

## George Simmel, the Forgotten Conflict German Conflict Sociologist

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**ABSTRACT**

*Georg Simmel (1858-1918) the father of urban sociology. This effort will also suggest that Simmel was among the great German Conflict Sociologist (Weber and Marx). Conflict theory argues that there is tensions and conflict when resources, status, and power between groups in society creating social change.*

**Keywords**

Conflict Sociologist, Metropolis, Mental Life.

**Urban/Conflict Sociology**

This effort will suggest that although not usually known as a Conflict Sociologist (as Weber and Marx), Simmel exposes Conflict Theory in several of his works. Indeed, in “The Stranger” Simmel argued that Human beings are endowed with a sense of unity, nearness, remoteness, and indifference. However, conflict arises when there is social difference displayed (i.e., race, religion, city vs. country dweller, etc.) creating the Social Role of the “Stranger”. In supporting the “Stranger” conflict concept, Simmel cited the social position of the Jewish community in Europe and the Beede Tax. Under this taxation policy, the Jewish community were required to pay a fixed tax per person living together. On the other hand, for the Christian population the tax was based in the changing economic fortunes and/or losses. This taxation policy discriminated leading to prejudice and decimation, resulting in the objectification of the Jewish community.

In *Metropolis* and *Mental Life*, Simmel suggested that in modern urban (city) life the individual must always adjust their social behavior to the external forces found in the city. Indeed, the overwhelming negative powers of the city on behavior “coloring or rather “discoloring” all Human interaction reducing individuals to “THINGS”. Simmel further suggest that the deepest social problem of modern city life is the attempt of the individual citizen to maintain independence, individuality, and freedoms.

On the other hand, as in all Conflict theory, there is a dialectical outcome, the Money Economy and Human Intelligence found in the city, which fosters the Rise of the individual, independence, and freedoms by creating the arena for the growth of the individual. Simmel further suggest that the deepest social problem of modern city life is the attempt of the individual citizen to maintain independence, individuality, and freedom, creating the Human Objectification.

**The Conflict Theories of Weber & Marx**

Weber’s work entitled the “Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”, argued that the more wealth the capitalist accumulates, the more “Good Works” assisting the poor, and the needy through their negative economic issues. In fact, the capitalist can finally put an end to Human misery. The pay-off for the capitalist according to Weber “is eternal life in Heaven”.

AS in all Conflict there is a positive dialectical outcome that of the “Principle of Rationality and Disenchantment. Disenchantment represents the impersonal and objectification of humanity found in Capitalist Society (Disenchantment accounts for the rise and fall of traditional institutions, structures, classes, and parties). Furthermore, Weber suggested that disenchantment is a major force of social change, and human thought and emotions. Lastly, Disenchantment and Rationality is a general trend in Modern American Capitalist society, which has to a large extent progress into the intellectual, impersonal, calculating image based in rules and scientific laws. Hence, the “meaning of inner-worldly occurrences” through empirical and scientific thought, pushing

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back religion and the supernatural into the realm of the irrational, as a result reducing human relations to an objective and impersonal stance [3].

Karl Marx suggested that modern capitalist society is an historical process based in oppression and alienation of Human labor. Indeed, Marx viewed the Capitalist System as reducing Human labor into a commodity. He refers to this objectification as Alienated or Estrange Labor. Resulting humanity experiences, oneself passively as the subject separated from the object, therefore placing of the Poor and working class into a meaningless crippling productive force. Marx further argued that the nature of humanity is to transform, and change nature to fit human needs or “Species-Being. The Dialectical outcome for Marx, is humanity is reduced to act and view oneself as less than Human, rather than as a free creative human activity decreasing humanities advantage over animals. Lastly, private property is the all-summarized expression of alienated labor, transforming humanity into “commodities” owned and used by the Power-elite. Marx labels this “The Theory of Surplus Value”. The equation located in “Surplus value” is as the value of “things” increase there is a direct decrease in the value of humanity. The end-product is always more valuable than the sum of its parts, which by logically includes the devaluation of Humanity.

## Conclusion

This effort has suggested that Simmel’s work.

Is an important contribution to Conflict Theory. Indeed, “The Stranger”, and “Metropolis and Mental Life”, points to tensions and conflict when economic resources, social status, and power between groups in society creating prejudice and decimation. As found in the War in the Middle East in 2023. Furthermore, Simmel’s work is also akin to both Weber’s, and Marx’s work on Conflict Theory pointing to the Objectification of Humanity, the reduction of human life to be “THINGS”, mis-treated, and murdered all based upon social Background differences in “Modern and Post-Modern” Society.

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