

Monetary Mediation of Meaning

An Inquiry into Georg Simmel's Ideas in *Philosophy of Money* (2011 [1907])

Research Question: How Can Money Simultaneously Undermine and Afford Meaning-Making?

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Introduction

This thesis aims to offer a philosophical exploration of Georg Simmel's (1858-1918) magnum opus, *Philosophy of Money* (2011 [1907]), and address the significant gap in academic research that primarily views him, and his work, through a sociological lens. Furthermore, the motivation for this thesis stems from the belief that sociological literature on this book^{1,2,3,4,5} has dismissed some of Simmel's key concepts and that a philosophical approach can uncover the more nuanced dimensions of his thought, offering a more comprehensive understanding of his book.

In the *Philosophy of Money* (2011 [1907]), Georg Simmel presents two seemingly contradictory interpretations of the phenomenon of money. On the one hand, money appears to accelerate experience by way of tying objects together as a 'universal equivalent'⁶. In this view, money undermines other ways of making meaning, subjecting relations, those towards objects and people, to only be monetarily, abstract – and therefore reduced to a single quantitative measure. On the other hand, Simmel analyses money as providing a stabilizing – deceleratory – structure in the face of an environment that continually presents indeterminacy to sense-making agents. By viewing monetary exchange as an information system of sign relations grounded in a lived and thereby undetermined experience, such structures of information, although reductionary, become the means by which meaning becomes possible.

Following Simmel, the thesis restricts itself to the bounds of the two aforementioned opposing interpretations of money. By contrast, the sociological interest so far has taken up only Simmel's first, acceleratory, interpretation. In the most recent publication on Simmel's *Philosophy of Money* (2011 [1907]), Ailon (2022) insists that Simmel "argued that money is an impersonal, uniform instrument that corrupts the true value of things and erodes interpersonal bonds"⁷. All reconciliation is attributed to Zelizer (1989), who first brought Simmel's *Philosophy of Money* forward to sociological research, rejected its impersonal premises, and offered an alternative framework. Despite a one-sentence mention in Horwitz (1995) and Wennerlind (2001) of Simmel having a semiotic framework of money, no matter what contemporary related academic paper one reads since Zelizer (1989), she is cited as the 'revolutionary'. Because of her, Simmel's magnum opus is completely discarded in the relevant fields and the arguments he brings

¹ Ailon, 2022

² Dodd, 2005

³ Gilbert, 2005

⁴ Nelms & Maurer, 2004

⁵ Zelizer, 1989

⁶ Simmel, 2011 [1907], p. 425, 344

⁷ Ailon, 2022, p. 1

forth are misinterpreted as regarding money as meaningless⁸. Neither Horwitz (1995) nor Wennerlind (2001) explicate their semiotic claim, providing no further economic, sociological, or philosophical analysis. Even Gianfranco Poggi's book *Money and the Modern Mind: Georg Simmel's Philosophy of Money* (2023 [1993]) which is supposed to be a reader of Simmel's book, fails to mention the semiotic framework of Simmel.

Therefore, this thesis aims to fill in the research gap on Georg Simmel's *Philosophy of Money* (2011 [1907]). This aim consists of two parts, one is that of foregrounding Simmel's meaning-making interpretation of money, and the other of doing so through a philosophical exploration. This combined aim is oriented towards answering the research question: How can money simultaneously undermine and afford meaning-making?

To observe how this tension could persist without contradiction according to Simmel, this thesis is structured as follows: first, Simmel's place within Western European historical developments, his relation to the contemporary economic landscape, and his relation to thinkers of his time – Max Weber and Karl Marx –, is contextualized. Thereafter, the thesis introduces Simmel's concepts of Value and Being, which move in a direction from abstract to embodied notions of engaging with the world. Next, the thesis develops the concept of embodied money by discussing Simmel's philosophical presuppositions and concepts of sociation, the actualization of the individual, desire, and the distance between the subject-object relationship. Lastly, this thesis will discuss Simmel's interpretation of money as a form of meaning-making, not as an entity that *has* value. With this form-content distinction, this thesis will attempt to resolve the paradox Simmel introduced, where money can simultaneously be something that undermines and affords meaning-making.

Part 1

Historical Contextualization of Georg Simmel

The establishment of the world's first big multinational oil corporation — Rockefeller's Standard Oil (1870-1911) — symbolizes the advent of the Second Industrial Revolution (c1870-1930) in which mass production becomes widespread in Europe. Within this period Europe saw its greatest economic growth. Improvements to infrastructure and market reach reflected great population growth and the rise of the urban city. For example, this period was one of the first in Western Europe where yearly crop failures did not result in starvation, due to the well-connected economy and railway

⁸ Ailon, 2022

infrastructure⁹. Despite this growth, however, the Europeans also suffered years of economic turbulence in the ‘long depression’ between 1873 and 1896.

It is this unpredictable economic environment that sociologist Georg Simmel called a home¹⁰. He was German, Jewish, and studied philosophy and art at the University of Berlin. It is because of his Jewish heritage, that although his works were greatly appreciated by colleagues, he never reached a university chair position until 1914 at the University of Strasbourg, 4 years before his death¹¹.

His home was a frequent meeting point for thinkers and artists such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Edmund Husserl, and Max Weber. It was not a coincidence that together with Weber, Ferdinand Tönnies, and Werner Sombart, he founded the German Sociological Society (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie) in 1909, thereby commencing the tradition of Sociology⁴. After his death, the increasing anti-Semitism in Germany caused his works to be overlooked and mostly forgotten.

Nonetheless, his works are far from useless for contemporary inquiry. This thesis aims to re-introduce Simmel’s *Philosophy of Money* (2011 [1907]), with its relevance for a world in which societies are abundant with relations marked by money. His unprivileged academic position provides this book with the advantage of examining society from a unique standpoint, as he brings a sociological and philosophical analysis that is not shared by many thinkers of either the 20th, or 21st century. An English translation appeared only 80 years after its first publication in 1900¹². It is therefore imaginable that ideas within the book were not widely known and given the chance to develop within the philosophical, sociological, and economic traditions of Western Europe.

