



Eros as Educator in the Era of Advanced Monetary Economy: Simmel's Social Metaphysics of the Erotic Being

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Article abstract

In the era of advanced monetary economy, the nexus of love, money, and good education is at the origin of the “good society”. If marriage was invented for reasons of administration of goods and money, then the fact that individual love came upon marriage in the specific historical and geographical context of the Western European metropolitan life cannot be a coincidence. The platonic ladder of love, that leads to eternity through the erotic elevation of the soul to the sight of the Ideas, is transformed in Modern era through the new perception of Money as a “secular god”. For Plato, the goal of the lover is actually “education” (paideia) as he is supposed to give to the soul of the beloved wings in order to elevate itself to the contemplation of the Ideas. Plato’s heritage regarding love, says Simmel, is the belief that beyond the affect something of a bigger order is hiding in the phenomenon of love. As long as serial monogamy is the dominant model of erotic relations in our days, it is clear that its spiritual background is linked to Platonic Eros, not as an initiation to the science of the general, but, bended by the modern understanding of the individual, as an art of the individual. What is explored in this article is the educational role of Eros and its cultural potential. Eros can actually be considered as educator, as the initiator of the individual to a higher collective and spiritual order.

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Abstract. *In the era of advanced monetary economy, the nexus of love, money, and good education is at the origin of the “good society”. If marriage was invented for reasons of administration of goods and money, then the fact that individual love came upon marriage in the specific historical and geographical context of the Western European metropolitan life cannot be a coincidence. The platonic ladder of love, that leads to eternity through the erotic elevation of the soul to the sight of the Ideas, is transformed in Modern era through the new perception of Money as a “secular god”. For Plato, the goal of the lover is actually “education” (paideia) as he is supposed to give to the soul of the beloved wings in order to elevate itself to the contemplation of the Ideas. Plato’s heritage regarding love, says Simmel, is the belief that beyond the affect something of a bigger order is hiding in the phenomenon of love. As long as serial monogamy is the dominant model of erotic relations in our days, it is clear that its spiritual background is linked to Platonic Eros, not as an initiation to the science of the general, but, bended by the modern understanding of the individual, as an art of the individual. What is explored in this article is the educational role of Eros and its cultural potential. Eros can actually be considered as educator, as the initiator of the individual to a higher collective and spiritual order.*

Love and Money

“She’s got an indiscreet voice’, I remarked. ‘It’s full of –’ I hesitated. ‘Her voice is full of money’, he said suddenly. That was it. I’d never understood before. It was full of money – that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals’ song of it.” This excerpt of Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* opens David Frisby’s introduction to the translation of Simmel’s *Philosophy of Money* (Simmel, 1978: 1). Jay Gatsby’s lover’s voice is “full of money” (Scott Fitzgerald, 2013: 154)! Daisy

Buchanan is the “golden girl”, both for her golden hair and for her inextricable preference to easy and secure life that only lots of money can provide. A boy should be rich before asking a girl to marriage: that was the lesson that young men from the American aristocracy of the Jazz Age were taught about love.

In the era of advanced monetary economy, love and money form a unique junction of events leading to the perspective of a fulfilled life. In other words, the way to beauty passes through the acquisition of an economic status. Desire for Daisy, the object of beauty if not the beautiful object, leads to the effort to get rich, and get rich fast enough to conquer her before someone else does. Love in his natural form happened unexpectedly for young Jay Gatsby. It was love at first sight. The very instant he laid his eyes on the golden girl they were both struck by the arrows of Eros, the Greek god of love. However, love as a social form is a kind of *monied perfection* that must be achieved through self-sacrifice and social elevation. The platonic *ladder of love* that leads to eternity through the erotic elevation of the soul to the sight of the idea of Beauty¹ is transformed in Modern era through the new perception of Money as a “secular god”:

Money all too often easily gives the impression of being the final purpose; for too many people money signifies the end of the teleological sequences, and lends to them such a measure of unified combination of interests, of abstract heights, of sovereignty over the details of life, that it reduces the need to search for such satisfactions in religion. All these connections show that something more than the familiar points of comparison exist. Thus Hans Sachs, already a representative of popular opinion, concluded that ‘Money is the secular God of the World’. This refers back to the basic reason for the position of money, which is that it is the absolute means which is elevated

¹ See Allan Bloom’s *The Ladder of Love*, a commentary of Plato’s *Symposium* (Plato, 2001: 55-178).

to the psychological significance of an absolute purpose (Simmel, 1978: 256).

