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*Eros and Culture: Gender Theory in Simmel, Tönnies and Weber**

Klaus Lichtblau

When the “founding fathers” of German sociology set about to create a theory of cultural modernity, they treated gender as crucially important. At the same time, their work reflected the contemporary tendency to articulate the cultural crisis of the age as a gender problem. German sociology, which understood itself mostly as a *Kulturwissenschaft*, and the bourgeois women’s movement mutually influenced each other. In fact, there were close personal contacts between male sociologists and leading figures in the women’s movement.

In the period before WWI, two gender issues in particular were much discussed in both circles: the gender-specific character of all social conditions and all “objective culture,” and the significance of eroticism and sexual love in relation to marriage and culture-at-large. In time, both perspectives coalesced into a critical position for which the history of occidental culture appeared as a form of domination shaped by patriarchalism and asceticism. In this context, the gender problem attained the dimensions of a cultural revolution that was partly linked to the emancipatory demands of the labor movement, but ultimately went beyond them. Friedrich Engels and August Bebel anticipated the revolutionary potential of the gender issue and attempted to combine the critique of patriarchalism with the Marxian critique of the capitalist mode of production. For them, the outcome of the struggle

* Translated by Guenther Roth. The German original will appear in Ilona Ostner and Klaus Lichtblau, eds., *Kultur-Wissenschaft-Frauenforschung* (Frankfurt a/M: Campus Verlag, 1990).

against the social repression of women and against a repressive sexual morality would depend on the success of the battle against private property, which constituted the historical and logical foundation of the present gender relation. The notion of the prehistoric existence of a social order based on mother right (*Mutterrecht*), as it was advanced by Johann Jacob Bachofen and Lewis Henry Morgan, aided not only the socialist critics of bourgeois society but also gained, reinforced by Nietzsche and Freud, explosive force in various circles of the intellectual and artistic avant garde. The Dionysian exaltation of the vision of a new culture that rests again on mother right was not only hostile to every patriarchal order but repudiated, in its profoundly anti-modernist thrust, every form of rationalism and intellectualism, including those elements on which the socialist critique of society relied. In its more attenuated form, this movement resulted in an ethical and esthetic individualism that cultivated individual lifestyles and aimed at enthroning sexual love as the dominant cultural force. In the flourishing literature on sexual science, sexual ethics and eroticism, the phenomenon of sexual love appeared as a crucial symbol that reflected the cultural distinctiveness of modernity.

In a critical vein, Gertrud Bäumer, one of the most influential leaders, observed in 1904: "A sensual and artistic historical epoch that desires to experience the intoxicating power of all natural drives is dawning. People have become attuned to the vibrations of the sensual energies in the balance of pleasure and pain. Eroticism has become vitally important. Ellen Key goes so far as to claim that love is for people in the present what religion was in the past. Love becomes the object of a restless interest that drags all its mystical secrets into the limelight . . . and multiplies its power through ever greater auto-suggestion."¹ For women like Bäumer, the glorification of eroticism appeared as an exaggeration which undercut the theoretical and literary expression of this life experience. "The first female enthusiasts for the rights of man," she continued, "held womanhood in almost ascetic disdain. But today we encounter a mood for which all *Weltschmerz*, all dissatisfaction with life, is attributed to unfulfilled erotic desires. Ricarda Huch is right in her essay on Gottfried Keller that people are overestimating the importance of love. 'In modern life as in modern art love occupies too much space, and this is one of the most important causes of the sickness and weakness of our time'.²

I shall not discuss the degree to which these and similar manifestations

1. Gertrud Bäumer, *Die Frau in der Kulturbewegung der Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden: Bergmann Verlag, 1904), pp. 5f.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

of *Kulturpessimismus* might have some empirical plausibility, but I would like to examine instead the ways in which the articulation of the crisis of culture in gender terms appeared in the works of some influential sociologists. My purpose is threefold:

First, to show how Georg Simmel and Ferdinand Tönnies analyzed various "objectifications" of Western culture in gender terms. Simmel's writings, in particular, delineate in paradigmatic fashion the vantage point from which it becomes meaningful to ask whether a genuine "female culture" is possible at all *vis-à-vis* a dominant "objective culture" that has been shaped by a "male principle." His work is also of exemplary importance in that it allows us to identify antinomies that must necessarily emerge out of a dualistic gender metaphysics.

Second, to deal with Max Weber's views on the significance of the erotic sphere as a genuine "subjective culture," i.e., a form of subjective experience in a "disenchanted" world that is in the grip of instrumental rationality. The erotic relation of the sexes can be viewed as an example for the place of a strictly esthetic and expressive lifestyle in the pluralistic model of cultural modernity. I would like to suggest that within the framework of a "polytheism of values" the antinomies of dualist gender metaphysics can be avoided, without abandoning simultaneously the critical and utopian dimension of the gender problem.

Third, to treat Simmel's project of a "sociological aesthetics," which harks back to the idealist theory of autonomous aesthetics. This will allow me to confront the fragmentary character of cognition as it is postulated by the Neokantian theory of value-spheres with the idea of "reconciling" nature and culture through the erotic relations of the sexes. Simmel's inquiry into "sociality" and "coquetry" can illustrate how the different experiences of modernity in the various spheres can be related in such a way that a "purely formal" unity is at least conceivable on the symbolic level.

Objective Culture

In his time, Simmel belonged to those sociologists and philosophers who dealt most intensively with gender issues. After 1890 a number of his essays and articles treated the social position of women in the past and present, dealing with such themes as sexual relations within and without the family, women's position in militarist societies, and the role of money in gender relations. Beginning in 1902, he investigated the possibility of a genuinely female culture, a topic that should be seen against the background of the first edition of *The Philosophy of Money*

(1900). By the time *Philosophical Culture* (1911), a collection of essays, appeared, female culture had become a central component of his *Kulturkritik*. After 1907 Simmel paid particular attention to sexual love, a theme that remained important in his later writings on *Lebensphilosophie*. The essays written over a quarter of a century covered almost all the topics that also preoccupied the bourgeois women's movement up until the seizure of power by National Socialism in 1933.