Simmel’s Relation to the Contemporary Socio-Economic Landscape

Before and during Simmel’s lifetime, Western European economies enjoyed almost a century-long of Laissez-faire economic growth. After the agreements made in the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) to avoid more war following the Napoleonic Wars (1804-1815), economies had the chance to grow significantly.¹³ Towards the end of the

⁹ Wells, 1899

¹⁰ Britannica, 2024

¹¹ Britannica, 2024 ⁴

Palmisano, 2001

¹² Deflem, 2003

¹³ Granted by the peace that was a result of the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars (1804-1815), Europe enjoyed almost a century-long of Laissez-faire economic growth. However, with too many inflationary investments, France’s war reparations to be paid after the FrancoPrussian War (1870), and the US’s decision to pursue a pure gold standard instead of the bimetallic standard of gold and

19th century, however, the European markets struggled with keeping up with the growth, giving rise to the Long Depression of 1873-1896.

Together, the global financial crisis of 2007-2009 and recent economic turbulence following a long period of growth and economic buildup since the end of the Second World War, resemble the same kind of unpredictable economic environment of the early 20th century of Simmel's time. Nineteenth-century attitudes of "progress and change, of revolution and transformation" are still found in contemporary techno-optimisms of climate technologies, transhumanistic ideas of artificial humans, algorithms, and AI, with worship in progress, growth, and above all rationality¹⁴. Western-fueled worldviews still carry around, – as Günther Anders (1956) notes after the creation of the atomic bomb, – a 'Promethean shame' of self-depreciation. With no awareness of the Babelian towers of (economic) technology that are constantly created and maintained, we still "perceive [even] ourselves as a badly functioning machine, which we dream to update"¹⁵. Surely it cannot be that this sort of attitude is the only way of moving forward.

Yet not much has changed in this regard, my economics lectures at Erasmus were enough evidence on their own. In a country such as the Netherlands – categorized as an 'advanced economy' – there's a shortage of workers whilst there is an abundance of managers – fewer and fewer persons want to be 'merely' an employee. This intellectual class of (to be) economists and entrepreneurs are out to 'game the system', and be financially independent by making a profit from the rest of society – categorized under 'mass culture'. Even though, to do so, they must engage in a rhetoric that subjects others to this relationship they are trying so hard to avoid for themselves. If in one's entire worldview, it is a competition to be first in not being dominated; in which everyone else is less important than oneself, then this institutionalized hypocrisy drives a wedge between the various groups of society.

Indeed, comparably, Meobius notes that similarly at the start of the 20th century, there was also an "educated middle class"¹². Although seeing "themselves further confirmed by the 'mass culture' that they 'dismissed as shallow'", they "used 'mass culture' as a line of demarcation, a foil against which to elevate their educational

silver, the now (1870s), global market fell into a what at the time was referred to as the 'Great Depression' (Glasner & Cooley, 2013). Struggling markets increased national attitudes toward protectionism, seeking to mitigate the effects of the crisis on their infrastructure, national funds, and economic well-being. Looking for cheaper production costs, it was the Long Depression that spurred the European nations to completely colonize Africa for the lower labour and resource costs in competition with other nations (Robinson, Gallagher & Denny, 1961). Ironically, the anti-slavery movement of the late 19th century was used as a justification for this European conquest (Chatalet, 1988). ¹¹ Fisher, 2009, p. 2

¹⁴ Judt, 2005, p. 7

¹⁵ Müller, 2022

knowledge and themselves as a cultural elite”¹⁶. Meobius also notes that the political sphere of the Western European nations at this time was fraught with political fragmentation as people struggled to make sense of a changing world, – changes that were accelerated by a strong role of the market and market-oriented worldviews¹². It is this mixture of social fragmentation and a materially alienated society that “fueled the political projects and social movements that tore Europe apart in the first half of the [twentieth] century”¹⁷. With the hope that this form of social fragmentation does not lead to the same kind of mistakes of the 20th century – with consequences that affected the lives of millions – in a time where political fragmentation is increasing, once again, this thesis aspires to provide the framework and vocabulary that would be necessary to resolve the social dissonance that originates from monetary action through relevant insights from Simmel’s analysis of money.

The motivation for this thesis is not just that Simmel’s *Philosophy of Money* (2011 [1907]) is misunderstood in (sociological) research. Within this book, I believe there is a philosophical corpus that can be applied by individuals living their lives today. So that these individuals can improve their relation to objects and other people in relations that are mediated by money.

Anyone acquainted with Simmel’s writings knows how little he makes his assumptions explicit or cites his work to thinkers that contributed to his thinking¹⁸. The philosophical examination in this thesis is thereby aimed to provide a philosophical base of what the conceptual preconditions must be such that Simmel could have created his theories on money in his book. Thus, although I believe this philosophical ‘base’ could be applied by other’s, this thesis’ reconstruction of Simmel’s philosophical ‘base’ is at most interpretative and should accordingly not be judged to be more than this.

Simmel’s Relation to Max Weber

Although a friend and a colleague, Simmel sets himself apart from Weber, a thinker who is well-known for his sociology of economics. In contrast to Weber, who focused on macro-sociological phenomena, Simmel focuses on how these macro-sociological phenomena express themselves in the lives of individuals, and their relation with others and the world around them. This relational structure that is specific to the individual is a formal process of sociation, a phenomenon by which individuals are formed through their interaction with others¹⁹. Simmel’s emphasis on form in contrast to content in the concept of sociation moves his sociological analysis from the particular instances of

¹⁶ Moebius, 2023, p. 21

¹⁷ Judt, 2005, p. 7

¹⁸ Simmel, 2011 [1907], pp. 5-6

¹⁹ Deflem, 2003

sociological phenomena as pre-given, to how these unfinished forms of identities develop over time. Specifically, Simmel's *Philosophy of Money* (2011 [1907]) aims to emphasize how identity is formed by valuation and meaning-making in money-mediated action. Thus, while Weber's works, like *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (2009 [1930]) focus on the "structural conditions of capitalist money economy", Simmel's creates a "phenomenology of money as a medium of the human experience of reality as such"²⁰.

It is because of this difference in scope compared to Weber, that Simmel's work can be characterized as investigating a particular increasing tension in the individual in the context of late modernity. He found this tension to have climaxed in the dichotomy between the instruments of abstraction (for example; the use of science as grounds for knowledge, machines for labour, and other increased reliance on quantified information and data) that have accumulated in industrial Europe, and the felt experience of individuals. Simmel related the increasing acceleration of German society to the increasing tendency of abstraction. While instruments of abstraction as such aim at establishing certainty and prediction, at the time they nonetheless became the grounds for an accelerating society in which life became unpredictable. As shown in the turbulent years of the Long Depression, money became a main symbol of this acceleration. Although money afforded the means to establish the mass production of goods, this certainty of plenitude was at the expense of a predictable life for the individual. The predictable life in which their relationships with others remained in small, known numbers, with goods of loyalty and reparation was left for one where the web of relations grew in an alienative quantity but not quality²¹.