In this particular circumstance, money had Daisy's voice, and Gatsby was perfectly aware of it. Means and purpose were consciously considered as interchangeable and, sociologically speaking, they were. Daisy was the symbol of Gatsby's social ascension, of his personal achievement. And yet Gatsby's love for Daisy was genuine, his sacrifice was genuine. One could argue that he spoke the language of money only because Daisy's voice sounded like money. Except that this would only partially be true. Gatsby was on the road for social ascension before he knew Daisy, but when he saw her, his quest took a spiritual turn. It was as if Daisy's love as a purpose of his social praxis purified his pursuit of money as a means to happiness. After all, one should only be naïf to believe that natural love knows no obstacles or social rules. In a certain way, individual love is an invitation to play the social game and conclude one's education about the ultimate values of the society in which one evolves. Daisy as "individuality" reveals through an erotic education the general character of the monetary economy.

Metaphysics of love

In his posthumous fragment *Über die Liebe* (1923), Georg Simmel notes:

Die metaphysische Erotik: durch die Welt hindurch die Frau zu lieben und durch die Frau hindurch die Welt (Simmel, 1985: 272).

The metaphysical erotic consists in the love of the woman through the world and of the world through the woman (my translation).

But the love of the “world” is not a material love, it is not the love for the material world. On the contrary, it is the love and the understanding of a spiritual entity that is larger than the individual and in which the individual finds meaning and purpose. It is the sentiment of belonging in a higher social order. It is what Husserl and the German philosophers of the beginning of the last century called a *Weltanschauung*. According to Leo Strauss, this “vision of the world” is a “life-experience of a high order” that includes also the religious, esthetic, ethical, political, technical experience of the world we live in and even a certain idea of *humanity* (Strauss, 1983: 36). It is a kind of wisdom, and the man who possesses such a *Weltanschauung* in a very high level is called “wise”, argues Strauss. It is in this sense that *Eros can actually be considered as educator*, as the initiator of the individual to this high collective and spiritual order. But wasn’t that also the platonic definition of Eros, the benefactor of humankind?

In a comparison between the platonic love and the modern era love, in the posthumous article *Der platonische und der moderne Eros* (Simmel, 1923: 125-145), Simmel distinguishes between the two understandings of love, the Ancient and the Modern. Plato saw in love, says Simmel, “an absolute vital power” (Simmel, 1971: 236), and realized that “the way of understanding would therefore have to lead through love to the ultimate ideals and metaphysical potencies, to all the places where life as experienced is connected to these potencies” (Simmel, 1971: 236). The reality and the unitary character of the Greek cosmos is present in Plato’s vision, argues Simmel, and this fact influences his appreciation of love. The Greek world is a complex reality made out of different levels and layers of experience and not a representation within the conscience of a solipsistic individual, as is the modern one. This is not altered by any duality in the conception of the relation between the body and the soul. The Greek soul was entirely worldly and not in constant tension between our material world and God’s spiritual one, exterior to ours.

According to Plato², if the physical beauty of a person incites us to love him or her, it is because it reminds us of the Idea of the Beautiful that our soul has contemplated before its descent to earth. From the beauty of one person, we infer the beauty of many persons and eventually beauty itself and the Idea of Beautiful. Erotic love is the psychological stimulus that is linked to the remembering of the Idea of Beautiful. When we fall in love, the memory of the idea of Beautiful is activated and the superior order of the ideas remembered through the recognition of Beauty in the beauty of the beloved. Thus, love does not only concern sexuality but above all knowledge. It is the way for the human soul to climb from earth to the order of ideas, without which no knowledge is possible. As Beauty is linked to the Good and to other Ideas, physical beauty is linked to moral beauty, justice, temperance etc., and in general the physical is linked to the spiritual and the intellectual:

Looked at from this point of view, Plato's theories of truth and of love develop in an exactly parallel manner. Truth is a product of our capacity to know, even if this product stands in a determinate relation to reality; the general concepts, however, which carry the truths are not freely created constructs out of the stuff of experience. They are only the reawakened memories which the soul maintained unconsciously ever since it viewed in its pre-existence their metaphysical counterimages, the ideas, the truths in substance as it were (Simmel, 1971: 239).