Before Simmel, Tönnies prefigured a theory of gender differentiation and polarization in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887). His sociological theory of culture described the genesis and distinctiveness of occidental rationalism as well as the central contradictions of modernity within the context of a dualist gender metaphysics.³ After the second edition of 1912, Tönnies' *magnum opus* exerted a strong influence on the German youth movement, and in the ideological struggles of the 1920s it played an important role in defining the political semantics of various groups.⁴ For our theme, however, Simmel remains more pertinent. His theory of socio-cultural evolution and gender differentiation proceeds from the thesis that all of modern culture, which rests on occidental rationalism and intellectualism, has been molded in a very one-sided fashion by a "male principle."⁵ Socio-cultural evolution, according to Simmel, results from processes of differentiation, the movement from an undifferentiated unity via a differentiated manifold to a differentiated unity (Spencer). Therefore, the different character of the two genders must be explained from their position in these developmental processes. The modern money economy and the industrial mode of production separated the traditional household economy from market-oriented production, and this "exacerbated the division of labor between the sexes."⁶ Since women had remained confined to the household until the most recent past, only the males had taken part in rationalization and intellectualization. Male predominance in the social division of labor and the public sphere had the effect of equating the particular male features that shaped the image of modern man with the general characteristics of the human species.

3. See Bärbel Meurer, "Die Frau in 'Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft,'" and Michael T. Greven, "Geschlechterpolarität und Theorie der Weiblichkeit," in Lars Clausen and Carsten Schlüter, eds., *Hundert Jahre 'Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft'* (Opladen: Leske Verlag, 1990).

4. See René König, *Soziologie in Deutschland* (Munich: Hanser Verlag, 1987), pp. 242ff.

5. See Georg Simmel, "Weibliche Kultur" (1902), *Schriften zur Philosophie und Soziologie der Geschlechter*, Heinz-Jürgen Dahme and Klaus Christian Köhnke, eds. (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985), pp. 159ff.

6. Simmel, *Schriften, op. cit.*, p. 144 (hereafter cited as *Schriften*).

Individualism, rationalism, objectivism, social differentiation and division of labor, modern professionalism and specialization, as well as the separation of "subjective" and "objective" culture concerned in essence only men, and thus led to the problematic identification of male and human. Since males are more of a social product than women, they must also be understood less as sexual beings in a naturalist sense. Man is much more an "individual" than a "gender type."⁷

If the individuality and abstract personality of the male is the product of social differentiation, the female appears, according to Simmel, as an undifferentiated being. Because of her "lower" position in evolution and her reproductive function for the human race, woman lies, so to speak, like an immovable prehistoric boulder in the landscape of modernity. Manifesting a not yet differentiated unity, woman seems to be untouched by the fractures and conflicts of modern culture and to remain close to the "primeval grounds of being (*Urgrund des Seins*)."⁸ In view of her formal unity in a logical sense, and her centuries-old confinement to the household, woman can at best be compared to the work of art, which through its framing also retains an aura of self-reference and a meaning that completely transcends the social division of labor.⁹

We can get a better grasp on Simmel's reasoning if we compare at this point his gender-specific interpretation of modern social differentiation with Tönnies' ideal-typical contrast between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, which is also gender-specific.¹⁰ Following Henry S. Maine's evolutionary perspective, Tönnies construes a transition from status to contract, whereby the difference between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* becomes identical with a strict distinction between natural units, which have profound significance for social life, and artificial ones. Tönnies also linked the polar concepts of natural and rational will to this scheme. Communal forms of life are thus rooted in real, organic life, whereas contractual relationships have a purely "ideal" character or are a "mechanical aggregate" or mere artifact. Community grows out of

7. See Simmel, "The Relative and the Absolute in the Problem of the Sexes" (1911), in Guy Oakes, tr. and ed., *Georg Simmel: On Women, Sexuality, and Love* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 125 (hereafter cited as *Simmel*).

8. *Schriften*, p. 180.

9. *Schriften*, pp. 177, 181f. and 219ff. On the traditional equation of the female sex with the status of a work of art, see Karl Scheffler, *Die Frau und die Kunst* (Berlin: Bard Verlag, 1908), pp. 22f., and Gertrud Bäumer, "Eine Metaphysik des Geschlechtsgegensatzes," in *Die Frau*, vol. 15, no. 12 (1908), pp. 705-714.

10. See Ferdinand Tönnies, *Fundamental Concepts of Sociology (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)*, trans. by Charles P. Loomis (New York: American Book Co., 1940).

the organic processes of birth. Thus descent and genealogy play a dominant role in defining communal forms of life. Tönnies regards the various communal forms in analogy to the relation between mother and child, man and woman as well as siblings. The household lends itself best to an ideal-typical construction of *Gemeinschaft*. Village and town are also treated in analogy to the house. The city, however, cannot be understood in this manner, since it arose out of the transition from subsistence to market economy. This in turn permitted the development of the industrial mode of production and of modern science. Thus the city is the typical *Gesellschaft*.

Just like Simmel, Tönnies recognizes the household as the proper sphere of woman. By contrast, trade and formally free, but actually unfree, wage labor (*unfrei-freie Arbeit*) are "offensive to the female psyche."¹¹ The psychological difference between the sexes is also reflected in the polar opposition of the household and the rationalized and intellectualized world of "objective culture." The latter is a purely male creation, since in the course of occidental rationalization the whole *Kultur* changed into the *Zivilisation* of society and state.¹² Tönnies cannot believe that the entry of women into modern occupational life will lead to any humane reform of the existing social conditions. In fact, the vocational integration of women into the capitalist mode of production is disastrous for traditional communal relations. It is also incompatible with the female character, which is distinguished not by abstract reasoning but by genuine *Gefühlskultur*. Therefore, Tönnies can conclude: "The woman becomes enlightened, cold-hearted, conscious. Nothing is more foreign and terrible to her original inborn nature, in spite of all later modifications. Possibly nothing is more characteristic and important in the process of formation of *Gesellschaft* and destruction of *Gemeinschaft*. Through this development the 'individualism' which is the prerequisite of *Gesellschaft* comes into its own. However, the possibility of overcoming this individualism and arriving at a reconstruction of *Gemeinschaft* arises with the same process. The analogy of the fate of women with the fate of the proletariat has been recognized long ago. The growing awareness on the part of women and workers can, like that of the isolated thinker, develop and rise to a moral and humane consciousness."¹³ In Tönnies' eyes, the "woman question" is inseparable from the "workers question" and can be solved only through a

reconstitution of communal forms of living. Outside the household, there is no room for developing an autonomous "female culture" in modernity. A new communal culture could arise only on the ruins of the "age of society." Then the question of a gender-specific determination of culture would become irrelevant.