Simmel's Relation to Karl Marx

Simmel's *Philosophy of Money* also responds to Karl Marx's work on alienation. Marx's theory of alienation describes the increasing estrangement of laborers from their means of production. This alienation, for Marx, would necessarily lead to class struggles between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, resulting in a communistic revolution. Marx's critique of money is focused on its "transformation ... into capital", where it becomes "an independent force that determines the mode of production"²². Money is thereby only instrumental as part of a bigger critique of capitalism²³. Contrastingly, Simmel focused more on how an individual's relations to their surroundings – let that be objects or people – are influenced by the relations afforded by money. In this way,

²⁰ *ibid*, p. 82, both quotes

²¹ Simmel, 2011 [1907], p. 517

²² Deflem, 2003, p. 75

²³ *ibid*, p. 76

Simmel diverges from Marx, emphasizing that Socialism at the turn of 20th century resembled the epitome of the instrumental rationalization behind capitalism, not the opposite of it. In contrast to Marx's focus on production, Simmel's analysis of the alienative quality of money is in its use, – the demand side of society. The changes he put under sociological analysis were not so much external, as for example the increasing dominance by a bourgeois class with dominance over production and land. Instead, the paradox that Simmel is also interested in, is that while money is one of many dominating instruments of abstraction of the 19th century, the relations money affords with objects and others are still valuable for the individual, albeit increasingly impersonal. Money, therefore, remains a meaningful way of engaging with the surrounding world while devaluing other forms of sociation. In this way, Simmel's analysis of money is more pessimistic than Marx's, as Marx's analysis of capitalism concludes that it will undermine itself at some point. Under Simmel's analysis of money, money symbolizes no change to happen at all²⁴. The desired constant commercial stimulation of mass media, products, and advertisements that places individuals increasingly within a state of “permanent hyper-activity”, ensures that there is no space for a thriving social collective that resists this domination to form^{25,26,27}. Even the kinds of worldviews that aim to rise above the financial system, such as the ‘manager culture’, are only able to articulate this freedom with the vocabulary of a financially determined worldview²⁸.

The abundance of these impersonal and naïve relations reflects an increasingly estranged experience, a predicament Simmel termed the blasé attitude. This blasé attitude is not so much a reversing of values towards mechanization or the romanticism of the urban sprawl, but a complete indifference; a dampening of experiences and their qualitative differences into a ‘grey hue’²⁹. Sociologically, Simmel is interested in not only how the individual has to engage with an increasingly impersonal environment, but in how the individual understands themselves differently because they engage with an impersonal environment. This estrangement that “drives modern man from socialism to Nietzsche, from Böcklin to impressionism, from Hegel to Schopenhauer and back again” is a symptom of “the lack of something definite at the centre of the soul [which] impels

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ Zizek, 2023

²⁶ As Zizek remarks in his recent book *Too Late To Awaken* (2023), “things change all the time to make sure that nothing that matters really changes” (p. 143)

²⁷ Quote; Simmel, 2011 [1907], p. 276

²⁸ Just like critics of economic growth tend to only formulate this critique under ‘degrowth’ economics, but is not possible there not more forms of critique of economic growth that remain outside the conceptual distinction of growth/degrowth?

²⁹ Simmel 2011 [1907], p. 276

us to search for momentary satisfaction in ever-new stimulations, sensations and external activities”³⁰.

Stability as Meaning-making

Simmel’s analysis begs the question; for what reason does the individual in the modern world desire features of progress and growth? If anything, this is something the individual chooses, there is no coercion when they decide to engage with money or objects of the external world. Here, Simmel argues that because we live in a world that – even without techno-economic acceleration – continually presents us with a changing environment, stability itself is desired in the face of this flux. To make meaning out of an ever-changing world, individuals require a set of relationships with others and things in which the individual knows oneself. Here, Serres and Deleuze join Simmel, emphasizing that institutions such as the state, and the church have set effective mechanisms in motion to ‘stabilize’ one’s worldview, affording an efficient medium to spread their agenda²⁶. As Dolphijn put it, the evident need for stability when faced with the unpredictable sociohistorical context was “why first the church and then the state was so keen on creating objects, totems, places of worship, prisons, and courthouses”³¹. Similarly, in Simmel, we see money as a comparable ‘totem’, or item of worship which stabilizes an individual’s identity in relation to the world. Money as something that can provide such relationships is a powerful tool. Still, what does it mean then when money or progress itself is desired? To what extent, further, is the individual in need of an external world, and things in it to engage with, to fully become an individual? What is individuality if it depends on its actualization through external objects in which it can embed itself?

What seems to be underrepresented in economics are these metaphysical – and meaning-making – considerations, essentially questioning what notions like individuality, value, money, object, meaning, and desire are. Especially when, unlike in Weber’s works, these concepts are taken with respect to their interdependent, personal socio-temporal and socio-spatial (embedded) contexts. With Simmel one can ask; in what ways does the engagement with objects through desire and money, such that this bond bears meaning and value, form the identity of the individual? For this question, I miss even in philosophy a nuanced answer and view of money, where often, as seen with Marx, it tends to be downplayed for its constitutive role in active and embedded meaning-making. Thus, while there are many critiques of money and the economy that share in Simmel’s analysis regarding the tendencies of alienation, abstraction, and acceleration,

³⁰ Simmel, 2011 [1907], pp. 525-6

³¹ Dolphijn, 2018, p. 18

Simmel's analysis does not stop there. These critiques which also use abstractions to make their claim, suffer under the same 'dulling' frame as what they characterize money to be. Insights from Simmel will show a unique thread of thought that refuses to collapse the discussion to a viewpoint in which money only annihilates meaning. To conclude here the first part, this thesis will now set out to develop Simmel's ideas of value, meaning, and money through his concepts of Value and Being, such that money is understood to be situated within and between the relations of the individual with their environment.

