

The Relationship of Philosophy, Sociology and Pedagogy in the Work of Georg Simmel¹

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“*Relationship*” is an important term in the work of Georg Simmel (1858 – 1918). Simmel used this or familiar term to describe completely different processes and structures. In this essay attempts will be made to apply the concept of *relationship* to the work of Simmel itself. The aim is to demonstrate particularly interesting links between Simmel’s philosophy, sociology and pedagogy.

Essentially, three Simmel’s books are focused on in the given essay: “Philosophy of Money” (“Philosophie des Geldes”, 1900), “Sociology” (“Soziologie”, 1908) and “School pedagogy” (“Schulpädagogik”, 1922). The intention of the essay is not to give extensive interpretations of the special parts of these books. The intention is to show in general terms that at least four Simmel’s ideas create a strong relationship between his philosophy, sociology and pedagogy:

- The first idea is a metaphysical supposition and relates to the terms “process” and “interaction” (Wechselwirkung).
- The second idea is a methodological supposition and relates to the term “detail” (Einzelheit).
- The third idea is an anthropological supposition and relates to the term “individual” (Individuum).
- The fourth idea is an act theoretical supposition and relates to the terms “means” and “ends” (Mittel und Zweck).

The analysis of Simmel’s books demonstrates that he liked to work with these suppositions. But this does not mean that you can find only repetitions, copies or deductions of these ideas in Simmel’s philosophy, sociology and pedagogy. In fact, you can find many developments, transformations and sometimes surprising variations of them. .

Thus the essay is developed in three steps. Step 1: the author explains the philosophical form of the said four ideas. After that he describes how the given ideas are transformed in Simmel’s sociology (step 2) and in Simmel’s school pedagogy (step 3).

I. Philosophy

In “Philosophy of Money” the metaphysical, methodological, anthropological and act theoretical suppositions of Georg Simmel are nearly all important. In the following paragraphs the prototypes of these ideas will be described.

1. Metaphysical Supposition: Interaction and Process

What is the structure of the world? Is it the structure of a house: with one fundament, with one entrance, with a hierarchy of floors, with separated rooms and with one top? Simmel’s answer is: “No”. His assumption is: The world is a network of small elements, which constantly interact and change. In this network all is in contact with all. Therefore each item is an individual mirror of the world. Each item can be the fundament and the top, and each item can be the center and the

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periphery in this network since the “basic characteristic of all knowable existence” is “the interdependence and interaction of everything”. (Simmel 2004, 119)

Simmel’s term for his own metaphysical position is “a relativistic world view”. He defends his position in the following way:

“The relativistic view has often been considered as a degradation of the value, reliability and significance of things, regardless of the fact that only the naive adherence to something absolute, which is here questioned, could put relativism in such a position. In reality, however, it is the contrary that is true; only through the continuous dissolution of any rigid separateness into interaction do we approach the functional unity of all elements of the universe, in which the significance of each element affects everything else.” (Simmel 2004, 118)

The relativistic idea of the “dissolution of things into relations and processes” leads Simmel to a particular notion of infinity:

“If the effect that one element produces upon another then becomes a cause that reflects back as an effect upon the former, which in turn repeats the process by becoming a cause of retroaction, then we have a model of genuine infinity in activity. Here is an immanent infinity comparable to that of the circle; for the latter also develops only in complete mutuality, by which each part of the circle determines the position of other parts (...). If infinity is regarded as a substance, or as the measure of an absolute, it always remains something finite though very large. The finiteness of existence is only transcended through the conditioning of every content of being by another content, which in turn is equally conditioned – either by a third factor which undergoes the same process or by an interaction of the two.” (Simmel 2004, 119)

2. Methodological Supposition: Detail and Totality

The said metaphysical supposition is closely related to the methodological supposition of Simmel, which says: the scientific examination of the interaction of these small world elements leads to a better understanding of the world.

