# The Social Sense of the Human Experience

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## *Thinking about* Vom Menschen *of Werner Sombart*

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# INTRODUCTION

A *fil rouge* ties all Sombart's works together, even when they seem to be diverse in their content or transversal to various disciplines. It is a warning, albeit wrongly forgotten, of the great social challenge that has awaited modernity since its very beginning, which is increasingly insistent on the radicalization of modernity. To try to trace this red line and to follow it through the words of the author (without many paraphrases, if this means to avoid forcing his thought) can help us to deal with one of the most critical issues of our time.

It is the challenge of humanization that, today more than yesterday, spares nothing: from medicine to economy, from family to politics, from the law to migration, there is no sphere of social experience or phenomenon that is not invoked to be "humanized". What does it mean? Why should a society, by definition made up of men, be "un-human"? What is the objective of suggestions that there ought to be "more human" therapies, hospitals and health services? What is the objective behind the request that families become, once again, the "primary place of humanization"? When we invoke "capitalism with a human face", a policy with a "human scale", the "humanization of the punishments", or better conditions for migrants? Can man evaporate in order to leave room for a dehumanized sociality, as if sociality were a garment covering the human dimension to the point that "what is human in man" disappears? And, what is "human in man"?

If these are some of the critical questions of our age, the answers can be found only through this same order of arguments, that is to say, by closely looking at the growing process of dehumanization and the everyday more vital research of its opposite. And it is precisely here that Werner Sombart's thought comes to the rescue. His words still provide true lessons for the modern human. Lessons that place the author between the classics of sociological thought, even when (and this happens all too often) he is not remembered as such. Who is "classic" if not one who is able to speak beyond his existence or his generation of reference?

It is 1938. Germany is "already Nazi"[1] and has been for five years, and this is the year of the big change. It is 1938 when Hitler assumes the supreme command of the German armed forces.[2] It is still 1938 when the policy of *Gleichschaltung* is enacted and the local governments and the federal states virtually lose their legislative power. In the same year, the annexation of Austria takes place and that of the Sudetenland begins, giving birth to the process of realization of a Greater Germany based on the principles of Pan-Germanism. The same year also sees the dramatic episode of the *Kristallnacht*, with which the Jews finally come within sight[3] of the pogrom that led to the Shoah. And finally (but, unfortunately, the list could go on), it is still 1938 when Hitler makes an official visit to Italy,[4] forcing Pope XI to retire to Castel Gandolfo and to order a shutdown of the Vatican museums for the entire duration of the visit.

The German power awakens after a long hibernation. A "new millennial German Empire" wants to establish itself through the "re-conquest of a living space" and the hegemony of a "superior race".

While Germany undergoes this evil transformation and Europe waits confused, suspended between hesitant contradictions and responsible weaknesses, it is in this same scenario that Werner Sombart makes a point: *to start again, but from humanity*. This is his last published work before his death,[5] a true spiritual testament for the modern man.

A truly courageous work[6] that, dealing with the theme of man, could neither avoid dealing with the problem of race,[7] nor do it with

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[1] As is known, the definitions of *Nazi Germany* and the *Third Reich* generally refer to Germany in the years between 1933 and 1945.

[2] It is good to remember that in 1934, as President of the *Reich* and Chancellor, he already formally concentrated the executive power on himself, dissolving the parliaments of the Länder and transferring the administrative and legislative powers to the central government in Berlin.

[3] On the nights of 9th and 10th November of that year, an anti-Semitic fury was unleashed against Jewish shops and synagogues across the whole of the country.

[4] Italy had, in that same year, promulgated the infamous racial laws.

[5] The works *Noo-Soziologie* and *Units of culture and constitution in Europe* were published posthumously. Cf. Wener Sombart, *Noo-Soziologie*, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin, 1956, and Pierangelo Row (Eds.), *Unità di cultura e di costituzione in Europa* (1940), Bibliopolis, Naples, 2005. With regard to this work, see: Roberta Iannone, *Unità di cultura e di costituzione in Europa. Storia e attualità europea nel pensiero di Werner Sombart*, in "Journal of Political Studies", XXIII, October-December 2011, Apes, Rome.

[6] Not coincidentally, the Nazis hampered the publication and distribution of the work. For what concerns the attitude of Sombart towards Nazism, we should remember that it has often been compared to that of Heidegger and Schmitt, who

circumlocution or without taking up a position. The questions are indeed explicitly expressed. "When did we begin to favor a racist observation modality?"[8] Sombart asks in section two of the third part of the work dedicated to the becoming (of humanity, of people and of the individual). This is a question which is clear in its sense as well as crucial in its implications "to seize the destiny of the nations".[9]

Sombart starts from the awareness that throughout history there have been lots of reflections on the subject of race. However, he considers that these discussions developed primarily "on the battlefields of politics",[10] rather than "in the studies of scholars".[11]

Only later, the thought became "scientific" in order to explain the problems relating to the history of humanity. This is the case regarding the letter that the scholar of race Edwards wrote, in 1829, to Thierry "in relation to the offering to match the results that Thierry had come up, with regards to the differentiation and the subdivision of various nationalities with his anatomical studies performed on these nationalities".[12]

According to Sombart, the letter represents the "birth certificate of racism"[13] and establishes the relationships between history and physiology,

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joined the regime with the intent to take a leading role in their respective disciplines. In fact, Sombart was never a supporter of the regime, and this work clearly demonstrates it, although it does not mean he was a real opponent or an activist of the Resistance. Doubts persist even with respect to his position on Judaism and anti-Semitism. Even if *Jews and the economic life* (1911) was considered philo-Semitic at that time, several contemporary Jewish writers describe it as anti-Semitic at least in its effects. However, we should take into account the fact that the effects of a work can hardly be controlled; the same applies to the possible exploitation of a particular thought. To prove the philo-Semitic orientation of Sombart, we should also consider that more Jewish students followed his lectures than the other courses and that most of his students did not condemn him after the war.

[7] For a short summary of these critical aspects of the work, see the review of Hans Kohn to *Vom Menschen*, in "Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science", vol. 205, Frontiers of Legal Aid Work, Sage Publications, Sep., 1939, pp. 174-175.

[8] Cf. index of the Opera.

[9] The author writes: "We can only understand the faith of nations once we take into account each single member of the nation as a human being, each one with his own body and soul, today we can define it as race, using the concept of race both in its classificatory and medical sense", p. 250.

[10] Ibidem.

[11] Ibidem.

[12] Ibidem, p. 252.