Part 2

Simmel's Concepts of Value and Being

The first main theme of *Philosophy of Money* is Simmel's sociological approach of finding sense through one's relation to the world. His background makes it clear that he sets himself apart from contemporaries by bringing in a formal³² perspective on the individual, and their relations to the world and themselves. In the book, Simmel develops these observations under the theme of meaning-making through contrasting the concepts of Being and Value. He aimed to rebalance the alienating consequence of abstractions with Value as an embodied attitude, by contextualizing the developments of European rationalization. This chapter's inquiry ends with Simmel proposing that Money embodies both the activities of Being and Value.

For Simmel, the concept of 'Value' is a process of discovering meaning in the distance between the observer and the observed by realizing one's perspective that frames said distance. This situation of Valuation is unique in every single created relation because of its socio-temporal and socio-spatial context. However, for one to realize the uniqueness of their relation to the observed, possibilities of comparison to other, relevant observed, are necessary. This way, the uniqueness can be established in their difference from one another. Lastly, the concept of Value describes the process of establishing purpose across multiple time periods in which things are valued.

Simmel's emphasis on this concept is his sociological interest in wanting to interpret meaning-oriented behavior in a time when valuation was not adequately accounted for by the scientific worldview. Simmel claims that culminating up until the end of the 19th century, modernity's 'naturalistic spirit' of rationalization, carries with it the tendency to "dethrone universal concepts, and to emphasize singular instances as

³² formal as in the form-content distinction

the only legitimate content of conceptions”³³. Any universal concept, such as that of Value has, throughout modernity, been reduced to “something purely abstract which acquires meaning only in its material embodiment”³⁴. A symptom of this regression is how the value of a person has been symbolized over the course of European history. Simmel draws the formalization of the absolute sense of Value in Europe from the continent’s Christian past. Christianity introduced the idea that there is a ‘unified and indivisible’ person who must have infinite value, because they cannot “possibly [be compared] by any quantitative standard” nor be “compensated for merely by more or less of another value”³⁵.

Yet, in post-enlightenment Europe, classical liberalism has turned this value into the rights of the individual^{36,37}. While the Christian ‘indivisible’ worth of the individual – that the religion dictates its followers to aspire towards – was infinite and unique to the individual, the individual for classical liberalism was valued in rights - rights understood more abstractly in a social contract negotiation. The European individual has come to know themselves and others increasingly in abstract and homogenous terms. This rationalizing attitude, which lends itself to reducing human beings to categories, devoids them from their status of being uniquely valuable. For example, the reduction of human beings to what they ‘are’ according to a category (race, financial, or social status), hides the process of establishing purpose – meaning-making –, which as a formal process, continually reconstitutes what they ‘are’. Whilst Christianity also used abstract judgments of one’s value (Judgement Day), these judgments were never delegated to a third medium, rather just translated via a translation system offered by the Bible. The development of human rights without the addition of the right to something expresses the trajectory of shifting from a purpose-led orientation to that of a more instrumental one.

³³ Simmel, 2011 [1907], p. 217

³⁴ *ibid*, p. 217

³⁵ *ibid*, p. 389

³⁶ *ibid*, p. 389

³⁷ This parallel is also noted by Jürgen Habermas in his “Time of Transitions” (2006): “Universalistic egalitarianism, from which sprang the ideals of freedom and a collective life in solidarity, the autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy, is the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love. This legacy, substantially unchanged, has been the object of continual critical appropriation and reinterpretation. To this day, there is no alternative to it. And in light of the current challenges of a postnational constellation, we continue to draw on the substance of this heritage. Everything else is just idle postmodern talk.” pp. 150-151

While instruments of abstraction were and are useful as forms of sociation, Simmel attributes the increasing alienative conditioning of the mind to the intensification of instruments of abstraction in the history of early modern Europe. Simmel uses this analysis of an increasing abstracted-ness to argue for the importance of a new concept that validates Value objectively – where Value is neither to be reduced to singular instances of subjective ‘interpretation’, nor considered so abstract that it bears no connection to one’s embodied engagement with the world.

As a further symptom, the growth of industry and factory production, which increased the replaceability of a human worker, reduced the value of a person to only the work they can produce. Human lives were felt to be used as tools for the gain of a representation of value, no longer Value itself. Thus, with the concept of Value, Simmel critiques modernity for the disappearing perspective of the inherent Value of a person. Simmel emphasizes that behavior will always be Value-oriented because a person is always situated within a spatial and temporal locality, whether this behavior is retroactively categorized as such, or not. Simmel talks about being embodied within objects through a relation of valuation, and I will therefore, for clarification in this thesis, distinguish between ‘abstract value’ and ‘embodied’ Value by capitalizing ‘Value’ for the latter³⁸. A mode of analysis that utilizes this embodied Value is not about arguing for a ‘new’ way of doing things, but rather merely about revealing what has always already been – and will continue to be. With the framework of Value, Simmel shows that there can be a rational explanation for the embodied interaction between the individual and their surroundings that is otherwise considered metaphysical by the naturalistic framework of an abstract scientific worldview.

Conversely, ‘Being’ describes the process of establishing an objective world and things existing within it by representing them in structures of thought. For Simmel, the concept of Being is similarly embodied; Being is to humans, as observation is to science. Influenced by Kant, Simmel continues in the tradition of acknowledging a gap between the object itself and the representation of this object qua object. To say that an object exists is not a quality of that object, Simmel writes, for “if I state that an object which so far existed only in my thoughts, exists, it does not acquire a new quality, because otherwise it would not be the same object that I thought of, but another one”³⁹. The objective knowledge of an object is not part of an object, but rather exists as something of its own, as it neither resides solely within the perspective of the subject.

Simmel parallels this notion of embodied Being to that of embodied Value in an attempt to equate the validity of the latter with the former. In the same way as with the attitude of Being, when one values an object, this object does not “gain a new quality”,

³⁸ Simmel, 2011 [1907], p. 138

³⁹ Simmel, 2011 [1907], pp. 62-3

it is “valued because of the qualities it has”⁴⁰. While the common tendency is to ascribe valuation to the ‘eye of the beholder’, Simmel challenges his readers to regard Value as “like light and shade”; Value only gains its use in the embodied interaction with a world out there⁴¹. Yet, Value is not reducible to the world as much as it is to the subject either⁴². Value and Being should not be reduced to the dualism between representation and the world as it is, respectively. This attitude mistakes the attitude of Being to uncover ‘truth’ as if it resides within the world ‘as it is’, not something that is created⁴³. By showing that activities of Being are active constructions of the mind as much as activities of Value, Simmel emphasizes that the world will only be what we represent it to be. The fact that such objective representations, like that of truth, are active constructions of the mind, does not mean their realness is undermined. On the contrary, using Kant’s epistemological framework, Simmel emphasizes that such active constructions and the experience from which they originate will always be bound by the same enabling constraints of space and time⁴⁴.