And, indeed, Simmel’s research interests were often orientated (nesuprantu) to the small events and small objects. That is obvious, for example, in his essays „The handle“ (“Der Henkel”), „The picture frame“ (“Der Bilderrahmen”), “The coquetry” (“Die Koketterie”) (Simmel 1986) and “On the Caricature” (“Über die Karikatur”) (Simmel 1922b). Also I It can also be seen in the fact that Simmel often writes about the function and the meaning of a little piece of time: the moment (“Augenblick”) (e.g. Simmel 1918, 208; Simmel 1985, 3).

The most impressive example for Simmel’s interest in details is the book “Philosophy of Money“. Here Simmel argues that traditional philosophy cannot really explain the details of life because:

“The abstract philosophical construction of a system maintains such a distance from the individual phenomena, especially from practical existence, that actually, at first sight, it only postulates their salvation from isolation and lack of spirituality, even from repulsiveness.” (Simmel 2004, 55)

Simmel adheres to a completely different methodological and philosophical program. He fails to begin his inquiry with the construction of a philosophical system but starts it with a detail of practical existence: with the phenomenon of money. He reflects this detail from a completely different points of view and in the end the research doesn’t come to a philosophical system but to a network of interdependent and interacting elements. So it may be asked what the purpose of “Philosophy of Money” is?

“The unity of these investigations does not lie, therefore, in an assertion about a particular content of knowledge and its gradually accumulating proofs but rather in the possibility – which must be demonstrated – of finding in each of life’s details the totality of its meaning.” (Simmel 2004, 55)

A few chapters later Simmel describes an important result of his investigation:

“The philosophical significance of money is that it represents within the practical world the most certain image and the clearest embodiment of the formula of all being, according to which things receive their meaning through each other, and have their being determined by their mutual relations.” (Simmel 2004, 128f)

3. Anthropological Supposition: Flowing Individual Life

Simmel’s metaphysical supposition is also closely related to his central anthropological supposition, which argues that : the individuality of human beings is not static but is constantly changing. The individual is an entire complex of interactions in which each element interacts with all others. That is why it is impossible to express or to understand exactly the individuality of a human being.

In other words, the principle of the world is that elements “have their being determined by their mutual relations”. Life is the exaggeration of this principle. And human life, especially the human mind, is the next step of this exaggeration, because the mental life shows a particular intensive interaction of its elements. One aspect of this intensity is the continuity:

“We must conceive the mental process as a continuous flux, in which there are no distinct breaks, so that one mental state passes into the next uninterruptedly, in the manner of organic growth.” (Simmel 2004, 115)

Another aspect of the mental life is the intensive interaction with itself:

“Our mind has no substantial unity, but only the unity that results from the interaction between the subject and object into which the mind divides itself. This is not an accidental form of the mind, which could be different without changing our essential qualities. It is rather the decisive form of the mind. To have a mind means nothing more than to execute this inner separation, to make the self an object, to be able to know oneself. That there is ‘no subject without an object, no object without a subject’ is realized first within the mind, which raises itself as the knowing subject above itself, as the object known; and by knowing this knowledge of itself, the life of the mind proceeds necessarily in the progressus ad infinitum. Its actual form, its cross-section, as it were, is a circular movement. The subject knows itself as an object and knows the object as a subject.” (Simmel 2004, 117f)

One essential effect of the circumstance that human life shows a particular intensive interaction of its elements is that each human being is extremely individual. The second effect is that this individuality is always changing, it is a flowing individuality.

Consequently, an unsolvable communication problem arises: an individual can express itself as an individual only by forming and styling. Even the other person can also recognize the individual only by forming and styling. In short, nobody can express or recognize the pure individuality of a person. Simmel explains this by the relationship of a reflection on naturalism and realism in art:

“Style, as the manifestation of our inner feelings, indicates that these feelings no longer immediately gush out but take on a disguise the moment they are revealed. Style, as a general form of the particular, is a veil that imposes a barrier and a distance in relation to the recipient of the expression of these feelings. Even naturalism which specifically aims at overcoming the distance between us and reality, conforms to this basic principle of all art: to bring us closer to things by placing them at a distance from us. (...) Artistic realism makes the same mistake as scientific realism by assuming that it can dispense with an a priori, with a form that – springing from the inclinations and needs of our nature – provides a robe or a metamorphosis for the world of our senses. This transformation that reality suffers on its way to our consciousness is certainly a barrier between us and its immediate existence, but is at the same time the precondition for our perception and representation of it.” (Simmel 2004, 473)