Simmel, however, draws the opposite conclusion from this diagnosis of the paradoxes and pathologies of modernity. For the "objective cultural significance" of the modern women's movement emerges exactly at the historical moment when women's segregation and the specific form of female productivity — household and motherhood — are superseded by modern industry. Only because household production lost its social function could the question of a genuinely female contribution to culture arise that would consist neither in maintaining the "culture of the hearth" nor in mechanical subordination to the male division of labor. In this regard, Simmel shared with representatives of the bourgeois women's movement an interest in determining the possible contribution of women to "purely objective culture," i.e., in discovering a "new continent" of culture that could be "enriched by the difference made by female productivity."¹⁴

If we take into account, however, the whole structure of Simmel's theory of culture and of his gender metaphysics, it becomes clear that his interest remains superficial because it cannot be pursued, given his theoretical premises, without encountering major contradictions and antinomies. Simmel's concept of culture remains so closely tied to the male gender that the question of the possibility of a female objective culture can only be answered in the negative.¹⁵ I do not want to address the examples that Simmel provides in discussing a possible female contribution to objective culture. Instead, I would like to show that the question itself must be considered inappropriate on the basis of Simmel's own presuppositions, and then I will treat the function that the metaphysical exaltation of gender differentiation plays in Simmel's theory of culture.

Like Marx, Simmel sees socio-cultural development as a conquest of nature through production. The human intellect externalizes itself increasingly into a world of intermediacy created by it. The individual becomes a cultured being by appropriating these creations. Working

14. *Schriften*, pp. 171-73.

15. This was already Marianne Weber's judgement. See "Die Frau und die objektive Kultur" (1913), in *Frauenfragen und Frauengedanken* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1919), p. 111. See also Guy Oakes' introduction to *Georg Simmel, op. cit.*, pp. 43ff.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 189f.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 263f.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 191.

on nature becomes identical with a gigantic process of cultivating the human species. But this process also leads to a growing separation of "subjective" and "objective" culture, i.e., a differentiation of the "culture of the individual" and the "cultural logic of the objects."¹⁶

Differentiation is a value in itself, but it can also lead to a crisis, even a "tragedy of culture," because the individual subject increasingly has trouble appropriating the objective achievements that the very division of labor made possible. Since for Simmel culture in general is an objective product of the purely male principle, which is marked by differentiation, fragmentation and externalization, the very idea of femininity denotes for him the utopia of a cultural principle that is not identical with the model of creative alienation. According to the latter, only the male soul objectivates itself in cultural products and then sublimates itself through their reacquisition. In fact, Simmel does not deny the possibility that an "objective female culture" is a contradiction in terms, since there is a basic "discrepancy between the essence of femininity and objective culture."¹⁷ Femininity is for him basically a purely logical, if not imaginary phenomenon of cultural productivity that is totally different from the male mode; it is a productivity that antedates as well as transcends the historical division of labor and that at any rate has lost its proper "product" with the disappearance of the household economy.¹⁸ Thus the idea of a genuinely female culture is utopian, a pure potentiality that must not be actualized for the sake of its own integrity.¹⁹ This conception points to a lacuna in Simmel's discourse of modernity. It can be understood as a liminal notion and as a negation of the male logic, and may even be interpreted in mythological terms. But in practical political terms it could be realized only at the price of an antimodernist regression.

If empirical descriptions of femininity remain subordinate to the ultimately unanswerable (*aporetisch*) question of whether an objective female culture is possible, Simmel finds it "even more difficult to conceptualize

16. See Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. by Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 446ff.

17. Simmel, "Female Culture" (1911), *Simmel*, p. 100.

18. In this regard, the possibility of a genuinely female culture reveals itself, first of all, as the absence of a product. This negative determination calls attention to parallels that subterraneously link Simmel's theory of sexual differentiation with Foucault's analysis of insanity in the Age of Reason. See his *Madness and Civilization*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Tavistock, 1971). On the methodological problems of reconstructing a history of the absence of female history, see Silvia Bovenschen, *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979), pp. 9ff. and 257ff.

19. Simmel, "Flirtation," *Simmel*, pp. 147f.

the essence of maleness."²⁰ Indeed, here lies the basic problem of his gender metaphysics. The big conundrum turns out to be not femininity but "the male principle," for the male cannot directly experience his identity in an "absolute unity of being and gender."²¹ Rather, his identity is mediated through a separation that obscures his gender behind a world of objectification. If for the woman "natural existence is too much part of her metaphysical essence in order to permit a tragic dualism,"²² the tragedy of the male principle lies in the fact that it points beyond itself to cultural objectifications which do not identify gender. Thus woman's real cultural achievement and the metaphysical significance of the women's movement consist in the way in which they provide identity to the male principle and modern culture by being the essential other.²³

Put differently, the meaning of the "cultural value of differentiation" reveals itself only by reference to a still undifferentiated unity and a liminal experience that transcends modernity. Simmel's paradigmatic examples are the work of art and femininity. The "crisis" and "tragedy" of culture can be grasped only if they are seen against the background of a completely different principle that inheres in the formal unity of an artwork as well as in the self-contained being of the female gender. Both constitute equivalent possibilities for reconciling a fragmented world, since "the very completeness of a given existence implies the strongest symbolic or metaphysical reference to the world's totality."²⁴ The symbolism of a great work of art as well as the integrity of female existence provide an "intimation of cosmic symbolism" and represent the idea of reconciling the conflict between law and freedom. Woman can still accomplish this differentiation in the "form of existence," but the divided male, who objectifies himself, can at most arrive at a partial solution in the "form of art."²⁵ Moreover, gender polarity becomes for Simmel a paradigm for the distinctiveness of modern culture, which can no longer be understood in unitary terms, and herein lies its greatest cultural significance. What is in principle inaccessible to empirical science can at best be symbolically expressed by an artistic ideal or by a metaphysical "world formula," which finds its "historical

20. "The Relative and the Absolute," *Simmel*, p. 124.

