

## Masaryk and Simmel<sup>1</sup>

(Reflections on an Unknown Review by Masaryk)

MIOSLAV PETRUSEK

Charles University, Prague

### 1.

The most important Czech thinker of the 20th century, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, always saw himself as first and foremost a sociologist. Not only did he say so on many occasions, but he also designated many of his writings as 'sociological', although they would not today be considered thus in the strict sense of the word. This was very much the case with his famous work *Rusko a Evropa* (*Russia and Europe*), written in 1912, which he subtitled *Sociologické skizzy* (*Sociological Sketches*).

The mass of literature on Masaryk (unfortunately mostly Czech)<sup>1</sup> includes texts on his sociological work, but strangely enough does not include any which can provide the answer to one searching question: if we consider that Masaryk (1850-1937) was a contemporary of Max Weber (1848-1920), Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), Wilfred Pareto (1848-1923) and Georg Simmel (1858-1918), there is good reason to ask what were Masaryk's professional academic relations to his contemporaries who are today considered as the 'classics' of sociology?<sup>2</sup> Only two such relationships on the theme of Masaryk in relation to classical sociologists have been researched in detail and in all aspects, and those are his relations with Comte and Marx [see Machovec 1992]. However neither of these two was Masaryk's direct contemporary (Masaryk was just starting school when Comte died, and was just moving from Vienna to the university in Prague at the time of Marx's death) and they were certainly not 'professional colleagues' in the sense of belonging to the same scientific (sociological) community.

Jiří Musil has recently made an attempt to incorporate Masaryk into the international sociological context of his time [Musil 1993: 89-100]. Musil rightly considers and convincingly argues that Masaryk quite precisely marked out his relations not only with Comte, Marx and Mill, but also with Spencer, with the representatives of social Darwinism (Gumplowicz, Ratzenhofer), with some American sociologists (Ward, Kidd), and

<sup>1</sup>) The author would like to thank the University of Constance (particularly Dr. Franheim) for providing access to their sources on Simmel, the Grant Agency of Charles University (grant no. 83/94) for financing his term of study in Constance, and Alena Miltová, who so industriously and meticulously identified materials on Simmel.

<sup>1</sup>) A number of Masaryk's works have recently been published in translation, mostly in English, including Giddens' edition of Masaryk's *Sebevražda* (*Suicide*) with his introduction [Masaryk 1970, Giddens 1970], the English edition of the 3rd volume of *Rusko a Evropa* under the title *The Spirit of Russia* (published in Czech in 1996), Huanus J. Hajek's neglected work [1983] which is a qualified introduction to Masaryk, or Gordon Skilling's notable work [1994].

<sup>2</sup>) See Jeffrey C. Alexander's famous article *The Centrality of the Classics* [in Giddens and Turner 1987], or Turner's book [Turner 1993] which features the classics canonised from a 'positivist perspective': Comte-Spencer-Durkheim-Marx (compared with Simmel and Weber)-Weber-Mead. Parson's canonisation includes Marshall, Pareto, Durkheim and Weber [Parsons 1949], etc.

also, with respect to his deep interest in the 'Russian question', with the most important Russian sociologists of the time (Lavrov, Michajlovskij and to some degree Karejev). Masaryk was extremely well read with an unusually broad perspective, and also had wide-ranging interests which took in the economic theories of his era, particularly with their methodological results and interconnections (the conflict between Gustav Schmoller and Karl Menger) etc.. Zdeněk Pinc (following Jan Patočka), for example, reproaches Masaryk for "not being concerned with the great philosophies, but rather with marginal ones", saying that it is not possible to learn philosophy from Masaryk because "philosophy must be understood through the fundamental ideas and not via marginal authors", which may in fact be justified [see Pinc 1992: 300]. As far as Masaryk's relations with his *sociological contemporaries* are concerned, however, this is very far from being the case. Musil's list can be greatly extended, since Masaryk was familiar not only with Durkheim (it is interesting that Masaryk never reacted to the latter's *Suicide*, although this was one of his own dominant interests),<sup>3</sup> but also Le Bon and Tarde – the antipodes of Durkheim. He also referred on more than one occasion to Tönnies, reacted to Weber's early work on Roman agrarian history (Šrubař made a qualified comparison between Masaryk and Weber in his as yet unpublished study [1996]), and so on. In sort, Masaryk was familiar with his great contemporaries and always responded to them in cases of factual concepts [see Petrušek 1993: 60-76]. Despite Masaryk's efforts to gain recognition and respect as an academic sociologist, he was never in fact successful in this and his relations with his contemporaries were never on a systematic basis, just as he never created a systematic base for his 'sociological theory'. The standard objection that "Masaryk did not create a sociological system" (Bláha, Fischer, Chalupný) is the leitmotif of all attempts to reconstruct a 'Masaryk system' and at the heart of criticism of Masaryk as a sociologist. This is certainly a criticism which is relevant to the times and spirit of the 19th century, when the creation of a system was seen as the one logical conclusion of someone's work. Today, when there is a tendency to steer clear of creating systems and indeed the very word 'system' (after the intoxication with systems analysis and 'general systems theory') has virtually become a dirty word, Masaryk's (and Simmel's) lack of system may be seen as a point of entry into the postmodern debate, as has indeed already been the case with Simmel.