To summarize, Simmel critiques the established worldview, a worldview which according to Simmel only considers ‘abstract Being’ as a valid framework, by using Kant’s work to argue for an embodied version of Being. Then, he brings the framework of Value back from its ‘prohibited’ status by showing that it is on equal terms – in their embodied formats – with the framework of Being⁴⁵.

Man uses embodied Value and embodied Being together to make sense of the world and find meaning in his interactions with things and other people. While the activity of Being homogenizes things by reducing a phenomenon to a shared and universal rule, equation, or law, Value’s necessary “fundamental quality is not uniformity but difference”⁴⁶. It is in the tension between the two tendencies of homogenizing and creating a difference that things are known on their own through their relation to others. For Simmel, money is the ultimate example of how the modes of Value and Being interact. Money links all the objects it represents through a common denominator, yet only creates value by opposing these objects to each other in terms of their worth⁴⁷.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 63

⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 63

⁴² *ibid*, p. 62

⁴³ p. 123

⁴⁴ *ibid*, pp. 94-5

⁴⁵ Interpreting simultaneously why Western-European societies have struggled so much with validating Value, if only an abstract/analytic benchmark was adequate

⁴⁶ Simmel, 2011 [1907], p. 61

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p. 141, 155-156

Embodied Money

First and foremost, Simmel is concerned with the psychological aspect of money. As an activity of Being, Simmel emphasizes the reduction of qualitative differences between objects through money's homogenizing quantitative measure⁴⁸. By placing objects into a series that money nets together, the "individual significance of different objects" that were previously regarded as valuable, is "degraded through their exchangeability"⁴⁹. The exchangeability that money affords is precisely what makes it an instrument of abstraction. It is the proportional comparison of value through a quantitative measurement that connects two otherwise disconnected objects. Thus, as an object becomes commodified, it is transformed into a means for acquiring other objects⁵⁰. Hence, the exchangeability of objects through money creates a comparative indifference towards each object because they are no longer valued for what they are.

It is this mental operation of 'leveling', that initiates the indifference of the blasé attitude towards objects and the surrounding world⁵¹. The mediation of Value through the abstraction of money detaches individuals from objects within everyday life⁵². No wonder that modern man adopts a blasé attitude if the "numerous objects that swarm around [him]", physically express the increasing "insecurity and disloyalty" towards objects and the world at large⁵³.

Money, because of its malleable form, takes on the meaning of the context in which it is used, which both extends its use for substituting for Value, but simultaneously destroys its usefulness precisely due to its increasingly ambiguous form⁵⁴. The latter tends to dominate in modern society because of the lack of a grander meaning in life by the insignificance placed on Value. While money can only ever remain a means, the desire for money itself is a symptom of both the favoring of indifference over Value and the transformation of a means into an end. Desiring money itself only furthers the nihilism of modern times, since money is ultimately there to be given away; even the "occasional repose" is only "out of anticipation of its further motion"^{55,56}. If what is valued so much constantly moves between hands, more

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p. 136, 427

⁴⁹ *ibid*, p. 425

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p. 467

⁵¹ *ibid*, p. 426

⁵² *ibid*, p. 437

⁵³ *ibid*, p. 499

⁵⁴ Simmel, 2011 [1907], p. 478, 510

⁵⁵ In reference to behaviors of speculation like stock market timing

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p. 554

than ever, this multiplies the general sentiment that the “core and meaning of life always slips through one’s hands”⁵⁷.

Yet, for what reason then does money itself become desired if it only leads to eventual disappointment? Simmel considers money, whilst still admitting it as an instrument of abstraction, to simultaneously afford the making of meaning for an individual. In his inquiry of how individuals make sense of their world and themselves in relation to it as a form of sociation, Simmel views the individual from the standpoint of a continual process of sociation. The subject’s identity is not presupposed but rather emerges out of the embodied interaction between others, and the items in their environment. Money provides one of many ways to enter in relation with these external items, even if it is by commodifying them under a common denominator⁵⁸. Money should not be understood as the ‘abstract’ copy of value, but rather as a relational affordance, where money affords two things to have something in common so that they can be compared – and thus Valued. In the final part of this thesis, such philosophical considerations will be expanded through Simmel’s concepts of sociation, the actualization of the individual, desire, and the distance between the subject-object relationship.

Part 3

Process of Sociation: The Creation of the Subject

On top of the previously mentioned reliance on Kant’s intuitions of time and space, Simmel relies here on a Heraclitean flux notion of experience to justify the importance of engaging with an external environment for the creation of meaning as the establishment of identity. He concludes that the individual requires stabilizing mediums, such as money, which afford the connections between items to make meaning in the face of the processual flux of experience.

While the individual exists in a perpetual unknown and changing environment, intuitions of time and space afford differentiation of one context and the next in a time-space continuum. Such differentiation of one moment to the next, and one location instead of another establishes the dichotomy of externality and internality for the individual, bringing about some sort of stability. To establish an unchanging ‘I’, the concept of ‘change’ needs to be made relevant. Similarly, to establish the extended entity of ‘I’, entities of ‘not-I’ must be made relevant. Here, the mediating intuitions of space and time, and the concepts used to understand this mediation give rise to a gap between

⁵⁷ *ibid*, p. 437

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p. 136

the understood 'phenomenal' world, and the lived 'noumenal' world, The gap between the noumenal and phenomenal world is necessary for the formation of identity because this distance affords the reflexivity between object and subject⁵⁹.

Simmel's ontology is primarily relational where substances temporally stabilize and appear as identities. Meaning is created in the process of stabilizing these subject-object identities in the face of a background of change. The establishment of a structure of subjects and objects, as such, is a foregrounding act of active construction. In Simmel's idea of sociation, the individual must be understood as empty in form, and only filled with the 'content' of subject's identity by the form's temporary actualization. The individual is differentiated from the subject's identity, where meaning is created in the process of an identity appearing temporally out of the form of the individual. Whereas value is the retroactive, static, reflection of this process, meaning must thus be understood as standing opposite to it; dynamic and temporally situated. Such a temporally and spatially constricted notion of identity stands opposite to the mode of thought behind individualism which secures identity as pre-given.

