

Lectures on Simmel

A Methodology

1. Distinction between form and content
 - a. This has Kantian roots; it is not mere “formalism”
2. Sociology is primarily the study of interaction (Wechselwirkung) and sociation (Vergesellschaftung)
3. Form and content (or substance) are related in a dialectical fashion
4. Pure or formal sociology is the study of “the societal forms themselves”

B Group Dynamics

1. Group Affiliations: Intersecting Social Circles
 - a. Spencerian notion. As society becomes more complex and larger, people’s roles become more specialized and differentiated.
 - b. Group membership moves from “organic” (ascriptive) criteria to “rational” criteria.
 - c. People join multiple groups corresponding to different aspects of their (differentiated) activities.
 - d. This has consequences for society in the dialectic of conflict and solidarity (will return to this)
 - e. It also has consequences for the individual because it defines his or her identity and personality.
2. Group Size has independent consequences
 - a. As groups grow, their regulation will progress from personal morality to mores, conventions, and positive law.
 - b. Larger groups are more differentiated.

- c. Relations in larger groups are more superficial and selective. Relations become less dependent on any given individual.
- d. Dyads are the simplest form of group (two people), but groups can be as big as all of society.
- e. In triads and larger groups, third parties have the opportunity to play the role of mediator.

C Conflict

- 1. Conflict often promotes social solidarity as much as disunity.
- 2. Conflict between similar people is often very intensive, sharp, or violent.
- 3. When conflict is regulated by norms, it tends to be depersonalized. And the more that people in such conflict understand each other, the more they can engage in intense and sharp conflict without breaking the relationship.
 - a. Examples are party competition, market competition.
- 4. Conflict between groups has several consequences:
 - a. It increases centralization of authority within the group.
 - b. It increases social solidarity and reduces tolerance of deviance within the group.
 - c. It encourages alliances between groups having a common opponent.

D Stratification and Power: Superordination and Subordination

- 1. Domination is an interactive relationship: subordinate parties express at least tacit consent.
- 2. One person rule produces solidarity among the ruled by leveling
- 3. When the subordinated are stratified, control is differentiated and less unified.
 - a. When there is stratification, there are reciprocal sub-rules.

E Individuality

1. Individual freedom is determined by the interaction between individual and society.
2. Freedom means liberation from control, and choosing one's group including the domination of that group over oneself.
3. Larger groups control individuals less: individual differentiation and cosmopolitanism grow.
4. Individuality grows the more social circles one belongs to, and the more differentiated they are.

F The Philosophy of Money

1. The study of money is part of the study of individuation.
2. Money is a tool for social exchange that:
 - a. Speeds up the exchange;
 - b. Allows for greater continuity of exchange;
 - c. Facilitates multiple social ties;
 - d. Permits exchange across greater distances;
 - e. Increases social solidarity and trust;
 - f. Increases the central authority that guarantees the value of money;
 - g. Creates new forms of social solidarity because everyone is subjected to taxes.
3. At the same time, people resist money's incursion into certain personal spheres of life, and anomie may increase.
4. Money permits individuals to:
 - a. Engage in more diverse activities and types of interaction;
 - b. Have more options for self-expression.
5. But money also makes it less necessary for people to know each other personally, because money "speaks" for them.
6. Thus, money also permits greater individuation because it creates more intersecting circles of sociation.

- a. As this happens, it becomes less easy for any one person to control all others.

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