Musil probably somewhat exaggerates when he finds signs in Masaryk's writings of things that were only explicitly stated long after the latter's death. Masaryk was apparently "close to all theories of social interactionism, especially symbolic interactionism. His ideas moved along paths which led to the structuralist theories of Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu and certainly also Norbert Elias (...) nor was he unfamiliar with the modern versions of exchange as put forward by Homans and Blau" [Musil 1993: 98]. Allowing that Masaryk can, with hindsight, be seen in this light, it seems likely that certain misunderstandings about him may be dismissed and his links with contemporary sociological theory be identified in a very simple step inspired by the current so-called

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<sup>3</sup>) Jaroslav Střítecký raised an interesting and amusing point when he posed the question of whether "Masaryk would not have become the Austro-Hungarian Durkheim" if he had not moved from Vienna to Prague in the 1880s. It is true that Masaryk's move to the Czech environment meant a radical change in his scientific interests and in particular a fundamental move towards politics. Střítecký's question can therefore also be rephrased as "Would the first Czech Republic have had a president of Masaryk's standing" if Masaryk had stayed in Vienna?

*Simmel renaissance*, i.e. the enormous re-emergence of interest in this sociologist who until recently was marginalised or, rather, ‘badly read’.

## 2.

The name of Georg Simmel appears in Masaryk’s writings (although only briefly as Mušil’s exhaustive study does not note it) primarily in his *Otzáka sociální* (*The Social Question*), in which Masaryk considers the close but antagonistic relationship between “sociology and socialism” (with Simmel figuring alongside Tönnies, Bartha, Stammler among others). A close material relation between Masaryk and Simmel is indicated in Mistrovič’s analysis of modernity and of his attempt to establish ‘postmodern critical theory’ [see Mistrovič 1991 and 1993] and in Frisby’s work [Frisby 1981]. The latter in fact quotes Masaryk’s review of Simmel’s book [Simmel 1908], a review probably unknown in this country to date. Frisby in fact took a quote from this review as the motto of one chapter of his book on Georg Simmel’s ‘sociological impressionism’ – the sentence “Modernity has found here a dynamic expression: the totality of fragmentary, centrifugal directions of existence and arbitrariness of individual elements are brought to light” [Frisby 1981: 45]. Even allowing for the miracles that English can wreak with the German language, all my searching has not yet found this sentence in any of Masaryk’s reviews.

Masaryk was in fact not able to read Simmel in the same way that Frisby did some years later and while he was undoubtedly one of the great analysts and critics of modernity, he could not perceive what he himself had in common with Simmel. It is enough to look at Masaryk’s critique of Simmel’s *Soziologie* in order to understand that Masaryk read it as an academic sociologist of his era, with more or less the same objections as were raised from the turn of the century up to the end of the 1970s, i.e. first and foremost his not entirely successful attempt to set specific limits for sociology as a science of ‘special forms of association’. Masaryk’s academic approach can also be seen in his insistence that Simmel should resolve the question of sociology’s position in the complex of sciences, clearly define its content and not refer to method (although Masaryk’s first teacher, Comte, stated that “the more complicated phenomena become, the less it is possible to distinguish between method and science”, [see Comte 1927: 101]). He also maintained that Simmel should set out a ‘system’ and ‘clearly define concepts’. Masaryk did not realise that precisely the same criticisms (except perhaps that of the classification of science) would be levelled at himself. He was largely justified in his criticism of Simmel’s ‘formalism’, but the real problem lies elsewhere. Today it is clear that Simmel’s key *sociological work* is not *Soziologie* but rather *The Philosophy of Money*<sup>4</sup> and that that part of *Soziologie* which is relevant to sociology today is one which Masaryk viewed overall positively if only marginally – “the separate excellent and valuable ideas” which were however “complicated by the explanation” because the “systematic links” were broken.