Thus, for Plato and the Greeks, notices Simmel, love is the result of the mechanism of the soul that has contemplated the Beautiful and will recognize it in every beautiful person. Love is a kind of logical necessity (*[Liebe] ist eine Art logischer Notwendigkeit*). It does not come out of our free will and personal experience. This is why, according to Plato, we fall in love with a beautiful person because this person is beautiful; instead, us, the Modern, find beautiful the

² Simmel does not mention in this text any particular platonic work, but he is actually referring to the *Symposium* and to *Phaedrus*, where Plato exposes his metaphysics of the erotic mysteries and the Idea of the Beautiful.

person we love. Eros is for Plato the opposite of individuality as it is a mediator between the individual and the supra-individual order, a passage from the personal erotic passion to the impersonality of the Idea. The modern sentiment of love is on the contrary a mediation between two individuals. Love is just that, a self-sufficient “relation”, not an elevation to a higher moral order. For Plato, continues Simmel, the erotic partner is actually a recipient for an ideal education and acculturation to higher moral standards and mentalities. Its essence is actually “education” (*paideia*) as it is supposed to give to the soul of the beloved wings in order to elevate itself to the contemplation of the Ideas. It does not create a permanent link between the lover and the beloved other than the impersonal content of the Ideas. When the recipient is full, the lover can depart: love ends with the completion of the education of the beloved. His initiation ended, the beloved can become a lover himself and continue to erotically transmit culture and knowledge. If there is a kind of duration and sustainability in the process of love, it is that of the forms transmitted through the collective game of Eros.

The same thing applies to the love of our children and the transmission of cultural forms of knowledge to the next generations. In this case, Eros is defined by Plato as a “desire of immortality”, the feeling of living after death in the persons we have educated and that keep alive our forms of life: laws, ethical rules, mentalities, behaviors, rituals, ideas, memories, traditions, knowledge. I could gladly argue that a person continues to exist in the surviving memory of the common lifeform, be it a clan, a tribe, a City-State or a Nation. The act of love is essentially an act of transmission, a transmission of one’s (collective) self in the next era. This, might it be noted, is not just a Platonic understanding of intergenerational love, it is the traditional understanding of the loving of one’s children.

This is certainly not the modern conception of love. If for Plato, beauty and individuality can be dissociated, “[f]or us the beauty of individuality and the individuality of beauty comprise an indivisible

unity (*Für uns ist die Schönheit der Individualität und die Individualität der Schönheit eine untrennbare Wirkungseinheit*)” (Simmel, 1971: 242). For the Modern, love is only understandable from the point of view of the centrality of the individual. What is demanded of love is not transcendence, but *reciprocity*. In the modern vision, love is primary and beauty is just the consequent quality that it attributes to the individual. If for Plato the idea of individual beauty meant simply the presence in the individual of the general quality of beauty, for the modern such quality does not exist. Beauty is an emanation of the individual, it is at the same time physical, idiosyncratic, personal, moral, spiritual. In one word, beauty is *individual*, and its mystique is not in an exterior order of perfection, but in an interior order of complexity: for the modern lover, it would take an eternity to understand the involvedness of his beloved.

The mystique of Love

If there is a mystique of the individual love and of love as absolute reciprocity, a mystique that Simmel does not mention in these posthumous texts on love, it is the one hidden in the myth of the androgyne. Reported by Aristophanes in the symposium of Agathon, in the presence of Socrates³, this myth reports that once lived on earth creatures made of men and women, as well as of men and men and of women and women. One can see that Plato was fully aware of the different ways of sexuality proper to the human nature. Happy and self-centered, they were powerful enough to frighten the Gods, until one day Zeus decided to divide them in two. A terrible spectacle followed as halves wandered around desperate, lost, without knowing what has happened to them or what was expected of them. Their misery was so great that Zeus took pity of them and send Eros to give them a purpose in life: to find their other half. Eros actually offered them a lesson, that they were incomplete and that somewhere out there, there was another being like them, and that this being was unique, it was *their* other

³ See, Plato’s *Symposium* 189a-193e.

half. This incompleteness does not derive from the inner life of the individual, as in its modern conception, but on the character of the *reciprocity* itself. Reciprocity is not a mutually subjective mutual choice of one another, it is an objective fact if not a kind of destiny. The same applies to the unique character of their individuality. They are not unique because of their individuality, they are unique because they are the mate of another individual, without whom they wouldn't be unique, they would simply be incomplete.

