



Simmel's Centenary. A cornucopia of conferences

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Georg Simmel's Living Heritage

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GREGOR FITZI

Simmel's Centenary. A cornucopia of conferences

The activities for the Simmel centenary started already in 2017. At the School for International Relations and Diplomatic Affairs, Forlì (Italy), in November 3rd 2017, a first workshop on *Culture and Civilisation. Starting from Simmel* took place. The engaged debate showed that classical authors can be interesting for the students in contemporary sociology of culture. The workshop was introduced by the organizer Prof. Paolo Terenzi (University of Bologna) who is actually also the instructor of the course in sociology of cultural processes at the department in Forlì in which the workshop took place. The moderator was Prof. Ambrogio Santambrogio (University of Perugia, co-director of the journal *Quaderni di Teoria Sociale*), who was also the author of the handbook of sociology adopted for the class. Gregor Fitzi (University of Potsdam, Centre for Citizenship, Social Pluralism and Religious Diversity) gave a presentation on *The conflict of social life and cultural forms: Simmel's theory of "qualitative societal differentiation"*, where he argued that Simmel's late conception of the conflict of life forms can be seen as the final development of a decennial reflection on the "qualitative differentiation" of modern societies. Vincenzo Mele (University of Pisa) presented on *Georg Simmel and the Theory of Media*, where he showed the Simmel's seminal text *The Metropolis and the Mental Life* can be read as a key text in the media theory. The workshop was concluded by Prof. Sergio Belardinelli (University of Bologna) who

remarked the importance of Georg Simmel to understand the contemporary postmodern human condition.

From November 30th to December 1st 2017 there was a conference on *Georg Simmel's living heritage* held at the Department of Sociology, Università Cattolica in Milan. It was a fruitful encounter of different generations of the most qualified Simmel specialists from France, Germany and Italy. The proceedings of the conference constitute the current special issue edited by Monica Martinelli that you find in this volume of the *Simmel Studies*, followed by the commentaries of the discussants.

On March 16th 2018, a very particular and interesting *Journée d'Études* on *Les Enfants de Simmel* was organised by Veronica Ciantelli, Nathalie Raoux et Denis Thouard at the *Centre Georg Simmel* of the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* in Paris. The idea was to trace who are all the possible intellectual sons and daughters whose life and work witness a proximity and distance to Simmel as their precursor, starting from famous – and challenging – aphorism on the cash legacy of his intellectual legacy (“My legacy will be, as it were, in cash, distributed to many heirs, each transforming his part into use conformed to his nature: a use which will reveal no longer its indebtedness to this heritage”, GSG 20: 261). The discussion produced an exciting cultural exchange between different generations and intellectual traditions, included an important Franco-German dialog that could be traced back to World War I and took place despite the ideologisation of the contrast between European cultures.

Introducing the workshop, Denis Thouard portrayed Simmel's two biological children and their role for the transmission of his intellectual heritage. Oliver Agard focussed on Simmel's ‘visual effects’ on the triumvirate of the culture and film critique in the 1920s: Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Krakauer and Béla Balázs. Maria Stavrinaki, presented Carl Einstein's work as a politically engaged art critic and analysed his elaboration of Simmel's concept of tragedy of culture. Nathalie Raoux and Veronica Ciantelli dedicated two terrific presentations to a classical issue: Benjamin's attempt to

‘save Simmel’ from Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s dismissal. Thereby, they went into unexplored details of the very intricate structure of Benjamin’s Arcades Project. The greatest surprise of the workshop was Laure Schnapper talk about Heinz Tiessen (1887-1971). Predestined by his father to become a lawyer, Tiessen discovered Simmel during his studies at the Berlin University. Under the influence of Simmel’s lectures, he decided to become a composer. Schnapper reconstructed insights and successes of his musical career. The *Journée d’Études* concluded with two powerful presentations about classical topics of the Simmel’s reception. Matthieu Amat spoke about the effects of Simmel’s oeuvre on Georg Lukács. Therefore, he did not only present Lukács well-known critique of Simmel’s thought but he also explored the less known influence of different Simmel’s themes on the building of Lukács philosophical and aesthetical research programme. Dominique Bourel gave an interesting, detailed and even enthusiastic reconstruction of the interconnections between German and French intellectual milieus after World War I with a particular focus on Charles du Bos, Bernhard Groethuysen and Ernst Robert Curtius. In this perspective, especially Groethuysen emerged as the untiring mediator of Simmel’s and Dilthey’s heritage in the French culture between the World Wars. The proceedings of the conference will be published soon and includes papers on further ‘Simmel’s sons and daughters’. Inter alia, on Margarete Susman, Gertrud Kantorowicz, Edith Kalischer, Michael Landmann, Karl Mannheim, Max Raphael, and Antonio Banfi.

In Strasbourg and Paris from March 14th to 16th was held *Simmel et l’Espace Architectural. Sociabilité Urbaine, Paysage et Esthétisation du Monde*, organized by Emmanuel Amougou (LET), Manola Antonioli (LAA), Andrea Borsari (Université de Bologne), Cristiana Mazzoni (AMUP), Alain Milon (EA 4414 Université Paris Nanterre), and Alexandra Pignol-Mroczkowski (AMUP).

Many others Simmel conferences will take place during the Simmel centenary year 2018. *Simmel Studies* will dedicate detailed

reports to them in volume 22/2. The plan for the next month includes – as far as we knew before the editorial deadline – the following appointments:

1. June 21 2018. Workshop at the University of Wuppertal (Germany): *Georg Simmel and the suffering of the modern age*. Organized by Gerald Hartung (University of Wuppertal).
2. September 2–5 2018. Conference at the University of Bonn (Germany): *Answers to the 'crisis of philosophy': Georg Simmel's idiosyncratic stance on the history of philosophy*. Organized by Melanie Riedel (University of Bonn), Matthieu Amat (University of Lausanne) and Efraim Podoksik (Hebrew University of Jerusalem).
3. September 25–27 2018. Conference at the University of Wuppertal (Germany): *The Philosopher Georg Simmel*. Organized by Gerald Hartung (University of Wuppertal).
4. October 4–5 2018. Conference at the University of Lisbon (Portugal): *Georg Simmel: Metaphysical. The Eternal Meaning of Temporality*. Organized by Maribel Mendes Sobreira (University of Lisbon) and Luca Vargiu (University of Cagliari).
5. October 11 2018. Conference at the University of Perugia, in Narni (Italy): *The last Simmel. Outcomes and openings of an intellectual path*. Organized by Maria Caterina Federici (University of Perugia).
6. November 29–30 2018. Conference at the *Collège doctoral européen* of the University of Strasbourg (France): *Revisiting Simmel. Contributions, controversies and posterity*. Organized by Sylvie Monchatre, Laurent Muller and Patrick Watier (University of Strasbourg).