<sup>4</sup>) The Russian researcher into Simmel, Jonin, wrote that “Economists and philosophers turned to the *Philosophy of Money* provoked and confused by the bizarre title, but not those for whom it was intended, i.e. sociologists. While sociologists may have ignored the *Philosophy of Money*, they saw *Soziologie* as a fundamental sociological text, a tractate which offered an exhaustive view of Simmel’s sociology. The part was taken as the whole, meaning that for decades there was a totally false interpretation of Simmel’s sociology” [Jonin 1981: 34].

Today Simmel's attempt at 'formal sociology' is recognised as an offering of the day to the commonly felt need of academic sociology to define itself as a distinctive science. For Simmel himself it was perhaps more an attempt to demonstrate his particular academic competence than something that really interested him. His discussion of social forms was better and more convincing in his short studies, sketches and essays on fashions or shame, than in his Kantian reminiscences of the difficulties of abstract considerations.

Masaryk's critique clearly agrees with later ones, as for example that of Sorokin, who like Masaryk maintained that the analogy between sociology and geometry is not admissible because "phenomena like power, authority, domination and competition do not have geometric dimensions" [Sorokin 1936: 402]. Similarities are also clear in Szczepański's later critique in which he stated that despite all Simmel's attempts "the requirement of dividing form from content cannot be met because the forms of social relationships have a different relation to their empirical forms than do the forms of the triangle to diagrams on a blackboard" [Szczepański 1967: 476]. Szczepański was also in full agreement with Masaryk when he said that "Simmel was not content with a general programme, but also presented his postulates in a series of monographs which laid out his ideas, the clarity of his reflections and surprising solutions", but all in vain – sociology in this sense does not exist.

Simmel's closest contemporary reader was one of the "Holy Trinity" of Czech sociologists (Masaryk-Bláha-Chalupný), i.e. Emanuel Chalupný. Ten years after Simmel's death, Chalupný paid considerable attention to his attempt at making sociology systematic [Chalupný 1927].<sup>5</sup> Chalupný compared Simmel's attempt with Giddings, who was at one time very popular in the Czech Lands, because Giddings basic work came out in Czech translation [Giddings 1900] – on Masaryk's initiative, it should be remembered – and saw his concept as the science of association as very close to Simmel (apart from anything else Simmel was well known in America from the end of the last century thanks to his student, Park). Chalupný says that Simmel's concept, which at least tries to define sociology but at the same time rejects the idea that it is an independent subject and reduces it to "a mere method", is too extreme, on which Chalupný is in complete accordance with Masaryk. The former, however, differs from Masaryk in his careful reading of the excursus on jewels and on letters, analysing them through the prism of his own sociological outlook and identifying an inner conflict in Simmel's formal sociology: "Simmel offers a keen empirical examination but cannot draw from this basic conclusions for the concept of science: and thus in his 'Sociology' he explains many things which belong to sociology *as I would define it*, but not to sociology *as he himself defined it*, since that definition disputes the possibility of a content-based sociology" [Chalupný 1927: 92]. Chalupný thus expresses an inconsistency which undeniably existed but which Simmel was able to live with and which did not in fact worry him too much. The overall context of Simmel's life work shows that his work towards a 'formal sociology' was by no means marginal, but nor was it central to his work (on the other hand, positivist formalism, the formation of sociological dichotomies and classifications, is a key factor in

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<sup>5</sup>) It is a sign of the times that when it was written Chalupný's extremely well-researched book does not even mention Max Weber. There is in fact a Max Weber mentioned as co-author of the *Lehrbuch der Biologie*, together with M. Nussbaum and G. Karsten, but this must be a pure coincidence.

von Wiese's work). At the end of his life Simmel in fact announced that he was abandoning sociology in order to devote himself to philosophy and his aesthetic interests. It is however undeniable that his *Soziologie* is the first European work which includes the word 'sociology' in its title and that almost the last works that Simmel published during his lifetime were variations on formal sociology, *Grundfragen der Soziologie (Individuum und Gesellschaft)* and his last work *Lebensanschauung (Vier metaphysische Kapitel)*. Unlike Masaryk and Chalupný [see Masaryk 1885, Chalupný 1945] he was in fact indifferent to the question of sociology's position in the system of sciences, and the lack of a system was inherent in his work.