A note may be made here that for Simmel there is one single exception: the only artist, says Simmel, who was able to demonstrate human life as a flowing individual life was Rembrandt when he painted his portraits: "The form, which Rembrandt worked out, is exact and the only individual's form; this form lives and dies with the individual." (Simmel 1985, 62)²

4. Act Theoretical Supposition: Means and Ends

As has been mentioned, Simmel is interested in the interplay of the mind with itself when the mind divides itself into the subject and the object. But he is also interested in the interplay between the ends and means in human actions. Simmel's central hypothesis is that in human actions ends are also means and means are ends, too. How does he explain this?

Simmel describes the human being as an "indirect being". The human being cannot transform the present situation directly into the desired future but can do it only by actions, which are organized towards the desired purposes. In short, he needs means.

"The concept of means characterizes the position of man in the world; he is not dependent as is an animal upon the mechanism of instinctual life and immediate volition and enjoyment, nor does he have unmediated power, such as we attribute to a god, such that his will is identical with its realization. He stands between the two in so far as he can extend his will far beyond the present moment, but can realize it only in a roundabout way through a teleological series which has several links." (Simmel 2004, 211)

The psychological growth of means into ends is attractive to Simmel. Simmel argues, that this takes place when it is difficult to achieve the purpose and when there is a very long teleological series, leading to it. Simmel's view is that our psychological energy is limited, i.e. if you are always and mainly concentrated on the ends you fail to have sufficient psychological energy to organize and execute the means. So it is necessary to have almost all power to concentrate on the means. Simmel puts it in a more exact way:

"The most expedient attitude is that of the complete concentration of one's energies on that stage of the sequence of purposes that should be realized next; in other words, one cannot promote the final purpose any better than to treat the means as if it were the end itself." (Simmel 2004, 231)

In Simmel's opinion the psychological growth of means into ends is closely related to the philosophical hypothesis which proclaims that each situation in human life has its own purpose and its own value and is therefore a stop. But in the same way each situation in human life has means for the following situations and therefore a transfer point. Simmel argues:

"We are supposed to treat life as if each of its moments were a final purpose; every moment is supposed to be taken to be so important as if life existed for its sake. At the same time, we are supposed to live as if none of its moments were final, as if our sense of value did not stop with any moment and each should be a transitional point and a means to higher and higher stages. This apparently contradictory double demand upon every moment of life, to be at the same time both final and yet not final, evolves from our innermost being in which the soul determines our relation to life". (Simmel 2004, 232)

So the quintessence for Simmel is:

"That the means become ends is justified by the fact that, in the last analysis, ends are only means." (Simmel 2004, 235)

² Translation by the author.

II. Sociology

Variations and transformations of the described ideas are presented in Simmel's "Sociology". The analysis demonstrates that:

- Simmel understands a society as a network of interactions.
- His sociology is in its main parts a micro-sociology.
- He is very interested in the tension between an individual and a society.
- He investigates the interaction of the means and ends with the institutions and social symbols.

In the following paragraphs this result will be illustrated by particularly concise quotations of the book "Sociology".

1. Society as Interaction Network

Simmel's view is that society doesn't consist of static substances. To analyze a society one must dissolve all ideas of social substances in social interactions and processes. And to understand a society one must realize that each social phenomenon can be considered as a fundament and as a top of the society and that each phenomenon can be considered as a center and as a periphery in the social network. Not a single great personality or a single historical event creates the unity of the society but millions of interactions between the people:

"That people gaze at one another and are jealous of one another; that they exchange letters or dine together; that, apart from all tangible interests, they affect one another sympathetically or antipathetically; that gratitude gives to the altruistic act an after effect which is an inseparable bond of union; that one asks another to point out the way, and that people dress and adorn themselves for one another's benefit—all the thousand relationships playing from person to person, momentary or permanent, conscious or unconscious, transitory or rich in consequences, from which these illustrations are quite casually chosen, bind us incessantly together.