[13] Ibidem, p. 253.

enabling the "study of the physical characteristics of the people whose history is being written".[14]

In the same period of Edwards – and sometimes also in the same wake – other authors such as Dunoyer and Comte[15] adopted the ideas of race and the temperaments of people as dimensions capable of playing a considerable role in the life of the nations.

In this way, history started to acquaint new points of view within the light of anthropology.

However, according to Sombart, if we want to refer to the first real work of "social doctrine based on racist principles", we have to wait until 1838 (it is singular that this date recurs from time to time!), when Courtet writes *La science politique fondèe sur la science de l'homme ou Etude des races humanies sous le rapport philosophique, historique et social*. "In this astonishing book, all the problems pertaining the meaning of race are handled with great competence and, let us say, in a definitive way. From then on racial theory never disappeared from the historical and sociological thought."[16]

On the other hand, with his work, most of the disputes can be considered *de facto* placated. In particular, Sombart refers to a violent diatribe that erupted between two centuries on the right of citizenship in the theory of race (i.e. epistemologies of race) and in the sciences of the spirit that led to a series of writings against the racist argument. In this regard, the author mentions Steinmetz, the "illustrious Dutch sociologist",[17] and his hostility toward the concept of race, Saillière who took a stand against Gobineau, and other authors such as Schallmeyer, Finot, Hertz and Boas.

Thus, the "theory of race" lends itself to numerous theoretical and conceptual elaborations. The reason why several influential authors refused to accept it lies in the fact that the "true meaning of racial theory"[18] has been misrepresented and, therefore, must be investigated one more time.

The meaning, or better, the true meaning of the concept of race lies in the assumption that "it must make possible the interpretation of history and culture starting from blood, despite the infinite diversity of men. The concept of race, interpreted as the sum of the same (hereditary) characteristics in

[14] Ibidem.
[15] Ibidem.
[16] Ibidem.
[17] Ibidem.
[18] Ibidem.

consanguineous groups is the Ariadne's thread that should guide us through the maze of the infinite plurality of individuals".[19]

When, or rather, in which case, is it possible to "legitimately" meet this condition? It is possible when:

1. It expresses science rather than metaphysics;
2. It uses the theory and not some theories;
3. It is constituted as a working hypothesis.

Therefore, Sombart has no doubts as to the heuristic usefulness of the concept of race and the fact that "to give it up would mean a clear impoverishment of science".[20] However, the concept should be "properly" used, i.e. in scientific terms[21] and not with an extra-scientific approach. A perfect example of the latter is Schemann, the "representative case of this kind of extra-scientific study of race".[22] It happens every time the theory of race[23] is not merely used but abused in order to "motivate some kind of historical and social scientific construct"[24] (or other similar constructs).

In relation to this misguided conception of race, explicitly and courageously for the times,[25] Sombart wrote: "Many scholars of race have so much misunderstood the concept of the race, that personified and defined it as racial collectivities, acting through history, creating States and creating culture, while, as we have already seen, race is an abstract concept consisting in a sum of characteristics: the communities that act, produce and create are only families, peoples. Furthermore, during the struggle for the right to exist of a racial concept through history, some scholars raised objections, formulated theories and general theses without being able to prove them. In this way they abandoned the area of the scientific research and entered in that of faith, where certain judgments about 'races' resurfaced along with a formulation and classification of races and their capacities, in line with this subjective evaluation".[26]

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[19] Ibidem.
[20] Ibidem, p. 254.
[21] For further information on the scientific use of the concept of race applied to the institutions and a recapitulation of the recent debate on the subject, see: Thomas Casadei (Eds.), *Razza, discriminazioni, istituzioni*, in "Rivista trimestrale di Scienza dell'Amministrazione", 4, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2007.
[22] Ibidem, p. 254.
[23] Ibidem.
[24] Ibidem.
[25] In fact, it deals with evaluations perhaps obvious for modernity, but highly innovative in that context and in those days where they stood for real cognitive and value additions.
[26] Ibidem.

We still are in 1938, and Sombart's courage goes beyond imagination. His aim was not only to distinguish between science and faith, but also to demonstrate the lack of scientific basis of certain assumptions or theories, which, on the contrary, would be self-legitimizing. Therefore, there is a "healthy"[27] kernel inasmuch as there is a pathological kernel in this theory and we cannot be silent about it; on the contrary, we should bring it to light. The distinction between healthy and pathological kernels is also the distinction between making a "theory"[28] and elaborating on "theories".[29] Among these, Sombart mentions, in particular, the theory of the two peoples,[30] the theory of the mixture,[31] the theory of decadence,[32] and the tragic theory of Gobineau.[33]

In order to become science, the theory of race must be a "working hypothesis",[34] a "heuristic principle"[35] or a "normative idea".[36] This is the only way it can be helpful "to this anthropology and, not least, to anthropology as a science of the spirit".[37] It would have the same rights "of the working hypotheses of disciplines such as geography, economics and so on: in the interpretation of any state or process inherent in the human being we are obliged to ask whether this factor – in our case the bodily structure of man – has generally a meaning and, if yes, we should inquire what this meaning could be, what could be its entity, and what its kind".[38]

In the best case, race can be a hypothesis. A hypothesis among many others. Besides, it is a hypothesis that might be used "only when all other attempts of explanation have been exhausted, because to *explain something on the basis of blood means to renounce to understand and contemplate a mystery*".[39]

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[27] Ibidem, p. 255.
[28] Ibidem, pp. 268 et seq.
[29] Ibidem.
[30] Ibidem.
[31] Ibidem.
[32] Ibidem.
[33] Ibidem.
[34] According to Sombart, to use a *racist working hypothesis*, we should formulate, at the very beginning, some guiding principles, i.e. it will be more successful if: 1. the people we take into consideration are primitive; 2. it deals with mass phenomena; 3. the mark that they bring is material.
[35] Ibidem, p. 254.
[36] Ibidem.
[37] Ibidem.
[38] Ibidem.
[39] Ibidem, p. 254. Italics are mine.

Here emerges the true crux of the work we are presenting. Any reflection concerning man can be worthy of science, and the study of race can legitimately exist as a *hypothesis of a theory* (and not only as a *law included in various theories*)[40] only if we make a conceptual, theoretical and epistemological effort. This is the true cognitive tension of the whole work.

*For Sombart, to reflect on man is equivalent to study the science of the spirit according to well-defined conceptual elaborations and methodological assumptions*. To this idea of science, with its specificities, Sombart devotes his entire work, making it a fundamental key to understanding the entirety of his work, albeit originally used in individual arguments and for different phenomena from time to time.