Plato's heritage regarding love, says Simmel, is the belief that beyond the affect something of a bigger and different order is hiding in the phenomenon of love.

That the most subjective and individual of all passions is led in the direction of rational-metaphysical meaning and that this meaning could be fully enthroned only by overcoming such a huge tension therein lies the meaning of Eros for Plato's world view (Simmel, 1971: 248).

Only for us, Modern, this something must come back to the stream of the life of the individual and not evaporate in the generality of the Idea. If Aristophanes' myth is read in a modern way, that is taking into consideration that beauty is individual and not general, then beauty is more of a quest than of a memory, the quest of the other half. This quest is not the one of conquerors. In a way, Plato and Don Juan shared the same vision of beauty: it can be found in every beautiful girl. Any girl could do as long as she is *objectively* beautiful, and if one resists or cannot be conquered for different reasons, there are always others, interchangeable. But the uniqueness of the other half is not of that order. There is certainly a metaphysical order involved, but it is no other than the primitive wound of the incompleteness of the individual and the insufficiency of the individual order. Eros is the desire for the other, and not just for any other, but for a specific other that must, in a peculiar way, be a fit. This desire announces a double movement of the soul: towards one's own soul in order to get to know it, and towards the exterior world in order to explore the souls of the others. Erotic

reciprocity or disposition is the constant movement of the soul from inside to outside and *vice-versa*. One must be inner-directive if he is to find his *fit* for in order to recognize it he must simply know to what the fit is fitting. And one must be outer-directed if he actually is to find it and get it. The love of a woman is not a particular problem as long as any woman suits the seeker. But the love of a particular woman can certainly be a problem as there can be many obstacles to this relationship, of a social as well as of a subjective order. This particular object of desire being rare, its value rises with rarity and competition. If the value of an object is according to the marginal theory, that Simmel embraces in his *Philosophy of Money*, subjective and circumstantial, then the uniqueness of the other half and the absolute desire to seize it could only be measured to the sacrifice of one's self or of one's life. Or should I say of one's time and of one's money?

The general idea is that it is degrading to pay for one's love. Nevertheless, even in the worst case where it is question of putting a monied price on love, the very price can be a decisive factor of the "humanity" of the act. Simmel states that, regarding human values,

the degradation and humiliation of human value decreases if the purchase prices are very high. For money value in very great sums contains an element of rarity which makes it more individual and less interchangeable and thus more appropriate as an equivalent of personal values (Simmel, 1978: 405).

If the idea of "paying" for love is considered immoral, this is mostly because we have a very limited understanding of the function of money. According to Benjamin Franklin (1757; see also 1748) the sacrifice of one's time is the equivalent of spending his money. All things considered, that is the effort and time to find your other half, to get to know him or her, to overcome all possible obstacles, social and subjective, that keeps you apart or separates you from her or him, the price to pay for this quest is extremely high. The higher the price, the higher the value; the higher the sacrifice, the higher the redemption. But in this, as in every other

affaire, how can you know if it's worth it? If you find what you seek how can you know it is the real thing and that you haven't just overestimated a casual or even a simply interesting relation? In that case, is it all wasted time and money for nothing?

Love as social-erotic capital

Aristophanes' definition of love as a desire to find one's other half is not just a romantic tale. It's the source of modern romantic love. The problem is that it sets the standards and the price to pay very high. What are the odds that one could actually find his or her other half amongst billions of individuals living in the world? Practically none. But I might suggest that the myth has very different functions: psychologically speaking, that of justifying our choices of companions; sociologically speaking, that of structuring the game of choosing a companion. Serial relations are not excluded as long as they fit in the story of the quest of the right one. It is simple: one cannot know. First and most important obstacle: one cannot know one's self. Knowing one's self is a life time spiritual activity. But if I do not know myself, how can I know the other? In fact, this is where the educational aspect of love comes back, this time in its modern version. If you want to know your soul, you have to look at it in the mirror of another soul, said Socrates to Alcibiades. Subsequently, second but equally important obstacle: in order to know one's self, one needs her or his other half. The best way to overcome these obstacles is to proceed by essay and error.