Simmel emphasizes, furthermore, that the process of desire extends and necessarily sustains this distance of subject and object as "it places what is desired externally to what is not yet here"⁶⁰. It is, therefore, the establishment of this relation between a subject and the desired object, as this known relation actualizes the identity of the individual into a knowable subject. Here, Simmel emphasizes that meaning becomes value in the unification process of the distance between the subject and object – the chase of the two –, rather than the event of the unification per se⁶¹.

It must be understood that the unity of the subject and object, that is when the object is at a far enough distance such that the subject can know itself, is often confused with the unity of the subject reaching the object. As will be discussed more in a later section of this thesis, this misidentification is part of the reification of value to originate within the object, not in the relation to it. The misidentification results in a moment of disturbance and uncertainty – the subject does not know itself because it does not know what it wants anymore the moment an object is acquired. With the individual, in a parallel fashion, mistaking themselves to be the propositional identity of the subject which acquires the object, the individual will think that meaning is only found in the constant acquisition of objects, consequently focusing less on the objects themselves. In such a way the blasé attitude can develop, and objects become reduced to mere means of filling the void of uncertainty, not valued individually for what they are.

⁵⁹ Simmel. 2011 [1907], p. 514

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 68

⁶¹ *ibid*, p. 69

The subject is knowable through what it desires because it maintains a set of aims despite the uncertainty of the processual Heraclitean flux. Simultaneously, the subject is also knowable by what it does not desire anymore – both the unity and the “lack of unity of the object that we create affects, in a psychological – practical sense, the corresponding formation of our personality”⁶². Making choices of what one desires is also about choosing the kind of individual one is when making those choices – and the kinds of choices that this kind of individual refrains from. How an individual makes sense of their external environment, with its identities that are formed in the creation of the subject, reflects onto the individual’s form – the kind of person they are, as opposed to what they are.

Money as Mediator of Meaning

Furthermore, the subject-in-becoming requires means, or in other words, a mediator, to uphold the distance and actualize that meaning in the world of objects⁶³. Whether this mediation is artistic through art, or linguistic through words, the individual reaffirms their identity as a subject through the form of their choice. Simmel’s idea of money is, simply put, that money is an example of a mediator that allows values to be actualized through their transformation into a particular mode of interaction with an object⁶⁴. Money mediates meaning into materiality by offering a relation between subject and object, and a way to reconcile the distance between them. Ultimately, this is how money, for Simmel, acts as a stabilizing anchor in the face of the Heraclitean flux. Through money, the subject gains new relationships with objects that it can understand, reconcile, and overcome⁶⁵.

For Simmel, money is more than a token, money affords new ways of engagement and is thus always contextually imbued with the meanings in the way that it is used. The social meaning is not a part of money, instead, money as the object is part of the social context in which it is used. But because language is constricted by being able to only adopt a subject-predicate relationship, the relation of the context itself is hidden. An embodied concept of money includes this social context as well as the money object itself. Embodied money is more than the object of money when it is used in everyday interactions. Money cannot exist without these social contexts and relations, and yet, its representation as a copy of value is treated as something more real than these relations, as they are hidden by the language used to refer to them.

⁶² Simmel, 2011 [1907], p. 492

⁶³ *ibid*, p. 21

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. 21

⁶⁵ *ibid*, p. 488-9

Despite my critique of her knowledge of Simmel's work, Viviana Zelizer nevertheless has relevant research on the primacy of social contexts. In her paper "The Social Meaning of Money" (1989), she describes how women in the period of the 1870s-1930s were not allowed to have an earning because the money belonged to their husbands⁶⁶. The social context in some of the state's courtrooms, workplaces, or private correspondences justified "ironically but significantly," that "a wife's domestic earning could become her property but only as her husband's gift"⁶⁷. This 'earmarking' Zelizer coined, focuses on how individuals specific to their social relationships assign various meanings to money which is otherwise homogenous in amount. This earmarking records the way the money is received, from whom, and for what purpose, and how this money simultaneously has individual-specific affordances. All these constraints enable a unique relationship to a specific amount of money at any certain place and time.

It matters whether a particular amount of money is a bribe, tribute, donation, wage, allowance, ransom, bonus, tip, damages, or premium as they indicate a specific relationship between the people in the social context in which this amount is used⁶⁸. Taking away these distinctions by reducing valuation to only the content of money itself – the monetary price – fulfils the proscriptive promise that money alienates contexts. She writes that money "may well "corrupt" values into numbers, but values and sentiment reciprocally corrupt money by investing it with moral, social, and religious meaning"⁶⁹. Again, as Simmel notes regarding the mode of Value, this investment of 'moral, social and religious meaning' occurs whether it is acknowledged by retroactive analysis or not. The value of an object does not lie within its content, just as was accepted that truth does not lie within the content of a representation but in the relation between this representation and that which is represented.

When meaning is construed to be in the content of the object as opposed to in the process of reaching it (as identity-forming) – money is aimed for as an end in itself. With no attention to the meaning-making process, the means of acquiring other objects becomes a reified object itself – money becomes merely a token of value. The alienation, blasé attitude, and acceleration attributed to money are, therefore not an external force undermining the individual, rather occur only through how money is used subject to contextual constraints. In other words, these effects are not a property of money, because money as a form does not prescribe these uses.

Proscriptively, however, money increases the likeliness of these effects through the 'style' constraints of its form, because it clears the qualitative differences of various

⁶⁶ Zelizer 1989

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 366

⁶⁸ *ibid*, p. 351

⁶⁹ *ibid*, p. 347-8

objects by linking them together by price as an instrument of abstraction. Simmel writes about the emerging phenomena in his time of the ‘fifty cents bazaar’ – the equivalent of the various modern ‘dollar stores’, in which “it is not the commodity that is the center of interest here but the price – a principle that in former times not only would have appeared shameless but would have been absolutely impossible”⁷⁰. It is likewise only a relatively new phenomenon in human history that organizational decisions are made based on quotas, profit margins, or net cost-benefit trade-offs. Although it makes sense to base decisions when dealing with complicated and bigger systems on simpler heuristics, they have become the norm, not a supplement to other forms of meaning-making.

The economist and sociologist Thomas Veblen to whom the concept of the ‘Veblen good’ is attributed, noted that goods are often bought because of their price⁷¹. Such is the case when, for example, the price of an expensive good creates the rationale of obtaining ‘status’ through acquiring that product. However, retroactively rationalizing a decision based merely on price ignores the contextual form in which the decision is made, thereby creating a false idea of where meaning comes from. Meaning is neither in the reified object nor the subject, but rather in the process of an individual becoming a subject through their relationship to an object that is afforded by a medium such as money.

