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Article abstract

Georg Simmel was not an educator in the classical sense. But he had profound influence upon his students precisely because he was no educator. This paradoxical thesis is developed in three steps: First, Simmel's basic problem is discussed with respect to his own personality: modernity and individuality; second his analysis on money and modern life is reconstructed; third, his views on education and instruction are outlined demonstrating his liberal principles of education. Taken together, these three steps demonstrate the educational charisma of Georg Simmel.

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Teaching Life. The Education of a Modern Personality

Abstract. *Georg Simmel was not an educator in the classical sense. But he had profound influence upon his students precisely because he was no educator. This paradoxical thesis is developed in three steps: First, Simmel's basic problem is discussed with respect to his own personality: modernity and individuality; second his analysis on money and modern life is reconstructed; third, his views on education and instruction are outlined demonstrating his liberal principles of education. Taken together, these three steps demonstrate the educational charisma of Georg Simmel.*

1. Introduction

Georg Simmel was everything but not an educator in the classical sense. His interests revolved around basic problems in philosophy, societal forms in sociology and new trends in aesthetics. Education, pedagogy and instruction stood not on his agenda. Yet it may be that particularly those people who seem completely aloof of practical questions of pedagogy, schooling and education but who command the basic principles of life and the conduct of life have much to teach *in petto*. Simmel was a great teacher who like a magnet attracted the best minds of the younger generations in Germany and Europe. His lectures were crowded by students of various kinds and ranks and not at all just students of philosophy. His performance in the lecture hall gave the impression of a great thinker who invites his listeners to reflect with him. At the same time, the contents of his teachings were unbelievingly complicated and complex because he did not make any compromises as to the understandability of his talk. Yet students followed him enthusiastically – even lectures on logics were crowded.

What was the secret of his great success among the young generation? Why was he a great educator without a theory or ideology of education? Wherein consisted his educational charisma?

In order to answer these questions, we turn to Simmel's *problématique*: the relationship between modernity and individuality (Isaacsen and Waerness, 1991; Müller, 1993; Phythinnen, 2013; Watier, 1991). In a second step, we describe the modern commercial society Simmel envisaged. In a third step, we turn to his *Schulpädagogik* in order to show his liberal approach of teaching the younger generation. The thesis put forward is a paradoxical one: Simmel was an educator because he was no educator.[1]

2. The Man and his Time: Modernity and Individuality

From very early on in his academic career, Simmel decided to pursue his own path and not follow in the footsteps of the old masters (Müller and Reitz, 2018). He wanted to be a philosopher but one of a new kind. Sure enough, Kant was his godfather in philosophy as was Goethe in literature whereas Schopenhauer and Nietzsche had paved the way for a new conceptualization of age-old philosophical problems instead of closed philosophical systems. Therefore, he started as a critique. In his book *On social differentiation* (Simmel, 1989a) he took up the theory of the division of labor as it was discussed in economics and the social sciences of the 19th century. But he gave it an original twist. Although he did not doubt the productivity gains stressed from Adam Smith onwards due to savings of labor power (*Arbeitskraftersparnis*), the crucial effect consists of the relationship between differentiation and individualization. The "crosscutting of social circles" due to the many roles people play in modern society open up spaces of "freedom from" social and moral impositions. In his treatise on *The Problems of a Philosophy of History* (Simmel, 1997) he showed that

[1] Simmel as an educator did not receive much attention by the body of secondary literature. See, however, Levine (1991) and Amat (2017). For an older assessment see Danner (1991).

neither a philosophy of history nor historicism may give an adequate account of the proceedings of history. Both versions of historiography work with unchecked formula and are mere constructions of the historian in question. His two volumes *Introduction into the moral sciences* (Simmel, 1989b; 1991) made it abundantly clear that the entire business of moral philosophy was in vain since even the most systematic analysis of moral problems would never lead to a new morality to be taught to the people. There is no way from "is" to "ought".

In short, Simmel started as an iconoclast leaving no stone on the other. This made him famous but also impossible. Simmel earned the reputation of an academic outlaw. He was regarded as a disintegrating and pestilent figure dangerous for the academic youth of Germany. He was not a "*Kathedersozialist*" like Gustav Schmoller and Adolph Wagner but was regarded as a kind of "*Kathedernihilist*": Destroying everything dear to academe but offering no new morality, no ethics, no normative hope. Instead, he preached "relativism" while a new absolutism was desperately needed. Where Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert were in search of a new modern value system, Simmel offered vitriolic critique with no new normativity but an open horizon for the future. It was his modernity stressing contingency and complexity plus his own almost artistic individuality that made him unique in German academe but also hopelessly singular. In this radical position and positioning in the University Simmel stood his ground alone – a young philosophical hero in the footsteps of Humboldt's ideas and ideals: freedom and solitude.