21. *Op. cit.*

22. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 124. This point was also made by Max Scheler, "Zum Sinn der Frauenbewegung," reprinted in *Vom Umsturz der Werte*, fifth edition (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1971), pp. 197ff.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

25. *Schriften*, pp. 181f.

paradigm" in the erotic relations of the sexes.²⁶

Before turning to Simmel's theory of eroticism and sexual love in relation to his project of a sociological aesthetics, I would like to treat Weber's views in order to get another vantage point on Simmel's peculiar reasoning. Weber too perceives a close elective affinity between the spheres of aesthetics and eroticism, an affinity that also explains their relevance for understanding modernity. Weber starts from a model of value spheres, their tensions and conflicts, which is derived from Neokantian value theory, and discusses the validity of an aesthetic-expressive mode of life within this context. Where Simmel diagnoses a separation of subjective and objective culture, Weber contrasts the ethical rationalism of methodical conduct with the irrationality of subjective experience. Instead of a dualist gender metaphysics that opposes male and female culture we find in Weber a critical discussion of the divergent claims of ethically as against esthetically oriented conduct.

Subjective Culture

Weber's writings rarely address directly the issues connected with the rise of the women's movement. In good measure this has to do with the tacit division of labor between him and his wife, Marianne, who became a spokeswoman for the bourgeois women's movement and a leading feminist theoretician in the decade before WWI. However, Weber was familiar with the "woman's question" early in his life. His mother Helene participated since the late 1880s in the "first hesitant efforts at joint female action."²⁷ From the second half of the 1890s, Marianne Weber was engaged in the movement at the same time that she became, next to Else von Richthofen, her husband's most eager pupil. A rise of fate gave her the active political and propagandistic career she had expected her husband to play. She became a much sought-after and often-quoted spokeswoman for that puritanical view of marital love and fidelity she shared with her husband for some time and maintained until the end of her life. We owe to Marianne Weber the evidence that permits us to reconstruct the gradual change in Max Weber's attitude toward eroticism and sexual love.²⁸

In the beginning, Max Weber's position with respect to feminist issues

26. "The Relative and the Absolute," *Simmel*, p. 103.

27. Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography*, trans. and ed. by Harry Zohn (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988), p. 143.

28. See Guenther Roth's introduction to the Transaction Books edition of Marianne Weber's biography, pp. xv-lx.

concerned primarily the "marriage question." This becomes clear when we look at the way the couple reacted to the invasion of Heidelberg by the erotic movement in 1907. "The Webers," recalls Marianne, "had firm convictions and felt that they shared responsibility for the general morality. . . . They regarded marriage as one of those 'absolute' ideals that had to be defended anew, provided that it was based upon the power of love and on faith in its being 'forever'."²⁹

What had happened? Two members of Ludwig Klages' "Cosmic Round" in Munich, Alfred Schuler and Karl Wolfskehl, had championed the idea of a "new paganism" as spokesmen of the Schwabing *bohème*. They advocated radical "sexual liberation" from all ascetic ideals and patriarchal forms of domination. Their paganism attacked not only the values of occidental rationalism, but also the standards of bourgeois sexual morality. Already a cult figure, the Countess Franziska zu Reventlow played the role of the new hetaera who disdained the bluestockings of the bourgeois women's movement and demanded the establishment of an erotic culture in the sense of *l'art pour l'art*.³⁰ This sort of *Kulturkritik* was radicalized by the Freud pupil Otto Gross, who was also influenced by the works of Bachofen and Nietzsche. Gross raised the political demand for a "sexual revolution." The revolutionary force of "free love," he believed, had a socially therapeutic function and could transform society. Such ideas entered the circle of friends around the Webers. A more attenuated version of Nietzschean feminism was propagated by Helene Stöcker and her "Association for the Protection of Motherhood" and became very controversial in the bourgeois women's movement.³¹

Instead of pursuing the varieties of this "new ethic" and the personal entanglements of the Webers and their friends in this movement, I would like to examine the arguments with which Max and Marianne

29. *Ibid.*, p. 371.

30. On Franziska Gräfin zu Reventlow, see Marianne Weber, *Die Frauen und die Liebe* (Königstein: Langewiesche Verlag, 1935), pp. 180-195; Helmut Fritz, *Die erotische Rebellion* (Frankfurt a/M: Fischer Verlag, 1980); Regina Schaps, "Tragik und Erotik-Kultur der Geschlechter," in Wolfgang Lipp, ed., *Kulturtypen, Kulturcharaktere* (Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 1987), pp. 79-96; Johannes Székely, *Franziska Gräfin zu Reventlow: Leben und Werk* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1979).

31. See Wolfgang Schwentker, "Passion as a Mode of Life: Max Weber, the Otto Gross Circle and Eroticism," in Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *Max Weber and His Contemporaries* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 483-498; on Stöcker, see Amy Hackett, "Helene Stöcker: Left-Wing Intellectual and Sex Reformer," in Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan, eds., *When Biology Became Destiny* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), pp. 109-130.