(...)

The immeasurably short steps construct the correlation of the historical unity; the equally unimpressive reciprocities between person and person the societary correlation. That which incessantly occurs in the way of physical and psychical contacts, of reciprocal stimulation of joy and sorrow, of converse and silence, of shared and antagonized interest—all that is the real constructor of the wonderful indissolubility of society, the fluctuating of its life, with which its elements incessantly gain, lose, and shift their equilibrium."

(Simmel 1909, 311f)

2. Sociology as Micro-sociology

What is the consequence? Simmel's opinion is that it is erroneous to disregard the sociological investigation of these little interactions. It is important to put these micro-phenomena in the center of the research:

"We are concerned with the discovery of attenuated threads, of minimum relationships between people, from the continuous repetition of which all those great objectified structures which afford a real history have been built up and maintained. These quite primary processes, which build society out of the immediate individual material, are accordingly, along with the higher and more complex processes and structures, to be subjected to formal scrutiny. The particular reactions which present themselves in these masses, to which theoretical vision is not quite yet accustomed, are to be tested

as society-building forms, as parts of socialization in general. Indeed, these apparently insignificant types of relationship may profitably be subjected to investigation which shall be the more thorough in the degree in which sociology has thus far neglected these phenomena.” (Simmel 1909, 312f)

Two examples of Simmel’s micro sociology will be adduced.

2.1. Interaction of the Eyes

In Simmel’s “Sociology” you can find an “excuse” in the “sociology of the senses”. There Simmel investigates the social effects of looking, hearing and smelling. The most concise analysis is the investigation of the eye contact of two human beings is given:

“Among the various sensory organs the eye is created for a completely unique sociological performance: for the linkage and interaction of individuals that occurs in the look at one another. Perhaps this is the purest and most direct interaction that exists.

(...)

The closeness of this relationship [the look at one another] is made by a strange fact:

the look at the other person is expressive itself, in particular through the way we look at the other person. With the look where you internalize the other person you also disclose yourself. With the same action in which the subject tries to recognize the object, the subject opens itself. You cannot take information by the eye without giving at the same time. The eye reveals the other persons, mind which tries to reveal him.

(...)

This makes it quite understandable why shame often makes us look at the ground, where we avoid the look of the other person. That happens certainly not only because we don’t want to see how the other person looks at us in such an embarrassing and confusing situation. The main reason is that by looking at the ground we make it impossible for the other person to recognize our mind.” (Simmel 1983, 484f)³

2.2. Confidence

Looking at one another is a complex game in which taking and giving happens at the same time, a recognizing and a self-opening, and sometimes a revealing and an ashamed self-covering. This leads to a general problem of the society, which is to solve numberless everyday interactions:

“All relationships of people to each other rest, as a matter of course, upon the precondition that they know something about each other.” (Simmel 1906, 441)

This means that we have contact with people and we have direct or indirect knowledge about these people and sometimes we need more knowledge. But the knowledge is limited in each case – even between people who live together. In other words: Confidence is an important social phenomenon. . What is confidence?

“Confidence, as the hypothesis of future conduct, which is sure enough to become the basis of practical action, is, as hypothesis, a mediate condition between knowing and not knowing another person.” (Simmel 1906, 450)

The level of knowledge and so the character of confidence depends on the function of the relationship between the interacting people:

“The merchant who sells grain or oil to another needs to know only whether the latter is good for the price. The moment, however, that he associates another with himself as a partner, he must not merely know his standing as to financial assets, and certain quite general qualities of his make-

³ Translation by the author.

up, but he must see through him very thoroughly as a personality; he must know his moral standards, his degree of companionability, his daring or prudent temperament; and upon reciprocal knowledge of that sort must depend not merely the formation of the relationship, but its entire continuance, the daily associated actions, the division of functions between the partners, etc.” (Simmel 1906, 451)