Before approaching these phenomenologies and their peculiarities,[41] it is appropriate to take a step back in order to consider the sense of this work in its fullness, i.e. the sociological and anthropological reflection on man from the point of view of a science of the spirit.

[40] In this regard, he writes: "Indeed, there are people for which a theory as interpreted by the sober thought of the science of the spirit is not enough; these are people demanding more from a theory, in the particular affirmations of the sobriety of laws. Thereby, they obviously intend the natural laws that, accompanied with an additional more or less heavy metaphysics, makes the drink enjoyable to the public", p. 269.

[41] The attention will focus especially on spirit, soul, body, life, forms, person, the organization of the community, the organization of culture, the organization of human existence and the peoples.

# 1.

# A SPECIFIC IDEA OF SCIENCE

To reflect upon man means to reflect upon man as a subject and as a problem. This is an intellectual articulated crux obliging us to "walk on the shoulders of giants".[1] This is the aim of the work of Werner Sombart, which is here presented.

But, what does it means to "reflect upon man"?

Trying to bring order to the various solicitations of the work, as the author states in his preface, to reflect upon man means to endeavor a doctrine of man. As evidenced in the subtitle of the work and in the first line of the book, this means to set up a kind of anthropology.

If we want to "start from the beginning", what emerges from the very first words is that the reflection developed by the author meets a need which is both old and actual. A timeless exigency for humankind: *to know thyself*. "Man has always created images to learn, or rather to know, in the awareness of not being given to himself once for all, but trying to constantly define himself, because of the need to act, to realize, to complete himself through his work".[2] "Man, know thyself" was not only the imperative of the oracle of Delphi, but also the imperative placed "in the heart of the Western intellectual tradition".[3]

However, "to know man" means very different things depending on the historical era, the current of thought, the speculative objectives, and the image one wants to give of thyself and to thyself. An image without which man can neither meditate upon his past nor plan his future.

The first chapter of section one, respectively dedicated to "The essence of humanity" and to "the human kingdom", opens with the following

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[1] The expression belongs to R.K. Merton. Cf. Robert King Merton, *Sulle spalle dei giganti*, il Mulino, Bologna, 1991. See also: Luigi Marino, *I maestri della Germania*, Einaudi, Torino, 1975.

[2] Maria Teresa Pansera, *Antropologia filosofica*, Mondadori, Milano, 2001, p. 3.

[3] Donatella Simon, *L'idea di uomo nella sociologia classica e contemporanea*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2011, p. 9.

observation. Sombart remarks that the question “what is man?” resurfaces “at any time” and “the answers [to it] have been very different”.[4]

[4] Ibidem, p. 13. In his Work, Sombart shows a few of these “answers”, so that the reader “will be able to have an idea of the different alternatives offered”, p. 13 et seq. He cites authors such as Plato, for whom man is a featherless biped; Aristotle, who speaks of man as a political animal and animal strutting erect; Cicero, for whom “Animal hoc providum, sagax, multiplex, acutum, memor, plenum rationis et consilii, quod vocamus hominem”; Saint Augustine, according to whom: “Homo a Veteribussapientibusitadefinitusest: homo estanimal rationale mortale” and Christianity in general, for which man is crafted in the likeness of God; de Montaigne, who wrote that: “La plus calamiteuse et fraile de toutes les creatures..., et quand et quand la plus orgueilleuse: elle se sente et se veoid logee icy parmi la bourbe et le fient du monde, attachee et clouee à la pire, plus morte et croupie partie de l'univers, au dernier estage du logis et le plus esloigné de la voulte celeste, avecques les animaulx de la pire condition des trois; et se va plantant, par imagination, au dessus du cercle de la lune, et ramenant le ciel soubs ses pieds”; Pascal: “un roseau le plus faible de la nature, mais...un roseau pensant”; Franklin: “A tool-making animal”; Rousseau, according to whom man is “un animal dépravé”; Herder, who describes him as “an animal having an upright gait”; Kant: “the animal who has the power to improve”; Schiller, who says that man is the “being who wants” while Sombart adds, “all other things must”; Goethe, for whom “man is the first dialogue that nature has with God”; Schopenhauer, speaking of man as “the animal that makes fights”; Waitz: “The living entity with experience”; Nietzsche: “The animal qualified to make promises”, the “sick animal”, “monster animal” and the superanimal; Mack: “He who can say no”; Scheler: “The seeker of God”; Freud: “He who represses impulses”; Klages: “The thinking animal”; Ernst: “The animal that lies to himself”; Hartmann: “The being that constitutes a danger to himself”. Moreover, he cites definitions given by the science of nature, for example, Sheidt: “Man is a living being endowed with abilities of reaction”; Carrel: “An organism that gives rise to certain biochemical, physiological and psychological events”; von Eickstedt: “Man is an embodiment of the organic life in a limited time”. Sombart also mentions the different meanings taken by the word man amongst various peoples, for example, among the Greeks, who “attributed an artistic sense to the term: *ἄνθρωπος* derives from *ἀνωάθρείν*, a word indicating man’s gaze pointing upwards, or from the root ANΘ , *ἄνθος, ἀνθέω, ἄνθηρος*, attributable to a bright face, or to a radiant gaze (see the dictionaries)”; or among the Jews and the Romans: “Among the Jews and the Romans, the meaning of the word man had a physical-material value: Adam derivates from a Hebrew word meaning earth; *homo* from *humus*. Equally, there is another word for man in Hebrew: *enosh*, driving from *anash*, (seriously ill) which refers to pain or fever”; Indians and Germans supported a spiritual vision of the concept: the Indian *manushya* corresponds to the Old High German *manisco* and both terms mean “the thinker endowed with spirit”. In this regard, J. Grimm writes: “What we are, what sets us apart from all animals, in Sanskrit bears the significant and substantial name of *manudscha*, a term maintained until today mainly in our German

Regardless of the specific interpretation triumphant in a given moment or in a given socio-historical context, the problem of man has always been considered a matter of central importance for both religion and science. An essential reference for the knowledge. Maybe it can be even inherent to the heuristic mission of philosophy, the mother of all sciences, if we consider these words of Hegel: "Since the fixed point of observation that the almighty time and culture have set for philosophy is that of a reason affected by sensitivity, here is why this philosophy cannot aim to know God, but what we call Man".[5]

As suggested by Sombart, the list of reflections in this regard can be really long. In purely illustrative terms, it is well known that Nietzsche talked about man as "an unidentified animal",[6] while the French novelist Balzac warned, "there is no man that looks like another man".[7] On the other hand, hundreds of years before, the philosopher, politician and writer of the 16th century, Montaigne concluded, "man is indeed a marvelously vain, changeable and undulating subject. It is difficult to reach a constant and uniform judgment".[8]