To be an outsider inside one of the most important Universities in the 19th century, seen by many as the role-model for the rest of the world, made him a class apart. His scandalous existence turned his further career into a nightmare offering him a full professorship not earlier than at the age of 56. In the meantime, waiting patiently for full academic recognition he had become the most important and famous professor in philosophy and sociology of Germany – but a professor without a chair. Such an impossible but extravagant

existence – in fact: an existential abnormity, for which the concept of status inconsistency is but a euphemism – must have drawn the attention of the young generation. Who was this impossible man – brilliant in his lectures, widely published, dangerous in the eyes of his contemporaries, famous in a public beyond the academe and beyond the confines of Germany? Young people adore rebels and outlaws since they all imagine to be "different" at least from their parents and the conventions of their society. If curious and reflective they dream of creating a new society or a new form of self for themselves. For the students of Berlin University Simmel must have been a revelation in the conservative *Kaiserreich* and a German society that underwent rapid modernization and urbanization. Simmel was the new, irresistible, modern man with unconventional qualities who seemed to have understood the signs of the times. He embodied modernity and individuality. And he was able to teach the new constellation of a modernizing and urbanizing society and culture.

In addition, his style of life seemed to confirm this impression. Simmel wore modern clothes and used to enter Berlin University by a velo and well-equipped with "*Knickerbocker*" or plus fours. This was "*le dernier cri*" at the time. Simmel did not just present the newest fashion but wrote and lectured on "fashion" – this strange combination of mimicry and distinction, of socialization and individualization. Simmel seemed to know everything about the necessities of an aesthetic design of life and made "*ästhetische Lebensgestaltung*" an important topic of his reflections. He embodied the role-model and lectured about it. In his relationship to students and the public he lived with an almost ascetic discipline the principles of sociality (*Geselligkeit)* in a mood of conviviality: distance, discretion and a sense of tact. He never came too close to other persons or intruded their intimate sphere. Hans Simmel (2008), his son, reported that the visits by Stefan George were restricted to artistic subjects whereas political topics were off limits. Simmel never uttered anything bad about other people – even if they had deeply hurt him. Ernst Bloch, early admirer of him and

later on famous for libel and slander, was a case in point. Although Simmel finally had to break with him because he had offended Margarete Susman, Simmel's close friend, he sat down and wrote a letter of recommendation in favor of Bloch to Heinrich Rickert. He told his colleague in Freiburg that Bloch was a young and gifted philosopher worth to be accepted for a "Habilitation". Rickert received Bloch but was offended by his cocksure arrogance. Who would have had such a sense of tact and benevolence when it came to the academic offspring?

Academic brilliance, impeccable character and the role-model of a modern philosopher open to the pressing problems and the imminent troubles of the day surely made Simmel a highly popular professor, teacher and discussant to whom the students flocked.

His status inconsistency – a professor without a professorship – must have been an additional attractor to young students because Simmel was so different in comparison to the old and established "German mandarins" (Ringer, 1969). In the eyes of the students he was one of their own yet at the same time of unachievable superiority: equal but of high-order. An impressive document of admiration, appreciation and gratitude is gathered in the volume by Kurt Gassen and Michael Landmann (1958) *Buch des Dankes an Georg Simmel*. Many of his former students confess that it was Simmel who guided them in their life, opened their eyes and gave them lectures for life no stack of books closely read could have accomplished. With Simmel as teacher and academic companion they grew up and matured intellectually and socially.

3. The Society: Money and Modern Life

In most of his lectures and writings Simmel conveyed this spirit of the modern times and their problems. But nowhere becomes this clearer than in his main oeuvre *The Philosophy of Money*, (Simmel, 1989b; 1990). In this seminal book, Simmel undertook the preeminent project to understand modernity by means of one symbol: money. Money becomes the *passe-partout* of modern