3. Individual and Society

Knowledge about other people is always limited. A special limit concerns not the general aspects but the individuality of a person. Simmel’s opinion is “that complete knowledge of the individuality of another is denied to us; and all interrelations of men with one another are limited by the varying degrees of this deficiency.” (Simmel 1910, 378f)

What is the effect of this limit? An important social phenomenon is the formation, classification and typifying of the other person we are in contact with:

“In order to recognize the man, we do not see him in his pure individuality, but carried, exalted or degraded by the general type under which we subsume him. Even when this transformation is so slight that we cannot immediately recognize it, or even if all the usual cardinal concepts of character fail us, such as moral or immoral, free or unfree, domineering or menial, etc. – in our own minds we designate the man according to an unnamed type with which his pure individuality does not precisely coincide.

(...)

That is, the individual is rated as in some particulars different from his actual self by the gloss imposed upon him when he is classified in a type, when he is compared with an imagined completeness of his own peculiarity, when he is credited with the characteristics of the social generality to which he belongs.”

(Simmel 1910, 379, 381)

It is not possible to see another person in his pure individuality. Simmel goes forward and says: in the same way it is not possible to express our own pure individuality – particularly our own pure individuality in its actual inner constitution. Simmel describes this fact very subtly. The description reminds of a philosophical investigation of William James in relation to the stream of consciousness (James 1920, 164) and to James Joyce’s novel “Ulysses” in which the reader can have a “look” into the stream of consciousness of the protagonist (Joyce 1922):

„Our actual psychological processes are governed by logic in a much slighter degree than their expressions make us believe. If we look closely at our conceptions as they pass our consciousness in a continuous temporal sequence, we find that there is a very great distance between any regulation by rational norms and the characteristics of these conceptions: namely, their flaring up, their zigzag motions, the chaotic whirling of images and ideas which objectively are entirely unrelated to one another, and their logically unjustifiable, only so-to-speak probative, connections. But we are only rarely conscious of this, because the accents of our interests lie merely on the ‘usable’ portion of our imaginative life. Usually we quickly pass over, or ‘overhear’, its leaps, its non-rationality, its chaos, in spite of their psychological factualness, in favor of what is logical or otherwise useful, at least to some extent.

All we communicate to another individual by means of words or perhaps in another fashion – even the most subjective, impulsive, intimate matters – is a selection from that psychological-real whole whose absolutely exact report (absolutely exact in terms of content and sequence) would drive everybody into the insane asylum – if a paradoxical expression is permissible. In a quantitative sense, it is not only fragments of our inner life which we alone reveal, even to our closest fel-

lowmen. What is more, these fragments are not a representative selection, but one made from the standpoint of reason, value, and relation to the listener and his understanding. Whatever we say, as long as it goes beyond mere interjection and minimal communication, is never an immediate and faithful presentation of what really occurs in us during that particular time of communication, but is a transformation of this inner reality, teleologically directed, reduced, and recomposed.” (Simmel 1950, 311f)

Thus Simmel makes it clear that pure authentic communication between individuals is not possible. The communicating people fail to show their pure individualities but their formed and self-stylized personalities.

4. Means as Purposes in the Society

The change of social ends and the turn of means into ends is an important topic in Simmel’s sociological investigations. To this end many examples can be found in the “Philosophy of Money” because the book is both philosophical and sociological.

One of Simmel’s examples that leads to the sociology of religion will be given :

Simmel describes that money is the greatest exaggeration of the idea of means. Money is the means of the means:

“Money is the purest reification of means, a concrete instrument which is absolutely identical with its abstract concept; it is a pure instrument.” (Simmel 2004, 211)

But in the end this pure means turns in particular periods of societies:

“The inner polarity of the essence of money lies in its being the absolute means and thereby becoming psychologically the absolute purpose for most people, which makes it, in a strange way, a symbol in which the major regulators of practical life are frozen.” (Simmel 2004, 232)

When does this happen?