Weber tried to meet this challenge, especially to the marital values which they had taken for granted. This will help us to understand how Max, in contrast to Marianne, later changed his position in theory and practice toward a form of eroticism and sexual love that breaks the bonds of marriage. I will refrain from any psychological interpretation of Weber's transformation, and focus instead on the way in which his changing views are reflected in his work.³²

At the time, Max and Marianne Weber defended bourgeois sexual morality from the standpoint of a Christian worldview that was anchored in the tradition of ascetic Protestantism. Sexual fidelity is for them a taken-for-granted ascetic ideal that binds the "beautiful moment" to the rule of the moral law, which determines the mutual responsibility of the partners "up to the pianissimo of old age."³³ Law, duty and asceticism constitute the ideals of a monogamous community, which demands sacrifice and subordinates unbridled eros to the ethical norms of a puritanical union of souls. The demand for free love and a child out of wedlock appears as a "desecration of monogamy" that amounts to "killing something divine." According to this ascetic ethic of responsibility, sensual enjoyment must not become "an end in itself, not even in the form of an aesthetically sublimated eroticism."³⁴

Here we encounter the spirit of ascetic Protestantism, which shaped not only the Webers' marital understanding but also influenced the comprehensive study *Wife and Mother in Legal Development*, which Marianne wrote during the years of Max's illness and convalescence.³⁵ Weber's 1904 essay on the elective affinity between ascetic Protestantism

32. See Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, "Max Weber und die Frauen," in Christian Gneuss and Jürgen Kocka, eds., *Max Weber: Ein Symposium* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), pp. 142-54; Hermann Kulke, "Orthodoxe Restauration und hinduistische Sektenreligiosität im Werk Max Webers," in Wolfgang Schluchter, ed., *Max Webers Studie über Hinduismus und Buddhismus* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1984), pp. 293-332; Arthur Mitzman, *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1970), pp. 165 ff.

33. See Marianne Weber, *Max Weber, op. cit.*, pp. 371-90. The phrase "up to the pianissimo of old age," a maxim of an ethic of responsibility, occurs at the very end of Marianne Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter in der Rechtsentwicklung* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1907), p. 572, and toward the last version of the "Zwischenbetrachtung" (1920), published under the title, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 350; it also appears in the dedication to Marianne Weber in the first volume of the *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1920).

34. Marianne, *Max Weber, op. cit.*, pp. 371 and 374.

35. Mariane Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter, op. cit.*

and the modern capitalist ethos provided her not only with a theoretical framework but also guided her substantive interest in the development of marriage law from archaic communities to the bourgeois marriage and its puritan morality. Like her husband, Marianne was interested in identifying the non-economic, purely spiritual determinants in the emergence of modern secular conduct. As against the monistic approach of the economic interpretation of history, she emphasized the multiple influences that shaped the development of marriage law and marital conduct. Again, like her husband, she concluded that bourgeois marital morality resulted from that religious radicalism which began with the Reformation and continued through Calvinism, English Puritanism and the Baptist sects.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber attempted to reconstruct the purely religious motives at the root of the capitalist sense of vocation. The religious conviction of the world's sinfulness demanded an inner-worldly asceticism that aimed at destroying any "spontaneous sensual enjoyment of life."³⁶ Sexual intercourse appeared at most acceptable in marriage and only for the sake of procreation, and in the selection of partners erotic attractiveness was subordinated to sober rational choice. Like his wife, Max Weber believed that a sexual morality which rested basically on a rationalist affirmation of abstinence had led to an ethical transformation of marital relations and thus to the "flowering of a chivalry" that helped bring about the modern "emancipation of woman."³⁷ The idea of a universal priesthood, the demand for freedom of conscience for both sexes, and the rejection of any kind of militarism favored the formal equality of women in the Puritan communities. But what was the price?

In vivid imagery, Weber sketches the fundamental rejection of all sensual culture (*Sinnenkultur*) in its consequences for practical conduct and its relation to cultural values that have no immediate religious relevance. On the one hand, the impersonality of charity and the distrust of friendship in ascetic Puritanism appear as the logical consequence of every ascetic ethic that perceives in all purely emotional and personal relations the danger of the "idolatry of the flesh." On the other

36. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 119.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 264. The phrase "emancipation of woman" is an insert from 1920. For a similar discussion of Puritan sexual morality, see Marianne Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter, op. cit.*, and the formulation: "Just as freedom of conscience was the mother of 'the Rights of Man,' so it was the cradle of women's rights" (p. 290).

hand, this attitude must in principle oppose the esthetic sphere insofar as the latter retains any elements of sensuality (*Sinnenkunst*). Therefore, Puritan England sacrificed most art forms. This was accompanied by the emergence of a uniform and standardized lifestyle. Together with the industrial mode of production, this process eventually led to the iron constraints on conduct and the tragedy of modern professionalism of which Weber spoke with such pathos.

It is not difficult to see that Weber, in depicting the rejection of sensual culture as well as the treatment of positive science as the only explicitly approved non-religious value, also portrays his own personal ethos. This originally religious rejection of sensual culture, to which the Webers still tried to adhere, was challenged to the core by the erotic movement and the literary-esthetic avant-garde of the time. The challenge from a "free love" that eluded ethical and religious regulation and had affinity with an esthetic and expressive lifestyle deeply affected Weber and finally made him modify decisively his views on the cultural significance of a purely ethical and religious value position. He came to develop three strategies toward the "erotic question." First, with Marianne he continued to uphold the unconditional validity of the ethical ideal of monogamous marriage, but he became willing to allow persons unable to live up to it a practical dispensation under certain preconditions, a dispensation that he claimed in the end for himself.³⁸ Second, given his conviction of the autonomous value of sexual abstinence, Weber became now strongly interested in the effects of a norm-free eroticism on the personality. This interest is reflected in his reception of Freud's works and in his virulent critique of Otto Gross. Weber repudiated the latter's plea for a sexual ethic that embraced the therapeutic function of sexual release, but he accepted the lasting contribution of Freud's studies insofar as they succeeded in creating an "exact casuistry."³⁹ Third, Weber was troubled and fascinated by the notion that ethical values are not the only normative ones, since the spheres of the erotic and the esthetic each possess a value of its own (*Eigenwert*). In Nietzsche's terms, they are "beyond good and evil" and thus have a close elective affinity. Weber began to plan a sociology of art, but he managed to write only the fragment on the sociology of music. He also developed an avid interest in the various efforts to found a specifically modern esthetics.