commercial or capitalist society. Simmel develops a comprehensive theory of society in which money is the main mechanism, trigger and symbol of its order and functioning. In the first analytical part, he outlines a new theory of value showing his doctrine of relativism in practice since values are relative to other values which means that the "value" of values is determined by all the other values. He shows convincingly that the broad usage of monetary means offers new spaces and pockets of freedom from societal constraints hitherto unknown due to the prevalence of personal obligations in traditional orders. In the second part and here above all in the sixth chapter "The Style of Life" he outlined the consequences for the individual to live in such a commercial and capitalist society. What Simmel worries about though is that the "freedom of" is not complemented by a "freedom to" an autonomous conduct of life. Simmel finds the main reason for this impasse in his famous theorem of the "tragedy of culture" (Simmel, 1996). Subjective culture, i.e. the culture of modern beings, lags dangerously behind objective culture, i.e. the material and symbolic culture of modern society. In addition, a binding style how to live has been lost due to a multitude of styles yet without any obligatory or orienting quality. The growth of freedom therefore is not qualified by patterns of individuality to pursue as paradigms. The main question, "how shall I live", finds no consistent or convincing collective answer under modern conditions.

The crisis of modern culture finally drove Simmel more and more into the philosophy of life in order to give a coherent answer. In his last book *Lebensanschauung (The View of Life)* Simmel (1999; 2010) proposes what he calls "the individual law". Preeminent individuals have their own choice regarding how and in which way they want to live. This is an individual choice that substantially circumscribes a "law" that governs the entire conduct of life of the individual. Simmel though is realistic enough to know that only a minority, if you will the "aristocracy of man", will be capable for such an individualistic choice of and for self-governance. The majority, however, will have to follow a general law and its moral

imperatives. Orienting as this may be, "foreign governance" or governance from the outside necessarily impairs the realm of individuality. General laws for the conduct of life result in a sort of "ready-made individuality" or light individuality. In sociological parlance, one would call this individualization without individuation. This – and Simmel is beyond any idealistic "principle hope" (Bloch, 1985) but utterly realistic – is probably the fate of ordinary people unable to live up to an "individual law".

Here again, Simmel exhibits his mastery of understanding the modern times, their troubles and phobias. As a sociologist he offers a comprehensive understanding of the functioning of modern society. As a philosopher of life he diagnoses the ills of modern man yet abstains from a ready-made solution for the existential problems people face under modern conditions. What he outlines though are the possible avenues and roads open to be taken. Insofar he paves the way for a substantial reflection on the possibilities and restrictions of the modern individual to choose him- or herself and his/her concomitant style of life. Here again, he is a great teacher of life and a spiritual leader of the souls of the younger generation that he taught. He did not give directions but options; he did not prescribe a modern ethic or a binding morality, but opened up avenues for life and living.

4. Schooling and its Modern Education

When Simmel took over his chair in Strasbourg he was obliged to teach pedagogy, not just philosophy. It was not at all his field and he never had entered it in Berlin. But upon knowledge of his engagement in Strasbourg he immediately sat down and studied the body of literature on education from Locke and Rousseau, from Comenius to Pestalozzi and to Paul Barth as well as Georg Kerschensteiner.

Up to this point, all he had was the educational practice with his own son Hans. Since Simmel liked travelling and regularly disappeared from Berlin every year to tour Switzerland and Italy he

was not willing to subdue to Prussia and its fixed school holidays. This is why he hired a private teacher for his son in order to be independent from the Prussian school system. Hans enjoyed a broad education also by his father. Simmel went far beyond the confines of the school curriculum in order to give his son a broader horizon. He tried to put forward the bigger picture of things and the grand scheme no matter how far young Hans was able to understand his father's lectures. Simmel took lessons with his son absolutely seriously and would not be willing – much to the dismay of his son from time to time – to make any concessions. In other words: an open curriculum with open endings and teaching the world and world problems made schooling for Hans an exciting affair.

One incident is maybe telling for Simmel's rigor as an educator of his son. Hans' private teacher was Rudolf Pannwitz who had founded the journal *Charon* together with Otto zur Linde. An essay by Hans impressed Pannwitz so deeply that he asked Simmel to let him print it in his journal. Simmel was truly offended by this premature idea. He told Pannwitz that too early a literary success for a young pupil might ignite misguided ideas in him and in its wake might spoil his soul. Pannwitz was really struck by Simmel's harsh reaction but the latter abruptly stopped any further discussion of this issue.

Upon his imminent death, Simmel and his wife Gertrud destroyed many manuscripts among them most of the lectures and notes, the so-called "Kollegs". It was typical for Simmel that he did not want to leave a piece unfinished or imperfect. His lecture on *Schulpädagogik* surprisingly survived and was published posthumously by the French professor Albert Hauten who joined Simmel's lecture on the subject in 1915/16.

