transcendence is an option available only to a select cohort, humanity itself embodies an evolutionary principle. Every contribution to the realm of humanity, whether artistic or scientific, marks an increase, a heightening, an intensification of human existence. The individual who is willing and able to assimilate the products of humanity is thereby enriched through this process.

In the opening paragraph of this chapter, we praised Hornosty's work for raising the problem of the individual within the sociological context. Yet perhaps even more troublesome from the point of view of sociology is the nature of creativity. For Simmel, the creative process is the motor of progress. The theories which guide our

politics, the music which fills our ears, the science which perhaps makes the struggle a little easier: all are the products of creative individuals. If we want to put the issue in Simmelian terms, sociology fails at the point where the subject, having assimilated an objective artifact, produces his or her own, a product which is qualitatively distinct from any other. This is sociology's blind spot. For even if we wish to explain sociology itself sociologically, if perhaps we wonder what makes Marx different from Hegel, or Simmel from Weber, we are forced to look beyond sociology altogether. We are forced to look not into society but into the depths of human creativity which lie a long way from sociology's doorstep.

Finally, many commentators, including quite a few sociologists, have criticized Simmel's work for its lack of inherent logic, its rather haphazard approach to social theory and its incredibly wide range of interests. And yet perhaps these objections are, on the whole, unwarranted. For when we consider Simmel's four categories of human experience, namely the individual, society, objective culture, and humanity, we may in fact be dealing with a systematic theory. These four categories are suspended between a series of dialectical relationships with humanity at the pinnacle. It could feasibly be argued that these epistemological considerations allow Simmel to contemplate virtually any human experience and fit it logically within

his system. For instance, he can analyze aesthetic issues and evaluate them in terms of the relationship between the individual, objective culture, and perhaps humanity. Similarly his interests in the development of the individual vis-à-vis his or her social group places his discussion firmly within the dialectic between the individual and society. There is, it may be argued, no human experience which Simmel cannot process according to these aforementioned categories.

That the systematic quality of Simmel's thought has gone unseen is not really all that surprising. To the sociologist, aesthetic questions lie entirely beyond the sphere of his or her immediate concern. Likewise, a philosopher will probably have little patience with Simmel's discussion of forms of sociation, such as subordination. To be able to fully appreciate Simmel's system, one is forced to transcend particular intellectual paradigms, gaining a view of the undeniable interconnectedness of human life. At any given moment, the individual stands in relationship to something else. We are at one and the same time individuals, and yet part of a greater social whole. At other moments the individual is an audience, confronting an objective cultural form and communicating with it as a solitary being.

In the end we must praise Simmel for recognizing that the richness of human experience cannot be reduced to

psychology, sociology, or philosophy. Our lives are infinitely more complex, involving subtle variations which independent intellectual domains can only poorly approximate. If we are able to regard Simmel's social theory from a point beyond the individual disciplines involved, a system indeed emerges, revealing the inexhaustible world of human experiences as they blend into one another. However, we must admit that the question of a systematic element in Simmel's work is a separate issue that will require further consideration and lies beyond the objectives of this thesis.

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