While the representations, abstractions, and heuristics of meaning-making are useful because they create stable maps of a complicated territory, it is as A. N. Whitehead and Gregory Bateson note, the fallacy of misplaced concreteness to mistake a single map of identity for the territory of meaning-making in the form of the individual^{72,73}. Although the example of the fifty cents bazaar is the opposite of a Veblen good, in that one is admiring something for its low price, the latter for its high price, Simmel emphasizes that both forms of admiration are the same pattern of a reifying kind of behavior. The sign of the price is taken as more real, more desired, than what the representation refers to – the engagement with the object. In the same way, those wanting to be ‘financially independent’ rely on reifying money to distance themselves from it. By not attending to the form in which money is used, such an individual similarly places meaning into the object of money, albeit in its negative definition, becoming equally possessed by it. Thus, even in the critique of a bias created by the reification of a process like individuality and a mediator like money, one can nevertheless end up in the same bias by needing the identity of the distinction to act. The difference is from where the critique is made; is it

⁷⁰ Simmel, 2011 [1907], p. 426

⁷¹ Veblen, 1994

⁷² Whitehead, 2010

⁷³ Bateson, 2000

from the viewpoint of the subject which sees only objects, or from the individual which sees only forms and relations? What a critique of money should encompass is not money as such – as entity–, but money as form.

As a form, the measurement of money cannot determine the value content of the objects, as objects do not acquire value through monetary valuation as a quality of them. What is otherwise the same amount of money for multiple people, from the perspective of one individual, this amount of money ties objects together in a specific organization that is meaningful to them specifically – in terms of their knowledge of what they can use that money for. In the embodied predicament of having to choose both between objects and the way of engaging with them – with the spatial and temporal constraints of being tied to a particular context and thus limited in objects and ways to engage – an object becomes meaningful in its distinction from other objects and time spent with it, and engaged with it⁷⁴. For Simmel, this is the basis of economic value, which in some way, the economic idea of scarcity explains to economists.

What (to-be) economists miss, however, is that the personal context that ties down an individual based on their constraints provides a unique valuation of objects and is meaningful to them. For the economist, objects have value because they are representationally scarce - in that an infinite of them does not exist. On the contrary, under sociological analysis, Simmel finds that individuals value objects because their opportunity to meaningfully engage with them is scarce. The activity of economics projects that both the individuals that demand and the objects that become supply are stable entities for its models to work. Thus, in contrast to the starting assumption of a Heraclitean flux, the chosen enabling constraint in economic thinking is that of stability behind its representations. With stability – and rigidity – permeating every dispersed and enacted upon model of economics, the experience of the subjects using these models will be completely altered, both in their reflection and engagement with each other, and the world.

The form of economic thinking mediates the way an economist engages with the objects, just like the form of money mediates the way a user of money engages with the world, and its objects and subsequently changes them. One can say here that the individual who identifies, for example, as a salesperson in that they handle money, sees the world differently than one who abstains from using money. The form of money establishes a particular mode of engagement through which the salesman organizes objects and themselves concerning this organization for a purpose that bears meaning to them. This monetary conditioning thus operates on two levels; one in the linguistic world of models and way of thinking, and the other in the behavior with money.

⁷⁴ Simmel, 2011 [1907], p. 89

Thereby, forms of meaning-making individuals create in turn, forms and changes them in how they understand themselves in the use. The usefulness of a framework, either embodied in language or another mediary, like money, “depend[s] entirely upon what this representation can accomplish as a real process within the organism, allied with other physical and psychological forces and with reference to the specific needs of life”⁷⁵. Thus, Simmel writes, “there are as many basically different truths as there are different organizations and conditions of life” because “truth is not useful because it is true”, something is true because it is useful⁷⁶.

All forms of meaning-making are valid – including actualizing meaning into value through money. Here, Simmel’s ideas bring to light a framework with a potential solution to relations that are dominated by money – precisely those that are attempting to be free from it. The first step to change to a society in which sociation is not dominated by money is to acknowledge that using money is a form of meaning-making. Not recognizing the commonality between money and other forms of meaning-making obstructs the possibility of moving beyond money or acting differently with it. For individuals to depend less on money, they require other stabilizing means for sociation – which is only possible if money is seen as a meaningful stabilizing form. A history of weakening the validity of Value, resulting in the “illusory yet pervasive” worldview that “market exchange is free from cultural or social constraints” problematically considers nothing to exist beyond what can be measured⁷⁷.

Simmel’s work demands a revaluation of what it means to handle money. Both for those who consider money to have money and for those who identify money to be void of meaning. Meaning is not in the money-object as a content, but in the money-as-form.

Apophatic Identity

Simmel’s revaluation is made clear in the distinction between an embodied versus abstract engagement with the external world. This distinction is characterized by the difference in acting from the viewpoint of the subject, which only retroactively comprehends that something has value in terms of its relation to an identity, and the viewpoint of the individual in which identity is undecided but the process of becoming an identity is undeniably meaningful. Starting with the distinction between externality and internality, which language can then retroactively categorize, this is how the spatial mediation between the noumenal and the phenomenal stabilizes the subject. Thus, while the subject originates from the individual, if rationalistic attitudes are overemphasized – a disposition that fears that, which it cannot categorize – the subject will attach itself to

⁷⁵ Simmel, 2011 [1907], p. 113

⁷⁶ *ibid*, p. 113

⁷⁷ Zelizer, 1989, p. 343

its knowable identities to the detriment of a meaningful sociation process. Choices, decisions, and valuations are then not understood as originating from the process in which the empty form of the individual becomes the subject, but instead, only from a reified subject – where the lack of a knowable subject creates an inherent and pathological desire for attaching to an identity.

However, from the standpoint of the individual, there exists no end goal in merely completing a singular reconciliation of subject and object for the actualization of an identity. The confusion of the individual for its identities as opposed to the former process is what creates the false idea that value originates within the object – including money when it is reified as an object. Identity is only stable in the process of traversing the distance made available by the mediator, and thus a single reconciliation between subject and object only creates the need for doing it again. This process, Simmel notes, is like the “great number of processes” that “approach a definite goal by which their course is unambiguously determined yet would lose precisely those qualities that led them towards the goal if they were actually to reach it”⁷⁸. Such is the predicament of human identity, precisely because the individual can only find meaning in an indirect way through a mediator, does each instance of something meaningful lose its significance if the individual does not let go of this temporary identity to adopt a new one.

