



## Editorial

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## Editorial

This double volume marks a transition between the previous edition (initially *Simmel Newsletter* from 1991 to 1999, then *Simmel Studies* from 2000 to 2009) and the new *Simmel Studies* series. In his retrospective, Otthein Rammstedt (founder of the journal and editor of the German complete critical edition of Simmel's work) sheds light on the origin, development and future potentialities of *Simmel Studies* and illustrates the principal activities and scopes of the journal, its connection with the *Georg Simmel Gesamtausgabe* and the key role played by *Simmel Studies* in the research on the thought of Georg Simmel.

One of the scopes of this double volume is to offer an overview of the essays and contributions on Simmel published in the first 19 years of life of the journal. In particular, in the first part of the present number, the reader will find the complete tables of contents of all the previous numbers of the *Simmel Newsletter* and *Simmel Studies*. This work represents an ideal completion of Rammstedt's contribution as it shows, at an international level, how the research "materialised" and "crystallized" itself in the journal. This aspect reminds us of Simmel's key notion of "crystallisation" and of his secular elaboration of the concept of "objective spirit" beyond its idealistic meaning in Hegel.

In addition to the tables of contents of the past numbers of the journal, we provide scholars with further materials and research tools such as the complete Italian bibliography, a compendium of primary and secondary literature on Georg Simmel in Italian edited by Claudia Portioli. In order to keep up with the status of the research in different countries, we hope to publish similar bibliographical overviews for other languages in the next numbers of the journal.

In the section "Literatur", Léa Barbisan reviews Marian Mičko's book *Walter Benjamin und Georg Simmel* (2010), which highlights the similarities between the two authors based on their analysis of the phenomena of modernity and on the approaches they develop. The relevance of Barbisan's

review lies in the fact that it does not only present the principal arguments and contents of Mičko's book, but also points out how, despite the affinities between Benjamin and Simmel, their thoughts deeply differ in terms of their implications for the evaluation of those phenomena, not least from a political perspective.

In the second part of this double volume, the reader will find the section "Simmel Abstracts" edited by Cécile Rol (for 2011 and 2012) and by Claudia Portioli (for 2011). Along with "Simmel Abstracts", single reports of conferences on Simmel's work, such as the Symposium held in November 2011 in Medellín (Colombia), give an overview of the areas and centres of research on Simmel's thought.

The essays published in this double volume seem to delineate four different directions in the interpretation of Simmel's work. The first direction consists in the in-depth analysis of specific topics developed by Simmel, which can further our understanding of classical aspects of his sociological thought. As a case in point, Lassere's article focuses on the possibilities left to the individual, according to Simmel, to adapt to the changes of modern society without succumbing to the effects of a pervasive monetary economy.

The second direction re-examines key concepts of Simmel's work from new perspectives which lead to a re-interpretation of the relationship between his philosophical and sociological thoughts. This is the case of the essay *Die Geburt der Lebensphilosophie aus dem Geist der Konfliktsoziologie* (a title evocative of Nietzsche's early work *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*), where Gregor Fitzi suggests that Simmel's philosophical notions of "life" and "form" originate not only from Bergson's influence, but also from Simmel's need to elaborate a new and more complex theory of social conflict. More specifically, according to Fitzi, Simmel's late theory of social conflict hidden in philosophical language can express the double nature and effect of the conflict. Indeed, still according to Fitzi, in Simmel's thought social conflict represents both a factor of social division and a process of social cohesion, and contributes to developing forms of social integration.

The third direction addresses whether specific crucial aspects of Simmel's work remain valid to this day, while simultaneously showing how they are rooted in and influenced by the cultural and philosophical context of his time.

Adolphi's article is a case in point, as it highlights the weakness of a number of key aspects of Simmel's theory of culture, such as: the permanence of Hegelian prejudices in Simmel's notion of culture; the presence of unexplained aspects and implications concerning his theory of culture; and the disputable assumption (derived from Dilthey) of the possibility of an immediate understanding. In general, according to Adolphi, Simmel's approach to the topic of culture remains insufficiently developed from a theoretical standpoint.

The fourth direction examines how Simmel's sociological analysis and methods not only shed light on the early forms of modernity and on its consequences for individuals, but can also be applied and adapted to experiences of late modernity and to new aspects of the contemporary world. Despite addressing different topics, Natalia Cantò-Mila and Swen Seebach on the one hand and Vincenzo Mele on the other are representative of this direction. In particular, the former article focuses on the changes that followed the introduction of the cinematic experience: by comparing the approaches of Simmel, Benjamin, Turner and Sennett, Cantò-Mila and Seebach examine the changing role of the actor, the passage from stage to the screen, the activation of emotional processes in the audience and the emergence of new rituals connected with these experiences. Mele's essay revisits Simmel's notion of lifestyle in order to highlight nuances of current emerging forms of individualities in the context of a rationalised modern society. In particular, Mele suggests that Simmel's notion of lifestyle, if interpreted in terms of "individual law" (according to Simmel, an individually binding ethical choice of conduct), can shed light on contemporary forms of political and social participation that transcend traditional forms of citizenship and of political engagement.

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