The Metropolis and Mental life- Georg Simmel

* Problems of modern life- derive from claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of historical heritage, external culture and the technique of life.
* 18th century- called upon man to free himself of historical bonds in the state, religion, morals and economics.
* 19th century demanded functional specialization of man; made one individual comparable to the other, indispensable to highest extent. Yet, this specialization makes each man more directly dependent upon the supplementary activities of all others.
* Psychological basis of met type consists of ‘intensification of nervous stimulation’- swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli.
* Psychological conditions of metropolis: ‘impressions which differ only slightly from one another..’ p.48
* Deep contrast to rural/ small town life with reference to the sensory foundations of psychic life. – rhythm of life, sensory mental imagery flows more slowly, more habitually more evenly.
* Sophisticated character of met psychic life becomes more understandable- against small town life which rests more deeply upon felt and emotional relationships.
* In order to accommodate and adapt to change, intellect does not require any shocks or inner upheavals. Thus – intellect develops organ protecting him against threatening currents and discrepancies of his external environment. Head instead of heart.
* Met life thus underlines heightened awareness and a predominance of intelligence in met man
* ‘Intellectuality is thus seen to preserve subjective life against the overwhelming power of met life and intellectuality branches out in many directions and is integrated with numerous discrete phenomena.’
* Met= seat of the money economy.
* Money economy linked to dominance of intellect. Matter of fact attitude in dealing with things, formal justice coupled with inconsiderate hardness.
* Money concerned with what is common to all: asks for exchange value. Reduces quality and individuality to the question: how much?
* **Only objective measurable achievement is of interest**
* Contrast to nature of small circle: inevitable knowledge of individual produces warmer tones of behavior beyond objective balancing of service+ return.
* Displacement of domestic production and direct barter of goods minimizes amount of work ordered by customers.

Modern mind has become more calculating due to money economy; corresponds with natural science- transform the world into an arithmetic problem.

* Relationships and affairs of typical met life are so varied and complex that without strictest punctuality in promises, whole structure would break down into chaos.
* Punctuality, calculability, exactness forced upon life by extension of met life and intimately connected with money economy and intellectualistic character.
* Ruskin/ Nietzsche hate for Metropolis, money economy, intellectualism- sovereign types of personality opposed in typical city life.
* Highly personal subjectivity- blasé attitude: life in boundless pursuit of pleasure makes on blasé because it agitates the nerves to their strongest reactivity. The blunting of discrimination- meaning and differing values of things are experienced as insubstantial; subjective reflection of internalized money economy.
* Money is the common denominator of all values, hollows out the core of things, their individuality. Cities become locale of the blasé attitude.
* ‘reserve’ mental attitude towards metropolitans. Makes mets appear cold and heartless.
* Extremely varied hierarchy of sympathies, indifferences and aversions of the most permanent nature.
* Reserve with overtone of hidden aversion appears as a cloak of more general mental phenomenon of the metropolis: grants individual a kind and an amount of personal freedom which has no analogy whatsoever under other conditions.
* Small circle community grows numerically, spatially etc. to the same degree inner unity loosens and the rigidity of original demarcation against others is softened through mutual relation and connections. Individual also gains freedom of movement, individuality
* ‘the general human character’- people of incomparably individualized personalities struggles against the constant inner and outer pressure of a de- individualizing small town.
* Correlation between the enlargement of the circle and the personal inner and outer freedom has made the metropolis the locale of freedom.
* Metropolis characterized by essential independence even from the most eminent individual personalities.
* Met man and city consists of total effects which extend beyond its immediate confines.
* City offers a circle which can absorb a highly diverse variety of services.
* . At the same time, the concentration of individuals and their struggle for customers compel the individual to specialize in a function from which he cannot be readily replaced by another. It is decisive that city life has transformed the struggle with nature for livelihood into an inter-human struggle for gain, which here is not granted by nature but by other men.
* Forms the transition of the individualization of mental and psychic traits which the city occasions in proportion to its size.
* Reasons: . First, one must meet the difficultly of asserting his own personality within the difficulty of met life.
* The development of modern culture is characterized by the preponderance of what one may call the ‘objective spirit’ over the ‘subjective spirit’.
* Notice a retrogression in the culture of the individual with reference to spirituality, delicacy, idealism. Results from the growing division of labor as it demands an ever more one-sided accomplishment dearth to the personality of the individual.
* Individual has become a mere cog in an enormous organization of things and powers which tear from his hands all progress, spirituality, value in order to transform them from their subjective form in the form of purely objective life.
* ‘personality cannot maintain itself under its impact’
* On the one hand, life is made easy for the personality in that stimulations etc. offered from all sides. On the other hand, life composed of impersonal contents and offerings which tend to displace the genuine personal colorations and incomparability’s. individual must summon utmost uniqueness in order to preserve personal core.
* ‘the atrophy of individual culture through the hypertrophy of objective culture is one reason for the bitter hatred which the preachers of the most extreme individualism, above all Nietzsche harbor against the metropolis’. Also, why preachers are so passionately in love with the metropolis.
* 18th century- The eighteenth century found the individual in oppressive bonds which had become meaningless-bonds of a political, agrarian, guild, and religious character.. They were restraints which, so to speak, forced upon man an unnatural form and outmoded, unjust inequalities.
* individuals liberated from historical bonds now wished to distinguish themselves from one another.