To continually attach to one’s identity in the fear of losing it when faced with the empty form of individuality, is to have a constant desire such that no real meaningful relationship between the subject and what is desired can emerge. This can be seen for example in the constant buying of the newest upgrade, fashion rage, or scrolling Instagram and Tik-Tok for new stimuli to fulfil a never-ending hunger. The acquisition of each of these desires becomes the grounds for a meaningless – blasé – existence where each object is left for the next.

Simultaneously, this behavioral pattern expresses itself when there exists the aim to distance oneself from money, or at large, distance oneself from a destructive habit. Distancing oneself without gaining the identity that the negation of this habit provides will always be frightening as it requires the individual to let go of a certain identity and risk meaninglessness as an ‘empty individual’. Those that handle money must choose between a short-term gain with a long-term loss of blasé meaninglessness, or a short-term loss of meaning for a long-term gain.

To give an example of what the opposite relationship between an empty individual and a temporary subject looks like, I will use the framework of apophatic theology. Apophatic theology emphasizes that the transcendent will remain beyond any positive statements of it, thus only negative statements in what it is not, are adequate to refer to

⁷⁸ Simmel, 2011 [1907], p. 176

the transcendent via negativa⁷⁹. Thereby, to go back to the relationship between identity and the individual, only an inherent reluctance to engage in an identity from the standpoint of the individual would ensure that any identity that is created must have been meaningful to do so for itself, not as a means for filling the lack of an unknown subject.

Here, this thesis arrives at answering my final question – how could it be that even those who want to be ‘financially independent’ of money become wrapped in thinking precisely through only its terms. Both wanting or distancing oneself of money, from the position of the subject – thus in only propositional terms–, creates an identity that if the self wants itself to continue to exist, it can only do so through the identity that is expressed with the way of engagement that money affords. To rid oneself of money, one must rid oneself of the identity that money gives – precisely also in its negation. This removal is useless without the suspension of judgment of making an identity. Otherwise, the fear of the subject which cannot grasp anything without reifying the process of meaning-making, will pathologically create identities and shut itself off from the process that makes it possible to exist. Here, this point connects to the aforementioned idea of change happening on one level for no change to happen where it is important. Without resisting the temptation of clinging to an identity, the individual will never have the chance to critically reflect on what kind of identities are most meaningful for their short existence. Confronting the dynamic (and phenomenological) relationship between individuality and subject is nonoptional.

Summary and Conclusion

In a nod to Heraclitus, Simmel stresses that money never has the same context twice due to its meaning-oriented embeddedness. Simmel’s inquiry challenges ideas of identity, desire, and valuation that are static. As a mediator of meaning into Value, money acts in an embodied way. If this fact remains unnoticed, money will remain conceived of as only an abstract ‘entity’, while actions towards it will nevertheless be imbued with meaning (this is ironically most clearly obvious when it is treated as an end in itself).

Simmel emphasizes, in this regard, that money is not an entity that has value, but rather is a relation between people, and objects as something that mediates and affords valuation. As a mediator that sustains the distance between the noumenal and the phenomenal, money affords the intelligibility of the subject in reflection of its purposeful relation to the object. Hence, Simmel’s sociological theory of ‘what’ an individual is, is that it is ultimately an empty form that only actualizes itself as an identity through the

⁷⁹ Kondrila, 2016

interaction with an external world. The individual engages with this externality through various kinds of mediation, starting with the intuitions of time and space. As mediaries, the intuitions and forms of meaning-making, such as money, create a distance in which the subject and object emerge in relation to each other. However, while some identity is created within this process, this identity is temporal and continuously constructed against a backdrop of an ever-changing landscape. Since identity is continuously shaped by this forming process between embodied engagement and external objects, whether one wants to call it responsibility, obligation, or mindfulness, Simmel's analysis urges meaning-making agents to be careful of what kind of identities they adopt in the way they engage with others and the world.

From asking the question of how individuals transform value into money, Simmel turns the question around to how the translation of value into money affects individuals that use it. The formal process becomes a reflection on the individual, as making choices is also about choosing the kind of individual one becomes when making those choices.

Accepting the emptiness of individuality creates the space to actualize one's identity for something truly meaningful. This is not the death of the subject as merely a perspective amongst many other valuing subjects, but its liberation. The individual gains the moment-to-moment necessary awareness that a temporary attachment to an object is indeed a temporary attachment, but precisely its temporal bind is what allows for meaning to exist. The realization that a particular attachment's difference from another attachment must be considered equally valid for it to count as such, becomes the grounds for the enjoyment and valuation of the attachment, not the destruction of it. Thus, in reaching for a desire, whether through the mediation of money or not, the meaning is in the process, not in reaching the desire itself. Of course, without that which is desired – the ends – there are no means, and here Simmel would offer the conclusion that while the meaning is not in the ends themselves, the chosen ends, and specifically how these ends are chosen, shape the way the process of reaching these ends are enjoyed. Money, as a mediary form of meaning-making, must thus be seen as affording the creation of meaning, but simultaneously be treated with caution such that it is not desired as a thing in itself. As doing so would impair the possibility of making meaning through it.

With this conclusion on means and ends, it is not my intention to reduce meaning to only be acquired in behavior that can be reflected upon. Simmel's embodied notions of Value and Being are concepts that refer to processes of experience that involve both propositional and non-propositional components of experience, orienting them all under a purpose-led framework. This distinction which supplements with non-propositional ways of being is what bridges the gap between the individual and the identity of the subject.

This thesis has not managed to cover all of Simmel's ideas in *Philosophy of Money* (2011 [1907]), however, that was also not the primary aim. The primary aim was to

philosophically outline Simmel's ideas of money as part of a meaning-imbued social process. Through this analysis, it has become clearer how the beliefs that money-as-object *has* either meaning itself or no meaning, operates with the same mistaken framework that meaning is in the content of an object – whether it be money or an object that can be acquired with money. The original tension of Simmel's two opposing interpretations of money can persist without contradiction only with the miscategorization of money as an entity. Such miscategorizations will continue to appear when meaning is considered to originate from a reified, known subject and object, instead of the individual-in-becoming. I hope to have hereby also given insights from Simmel's work that are relevant for individuals in contemporary times who struggle to live a meaningful life in their actions marked by money.

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