Looking into the book one can see why Simmel would not have wanted this manuscript to see the light of the day. It is a typical lecture series in which Simmel presents the state of the art in the pedagogy of schooling. Under certain thematic guidelines he explicates theoretical positions and issues discussed at that time –

the lecture as reportage. It is not Simmel-like just to give positions and arguments of others instead of developing an idea of one's own. Where Simmel's view though lurks up in the text is when he underlines a position or when he – like always – is looking for a third way (Susman, 1959) overcoming or rather encompassing contrasting perspectives.

In ten chapters he outlines principles of instruction and education able to guide the practices of *Bildung* plus an appendix on sexual education. Pedagogy is an art, not a science. Simmel's program focuses on practical problems without formulating ultimate objectives of education or discussing technical problems of schooling. The first chapter on the basics of instruction and education is the most important one as well as the last chapters on language, the German essay, historiography and moral education.

Discussing contemporary approaches of instruction, Simmel stresses the importance of the personality of the teacher. His competence, his authority and his enthusiasm prove decisive as a teaching method because his passion will incite the curiosity of the students. How can one burn for the laws of mathematics or the Latin rhetoric of Cicero? There must be fire behind the smoke and a light at the end of the tunnel is what attracts irresistibly young people. Yet, here as everywhere too much can be too much. Simmel (2004: 330 f.) remembers the Latin instruction of his own school days with some ironic humor and horror. Teachers of Latin in his own days were convinced that students thinking *panis* would be a feminine case or who would be defying the *consecutio temporum* in a sentence had to be brought to the gallows. Passion for the Latin matter is necessary to teach a dead language, but the welfare of mankind is not at stake in the classroom. To turn students into the "'ape of Cicero'" (2004: 329 f.) in his eyes is an outmoded concept of *Bildung*. An extremist mistake would be if a teacher would regard the violation against Latin grammar as "a stain in the world order" (Simmel, 2004: 335, my translation).

By looking back at historical concepts of education Simmel identifies the modern ideal of *Bildung*. The classic Greek focused on

skills like gymnastics and music. Greek Hellenism wanted to advance knowledge in grammar, literature and philosophy. The medieval instruction favored humanistic exercises in classic Latin as the best preparation for theology. From the 17th century onwards scientific disciplines like mathematics and historiography were added. Modern education as the third period after antiquity and medieval times is based on knowledge *and* skills as a common foundation for the formation of the personality of the student. He or she is not seen as an passive object to be filled with knowledge but as an active subject. To conceive the student as an active agent has two important implications according to Simmel (2004: 332): 1) the recognition of the individuality of the student and 2) the release of the absolute authority of the teacher. To engender the activity of the student that modern pedagogy advocates demands a considerable level of patience by teachers and parents for the variations of student performance over time. What is at stake is not only the objective level of achievement measured in grades, although Simmel admits this to be of prime importance among what parents expect from the school of their children. But willingness, level of activity, engagement, enthusiasm, passions and the interests of the student are subjective factors which count when it comes to the evaluation of his or her accomplishments. In sum then: "The dichotomy: instruction and education – within school this is a unity: That instruction has the content, education the process of teaching and learning as object" (Simmel, 2004: 334). The excellent teacher will try to gain a complete picture of the entire personality of his student and his teachings seek to convey the enthusiasm of and passion for knowledge in order to incite the curiosity of his students. Simmel (2004: 350) likes to cite Vauvenargues to display the spirit in which his reflections on pedagogy are couched: "*Les grandes pensées viennent du coeur*". *Bildung* in the classic German sense is achieved if things are not just known as a sake in and for themselves but help to contribute to "the strengthening, refinement, oscillation amplitude of the spirit, his ethical-aesthetic lifting, the directedness of the soul towards the spiritual and valuable. Bildung is the synthesis of these two goals.

Because Bildung is neither the mere *having* of knowledgeable contents nor the mere *being* as a contentless constitution of the soul" (Simmel, 2004: 354 f.). And to drive this important point in Simmel's reflections home, he once again cites Vauvenargues: "*Ce n'est pas une âme, ce n'est pas un corps, qu'on dresse, c'est un homme*" (Simmel, 2004: 356).