38. See Marianne Weber, *Max Weber, op. cit.*, p. 371.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 376. On the relation to Freud, see Tracy B. Strong, "Weber and Freud: Vocation and Self-Acknowledgement," in *Max Weber and His Contemporaries, op. cit.*, pp. 468-482.

From modern esthetics Weber also expected a clarification of eroticism as a particular value sphere. For instance, he wrote to Georg Lukács after reading the first installment of his *Heidelberg Philosophy of Art*: "I am very eager to see what happens when you turn to the concept of 'form.' After all, form is not only found at the value level that rises above the level of the experiential. The erotic sphere, which reaches deep down into the 'cage' [of one's own individuality], also has form. It shares the fate of bearing the guilt common to all formed life. It stands close to the esthetic attitude by virtue of its opposition to everything that belongs to the realm of 'form-free' divinity. The topographic location of the erotic must be established, and I am very interested to find out where you will place it."⁴⁰ Unfortunately, Lukács' esthetic theory also remained a fragment. Thus we must determine the topographic location of the erotic and the esthetic elsewhere. Weber's sociology of religion provides us with a key, in particular through the three versions of the "Intermediary Reflections." Together with the two speeches on science and politics as vocations, the last version became Weber's ultimate legacy to us. Not surprisingly, much of the recent Weber literature has dealt with these last writings.⁴¹

Weber sketched the cultural autonomy of the esthetic and the erotic in a typology and sociology of rationalism, which lays out the range of fundamental conflict among the various orders of life (*Lebensordnungen*). In the great salvation religions and their image of a transcendental god, the basic tension between religious ethics and the world becomes radicalized through the opposition of a "cosmos of natural causality" and a "cosmos of ethical, retributive causality."⁴² The sublimation of salvation in the direction of an ethic of conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*) exacerbates the conflict with the world, because the religious rationalization of conduct also leads to a greater comprehension of the logic inherent in the other value spheres, and thus to a greater awareness of the tensions between them. In Weber's scheme, the rise of a universalist ethic of brotherhood is of crucial importance for the differentiation of the other spheres.

40. Weber to Georg Lukács (March 10, 1913), in Eva Karádi and Eva Ferkete, eds., *Georg Lukács: Briefwechsel 1902-1917* (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 1982), p. 320. For the English, see Judith Marcus and Zoltan Tar, eds., *Georg Lukács. Selected Correspondence 1902-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 222. The *Heidelberger Philosophie der Kunst* appeared as vol. 15 of the *Lukács Werke*.

41. On the controversial interpretations of the three versions with regard to their significance for Weber's oeuvre, see Wolfgang Schluchter, *Rationalism, Religion, and Domination: A Weberian Perspective*, trans. by Neil Solomon (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1989), Chapter 12.

42. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, op. cit.*, p. 355.

The logical precondition for the "universalism of love" and "acosmistic" (unspecific) love is the emergence of religious congregations that differentiate themselves from the household and the sib and gain support from the authorities in the politically pacified empires. But the universalist claims of this ethic of love are directed against the extended family and the neighborhood association no less than against the sphere of political power proper. Thus the moral "slave revolt" organized by the priests reveals itself also as an "ethic of the ruled." Since "women had everywhere shown a particular susceptibility to religious stimuli," Weber observed, "this domestication provided ever stronger grounds for assigning religious value to the essentially feminine virtues of the ruled."⁴³ The more political authority became institutionalized in its own right, the greater was the likelihood that subjects would "take flight into the irrationality of apolitical sentiment," especially into the erotic sphere.⁴⁴

Weber was especially concerned with the tension between the universalist ethic of brotherhood and the secular spheres of economy, politics, and science, on the one hand, and the spheres of sexual love and art, on the other. The latter two stood in particularly sharp opposition to the salvation religions because of their close similarities with mystical religiosity. The psychological similarity between the highest forms of eroticism and "the sublimated forms of heroic piety" and their "mutual psychological and physiological substitutability" explain why these two spheres became sharpest rivals in the rationalized and intellectualized world of modernity.⁴⁵ Only a culture that claimed to be able, in principle, to rationalize all spheres could provoke the emergence of "irrational" subjective experience as an autonomous sphere.

Religiosity, however, came to share a retreat into the private experience of the extraordinary with erotic intimacy and with subjective enjoyment of *l'art pour l'art*. The sublimation of sexuality into eroticism, in the sense of a "consciously cultivated, extra-mundane sphere," was possible only in a purely intellectualist culture that embraced ascetic professionalism. Extra-mundane, especially extra-marital, sexuality could appear as "the only tie connecting human beings with the natural source of all life," opening "a gate into the most irrational and

43. From the first version of the "Intermediate Reflections" in Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 591f.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 601.

45. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, op. cit.*, p. 348.

thereby real kernel of life, in opposition to the mechanisms of rationalization.⁴⁶

In recognizing the autonomy of "love for love's sake" and of "art for art's sake," Weber decisively modified the conceptual framework of *The Protestant Ethic* in relation to his theory of modernity: "If anything, we realize again today that something can be sacred not only in spite of its not being beautiful but rather because and insofar as it is not beautiful. . . . And, since Nietzsche, we realize that something can be beautiful, not only in spite of the aspect in which it is not good, but rather in that very aspect. . . . It is a commonplace to observe that something may be true although it is not beautiful and not holy and not good."⁴⁷ Thus Weber's theory of modernity linked up with the cultural avant-garde which identified the distinctiveness of modern culture with a systematic differentiation of the esthetic-expressive sphere from the purely cognitive-instrumental and moral-practical spheres. This amounted to a splitting up of "substantial reason" that had once been unified in the religious and metaphysical worldviews.⁴⁸ This theory of modernity took up central motifs of the early romanticist critique of reason, which had endeavored to defend the "internal infinity of the subject" (Hegel) against the logical and substantive imperatives of theoretical and practical rationalism and to rehabilitate the spheres of esthetics and of sexual love as matters of authentic expressiveness.⁴⁹ By acknowledging the autonomy of the erotic and the esthetic value realms, Weber integrated this esthetic-expressive modernism into a theory of

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 345f. A lucid analysis of Weber's theory of erotic love and of its possible significance for feminist theory today is found in Roslyn Wallach Bologh, "Max Weber on Erotic Love: A Feminist Inquiry," in Scott Lash and Sam Whimster, eds., *Max Weber: Rationality and Modernity* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 242-258.

47. Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, op. cit.*, pp. 147ff.

48. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984 and 1987), vol. I, pp. 157ff; vol. II, pp. 303ff. Weber himself recognized the elective affinity between the postulate of value-freedom in science and the postulate of autonomy in esthetics, and in this connection mentioned Baudelaire and Nietzsche. See "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, op. cit.*, p. 148.

49. On the "Modernism of Romanticism," see Hans Sedlmayr, "Ästhetischer Anarchismus in Romantik und Moderne," in *Scheidewege*, vol. 8 (1978), pp. 174-196; Hauke Brunkhorst, "Romantik und Kulturkritik: Zerstörung der dialektischen Vernunft?," *Merkur*, no. 436 (1985), pp. 484-496; Karl Heinz Bohrer, "Die Modernität der Romantik: Zur Tradition ihrer Verhinderung," in *Merkur*, no. 469 (1988), pp. 179-198; and Bohrer, *Die Kritik der Romantik* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989). On the distinction between "instrumental action" and "expressive action" and the inclusion of the erotic sphere in the latter, see also Max Scheler, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1973), p. 118.

rationalization and modernization which had begun with a massive historical process of religious disenchantment and now conjured up the return of the gods. As a "praise of polytheism," Weber's theory can be understood as "myth (*Mythos*) directed against itself," a post-historical attitude to history.⁵⁰ He thereby anticipated that break between modernism and modernity that Daniel Bell later described as a cultural contradiction of capitalism. Demanding limitless self-fulfillment for the individual, the "post-modern" counterculture represents an esthetic-hedonist, consumption-oriented expressive culture. But the institutional core of modern society, which found its historical paradigm in the Protestant ethic, still rests on a conventional ethic.⁵¹

Sociological Aesthetics

Weber himself did not cross the bridge to an unlimited cultural modernism, and resisted "postmodern" temptations. In contrast to Simmel, he left behind neither a theory of esthetics nor of eroticism, which could have situated the distinctiveness of cultural modernism in the "beautiful appearance (*Schein*)" or in the "beautiful moment." By proclaiming the polytheism of values and the transition from unity to difference on the categorical level, Weber followed, however, Simmel's earlier views on relationism and perspectivism.⁵² For Simmel, sexual love is one of the "great formative categories of existence," an "ungrounded and primary category," which develops a logic of its own and becomes autonomous within its own limits, in analogy to the other great cultural spheres (art, religion, science, morality).⁵³ In relation

50. This phrase refers to a modernist rejection of any history founded on the Judeo-Christian tradition and of any philosophy of history related to it. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, ed. by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), pp. 41f.; see also Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Rationalization and Myth in Weber's Thought," in *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber: Collected Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 133-144.

51. See Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), and "Beyond Modernism, Beyond Self," in Quentin Anderson et al., eds., *Art, Politics and Will: Essays in Honor of Lionel Trilling* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), pp. 213-253.

52. Simmel's epistemological position is elaborated in *The Philosophy of Money*, *op. cit.*; see also his "Anfang einer unvollendeten Selbstdarstellung," in Kurt Gassen and Michael Landmann, eds., *Buch des Dankes an Georg Simmel* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1958), pp. 9f. Simmel and Weber share the categorical switch from unity to difference not only with contemporary champions of the theory of social differentiation but also with the theoreticians of "postmodernity." See Hauke Brunkhorst, "Die Komplexität der Kultur: Zum Wiedererwachen der Kulturkritik zwischen Moderne und Postmoderne," in *Soziologische Revue*, vol. 11 (1988), pp. 393-403.

53. Simmel, "On Love (A Fragment)," *Simmel*, pp. 159 and 161.

to them, however, sexual love acquires a special importance, both because of its organic roots and its purely symbolic content. On the one hand, love is more fundamentally connected with the basic unity of life than are other feelings; on the other, the most highly developed form of eroticism "plays out" the formal structure of cultural modernism. If Weber failed to tell us whether a modernity differentiated into separate value spheres can be conceived at all as a formal unity, Simmel at least provides us with a hint on the symbolic level how the experience of difference can be categorically construed.

For Simmel, differentiation characterizes the socio-cultural process as well as the relation of the sexes. Whereas the acosmistic love of an ethic of brotherhood rests on a communal experience of mystical possession, sexual love involves an experience of difference, an "intermediate state between possession and non-possession."⁵⁴ If modern love is a mutual give and take, it also recognizes that "the absoluteness of the individual ego creates a wall between human beings, which the most passionate determination of both partners cannot break down and which makes 'possession' an illusion, insofar as it wants to be more than the fact and awareness of being loved in turn."⁵⁵ This "individualism of love" and its exclusiveness toward all other spheres, which proves its "totally subjective character,"⁵⁶ is at the same time the result of a comprehensive process of rationalization and differentiation, as Simmel analyzed it both in his *Philosophy of Money* and in his formal sociology. In several respects, the erotic relation of the sexes is connected with this developmental logic and the formal processes of association. The difference between the purely sensual enjoyment of sexuality and sexual love as *l'art pour l'art* reflects that process of "value increment" which derives from the impact of labor on nature and reveals the "most spiritualized forms of life" to be "cultivated nature."⁵⁷ But Simmel also analyzes this process of cultivation, which constitutes the history of the species, in terms of a teleological model that displaces the final purpose with intermediacy. For Simmel, "society" is identical with a "sum of reciprocal effects" between the forms and the content of human drives and motives. In this process, human beings

54. "Flirtation," *Simmel*, p. 133.