Actually, Goethe's chemical model of *Elective affinities* can be seen as a softer variation of the story of the androgyne. In this novel and according to the consequent model of love, couples do not freely choose each other. They are brought together by a kind of chemical mechanism of the soul. Every couple reaches a state of equilibrium and this equilibrium is stable until another element that has bigger elective affinity with one of the elements within the couple comes in between. Being a *soulmate* is a state of temporary equilibrium and no one knows if and when it will be disturbed. But the thing is that the new couple will be stronger and its equilibrium will be more

stable than the first. From the point of view of the limited knowledge of the individual, the best fit possible is the one who ended his or her life with. Hence, the story of Aristophanes sets a direction, points to a meaningful path and offers a moral code to follow: for the time you are together with your companion act as if he or she were your other half.

As long as serial monogamy is the dominant model of erotic relations in our days, it is clear that its spiritual background is linked to Platonic Eros, not as an initiation to the world of ideas and the science of the general, but, curiously, bended by the modern understanding of the individual, as an art of the unique individual human being. A simple essay and error model does not suffice to explain the success of the model. For as long as we are talking about love relations and not simply sexual relations, the choice of partners is not haphazard. The chain of relations in one's life is only meaningful if orientated to the fittest choice, the one that could truly be the other half or the one that would present the best cohesion and dynamic of the couple. In any case, the approach of love is made by the double-directed movement of the soul: the caring of one's soul and the caring of the other are inextricably linked in order to form a unique and individual erotic education and culture. Given the effort, the time and the money our fellow men spend on their love lives, it is clear that Eros has developed in them an erotic lifestyle, a cultural path of love that is made out of all the lessons they received from previous relations only to apply to their new ones. To put it in other words, following the double direction of love, provided that they play the social game, individuals' inner world becomes deeper as they become more open and caring to the outside world. The purpose is to be more desirable and lovable in order to recognize and be recognized by the chosen one.

Eros acts as a stimulus for the orientation of the erotic desire of the individual towards a more comprehensive *Weltanschauung*, thus enhancing culture and education. In the seventh chapter of his *Philosophy of Money* (Simmel, 1978: 486-490), Simmel observes *the increase in material culture and the lag in individual culture* of his time:

If one compares our culture with that of a hundred years ago, then one may surely say – subject to many individual exceptions – that the things that determine and surround our lives, such as tools, means of transport, the products of science, technology and art, are extremely refined. Yet individual culture, at least in the higher strata, has not progressed at all to the same extent; indeed, it has even frequently declined (Simmel, 1978: 486).

This will become a common ground of the cultural critique of the School of Frankfurt and of the currents of cultural criticism, and the phenomenon is said to progress even further as we entered the twenty-first century. What is not mentioned here is the educational role of Eros and its cultural potential. Individuals refine their ways in the quest for the ideal partner, get educated by participating in more and more subtle social circles⁴ as a suite of the chain of their relationships, they polish and upgrade their style of life in order to be more attracting, more antagonistic in the social circles in which they evolve.

But this erotic refinement of the individual lifestyle does not profit only the individual's love life. It also profits its social life as well as social life itself. More interesting individuals form more interesting groups, and more interesting groups enhance furthermore the style of life of their individual members. Eros is constantly creating a social dynamic that resists the general decline of individual culture. To take one example, language. Simmel notes in his *Philosophy of Money*:

⁴ See, Georg Simmel, *Sociology. Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms* (1908), 2 vol, Translated and edited by Anthony J. Blasi, Anton K. Jacobs, Mathew Kanjirathinkal. With an introduction by Horst J. Helle Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2009, ch.6, *The Intersection of the Social Circles* and ch.10, *The Expansion of the Group and the development of Individuality*. See also, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, Translated, Edited and with an Introduction by Kurt H. Wolff, Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press, 1950, Part Four, ch.2, *Types of Social relationship by Degrees of Reciprocal Knowledge of Their Participants*.

Linguistic possibilities for expression, in German as well as in French, have become much more refined and subtle in the last hundred years. Not only do we now have Goethe's language, but in addition we have a large number of refinements, subtleties and individual modes of expression. Yet, if one looks at the speech and writing of individuals, they are on the whole increasingly less correct, less dignified and more trivial. In terms of content, the scope of objects of conversation has been widened during that time through advances in theory and practice, yet, none the less, it seems that conversation, both social as well as intimate and in the exchange of letters, is now more superficial, less interesting and less serious than at the end of the eighteenth century (Simmel, 1978: 486).