Szacki shows convincingly that there were a number of factors underlying Simmel's lack of system: his relatively undefined philosophical starting point, his unbelievably wide interests ranging from sculpture and musical ethnology through ethics to the theory of culture, the tension between two readerships – the public, for whom, in Leopold von Wiese's words, he was "a literary salon sociologist", and the academics, for whom he was, almost until his death, an honourary *Privatdozent* who was entitled to teach but not to take part in the life of the academic community. Even before authors influenced by postmodernism and postmodern thought such as Bauman, the Weinsteins or Frisby, Szacki clearly saw that "Simmel was fascinated by the unending variety of aspects of reality, not by any (in his view illusory) possibility of organising them on any solid basis" [Szacki 1981: 506]. This was one reason that Simmel saw "society as an unstable, fragile, shaky and unsure form, which when it settles is like sand rather than rock – in a process of constant socialisation" [Bauman 1995: 19]. In a way Simmel anticipated the postmodern "death of the social", but that is not the main concern here, Masaryk neither saw nor wanted to see the society of his time in this light, but he did have three points in common with Simmel:

1. Like Simmel in his 'formal sociology', Masaryk was never convincing in his attempts at academic sociology, primarily because the sociological was not alive. Masaryk was convincing in his only lightly argued but rhetorically convincing reflections on "the crisis of our times", particularly in his key work *Moderní člověk a náboženství (Religion and Modern Man)*. It was not purely by chance that this series of essays was published at virtually the same time as Simmel's *The Philosophy of Money* (Masaryk – 1898, Simmel – 1900).

2. Masaryk was one of the most clear-sighted analysts of modernity and those same factors which motivated Simmel were also at work with Masaryk. These included his reflections on the neuroses of city life, on the crisis of culture, on the transitoriness of intellectual fashions, and particularly on "titanism" and "faustism".<sup>6</sup> As a diagnostician

<sup>6</sup>) Two brief quotations in illustration of this: "I feel that a reader with normal psychological experience will immediately answer the question of whether there are more psychoses to be found in the city or in the country that of course in the city, just as suicide is more common in cities. Why is this answer so easy and what does it really mean? That psychoses and suicide are greater in the very centres of modern life. This is something truly new and modern, and yet it is not a question of the quantity of psychosis but rather of various types and degrees. It is not only the physiological and pathological aspects of individual and mass psychosis that are of interest, but also the psychological and social ones. Scientific analysis confirms what is commonly heard today on all sides, that people are becoming more nervous, more sensitive, irritable and irritated, that they are weak, tired and weary, sad and joyless" [Masaryk 1934: 19]. The similarity with Simmel's analysis of

Masaryk was frequently as perceptive as Simmel, and Giddens quite rightly said that while the dramatic success of Durkheim's *Suicide* overshadowed Masaryk's *Sebevražda* (*Suicide*), it could not hide the similarities between the two authors, particularly as far as the role of religion and religious life in the contemporary social crisis was concerned [see Giddens 1970: xli]. This may be present in Simmel's work but it is expressed in an entirely different way.

3. The third point of similarity is the way in which Masaryk, like Simmel, although carefully and certainly at least partly unconsciously, created a new style of expression which has come to be called 'sociological impressionism', in direct relation to Simmel. This was first pointed out in the Czech Lands by Pavel Tomášek [1972], but without attributing it to the original source: this was not David Frisby, who wrote an monograph on Simmel with the same name, but Georg Lukács, one of Simmel's most famous pupils, who first used this term as early as 1918. It is worth going a little more deeply into his role, as while it may not seem directly related to Masaryk there is an undoubted connection.

### 3.

Lukács did not intend his term as a *bon mot*, let alone any belittling of Simmel's very special means of expression, in the essay in which Simmel set the status of a "sociological genre". He drew it from Simmel's ability "to see even the smallest and most insignificant phenomena of daily life *sub specie philosophiae*, so that they became transparent", and particularly from the fact that Simmel was for him a philosopher and sociologist of a "transitional era", a "transitional thinker" [Lukács 1991: 146]. It is difficult not to recall Nejedlý's (generally perceptive) analysis of Masaryk as a philosopher of an era of transition and a sociologist of crisis, or Pinc's metaphor of Masaryk as a "period thinker". Like Simmel, Masaryk developed a literary genre of sociological-philosophical essays in parallel with his academic sociology, and Simmel has remained the real master of this genre. Masaryk's academic works, particularly *Rukověť sociologie* (*A Handbook of Sociology*), *Člověk a příroda* (*Man and Nature*), *Základové konkretné logiky* (*The Basics of Concrete Logic*) are all typical of him, as if being almost symbolically unfinished and almost too boring to read was an essential element of a certain academic stance. Masaryk rather incomprehensibly clung to his *Basics of Concrete Logic* as his fundamental work, rather like Goethe in his conviction that his studies of optics would