One of the most important avenues for Bildung is *language*. Simmel advocates the cultivation of the German language in its nuances and the richness of its flexions to counter the illnesses of modern times: the hasty Americanization, the attunedness to praxis with a preference for utmost shortness visible in the German press (Simmel, 2004: 418). Language is a means for communication but also an end in and of itself. Insofar language is an art and like an art – a value and a world in itself. Developed language competence forms an attitude, gives an aesthetic form and lends the speaker a sort of self-domestication and civilizing effect for his affects. The person truly schooled in his/her language avoids strong and hurting emotions and speaks with a moderate voice and in a modest fashion. An elaborated style of language is a necessary prerequisite for civilized conversation. However, the current practice in German schools to write articles or essays in Latin or German leads to talk in pathetic platitudes. Crucial for Simmel is the capability of the teacher to give a presentation in front of his class. Once he is able to put forward a great narrative, his students will follow him suit and will try to imitate structure and culture of the teacher's performance. Exercises in free speech, the giving of a talk, the preparation of a presentation – all these methods encourage students to express themselves naturally and conventionally according to the techniques adopted: "What sounds good is a good style too" (Simmel, 1922: 425). This is the opposite to the prevailing standard of a declaiming pathos Simmel calls "*Deklabulzen*" (1922: 424) – the mechanical reading of classical texts.

One way to arrive at the cultivation of language is the aesthetic *Bildung*. Therefore, the aesthetic competence of teachers is of utmost importance. Simmel observes, however, that the students of

a *Gymnasium* typically come from upper middle class to upper class families, whereas the teachers are often from the middle class without the necessary aesthetic qualities. This creates automatically an uneven relationship between teachers and students giving the latter a feeling of vain superiority. Despite this problem aesthetics as an essential ingredient of every sort of education deems of utmost importance to create the necessary atmosphere (*Stimmung*) of learning. Simmel's view of life is thus expressed in a vivid way and couched in educational terms: "Who is able to see artistically has innumerable pleasures that lift life on to a higher stage, is exempt from many coarsenings of life (sexual excesses) which the aesthetically uneducated is subjected to" (Simmel, 2004: 436, my translation). Aesthetical instruction schools a sense of *beauty*. Especially for the youth, beauty is of great importance whereas classical school wisdom plays down its importance: "The old moralistic phrase: it makes no difference how a human being *looks like* – should be refrained from. Beauty and ugliness are absolutely important factors of life and it is nothing but hypocrisy to deny that" (Simmel, 2004: 437). The schooling of and for a sense of beauty opens up the mind of the student and provides an access to the works of art. Beauty though is more than beautiful bodily looks: "Beauty is a task too not just a gift" (Ibid.). A sense of beauty allows the student to *enjoy* art, not just to learn about art. In Simmel's eyes, a sense of beauty leads into the world of art and culture. Maybe Simmel remembered his own youth since traveling to Switzerland and Italy with Julius Friedländer from the days of late childhood onwards to get to know Italian art and *l'arte della vita* was the foundation of his cultural socialization.

Although Simmel was from the outset of his career highly critical of the theories and methods of historiography as his two editions of the *Problems of the Philosophy of History* show, he laid great emphasis on the teachings of *history* in school: "The historical studies, i.e. those whose contents imply the will and the feelings of mankind cannot be supplanted by something else because they school the formation of value (*Wertbildung*)". Narratives of events and constellations but

also the deeds of great personalities should form the contents of such historical instruction. But not in such a simple way as presenting historical figures as grand heroes or as examples of and paradigms for how life can be lived: "To present great human beings in that way, Sokrates or Jesus, Francis or Spinoza, Fichte or Goethe, seems to me a misunderstanding […]. Rather they should become elements of our own life, its direction and rhythm assimilated in an organic process in which they are something else than the forms in which we have to model our existence" (Simmel, 2004: 447, my translation).

Simmel completes his considerations on schooling with remarks on morality and sexuality. Sometimes school is seen as a grand moral enterprise, but Simmel is highly skeptical of such a traditional view because too much of a dose of *morality* ends up in empty and helpless moralizing. With respect to the virtues of discipline, asceticism and renunciation Simmel deems the school almost powerless although one should keep trying and the "optimistic apriori" (Simmel, 2004: 453) of pedagogy tells precisely that. Yet: "Qualities like concentration, intellectual probity, a consistent conduct of life, conscientiousness for the small duties of everyday life, the enhancement of intellectuality into all possible directions – this can only be achieved by the conscious impact on the *process* of the soul but cannot be educated as a reaction to readymade contents" (Ibid.).