This critique could most certainly be made about today's youth's expression and linguistic abilities in the age of the internet, mobile networking and of the society of the spectacle. My point is not here about the general tendency of our societies, but about the vital forces that resist it. As great literature has often been written about great loves, thus enriching our objective culture, one cannot live a great love if he hasn't read a great book. Our experience of the other comes with the right words to express the right feelings, and this experience reinforces our individual culture in our everyday conversations. A good speaker is always preferable to a poor one when it comes to using persuasive arguments to advance your position or even impress and attract attention. Poetry and literature, arts and good cinema, philosophy and esthetics work as a personal capital investment in the affairs of love. One simply must be more interesting if he wants the others to take interest in him. Especially if he wants one particular other to notice and choose him amongst billions. He needs to develop his human capital, and more precisely his social-erotic capital enhancing the appropriation of the objective forms of culture available:

Dies klärt sich aber sogleich durch die Einsicht, dass Kultur eben immer nur die Synthese einer subjektiven Entwicklung und eines objektiven geistigen Wertes bedeutet und - dass die

Vertretung je eines dieser Elemente im Maße ihrer Exklusivität die Verwehung beider ablehnen muss (GSG 14: 399).

But this is immediately clarified by the insight that culture always means the synthesis of a subjective development and an objective spiritual value, and that the representation of one of these elements in its degree of exclusivity must reject the interweaving of both (my translation).

A culture of things alone is insufficient when it comes to erotic affairs: Eros is working constantly to the direction of the culture of persons. Furthermore, Eros opposes the spirit of specialization. As its Platonic counterpart, it is the spirit of the general, not of course in the ancient Platonic form of the vision of the Ideas as a precondition to science, but in the modern individualistic world of the importance of general culture and refinement in the mingling of the social circles. General culture is what is needed in order to know and understand the human being, and love is the undefeatable vital force that drives the individual towards it. Love is the *voie royale* to the *Weltanschauung*, to this historical form of cultural knowledge and wisdom.

Love, Money and Culture

Simmel died before the publication of *The Great Gatsby*. Should he have lived, I am certain he would have taken a great interest in the novel. It so happens that in his quest of Daisy, the young Jay Gatsby sought first education and culture and only afterwards did he occupy himself to make money. He needed to be a man of a particular standing in order to achieve all the rest. The picture he showed the most around was a picture of him in Cambridge, in England, as he fancied himself a Cambridge fellow. He understood then, in the Jazz Age, perfectly what Gary Becker, Nobel prize in economics, discovered in the seventies, that a good education is quasi automatically convertible into money:

Education and training are the most important investments in human capital. My book showed, and so have many other studies since then, that high school and college education in the United States greatly raise a person's income, even after netting out direct and indirect costs of schooling, and after adjusting for the better family backgrounds and greater abilities of more educated people (Becker, 1964: 17).

Let us add that it is as easily convertible into love too. The nexus of love, money, and good education is at the origin of the “good society”.

The literary universe⁵ of Scott Fitzgerald is frequented by young and ambitious Ivy League graduates, who meet, drink and fell in love in the New York Harvard Club. They are all occupied by two things, how to make money and how to marry their beloved. Love and money are mingled with the highest education America can offer in an atmosphere of gaiety and glamour. What the American upper class teaches us is that the rich and the beautiful are also very well educated, that their cultural capital is as high as it can get. And that, in the modern era of the advanced monetary economy, *social beauty* cannot be understood outside the nexus of love, money and culture that forges autonomous entities like families and fashions the atmosphere of success. One should not underestimate the social value of family and of the family circle in the context of the social state of what Alexis de Tocqueville designated as “individualism”, and one should certainly not underestimate the importance or, as Simmel puts it, the “social utility (*soziale Nützlichkeit*)” of Eros in family and marriage. In a 1894 text *On Family Sociology*, Simmel notes:

Nachdem die Monogamie einmal durchgehende Eheform geworden war, schlossen sich an sie nun auch die subjektiven Gefühle an, die überall das Ergebnis lange andauernder Zustände sind und die vollzogene Anpassung der Individuen an diese bezeugen. Was man jetzt noch manchmal sagt, um

⁵ See for example, Francis Scott Fitzgerald ([1926] 2013).