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the city mentality is not accidental: Simmel was certainly more perceptive and the concept of *blaséness* is lacking in Masaryk's work. An excellent collection of Masaryk's 'diagnoses' of the time was prepared by J. L. Fischer in the context of the last *fin de siècle* [Fischer 1930: 177n], and Mestrovič [1991: 54n] placed Simmel in the context of our *fin de siècle*. The second example is concerned with the overriding subject of Simmel's second creative period (1900-1991), i.e. love. Masaryk, on this: "Politics was hypocrisy, religion was hypocrisy, now love too has become hypocrisy. Egoism, horrible, cold, mortal egoism is enjoying an orgy. Love has become egoistical, the woman sold, the courtesan has pushed out the sweet, romantic, dreaming innocent grisette. Man has cut himself off from woman, since he has begun to feel contempt for her, has abandoned the warm hearth of love and turned to wine, now haunting evil places. Love has been overcome by the spirit of the times: just as people did not believe the old kings and the old religion, now love too has become an old illusion" [Masaryk 1934: 263]. Masaryk was undoubtedly more of a moralist than Simmel, but nobody except Simmel's contemporary Bouglé saw in Simmel more than an essay-writing moralist.

become part of European intellectual history. In 1926 Masaryk explained his concept of “concrete logic” as an attempt at creating “a theory of science and the sciences”, as “a science of science and the sciences” – as if he were a precursor of the Vienna Circle. That may be a somewhat forced parallel – Masaryk’s classification of the sciences has its roots far back into the last century [for a more detailed discussion see Olšovský 1993: 44].

The basic fact, which Lukács notes, that Simmel provided a new and different thematic orientation for sociology, was also noted by Adorno, who said that “in defiance of all psychological idealism, Simmel was the first to turn to concrete matters and so became the canonical master of all those who were becoming tired of the vociferousness of the critique of knowledge and intellectual history”. Habermas cites this thesis in his study *Simmel as a Diagnostician of His Times* [Habermas 1986, cited according to Zimbel 1996: 541]. It is a fact that Masaryk, despite occasional leanings towards speculative excursus into the philosophy of history, was tired of the “vociferousness of the critique of knowledge and intellectual history”. He was certainly a case of a “diagnostician of his times *par excellence*” rather than just of “our Czech crisis”.

Some of these interconnections have recently been pointed out by Ivan Mucha, who says that “Simmel was one of the first sociologists to pay attention to marginal phenomena. In this he was a precursor of the contemporary analytic postmodern society”. He does however differ from this society in that “despite all his imagination and his unique ability to seize apparently unimportant moments, Simmel has something of the heroic which is lacking in the postmodern authors” [Mucha 1994: 84]. Masaryk certainly shared Simmel’s imagination but there cannot be the slightest doubt that he was also a *heroic thinker*. This is by no means irrelevant in an era which proclaims itself to be “post-heroic”: Masaryk would certainly have been afraid that this was a trifle previous.

Zygmunt Bauman writes that in his essays on flirting, jewellery, the Berlin Trade Fair, doors and bridges, shame or discretion, Simmel discovered a “sociological style which time has shown to be the most suitable, the most in harmony with the type of reality which it sought to express” [Bauman 1995: 33]. The fundamental point is that *time has shown* it, because Simmel’s contemporaries (as with Masaryk’s contemporaries) were less than enthusiastic about Simmel’s style, because it mixed strategies of argumentation and academic conventions not just of its times, and in general went against the strategies of argumentation and the model of the construction of sociology as presented and represented by the radical scientist paradigm (mostly neo-positivist in origins). Celestin Bouglé in *L’Année sociologique* (XI, 1906-1909) wrote in a review of one of Simmel’s books that “for sociology to become scientific more is needed than just essays, even such suggestive ones as those coming from the pen of the moralist, Simmel”.<sup>7</sup> Durkheim (in a review of Simmel’s most logically consistent work – *The Philosophy of Money*) even described Simmel’s style as “bastard speculation”, which expressed reality subjectively, without being as perceptive as art, at the same time seeking abstract formulations without reaching the standard of science [Durkheim 1980: 98]. Sorokin too found

<sup>7</sup>) Here I cannot give the exact source. The French manuscript of Bouglé’s reflections together with the sources can be read in the 1908 edition of Simmel’s *Soziologie*, which I had at my disposal. According to a note on the manuscript, but also according to what Masaryk indicated in his review and what he omitted, I am almost certain that Masaryk worked from this copy of Simmel’s book – Masaryk obviously found the quote from Bouglé himself and the tone of his criticism is consistent with Bouglé’s standpoint.