Therefore, these are explanatory difficulties that centuries of theoretical elaborations fight and testify, at the same time, by defining the chasm between the humanistic tradition and the social sciences.[9] Simon writes:

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language: *Manniska* in Gothic, *mannisco* in the Old High German, and *Mensch* in the New High German. It is possible to connect this term to a mythical ancestor *Manna, Mannus,* mentioned by Tacitus, to an Indian king Manas, whose name's root is *man* and meant to think (!), and which is directly connected to *manas, μενος*, *Mensch*". Citing Grimm, Sombart refers to Jacob Grimm, *Über der Ursprung der deutschen Sprache*. In „Abhandlungen der Königlichender Akademie der Wissenschaften", Berlin, 1851, 4, p. 29. Furthermore, Sombart makes references to Maximilian Perty, *Die Anthropologie als die Wissenschaft und von dem körperlichem und geistigen Wesen des Menschen*, C.F. Winter, Leipzig, Heidelberg, 1874.

[5] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, cit. in Arnold Gehlen, *Prospettive antropologiche*, il Mulino, Bologna, 1961, p. 21.

[6] Cf. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Umano, troppo umano* (1967), Newton Compton editori, Roma, 1979, p. 39.

[7] Honoré de Balzac, *La Comédie humaine* (1840), 23 vol., ed. classiques Garnier Le Monde, Paris, 2008-09, p. 32.

[8] Michel de Montaigne, *Saggi*, Mondadori, Milano, 1970, p. 10.

[9] For further information on the contribution of the social sciences and particularly of sociology to the theme of man, see the recent contribution by D. Simon, *op. cit.* where the author analyzes the theoretical positions of Vico, Ferguson, Comte, Durkheim, Simmel, Marx, Mauss, Weber and Schutz, Scheler, Parsons, Elias, Mead, Berger, Boudon, Giddens and Beck, Touraine, and Archer.

"Social science constitutes – since its eighteenth-century beginnings – an attempt to make a great moment in the research of the truth upon man and his self-realization, being nothing more than a study of the relations between man and man. [...] Since its beginning, social science seeks to explain and understand man and his interior and exterior world, an understanding which is both analytical and practical".[10]

In sociology, the work of W. Mills, *Images of man. The classical tradition of sociology*[11] is clearly a conceptual and theoretical distillate, and an ideal-typical example of such cognitive tensions. But the same can be said for all those theoretical contributions that, starting from the classics (such as Vico,[12] Ferguson,[13] Comte,[14] Durkheim,[15] Simmel,[16] Marx,[17] Mauss,[18] Weber,[19] Schutz,[20] and Scheler,[21] to name but a few), have set themselves the goal of *rebuilding* the social starting from the human.

Consequently, when Sombart speaks of an *attempt*, he is well aware of the complexity behind his "object" of knowledge. He knows – and testimonies it throughout his work – how many minds with such different theoretical, cultural, logical, linguistic, epistemological, ontological, and ethical expertise had taken the same direction and what political, economic, or social hinterland they (probably unwittingly) supported.

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[10] Donatella Simon, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

[11] Charles Wright Milles, *Immagini dell'uomo. La tradizione classica della sociologia* (1860), Comunità, Milano, 1963.

[12] Cf. Pietro Piovani, *Pensiero e società in Vico*, in "Critica sociale", LX, 1968 e Giambattista Vico, *Autobiografia Poesie Scienza Nuova*, Pasquale Soccio (edited by), Garzanti, Milano, 1983.

[13] Cf. Adam Ferguson, *Saggio sulla storia della società civile*, Giuseppe Bedeschi (edited by), Laterza, Bari, 1999.

[14] Cf. Auguste Comte, *Opuscoli di filosofia sociale* (1822), Sansoni, Firenze, 1969. Id., Corso di filosofia positiva (1839-1842), Utet, Torino, 1979.

[15] Cf. Émile Durkheim, *La divisione del lavoro sociale* (1893), Comunità, Milano, 1996. Id., *Le forme elementari della vita religiosa* (1912), Comunità, Milano, 1971.

[16] Cf. Georg Simmel, *La differenziazione sociale* (1890), Laterza, Bari, 1982. Id., Sociologia, Alessandro Cavalli (edited by), Comunità, Milano, 1998.

[17] Cf. Karl Marx, *Manoscritti economico-filosofici del 1844*, Einaudi, Torino, 1968, in particular the part concerning the notion of "social individual". Id., *Il Capitale* (1867), Einaudi, Torino, 1975.

[18] Cf. Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (1950), PUF, Paris, 2001.

[19] Cf. Max Weber, *Il metodo delle scienze storico-sociali*, Einaudi, Torino, 1981.

[20] Cf. Alfred Schutz, *La fenomenologia del mondo sociale* (1932), il Mulino, Bologna, 1974.

[21] Cf. Max Scheler, *Sociologia del sapere* (1924), Edizioni Abete, Roma, 1966.

Nonetheless, he does not seem to be discouraged. On the contrary, his ambition is even higher: his primary aim is to deduce the social starting from the human and the human from the social. This means to pursue this objective by collecting much of those ideas deposited through history, or at least to collect the most significant. In his opinion, this can be helpful in the attempts to make such a doctrine a genuine theory. That is, a set of concepts and hypotheses in which the formative aspect, namely the ability to "exercise the mind" or the "mental gymnastics" on the possible meanings of the phenomenon considered, is continuously interwoven with that of information. On the other hand, as Bouthol remarked, from its beginning, sociology originated as a response to the exigency to distinguish doctrines from theories.[22]

To make attempts means to examine centuries of theoretical elaborations. This is something Sombart does, with a tension to sincerity.[23] This is the kind of tension typical of those who make conscious references to the statements of their predecessors while expressing similar positions. Therefore, the author feels compelled to explicitly cite his sources even if it makes him feel like a "child without autonomy".[24] As the author will say later, far from being a symptom of naivety, this is the result of the "sincerity"[25] and the "correctness"[26] imposed by science and by its systemizing cognitive claims. The tension toward sincerity chiefly is respect for the ancestors and for their knowledge, as well as for the thought and its historical continuity. Sincerity is to believe that the progressive capacities of thought lie in the cumulative possibilities of knowledge; but it is also faith, modern faith, in the fact that truth can only be discovered and not revealed, that this task can be undertaken "by man" with his rational faculties, and that – as we will see later – this is the path of science.

