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EUROPEAN INTELLECTUAL SPACES AND THE ORIGINS OF ITALIAN MARXISM. A METHODOLOGICAL ATTEMPT

a public lecture by

Tommaso Giordani
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Largely forgotten nowadays, Antonio Labriola (1843-1904) is the initiator of an original line of Marxist reflection, whose most celebrated figure remains Antonio Gramsci. In the closing years of the nineteenth century, Labriola elaborated, in his three Essays on historical materialism, a heterodox understanding of Marxism, whose essential philosophical structures were to influence not only Gramsci, but also Croce, Gentile, and Georges Sorel.

The lecture examines the genesis of Labriola's Marxism through the unorthodox lens of intellectual space. In other words, it addresses the question of the extent to which the production and circulation of Labriola's ideas was shaped by the cultural, linguistic, and political hierarchies which carved up the intellectual field of Western Europe at the time. The picture that emerges is that the originality of Labriola's work was largely made possible by the peripherality – both real and perceived – of Italy in these spaces. By examining how interactions with France and Germany shaped Labriola's readings, publication and teaching strategies, an attempt is made to de-provincialize this important thinker and to show that the history of his thought is not just an Italian one, but one that involves a much wider space.

Tommaso Giordani is an intellectual historian with a background in philosophy. His principal research interests lie in the intellectual history of fin de siècle European societies, especially France, Italy, and their respective socialist movements. His research combines the classical tools of intellectual history with the insights of economic and social history, trying to read the emergence and use of given vocabularies through the lenses of economic and social transformations. He has published on Georges Sorel and at the moment is working on a study of languages of social conflict and social cohesion in early welfare state France (1880-1914). He holds a Ph.D. in History and Civilization from the European University Institute in Florence. Previously, he had studied philosophy and political theory at the University of Warwick and the London School of Economics. He has been a visiting researcher at Queen Mary, University of London, and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

May 24, Tuesday, 16.00
Nádor 9, Gellner Room