Skeptical towards the instruction of great moral virtues, Simmel is much more open to *sexuality* and its instruction. He strictly distinguishes between childhood and youth with puberty as the dividing line of the two periods of the life course. Before puberty, the laws of sexuality can be taught as the natural forms of life and its reproduction. Within or after puberty this task is much more complicated as students take a personal interest in and a great passion for sexuality, its attraction, its secrets and its anxieties as well as pleasures. To preach chastity and the prevalence of the spirit over the body as an old school wisdom is not only in vain, but ultimately counterproductive: "To despise nature, her antagonistic exclusion

from world and value of the spirit seems to me not to be the right thing. Particularly the positioning of the sexual in a valueless realm as such seduces to laxness and irresponsibility, just like the *despised* position of the female sex everywhere carries the unscrupulousness of her treatment in its wake" (Simmel, 2004: 467). It seems to Simmel that a true understanding of sexuality, its meaning and importance is vital for finding appropriate principles of and for sexual education: "To understand sexuality as an utterance of life (*Lebensäußerung*) that unites itself with all the others to a total living (*Gesamtexistenz*), she is subjected to the general ideals and norms of life designed to her enhancement and harmony" (Simmel, 2004: 469, my translation). The history of mankind shows that sexuality has always been regarded as a strong force in individual and social life and therefore had to be regulated: "However diverse and often whimsical the orders of sexual life have been that we encounter throughout the course of history – *some* sort of principal order has always existed". Order typically means constraint and for the individual requires self-restraint. Without doubt, self-discipline, asceticism and self-domestication are part of a learning and socialization process for every human being entering social life. Yet in Simmel's eyes this is not a factor standing completely outside of individual and society but is an integral part of life:

> That life exercises self-control and controls itself is thus a character trait of life and self-control moves, particularly in this realm, into the right aspect if one truly feels that the self in sexuality is not only her object but also a subject. Therefore, sexuality is not the paria of life expelled from life – for what she would seek revenge with the inevitable resentment of the paria – but all discourse on sexuality should take her into life and only by doing that is able to elevate (*emporläutern*) her to its values and forms of sense (*Sinnformen*) (Simmel, 2004: 469f.).

Instead of expelling sexuality from the decency of life as a particularly unholy and profane praxis, Simmel finds it much more appropriate to concede to her a sort of sacredness. Sexuality is holy like love, its erotic counterpart. But such a view of sacredness is far

aloof from the practical problems teachers encounter in school with students reaching puberty. Admitting deep conflicts of the soul and the clash between the values and necessities of the individual and the social order of society, Simmel advocates a serious conversation between teacher and student as a kind of helpful advice. But here the teacher needs a lot of empathy and sympathy for the student without riding a high "moral ross" (Simmel, 2004: 472): "Whoever wants to help somebody in situations of moral problems should not come from the outside but must position himself on the level of the other, i.e. delve into his total real life and from this given then try the rise to purification and the giving of direction" (Ibid., my translation). Again, Simmel seems to profit from his own long experience as a professor and teacher of life who was always open to and accessible for his own students.

5. Conclusion

Instruction and education, its unity in school, taking the individuality of the student seriously not reducing him to a body to be filled up with knowledge, starting from life and the experience of students as the vantage point for teaching, giving them room for presenting themselves in class by free speech, talks and presentations, schooling their sense of language as the door to the intellectual world, opening them up for aesthetics and the realms of art and culture, luring them into responsibility for their own self-domestication but letting them enjoy the exciting pleasures of sexuality without too much of moralizing – these are some of the basic insights to be drawn from his *Schulpädagogik*. Simmel presents the liberal and modern principles of education which are exchanged in the discourses of current pedagogy but not yet wholly practiced in the schools of the *Kaiserreich*. His reflections breathe the air of a progressive professor and an experienced teacher of life. But being an educator, he himself would never have conceived of himself as an educator and this, finally, solves our initial paradox: Simmel is an educator because he is no educator.

It is interesting to see how his own philosophy of life shades into his thoughts about education. He has studied the nature of the human being in a kind of "philosophical anthropology" *avant la lettre;* he has gained basic insights into life, its nature, forms and contradictions; he has developed the elementary principles of life and how to lead one's life; and he has found "the individual law" as an answer to the question "how shall I live". Upon this philosophical, anthropological, sociological and psychological knowledge he with his educational charisma and popularity among students is able to lay out the principles of modern education – teaching life under modern conditions – and to help his students to form their personality in order to find their own way and conduct of life.

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