“There is no period of time in which individuals have not been greedy for money, yet one can certainly say that the greatest intensity and expansion of this desire occurred in those time in which the modest satisfaction of individual life-interests, such as the elevation of the religious absolute as the ultimate purpose of existence, had lost its power. At present – as in the period of decline in Greece and Rome – and far beyond the inner state of the individual, the whole aspect of life, the relationships of human beings with one another and with objective culture are coloured by monetary interests.” (Simmel 2004, 236)

Why does this happen? Simmel’s answer is remarkable because it shows an interplay between theology, sociology and psychology:

“In reality, money in its psychological form, as the absolute means and thus as the unifying point of innumerable sequences of purposes, possesses a significant relationship to the notion of God – a relationship that only psychology, which has the privilege of being unable to commit blasphemy, may disclose. The essence of the notion of God is that all diversities and contradictions in the world achieve a unity in him, that he is – according to a beautiful formulation of Nicolas de Cusa – the coincidentia oppositorum. Out of this idea, that in him all estrangements and all irreconcilables of existence find their unity and equalization, there arises the peace, the security, the all-embracing wealth of feeling that reverberate with the notion of God which we hold.

There is no doubt that, in their realm, the feelings that money excite possess a psychological similarity with this. In so far as money becomes the absolutely commensurate expression and equivalent of all values, it rises to abstract heights way above the whole broad diversity of objects; it becomes the centre in which the most opposed, the most estranged and the most distant things find their common denominator and come into contact with one another. Thus, money actually

provides an elevated position above the particular and a confidence in its omnipotence, just as we have confidence in the omnipotence of a highest principle to grant us the particular and the baser at any moment and to be able to transform itself into them.” (Simmel 2004, 236f)

III. School Pedagogy

Georg Simmel failed to publish his pedagogical works himself. In 1922, four years after his death, the book titled “School pedagogy. Lectures, given at Strasburg University“ (“Schulpädagogik. Vorlesungen, gehalten an der Universität Straßburg”) was published. Karl Hauter, Simmel’s assistant and editor of the book, writes that the text was the basis of Simmel’s lectures in the winter semester 1915/16.

In Simmel’s school pedagogy the said four ideas, which relate to the concepts interaction, detail, individual, means and ends, can be found. One finds the ideas transformed when Simmel writes about the school subjects, the attentiveness, the individuality of students and teachers, about the purpose of childhood and knowledge.

1. A subject as Network and as Part of Network

In Simmel’s view each school subject is a dynamic network and it is erroneous to teach the subjects in mechanically separated pieces. The students have to understand the unity and interaction of things in a subject. To this end Simmel gives many examples. Here, one example, which relates on the general importance of mathematics,

has been selected. “The functional character of the world elements is nowhere else demonstrated so intensively. The fact that there is no change of a geometrical form, which doesn’t create further changes, that an unconditioned interaction of all variations of all single pieces exists – this must be perceived ? deeply as the most wonderful symbol of the dynamic and general connection as well as the unity of the world.”⁴ (Simmel 1922a, 113)

The subject is a network and at the same time it is a part of a greater network. Teachers have to be aware of this:

“The teacher shouldn’t miss any opportunity to elaborate on the experiences of the students to give them meaning, connection and outward and inward valuation. At this point he must introduce the philosophical ideas related to the fact that from each point of life’s surface there is a line in its fundamental depth.” (Simmel 1922a, 24)

Another variation of this idea:

“The teacher should take each opportunity to show the great connections of the intellectual history in which not only (among the humanities) the subjects of the taught sciences are located but also these sciences themselves.”(Simmel 1922a, 111)

2. Attentiveness

But it is not only great connections that are important. Equally important is the concentration on details. So attentiveness is one of the main concepts of “School pedagogy”. What does it exactly mean?

“The attentiveness on the content of the lesson should be also – and perhaps mainly– a training of the attention, of the conscious and appropriate perception in general.

⁴ This and all following translations of “Schulpädagogik” written by the author.