Konvenienzheiraten zu rechtfertigen: Die Liebe käme schon in der Ehe - das hat für die historische Entwicklung unsren Geschlechtes zweifellose Wahrheit. Es hat hier eine Umkehrung stattgefunden, die die Soziologie an vielen und wichtigen Punkten feststellen kann: was für die Gattung Ursache war, ist für das Individuum Wirkung, und *vice versa*. Die Geltung der Einehe, wie sie aus ökonomischen und sozialen Umständen hervorgegangen ist, hat es überhaupt erst zu dem spezifischen Gefühl der Liebe und Treue für das Leben kommen lassen; und nun ist umgekehrt für den einzelnen die Entstehung dieses Gefühls die Veranlassung, eine Ehe zu schließen (Simmel, 1985: 129).

Once monogamy was transformed into a permanent form of marriage, subjective feelings, which everywhere are the result of long-lasting states and testify to the complete adaptation of individuals to them, now also attached themselves to marriage. What is sometimes said now to justify the marriage of convenience: love would follow the marriage – this is undoubtedly true for the historical development of our kind. There has been a reversal that sociology can confirm in many and important matters: what was a cause for the species is an effect for the individual, and *vice versa*. The legitimacy of monogamy, as it has emerged from economic and social circumstances, has in the first place given rise to the specific feeling of lifelong love and fidelity; and conversely, for the individual, the emergence of this feeling is the occasion for concluding a marriage (my translation).

The feeling of love is an important ingredient to marriage, whose social utility (*soziale Nützlichkeit*) is undoubtable in the struggle for social status and domination. Again, long before the economists of Chicago and Becker in particular notice the importance of a steady foyer for the development of the human capital of children, Simmel wrote:

Das vereinte oder wetteifernde Interesse der Eltern an der Wohlfahrt der Kinder muss die nächste Generation körperlich

und geistig kräftiger machen, als es in einer Gruppe ohne gemeinsame elterliche Fürsorge, also ohne Ehe, möglich wäre; die Ehe schafft dadurch auf die Länge der Zeit eine unmittelbare Überlegenheit der Gruppe gegenüber einer ehelosen, in denen die jüngste Generation immer nur den isolierten Kräften der Mutter oder einer kommunistischen, des persönlichen Interesses entbehrenden Fürsorge überlassen ist (Simmel, 1985: 130).

The combined or competing interest of parents in the welfare of children most certainly makes the next generation physically and mentally stronger than would be possible in a group without shared parental care, that is, without marriage; marriage thus creates, in the long term, an immediate superiority of the group over another that ignores marriage, and in which the youngest generation is always left only to the isolated powers of the mother or to a Communist care lacking in personal interest (my translation).

For Simmel, love in marriage or, in the modern era, *marriage of love* finds its concrete social realization and utility in the struggle for domination of the family group and of the society organized in family groups. Such groups and such societies produce physically and intellectually stronger offspring. If marriage was invented for reasons of administration of goods and money, as Simmel himself corroborates in the same text, then the fact that individual love came upon marriage in the specific historical and geographical context of the advanced monetary economy, that is in the Western European metropolitan life, cannot be a coincidence. Money and love find their inextricable social bond in the family descentance:

Kurz, der Ursprung der Ehe aus dem sozialen Zwecke, dass sie um die Kinder willen da ist, macht sie in der Entwicklung unserer Gattung [...] zu einer Folge der Erzeugung der Nachkommenschaft. Wie die Liebe eine Konsequenz der Ehe war, bis die Ehe eine Konsequenz der Liebe wurde, so ist die Ehe ihrerseits eine Konsequenz der Produktion der nächsten

Generation, bis die jetzige umgekehrte Verfassung eintrat (Simmel, 1985: 130).

In short, the origin of marriage for the social purpose of being there for the sake of the children makes it, in the evolution of our species, [...] a consequence of the generation of offspring. Just as love was a consequence of marriage until marriage became a consequence of love, so marriage itself is again a consequence of next-generation production, until the coming of the present time reversed situation (my translation).

So, in our time, in the current state of our civilization in modern Western European metropolises, argues Simmel, the upbringing of our children is not a consequence of our marriage and of our love, but their cause. That the upbringing and education of our children is the *cause* of love is something that Plato too would agree upon. In his language, this would mean that Eros is driven by the desire to reproduce himself, both bodily and intellectually.

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