

CENTRE FOR SENSORY STUDIES

TALKING SENSE LECTURE SERIES



A Sentimental Education: Freud on Smell and the Origins of Culture

Simon Hajdini

3 April 2024

4:00—5:30 PM EST

In-Person: H-1120, Hall Building,
Concordia University

Virtual: [Zoom Link](#)

Osmological narratives claim that the onset of culture was conditioned by a suppression of smell, brought about by the landmark evolutionary advent of human bipedalism. The talk will trace the inception and development of osmological narratives originating in the age of Enlightenment and its immediate aftermath. These narratives, dating back to Albrecht von Haller's 1777 *Encyclopédie* article on smell—and resurfacing, among others, in J. G. Herder's 1784 *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, in Immanuel Kant's 1785 "Reviews" of Herder's book, as well as in J. G. Fichte's 1797 *Foundations of Natural Right*—situate problems of olfaction at the very point of inception of cultural life. Freud adopted such a narrative (moreover claiming its authorship), proposing that anthropogenesis was in fact conditioned by an "organic repression" of smell. The talk will unpack the key elements of Freud's sentimental education.

Simon Hajdini is Senior Research Associate in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Ljubljana, where he teaches social and political philosophy, and regular Visiting Faculty at The University of Chicago. He specializes in critical theory, political economy, (hyper)structuralism and psychoanalysis. At present, he is researching and writing on the sensorial politics of social divisions. This event marks the launch of Simon Hajdini's latest book *What's That Smell?: A Philosophy of the Olfactory* published in March 2024 by MIT Press as part of the *Short Circuits* series.

*A reception and book launch will follow in the Centre for Sensory Studies office, H-1122.01

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