Just this means the important education of looking (...); that is the education of the extensive looking (perception of the things! named by one word) and the intensive looking (perception of all single qualities of just one thing)." (Simmel 1922a, 44)

The third aspect of attentiveness is also significant: the endurance of the attention. Because attentiveness is "expectation in the form of continuity, the state of a flowing, not pointedly expectation." (Simmel 1922a, 39). Simmel's conclusion is the following:

"The training of the intensive and lasting attentiveness is for me one of the most essential pedagogical tasks; it is the formal and the functional moral of the intellect". (Simmel 1922a, 41)

3. Students and Teachers as Individuals

"From the beginning education is an activity which is carried by the spirit of individualism". (Simmel 1922a, 35) Simmel relates this idea both to students and teachers.

Simmel criticizes the disregard of the students' individuality: "The general school education operates not only with an always identical average psyche of the students, but so to say without a psyche". (Simmel 1922a, 19) So Simmel votes for a more intensive perception of the individuality of the students. And as consequence he also votes for a more intensive individualisation of the instruction.

It is interesting that Simmel includes the person of the teacher himself into this complex pedagogical process of individualization.. Simmel investigates the question related to the relationship between the individuality of the teacher and his methods His answer is the following:

"All principles of methods: inductive, deductive, dogmatic, heuristic, formal steps, concentric circles – are schematic abstractions that are not applicable for a lively creative teacher. He has his method (i.e.: he is a method)". (Simmel 1922a, 10)

That includes two aspects. The first is that it is important that the teacher uses his individuality Since he is very excited about certain topics and it is helpful when he can show his particular engagement. The second is that a teacher has his own method and he has to develop it, which does not mean that he is completely independent of the methodical training. But the teacher "should get into contact with these methods, not to apply them dogmatically and mechanically, but as food which he assimilates to develop his own organical and integral productivity." (Simmel 1922a, 10)

4. Childhood and Knowledge as a Means and Ends

Simmel writes:

"What Kant says about the entire man in his relationship to others: you should not see him only as means but always at the same time as end – the same is true for the relationship of the single moments of life. (...) The child is not only the candidate of the adult and should not be seen only on its way to its later life. Rather as child it has its particular beauties and peculiarities, tasks and rights, and those must be respected by the pedagogy". (Simmel 1922a, 36)

Simmel criticizes those educators who lay too great stress on the imperfection of the child. Simmel is of the opinion that those educators have an implicit picture of the child which says that the child is just a little adult, and the difference between an adult and a child is only a question of quantity. Simmel argues that childhood has a particular and unique quality.

Simmel emphasizes the dialectics of childhood and adult's age: childhood is just an effective means for the adult's age when it is accepted as purpose with its own value. If you see childhood only as a stage of deficiencies you harm the child and you harm the adult that the child will be in the future. (Danner 1991, 105ff)

Simmel's ideas remind those of Rousseau (Rousseau 1983, 185f, 206f). But it is remarkable that he doesn't relate to Rousseau but to Kant.

Another hint at Kant may be found in "School pedagogy". It relates to the contents of the education:

"What Kant says about the human being: he should never be treated only as means but always at the same time as ends – as a rule for all topics of the school. Each topic should be known and performed for itself, and at the same time each topic is in a deeper or in the deepest stratum a mean of the education of the entire man – at the same time purpose and mean". (Simmel 1922a, 87)

Simmel writes in a similar way in another chapter:

"All taught topics have two meanings: they should be known, just as contents. (...) But then they functionally serve as the strengthening, the refinement, the vibration vastness of the spirit, his morally and aesthetically development, the focusing of mind on the world of ideas and values. Education is the synthesis of both aims". (Simmel 1922a, 33)

Simmel's conclusion is the following:

"Each lesson and each subject has to be treated as – each time differently coloured – microcosm of the whole education." (Simmel 1922a, 104)

A lesson or a subject is this microcosm when all pedagogical dimensions are considered: the intellect and the emotion, the philosophical, the moral and the aesthetical aspects of the topic, the great connection in which the topic is located. That means that the teacher is not the teacher of a narrow piece of the world but – at least as a try or as an indication – a teacher of universal connections and interrelations. At the same time the teacher is not the educator of one particular ability of the student but of all his essential abilities.

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