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[22] Cf. Gaston Bouthoul, *History of sociology*, Armando, Rome, 1966. In this regard, Bouthoul wrote: "Any doctrine defines its author's set of opinions and personal preferences. The scientific apparatus surrounding it performs the function of a supporting argument: facts and arguments are seen and ordered as a plea of defense. In its conclusions, every sociological doctrine is conceived with a view to its immediate applications: first of all, it is a legislator. On the contrary, theories consist in the classification of the facts and their explanation by means of a body of hypotheses and postulates, always subject to revision when new facts do not agree with the previous. Then, theory is part of science since it represents a generalization and a temporary limited synthesis", p. 82.

[23] Ibidem.

[24] Ibidem.

[25] Ibidem.

[26] Ibidem.

This leads to two concerns frankly confessed by the author: an abundance of quotations leads to the interruption of the flow of speech, and the tributes paid to the thoughts of the defunct may imply continuous risks for the homogeneity of the work.

Doubts that, although postponed, clarify the incipit of the work: "The truth has been found long time ago, it brought together the noble spirits: get it from the ancient truth",[27] or as the words of the Roman poet Terence reported even further: "nullum est jam dictum quod non sit dictum prius".[28] Words clarifying that, before us, Sombart choose to walk on the shoulders of giants.

Again, this approach was consistent with the German tradition effectively described by Von Wiese. When comparing American and European sociological works, he wrote: "The youngest civilization of the other hemisphere did not have that respect, handed down especially in Germany, of the greater importance of succession with respect to simultaneity; an idea similar to that expressed by Sombart, that there exists only the past, nor the present, has not an American matrix".[29]

[27] Ibidem, p. 2.
[28] Ibidem, p. 11.
[29] The italics are mine. Leopold von Wiese, *Sistema di sociologia generale*, edited by Mario Diglio, UTET, Torino, 1968, p. 167. Of von Wiese of Werner Sombart he cites *Die des Grundformen des Menschlichen Zusammenlebens*, in "Hanwörterbuch der Soziologie" as mentioned in "Archiv f. Soziale. u. Sozialpolitik", vol. LXIV (1930), and his lecture: *Nationalökonomie und Soziologie*, "Kieler Vorträge 33", Jena, 1930.

# 2.

# ANTHROPOLOGY OR ANTHROPOLOGIES?

For all these reasons, Sombart's work is not only an attempt to knowledge by means of knowledge but also an "anthropology" attempt, as more completely defined in its title and index. With regard to the latter, it suffices to consider the *parts* composing the work, without investigating the chapter details: 1. The distinctive aspects of man; 2. Men and peoples; 3. The becoming. But we should also consider the *sections* articulating each part: 1.1 The human kingdom; 1.2 The actions of the spirit; 1.3 The idea of man through history, for what concerns the first part; 2.1 The individual diversities of men; 2.2 The people; 2.3 The peoples, for what concerns the second part; 3.1 The becoming of humanity; 3.2 The becoming and the decline of nations; 3.3 The becoming of the individual,[1] for the third part.

"Anthropology is the theory of man"[2] and man is the fundamental object of knowledge of anthropology. If these correspondences are valid *erga omnes*, they have even more value for Sombart and for all the "peculiarities" of the man he identified as the privileged object of the anthropological investigation.

The path that his thought carved out between several "anthropologies" (physical, cultural, social, interpretive, symbolic, philosophical) is not univocally definable and deserves some in-depth analysis.

It seems pretty obvious that between the physical anthropology and the cultural anthropology, as defined through the 19th and 20th centuries, Sombart nourished a conceptual and epistemological predilection for the latter. Sombart recognizes the boundary between content and method that emerged between the everyday more incipient field of (the science of the)

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[1] Note that in the section dedicated to "the becoming of humanity", Sombart dedicates a chapter to the "reproduction of man", where he deals with Malthusian doctrines, the post-Malthusian and the theory of wealth, the theory of population as a science of the spirit, the economic theory of cities and the general theory of population.

[2] Arnold Gehlen, *op. cit*., p. 21.

culture and that of physics. The same demarcation of human reality as composed of two well-distinguished aspects, such as *body* and the biological functions on the one hand, and *spirit*[3] *and its products*, on the other, has been recognized by Sombart as the fundamental binomial and the core foundation of the knowledge of man. On the other hand, this was the key assumption on which a distinction between *Kulturwissenschaften* (cultural sciences) and *Naturwissenschaften* (natural sciences) was based in late 19th-century philosophy. As will be seen below, the choice of the subtitle – anthropology as a science of the spirit – clearly goes in this direction.

Therefore, the cultural anthropology of these pages is already present in the rejection that Sombart opposes to the extra-cultural determinism and to the attempts, typical of reductionism in vogue, to connect the cultural dimension to conditions such as race, environment, biology and psychology.[4]

It is, therefore, difficult to resist the temptation not to make comparisons and parallels, distinctions and clarifications, between this thought and the reflection developing overseas with the Boasian school.[5]

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[3] During the discussion, we will attempt to clarify the meaning assigned by Sombart to the concept of "spirit". For further information, distinctions and clarifications, from now on please refer to the concept definition given in the Garzanti Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1981, p. 895.

[4] As if to say, "if man is formed by the conditions, then we should give a human element to these conditions": Cf. Helmut Schoeck, *Storia della sociologia*, Borla, Rome, 1980.

[5] F. Boas (1858-1942) was a German anthropologist, a naturalized American, considered one of the pioneers of modern anthropology. In this context, we primarily refer to the acquisitions to which Boas came in terms of "cultural relativism" and "critique of evolutionism". In particular, in the work *The mind of the primitive man*, Boas demonstrated the absence of any form of influence of the biological characters on culture. Furthermore, he explicated a thesis, already contained in all his studies, according to which the differences between human groups are only due to culture and different historical records but not to race. See: Franz Boas*, I limiti del metodo comparative in antropologia*, in Laura Bonib, Antonio Marazzi, *Antropologia culturale: testi e documenti*, Hoepli, Milano, 1970. Id., *The mind of primitive man*, Macmillan Company, New York-Boston, 1919; Italian translation: *L'uomo primitivo*, ed. revised with a foreword of Melville Jean Herskovits, Laterza, Rome, 1972. Id., *Anthropology and Modern Life*, with an introduction by Ruth Bunzel, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1962; Italian translation: *Antropologia e vita moderna*, introduction by Luigi Maria Lombardi Satriani with an essay by Franceso Maiello, Italian edition edited by Laura Fachin and Emilia de Simoni, Rome, Ei Editori, 1998. On these aspects, Cf. also: Denys Cuche, *La nozione di cultura nelle scienze sociali*, Mulino, Bologna, 2003.

