



**Hans-Peter Müller and Tillman Reitz, *Simmel-Handbuch: Begriffe, Hauptwerke, Aktualität*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2018, 960 pp.**

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## REVIEWS

GREGOR FITZI

**Hans-Peter Müller and Tillman Reitz, *Simmel-Handbuch: Begriffe, Hauptwerke, Aktualität*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2018, 960 pp.**

In the German scientific community there was a long-standing prejudice against Simmel's work (Fitzzi 2015: 417–426). The reasons for this lack of reception are historical and were rooted in the efforts to establish the tradition of a so-called 'German line of sociology' by representatives of the conservative revolution in Germany during the late 1920s and 1930s. In particular, Hans Freyer, Erich Rothacker and Andreas Walther excluded Simmel from the discipline's classical authors because of anti-Semitic and political prejudices, by stigmatizing his sociological theory as a 'science of the *logos*', being too close to the approaches of the cultural sciences (Fitzzi 2015: 61–77; Sontheimer 1992: 118 ff.). The idea that there was 'something wrong' with Simmel's sociology was then carried on unconsciously in the post-1945 institutionalisation of the sociological schools in Germany; yet also in Parsons' sociological canon and in its by far uncritical reception. For his part, Parsons decided to exclude Simmel from the sociological pantheon not only for reasons of career calculations with the aim of positioning his research programme as an alternative to the Simmel-inspired sociology of the Chicago school (Levine 1957). Parsons was highly influenced by the formulation of the tasks of sociology, including

its anti-Simmel bias, in Freyer's book on *Sociology as a Science of Reality* (1930), as he states in the *Structure of Social Action* (Fitzi 2015: 52 f.; Parsons 1949: 762, 774).

Müller's and Reitz' *Handbuch* is an attempt to make amends for this unjust reception history. The handbook presents about hundred keywords from adventure (*Abenteuer*) to cynicism (*Zynismus*) that embrace the complexity of Simmel's work. Assembling this pool of concepts and finding the proper authors to reconstruct the way Simmel conceived them, is the most significant achievement of the editors. They have successfully mobilized the Gotha of the German sociological schools from the emeriti, to the chair holder, to the assistant professors and succeeded in motivating them to give an account of the importance of Simmel's work and the role that it plays in their current and past work. In addition, a handful of renowned non-German specialists provided further keywords. Concluding, six essays on the topicality of Simmel's work are presented. These are dedicated to Simmel's modernity (Makropoulos). Simmel's sociology as a relational project (Ziemann). Simmel as the ancestor of the sociology of space (Hoerning, Weidenhaus). Simmel's theory of emotions (Gerhards, von Scheve). Simmel's gender theory (Klinger). Simmel's philosophy of life (Böhringer). Beneath the two sections of the keywords and of the essays, single chapters are dedicated to Simmel's main works. Here the sociological, yet also the philosophical and art-theoretical works of the classical author are taken into account. Yet, somehow surprising, also a classic feature of the German Simmel's reception comes to the fore. No chapter is dedicated to the *Sociology* of 1908. The idea that Simmel's sociological main work is an integral part of the sociological canon and constitutes a grounding stone for the following development of sociology seems in some way still to have not been completely established in the German social sciences.

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GREGOR FITZI

**Willi Goetschel and Daniel Silver, *Interdisciplinary Simmel. Special issue of The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory*, 2019, 94:2.**

2018 marked the centenary of Georg Simmel's death. Many different conferences, monographs and miscellanies were dedicated to his legacy. The question arose again as to who Simmel really was: a philosopher, a sociologist, a genial but superficial feature writer? Through his often unofficial reception, Simmel has played a major role not only in the disciplinary field of sociology but equally in philosophy, Critical Theory, and cultural studies. Yet, the reception of his oeuvre has been often selective and spotty. While this