

Lost on the Bridge of Money: Simmel on Money and Experience of Modernity

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Abstract: The emphasis on the survival experience of modern individuals is an important feature of Simmel's thought on modernity. This, apart from continuing the tradition of aesthetic modernity and being influenced by "the mood of *fin-de-siecle*", is very much related to Simmel's unique sociological interest. The maturity of monetary economy constitutes the historical root of our modernity experience. With the increasing dominance of monetary economy in modern society, money becomes part of human psyche, influences the behaviors of modern individuals and creates a unique experience of modernity. It can be said that the process of money becoming "Money" is the

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process that modern individuals acquire their modernity experience. Money plays the role of God in modern society, elevated from "absolute means" to "absolute purpose". It erases the differences between objects, among people, and between people and objects. According to the Money logic, modern people can be readily labeled such as the greedy, the avaricious, the extravagant or the ascetic poverty, living in a state of cynicism or blasé. For urban life is the typical experience of modernity, urban people are "Unhappy Dwellers." Their blasé attitude constitutes the core of the unhappiness of modern people. However, in the experience of adventurer and stranger, it is possible for modern individuals to maintain their unique personality and resist the logic of Money. Through money, Simmel reveals not only the plight of modern people but also the ultimate value of human being.

Keywords: money, the experience of modernity, the blasé, cultural form