In the first instance, significant correspondences can be also traced to the notion of "super organic" with which, in 1917, Kroeber exactly defined the specificity of the cultural dimension, identifying an autonomous order, irreducible to an organic level, and to an individual psychological dimension.[6] Sombart did not mention these authors, but the cultural anthropology approach he expresses seems to lie in the same convictions, even when the author ignores their overseas presence or dissects them with different terms and concepts. It is clearly evoked especially when the objects of observation (primitive and "developed" civilizations) seem to be completely different. In essence, the dominant orientation seems to be similar even when the shape and the aspect of the concepts are completely different. This is something inevitable if we consider the distance that, at the time, separated Sombart's Germany from the United States of Boas and Kroeber, even if Sombart was familiar with that country, having written a work in 1906 whose title is *Why is there no Socialism in the United States?*[7]

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[6] A. Kroeber (1876-1960) was an American anthropologist who built up his research on the studies of Boas. The concept of "superorganic" is considered an antireductionist declaration of independence against the domination of the biological explanation of cultural phenomena. According to Kroeber, although the concept of superorganic and the work that bears the same name are controversial, culture is an order of autonomous phenomena separated from the other levels in which reality is articulated, namely: the inorganic, the organic, the social and the individual. Kroeber explicitly reiterates Spencer's concept of superorganic coined to distinguish these phenomena from the organic ones. Nevertheless, while for Spencer the two orders of phenomena are related to each other, for Kroeber, there is no relationship between the biological and the socio-cultural order. The criticisms of these studies have been focused on the recognition of culture as an ontological reality in itself. Thirty years later, Kroeber replied to these criticisms by arguing that the (inorganic, organic and superorganic) levels of reality do not represent the ontological reality but some "horizons of intelligibility" to be studied with particular methods and epistemological approaches. The "closeness" with Sombart can be found not only in the – albeit posthumous – dissociation from ontologism, but especially in the effort to scientifically and epistemologically establish culture with respect to the other objects of knowledge. Cf. Alfred Louis Kroeber, *The superorganic*, in "American Anthropologist", 19, 1917, p. 163-213, reprinted in Id., *The Nature of Culture*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1952; Italian translation: *Il superorganico*, Mulino, Bologna, 1974, p. 39-92; Id., *La natura della cultura*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1952. Alfred Louis Kroeber, Clyde Kluckhohon, *Il concetto di cultura*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1952.

[7] Werner Sombart, *Perché negli Stati Uniti non c'è il socialismo?*, preface by Alessandro Cavalli, Etas, Milano, 1975.

For what concerns Sombart, perhaps we could say about him the same things we say for the *symbolic and interpretive* anthropology. This means that, yes, anthropology was born in the United States in the early '70s, thanks to Geertz's work,[8] and brought together different approaches (phenomenology, sociology, linguistics, semiotics, from the philosophy of post-empirical science to the Frankfurt School and to literary criticism). However, its genealogy should be traced back to the humanistic anthropology, namely, the particularistic approach of Boas, Benedict,[9] Sapir[10] and Lowie,[11] and to all those orientations developed as a reaction to naturalism,[12] which took inspiration from the neo-Kantian idiographic

[8] C.J. Geertz (1926-2006), an American anthropologist, known as a critic of both the structural anthropology of C. Levi-Strauss and the tradition of British social anthropology proposing a reflexive anthropology drawing inspiration from hermeneutics.

[9] R.F. Benedict (1887-1948) was an American anthropologist. His most famous work is *Patterns of Culture*, published in 1934. The author compares three primitive civilizations: the Pueblos of New Mexico, the Dobu of New Guinea, and the Indians of the northwest coast of America (primarily the Kwakiutl). Her literary education had a great influence on her works. Probably because of this aspect, cultures – as well as poetry – must be considered as a whole to understanding the "dominant forces" to which Nietzsche's distinction between Apollonian and Dionysian culture may belong. The concept of "cultural pattern" refers to a set of traits and characteristics that characterize a given culture, sanctioning its individuality with respect to the others, making each of them a coherent "integrated complex" of thoughts and actions. Cf. Ruth Fulton Benedict, *Modelli di cultura*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1934.

[10] E. Sapir (1884-1939) was an American linguist and ethnologist supporter of cultural anthropology as a "historical science" whose data may be perceived as a sequence of events referring to a distant past. Cf. E. Saphir, *Cultura, linguaggio e personalità* (1949), edited by D.G. Mandelbaum, introductory note by G.C. Lepschy, Einaudi, Torino, 1972.

[11] R. Lowie (1883-1957) was an Austrian-born American anthropologist. Among his works, see: Robert Lowie, *An Introduction of cultural anthropology*, Farrar & Rinehart, New York, 1934.

[12] In particular, we are referring to the reaction against the still-dominant comparative and evolutionary methods of the early 20th century with particular attention to the *American cultural anthropology*. In fact, it helped to conceive humanity as a whole, to shape culture as a whole, but also to understand its uniqueness and to establish the historical method as an aim of anthropology. It made it clearer than the *French ethnologists* (E. Durkheim, M. Mauss and C. Lévi-Strauss) and *British social anthropologists* (W.H.R. Rivers, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, B. Malinowski, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, M. Fortes) did. Significant in this sense is the approach of studies against evolutionism (typical of the 19th century), namely the "diffusionism", which was predominant among the Austro-Germans scholars,

philosophical tradition inaugurated by Dilthey,[13] Windelband[14] and Rickert.[15] In this sense, Sombart is both a historical and contemporary bearer and forerunner of guidelines that will become dominant in the near and distant future.

In this same direction of cultural anthropology, it is possible to discover the details of the relation between culture and personality.[16] Here, Sombart shows he is able to overcome the limits of a deterministic interpretation of nature, but also of culture. Moreover, he demonstrates he is able to overcome an approach unable to take into account the critical, individual and creative contributions of the members that are part of a given collectivity. The reference to Benedict and Sapir is, therefore, needed to understand the anthropological value of these pages of Sombart. In fact, the reference has, in its substance rather than in its form, the mere purpose of helping the reader in the construction of the coordinates necessary for the scientific understanding of the work. To use Rizzo's expression, (used in relation to the connections between Sombart and Pareto),[17] this is a relationship we are able to trace only *a posteriori*.

In Sombart's cultural anthropology, man is as central as his reasons and his motives, no matter how different the scientific dignity of these two phenomena and concepts. Therefore, the attention of the scholar is not

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supported by the English W.H.R. Rivers and, in a more extreme manner, supported also by other British anthropologists, including G.E. Smith.