55. *Schriften*, pp. 251f. This excursus on Platonic and modern eros was omitted in the English translation of "On Love (A Fragment)," *Simmel*. But see now Guy Oakes, "Eros and Modernity: Georg Simmel on Love," in David Franks and E. Doyle McCarthy, eds., *The Sociology of Emotions* (Greenwich: JAI Press, 1989), pp. 229-247.

56. "On Love (A Fragment)," *Simmel*, p. 165.

57. Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

must accept more and more detours to reach their destinations. Society comes to share this reversal of ends and means with art as "purposiveness without purpose" (Kant) and with the autonomy of erotic love from the original reproductive "purpose of the species."⁵⁸

By viewing sociability as the playful variant ("play-form") of society (*Vergesellschaftung*) and coquetry (*Koketterie*) as the playful variant of eroticism, Simmel can point not only to a profound affinity between the social and the erotic sphere, but also to two "sociological structures" — art and the game — that abstract the form of a given reality.⁵⁹ As a "sociological artform," playing games as well as the game of love become vehicles for a deeper insight. Abstracting from all content, this insight "distills" the formal structure that connects socio-cultural evolution and cultural modernization with the erotic relation of the sexes. If coquetry means the simultaneity of implicit yielding and refusal, it demonstrates playfully "the pure form of erotic decision-making" and can combine this polarity in a unified mode of conduct, since no final decision need be made.⁶⁰ Playing with the erotic decision lends to coquetry "that peculiar character of the preliminary, of suspension and irresolution," which becomes a purpose in itself and therefore appears analogous to art with its "purposiveness without purpose."⁶¹ In this manner, coquetry reflects the cultural peculiarity of woman as a "promise not yet kept"⁶² — this had made Simmel ask the question of the possibility of a genuine female culture. But the polar relation of the sexes also finds its most general expression in the dualism of coquetry, in the purely abstract form of affirmation and denial. Thus, coquetry finally becomes a symbol for many kinds of conduct: "Consider the charms of the simultaneous *for* and *against*, the *perhaps*, the *protracted* reservation of the decision, which permits a foretaste of the enjoyment of both its aspects together, aspects which in their realization are mutually exclusive. All this is not only characteristic of the flirtation of a woman with a man. On the contrary, it plays upon thousands of other contents. This is the form in which the indecisiveness of life is crystalized into a thoroughly positive way of acting. Although it does not make a virtue of this necessity, it does make it into a pleasure. The soul has found the appropriate form for its relation

58. On this "axial turn of life," see also Simmel, *Lebensanschauung: Vier metaphysische Kapitel* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1918), pp. 38ff. and 49ff.

59. Simmel, "Sociability" (1910), in Donald Lavine, ed., *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 130 and 134ff.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

61. Simmel, "Flirtation," *Simmel, op. cit.*, p. 144.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 148.

to countless things in that playful approach and withdrawal — even though it is certainly not always accompanied by the attitude of 'play' — in the act of taking hold of something only in order to let it fall again, of letting it fall only to take hold of it again, in what could be called the tentative turning toward something on which the shadow of its own denial already falls."⁶³

Simmel's view of the transcendental nature of coquetry gives us warrant to conclude that, in contrast to Weber, he crossed not only the bridge to cultural modernism but also attributed paradigmatic significance to the erotic relations of the sexes with regard to the analysis of the modern style of life. Simmel's "sociological impressionism" is indebted to Baudelaire's esthetic concept of modernity, which emphasizes the distinctiveness of the esthetic-expressive sphere as against the institutional core of modern society.⁶⁴ With its exaltation of the transitory, the fugitive and the contingent, this cultural modernism offers not only an "abstract opposition to history"⁶⁵ but also the basis for a "gay polytheism," which expresses itself in the change of fashion and the multitude of styles. Novelty becomes the core concept of a "superficial culture" (Nietzsche), which immobilizes history proper through a "dialectic of the novel and the invariant" (Walter Benjamin) and which can understand duration only as absolute change.

Simmel's analyses of cultural modernity originate in an intense experience of contemporaneity that motivates him to add a modern sociological esthetic to the reconciling function of art, as Schiller postulated it: "to suspend time in time and to make compatible becoming with absolute existence and change with identity."⁶⁶ When Peter Bürger launched his critique of idealist esthetics and demanded the "transformation of art into praxis," with a view toward the artistic avant-garde, he appeared more retrospective than prospective in relation to Simmel's theory.⁶⁷

63. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

64. See David Frisby, *Sociological Impressionism* (London: Heinemann, 1981), pp. 68 ff. and 102ff. and Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1985), pp. 1-108.

65. Jürgen Habermas, "Die Moderne — ein unvollendetes Projekt," in Habermas, *Kleine politische Schriften* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1981), pp. 452f. See also my essay "Die Seele und das Geld. Kulturtheoretische Implikationen in Georg Simmels 'Philosophie des Geldes,'" *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie, Sonderheft 27* (1986), pp. 57-74.

66. Friedrich Schiller, *Über das Schöne und die Kunst: Schriften zur Ästhetik* (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), p. 178.

67. See Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974); see also W. Martin Lüdke, ed., *Theorie der Avantgarde: Antworten auf Peter Bürgers Bestimmung von Kunst und bürgerlicher Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1976).

With Bürger, however, we can object to Simmel that art is in danger of losing its critical and utopian content if it is understood as the paradigm of everyday life. Simmel seems to have noticed this paradox when he contrasted his sociological impressionism with a traditional notion of the artwork and the utopia of female culture. From both viewpoints, the modern lifestyle appears rather as an alienated form of the reconciliation of nature and culture or of law and freedom. Finally, the fact that for Simmel the esthetic function comes into "play" in every human association can be understood to mean that eros and culture cannot be distinguished in terms of a critical difference between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, insofar as culture always transcends natural necessity. It becomes "affirmative" only when it abandons the critical idea of "an erotic reconciliation of man and nature in the aesthetic attitude, where order is beauty and work is play."⁶⁸

68. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 176.

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