



# Georg Simmel's "How Is Society Possible?": A Dialogue

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FRANK J. LECHNER AND DANIEL SILVER

*Georg Simmel's "How Is Society Possible?": A Dialogue*

How should we read and understand Georg Simmel's famous essay, "How Is Society Possible?" How and how well does Simmel answer his main question? What bearing, if any, does the essay have on the study of forms of interaction, in his own work or in modern scholarship? The exchange below addresses such questions in the form of an article, extended commentary, and response. With the support of the editors of *Simmel Studies*, we present the trio of items as a single unit to illustrate to fellow Simmel scholars the possibilities of divergent readings and critiques. The exchange began when Lechner sent a draft of his paper "How Is Society Possible?" to Silver, who responded with detailed comments. It occurred to us that rather than simply submitting a paper revised in light of those comments, or letting further revision occur behind the scenes through peer review, it might be worthwhile to make our contrasting views public as a stimulus to further reflection on a classic essay. Since we have both been inspired by the work and thought of the great Simmel scholar Donald Levine (who was Silver's Ph.D. advisor), we also offer this joint effort as an instance of the dialogical approach to theory he advocated.