[13] Cf. Wilhelm Dilthey, *La costruzione del mondo storico nelle scienze dello spirito* (1910), in Id., *Critica della ragione storica*(by Pietro Rossi), Einaudi, Torino, 1954. In this regard, Sombart writes in a note that "where today the science of nature no longer operates a decomposition into elements, but studies the so-called whole, the procedure remains the same used in the basic research: to define the external regularities, (necessarily) giving up the meaning", p. 9. See: "read more" in his book *Die drei Nationalökonomien*, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1930.

[14] Cf. Wilhelm Windelband, *Storia della filosofia moderna*, Vallecchi, Firenze, 1926. Id., I, Bompiani, Milano, 1948.

[15] Cf. Heinrich Rickert, *I limiti dell'elaborazione concettuale scientifico-naturale. Un'introduzione logica alle scienze storiche* (1902), Liguori, Napoli, 2002. For an overview, please refer to the documents of Pietro Rossi, *Lo storicismo tedesco*, Utet, Torino, 1977.

[16] On the concept of "personality" and its relation with the concept of "person", please refer to the following pages. However, note that, for Sombart, personality is not the primary object of the psychological or psychoanalytic investigation, but of the sciences of the spirit because of its derivation from the "person" and of the synthesis it realizes between nature and spirit.

[17] Cf. Franco Rizzo, *Werner Sombart*, Liguori, Napoli, 1974, p. 32.

focused on the mental dimension of the individual. Sombart is not interested in people's minds because meanings and models of thought[18] do not reside in them. On the contrary, he is interested in those "public" places – as Geertz[19] will define them in "his" anthropology – in which ideas live and are "used" and "handled", but above all, "interpreted" and "acted" through decisions, choices and individual behaviors that make the culture much less abstract and static and the social actor central, to say the least. However, this is done in a contradictory and not always fully proactive manner for the actors involved, as will be seen below.

A bridge between anthropology and sociology begins to delineate, perhaps as a result of *culture and action*. A bridge that Sombart continually crosses going back and forth, mastering the contents of many sciences but deliberately leaving them orphans of disciplinary labeling. The same labels that may not add or subtract anything to his thought, but with which we are forced to deal if mastering the complex contents of a work to give a name to the various emerging disciplines.

We will come back on the more "authentically" sociological meanings of this work. For the moment, what we want to emphasize are the contributions made and received from cultural anthropology that is central to physical anthropology, and that cannot be dismissed as alien to Sombart's thinking. This happens for at least two reasons. First, because Sombart seems to want to ignore that sort of "division of labor" that marked the line between the physical and the cultural anthropology for so long, assigning to one the study of the body and to the other that of the spirit. As Mauss did in France, Sombart challenges this division penetrating the context of corporality stemming from "culture" and shows great familiarity with the branch of physical anthropology studying the human body. In fact, the science that, from the beginning, set itself up as the study of races, that is the physical anthropology, had certainly been known to him considering the space he reserved for the theme of "race", as has already been said. More properly, Sombart speaks not without reservation and criticism about the disorder characterizing them, and about the somatic studies of the peoples, and cites not only the demographic or populationist science and ethnography,[20] but also "what we today call the anthropology in relation to the races".[21]

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[18] The criticism of "psychologism" will be investigated later.

[19] Cf. Clifford James Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, New York, 1973.

[20] In this regard, Sombart writes that "At present, the current situation in the field of ethnography or ethnology is the usual: confusion. This means "crisis", here as in all the other sciences. What is interesting in these problems is that the separation of

The second reason lies in the fact that if there is an explicit goal in Sombart's thought, an assumption knowable without much effort of extrapolation in his work and of his work, this element lies precisely in a non-homogeneous joint consideration, rather than in a separation between body and spirit. As we will see later, the author considers body, soul and spirit as different realities, closely intertwined, belonging to different worlds, yet susceptible to combination and synthesis. This is the boundary that defines body, soul and spirit, and that often clearly distinguishes between them but without dividing them. This geometry of relationships is also reflected in the architecture of the sciences. In a border marked but not hypostatized – the author seems to warn – this may mean a form of reification of the conceptual categories or of the epistemological boundaries, instead of healthier and mutual theoretical fertilization.

Sombart resolutely criticizes all those studies that, starting from physical anthropology approaches and approaches that nowadays we would define as biological or socio-biological anthropology, tried not so much to demonstrate the interactions between human populations and the cultural phenomena in terms of adaptation, but to apply the concepts of natural selection and genetic mutation to the human kingdom. This is the Darwinian conception that, in the reflections of the British biologist Thomas Huxley, brought about a new neo-Darwinian evolutionary synthesis.[22]

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the discipline into two parts is gradually consolidating: the first theoretical, empirical (ethnology), and the other general, special (ethnography), correspond to my study of the people and of the peoples. While Th. Waitz, etc. Friedrich Müller etc. still were using the two terms interchangeably, nowadays Br Ratzel, H. Schurtz, Max Schmidt, etc. use them in the different sense already explained. The question whether the rules should or should not be limited to primitive peoples raised differing opinions. In favor of this restriction are or were: Ad. Bastian, Br Ratzel, Max Schmidt, etc.; in favor of an extension to the civilized peoples are or were P.W. Schmidt, M. Winternitz, etc. The contrast between the opposing methodologies represents the main contrast in today's ethnology or ethnography: on the one hand, there are the evolutionists, the champions of the "human thought" (Ad. Bastian) and on the other the cultural theorists. Since the contents of this dispute are inherent to the theory of history, they do not concern us as we are dealing with the anthropological sphere". p. 162, footnote 102 in Sombart's text.

[21] Cf. chapter 16.

[22] Sombart wrote: "In England, Th. Huxley was one of the first to support animalism with zoological arguments. In his book *Evidence as to Man's place in nature* (1863) he collects conferences held in 1860 'proving' that man is related to noble monkeys (*high apes*) and more than these monkeys are related with those of a lower grade (*monkeys*). By doing this he dots the i's of the Darwinian theory

In the third section of the first part, addressing the issue of the transformation of the image of man through history, the author tries to find the fundamental differences existing between an *ominist*ic and an *animalistic* conception of man.[23] According to Sombart, on these two

(1859) only accidentally observing: 'light will be thrown on the origin of man and its history'", see chapter 8, "the current of animalism", p. 79.