Simmel to have “simply methodological shortcomings”, because all Simmel’s work is founded purely on the “speculative generalisations of a gifted man, supported by a method of illustration in the form of two or three randomly chosen and one-sided facts” [Sorokin 1936: 405]. At the end of his life Sorokin apologised to Simmel, not in words but in acts, when he wrote a volume of “Simmelian” essays on the mystical power of love.

Simmel understood intuitively that, in Green’s words, “style and text are as important as the logic and empirical reasoning of a theory” [Green 1988: 47], that style and rhetoric on the one hand and logical argumentation, empirical verification and historical authentication on the other are often of equal importance in sociology. Simmel’s – and Masaryk’s – sociological impressionism, their essays, their personal ways of formulating problems and their strategies for arguing these are *de facto* the start of the major change in the sociological paradigm, the return to a non-scientific, non-quantitative, non-experimental sociology.<sup>8</sup>

There is one more fundamental link between Masaryk and Simmel and that is their interest in art not just as a social phenomenon (in the style of positivist *sociology of art*) but as a basic life form or a *fundamental way of viewing the world*. The Russian researcher into Simmel, Jonin, writes that “Simmel did not see method and style as opposites, but rather saw many features in common between them. Method has much in common with what in art history and artistic creation we call style. Differences in style in all spheres of life, and so also in science, together with the impossibility of setting up method and style in opposition, are a characteristic mark of the times” [Jonin 1981: 568]. Thus not only is sociology close to art (and particularly to literature) both as a source of knowledge (as with Masaryk) and in its style of expression, but *sociology is becoming literature*. This is particularly the case today with the extant parts of the works of Georg Simmel and Tomáš Masaryk.

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<sup>8)</sup> Sufficient evidence that the paradigmatic change in interpretative and qualitative sociology can be traced back to the first half of the century is provided by Hubík in his *Sociologie vědění* (*The Sociology of Knowledge*) (SLON 1997). The reasons behind the close relationship between literature and sociology were first described by Nisbet [1967: 18] when he wrote on the emergence of sociology that “two final points must be stressed: first, the moral basis of modern sociology and, second, the intuitive or artistic frame of thought in which central ideas of sociology have been arrived at”. In his 1977 work, Nisbet wrote of sociology as an “artistic form”, showing how sociologists paint “landscapes” (pictures of landscapes “democracy in America”, “capital”, “the city” in Tocqueville, Marx and Simmel) and portraits (the bureaucrat, the bourgeois, the intellectual, etc.). This idea was further developed by Lepenies, who spoke of sociology as a “third culture” lying between science and literature [Lepenies 1985] and who found clear connections between the efforts of 19th century literature and those of the “founding fathers of sociology” [Lepenies 1996]. Masaryk’s links with literature have been well researched by now. He was also linked with Simmel by his passions for an “artistic understanding of the world”, a passion which in Simmel was tamed and corrected by certain academic canons. Masaryk’s early article *O studiu děl básnických* (*The Study of Poetic Works*), in which he clearly proclaims the superiority of an artistic (poetic) knowledge of the world over the scientific one (today we might say “the privileged position of artistic understanding above scientific understanding”), is marked by a still somewhat naïve spirit of late romanticism. While this was in striking contrast with his Comtean roots, Masaryk never lost his enthusiasm for literature as a “source of sociological knowledge”.

The fact that Masaryk was not able to read Simmel's *Soziologie* as being intellectually close to himself (at least in parts) can be put down simply to the fact that in his reviews of Simmel, Masaryk produced standard products of his academic professorial sociological work. A deeper connection between Masaryk and Simmel has yet to be revealed. This would certainly be a worthwhile task, precisely because it would be a purely non-academic task, but one which, in the spirit of the tradition of Simmel and Masaryk, is relevant to the most urgent questions facing not only contemporary sociology but first and foremost the (post)modern world today.

*Translated by April Retter*

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