[23] According to Sombart, the current of animalism is the one questioning the "privileged position" of man during the creation. For him, this position can be traced back to *De Natura Deorum* of Cicero who attributed a *mens*, a *ratio* and a memory even, to ants. The review continues with Quintilian, according to whom the animals do not have a language but would have *intellectus* and *cogitatio*, and finds evidence in Plutarch. Moreover, according to Sombart, in more recent times, we should refer to the famous *Psychologia antropolgica* of rector Casman. In fact, it is here that "the voices of those men who took a stand in favor of a spiritual soul in animals are mentioned for the first time", Cf. chapter 8, "The current of animalism", p. 76. On the other hand, the current of ominism is the one supporting the specificity of human nature. In time, despite the increasing popularity of animalism, ominism came out alive even from "the obscure nineteenth century, in the awareness of what is the spirit, that spirit and soul should be discerned and that the man should enjoy a special position in the universe as the only holder of the Spirit", p. 81. In this regard, Sombart cites the Italian Renaissance, the most prominent anthropologists of the 15th century; he also cites the 16th century, "still so not abandoned by God, as often said", p. 82. For example, according to Sombart, between Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza and Hobbes, only the latter surrendered to animalism, classifying man within the body of nature, although the nature of man continues to remain based on metaphysical elements. To him, even Hobbes "is not animalist" p. 83. Among the ominists, Sombart cites some luminaries of the French 17th century, such as Malebranche, Pascal and their Italian contemporary Vico. For what concerns the 18th century, in France, "the impertinences of the 'Enlightenment' were not tacitly accepted, but we opposed to them with force – even in the researches of the profane" p. 84. Even English sensualism did not necessarily lead to animalism. Locke is the primary example, in the same way – according to Sombart – "it is possible to find different voices claiming the recognition of the distinctive character of man" among the English sociologists of the 18th century, p. 84. Sombart considers Ferguson "one of the most important members of this lineage", p. 84. In Germany, "spiritual men were even a majority", p. 84. Moreover, it is well known that the German philosophy of the 18th century had an ominist setting. "A similar position on human essence of humanity", for Sombart, "is shared by our classical poets from Lessing to Goethe", p. 85. But this is also the case of Herder and Schiller. In general, "the French philosophy of the 18th century reacted more valiantly than the German to the assaults of animalism, thanks to the providential influences exerted by Descartes, and the eccentricity of the 17th century naturalism which, as noted, was extremely remarkable in France", p. 88.

opposite concepts – they are opposite because they consider man respectively "as a man" and "as an animal species" – "depends the overall approach of the individual in relation to man and world: in fact, the preference for one of the two theses influences both the scientific thought and the scientific approach, but also the practical ideals and principles guiding the actions".[24]

That is the reason why his approach is anthropological, but also "anti-animalistic", if we consider that, with the term animalism, he alluded to the biological or to the organic biologist conceptions aimed at demonstrating the animal origins of man and of his behavior in the light of the evolutionary process.

"There is no anthropology seen as a science of nature",[25] Sombart affirms in defense of man's humanity and of the "spiritual (and not natural) nature" of the anthropological science.[26]

More generally, *Vom Menschen* is a physical anthropology and cultural anthropology work, but also a work of ethnology and ethnography (whose theoretical positions and concepts are reviewed). It depends on the exact meaning we give to these terms and to the related disciplines. The allocation of the various sciences may also change depending on the nation. Maybe it is possible to speak about "ethno-anthropological studies", to use the renowned diction suggested by Cirese in the 70s, and it

[24] Cf. the introduction to section three, "The idea of man in history".

[25] Ibidem, p. 89. On the concept of "nature", Cf. Rudolf Steiner, *Natura e uomo secondo la scienza dello spirito*, Editrice antroposofica, Milano, 2008. See also John Dupré, *Natura umana. Perché la scienza non basta*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2007.

[26] The current of animalism received a definitive reinforcement with the advent of science, or correctly, with the advent of a certain idea of science. "Then there was an event that significantly influenced the fate of the image of man, in other words, the thought of the natural sciences became fatally dominant over men. And as this thought of natural sciences spread to all cultural areas with catastrophic effects over the centuries, also psychology succumbed to it. With its expansion towards the interiority of the man, the concept of spirit was naturally lost, considered unnecessary in order to subject the motions of the human soul to general natural laws. Further, the concept of soul was gradually lost, for this 'wonderful little creature', as Luther defined it, interposed too many obstacles to the 'exact' and 'experimental' researches of modern psychology", p. 77. In the process of "deprivation" of the spirit and the soul of man, Sombart distinguishes two stages: the mechanistic period and that of organic biologism, p. 77 et seq.

is possible to recognize many connections between Sombart's work and Kant's *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view*.[27]

Was Lévi-Strauss thinking of Sombart when he conceived ethnography, ethnology and anthropology as analysis levels involving an increasing abstraction from the particular to the universal? Actually, for Lévi-Strauss, the anthropological level coincides with the enucleation of innate mental structures. The "structural unconscious" is the unique place in which something similar to "human nature" arises. Therefore, Lévi-Strauss' anthropology will be connoted as an anti-phenomenological reflection leaving out of consideration the meanings and the local costumes and the same notion of subject.[28] Furthermore, it is known that this author's thinking has been decidedly "anti-humanist", like all the structuralist and hyper-functionalist currents.

In Sombart, the anthropological conception is not anti-phenomenological, nor is his methodological approach in general. He derives his method from Husserl and makes no secret of it in his theory of the laws of senses (*Sinngesetze*) and the concepts of senses (*Sinnbegriffe*). On the other hand, in all his writings it is evident how much these phenomenological influences passed through Scheler.

Moreover, in the same way as Geertz, for him, man's existence in this world coincides with being in a particular cultural universe. For this reason, the anthropology of Sombart echoes and seems to be ethnographic by definition.

On the other hand, even if Sombart did not appreciate conformism to disciplinary boundaries or entering into epistemological controversies (this is something he openly declared), it is hard to resist the temptation to recognize in these pages the lines of the interpretive anthropology, of the anthropology of experience and the same set of knowledges that often take the name of "life forms". In spite of his rejection of these "labels", it is he himself who used the term "ethnology" while writing on the study of the peoples: "In this third part, we will deal with ethnology or more precisely the science of peoples analyzing the specificity of various peoples".[29]

More precisely, we should say that, for Sombart, ethnography and ethnology did not seem to represent either separate disciplines (such as the

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[27] Immanuel Kant, *Antropologia dal punto di vista pragmatico* (1798), Einaudi, Torino, 2010.

[28] We should also remember that the structuralism of Levi-Strauss originated with an anti-historical function, therefore it finds its starting point and its raison d'être – at least in the humanities – in a theoretical and methodological position opposite to Sombart's.

[29] Cf. the introduction to Chapter 16.