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Hass/Literatur

Literatur- und kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge
zu einer Theorie- und Diskursgeschichte

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Legends of the Origins of Hate

On the Etiology of a Societal Phenomenon
(A Dialogue with Nicolaus Sombart)

Kirk Wetters

For Anselm Haverkamp

This paper is a preliminary attempt to pose certain questions that have emerged from my recent re-engagement with the writings of a relatively unknown figure, Nicolaus Sombart. In the absence of anything like a *Sombart-Forschung*, the text that follows reflects a series of problems, topics and working hypotheses, which remain to be developed and perhaps modified. My primary focus, in relatively traditional literary-critical fashion, is the reconstructive reading of Sombart's 1991 *Die deutschen Männer und ihre Feinde*. In the process, in order to mark the horizons of possible future inquiries, I will mostly only gesture toward the more familiar figures and ideas with which Sombart might be productively connected.

The justification of the eccentric decision to publish work in progress on Nicolaus Sombart is twofold: First, because the question of hate, its possible causes and remedies, is urgent enough to outweigh the usual long-term professional calculations of academic research. Even if it is a personal quirk that caused me to prioritize Sombart's version of the origins of fascism in the particular psychology of Wilhelminian masculinity, I am confident that readers of his work will find it not less relevant to present-day concerns than many other better-known studies on totalitarianism and authoritarianism that emerged after the Second World War. The second reason to prioritize Sombart is that the genealogy and corpus his work activates is real but under-researched. Sombart's primary innovation at this technical-pragmatic level is to read Carl Schmitt through the lens of the Bachofen-reception. This genealogical argument, the merits of which were never seriously considered by anyone other than Sombart, was understandably not received enthusiastically by

purely ›theoretical‹ readers of Schmitt.¹ The case of Schmitt-Bachofen is, however, not essentially different from that of other ›great German theorists‹ (e.g. Engels, Lukács, Benjamin, Adorno) who held the nineteenth-century originator of the theo-

- 1 In the US context see especially John P. McCormick: *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism. Against Politics as Technology*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press 1997, p. 269. I thank Robyn Marasco for calling my attention to this footnote, in which McCormick addresses the question of Schmitt's anti-Semitism. McCormick here declares his wish to ›refrain from psychologizing‹ and references Sombart's work as the main example of ›bizarre analyses‹ of this kind. What goes missing, however, is that the McCormick's mode of analysis are fundamentally at odds with Sombart's. According to the latter, who knew Schmitt since childhood (in the 1930s), it is impossible to understand his works without understanding their roots in anti-Semitism. For Sombart, Schmitt's most famous theoretical writings of the 1920s (McCormick's focus) are only a kind of window dressing, whereas Schmitt's most important work, written after 1938, represents a recontextualization and partial repudiation of the earlier theories. In any event, except for McCormick, Sombart was essentially never addressed within the U.S. Schmitt scholarship. – The situation in German-language scholarship is somewhat different, but leads to a similar result. Here one can see that certain leading figures of the 1990s, especially Friedrich Balke and Helmut Lethen, were able to receive productive impulses from Sombart. Cf. Friedrich Balke: *Der Staat nach seinem Ende. Die Versuchung Carl Schmitts*. Munich: Fink 1996, pp. 319, 338, 348–349, 354. Helmut Lethen: *Verhaltenslehre der Kälte. Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1994, pp. 148, 216, 224. These influential works by established scholars (which Sombart was not), combined with the international Schmitt-revival produced by Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer* (1995, English 1998) and Derrida's *The Politics of Friendship* (1994, English 1998), displaced and superseded Sombart's 1991 treatise. The only exception I am aware of is Helmut Lethen, whose latest book frequently references Sombart and can be seen as carrying on his speculative historical-biographical approach, which remains highly skeptical about whether Schmitt should be read purely as ›theory‹. Helmut Lethen: *Die Staatsräte. Elite im Dritten Reich*. Gründgens, Furtwängler, Sauerbruch, Schmitt. Berlin: Rowohlt 2018. The very topic of this book, the role of elites in history and society, bears traces of Sombart's core sociological focus on the role and constitution of elites. – The best overall treatment of Sombart in his relation to Schmitt remains that of Dirk van Laak, originally from 1993 (fifteen years before Sombart's death in 2008). Dirk van Laak: *Gespräche in der Sicherheit des Schweigens. Carl Schmitt in der politischen Geistesgeschichte der frühen Bundesrepublik*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2002.

ry of matriarchy in high esteem.² In short, Bachofen, though often broadly celebrated as the first to view the relation of sex and culture as a historical dialectic, remains an unwelcome guest when it comes to differentiating reputable and disreputable theoretical genealogies. Within this dynamic of the theory reception – where the label ›theory‹ itself has become increasingly problematic (as in: ›conspiracy theory‹) – Nicolaus Sombart ended up on the disreputable side. The reasons for this can only be characterized as complicated, but given Sombart's credentials as a Schmittian anti-Schmittian and outspoken defender of an emphatic version of European liberalism vs. what he sees as the long tradition of repressive German statism, I wonder if his case might not be worth reopening for the twenty-first century. This brings me to the main topic – of hate.

1 PRINCIPAL QUESTIONS

I do not claim to be a specialist with respect to the concept and discourse of and on hate, whether in its historical forms or in contemporary society. Others in this volume convincingly frame these aspects of the topic, but I will take the approach that hate is neither self-evident nor clearly definable, whether in its historical semantics or in its current political significance. In gathering and formulating my own thoughts about hate, it was difficult to get beyond what seemed to me to be the predictable and somehow clichéd approaches of literary history and

- 2 The scholarship on Bachofen and his reception is a respectable niche, which however seems to have been entirely unaware of Sombart's efforts in this direction. Thus, as a larger project, it would be necessary to check Sombart against various scholarly strands represented in works such as: Uwe Wesel: *Der Mythos vom Matriarchat. Über Bachofens Mutterrecht und die Stellung von Frauen in der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1980; Georg Dörr: *Muttermythos und Herrschaftsmythos. Zur Dialektik der Aufklärung um die Jahrhundertwende bei den Kosmikern, Stefan George und in der Frankfurter Schule*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2007; Richard Wolin: *Walter Benjamin Meets the Cosmics. A Forgotten Weimar Moment*. http://www.law.wisc.edu/m/ndkzz/wolin_revised_10-13_benjamin_meets_the_cosmic_s.doc (2008; 09.08.2018); Peter Davies: *Myth, Matriarchy and Modernity. Johann Jakob Bachofen in German Culture 1860–1945*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter 2010. Though such works represent major reevaluations, their lacunae with respect to Sombart's corpus go beyond Schmitt. Theodor Däubler, for example, another esoteric *Geheimtipp* of the early twentieth-century German intelligentsia, plays no role in this scholarship.

criticism: What is special about the idea and the word ›hate‹? To what does it refer, concretely, now and in the past? What is hate as feeling or as a phenomenon? Is it a feeling? Is it an emotion I have firsthand experience with or with which I can empathize? Is there a literary canon, ›classics‹ of hate?³ To what extent is the idea of unreflected, ›pure‹ hate or violent hate speech compatible with the modern concept of ›literature‹ (which must, almost by definition, allow a minimum of self-reflection)?

As a result of these initial considerations, I also asked myself: Which academic disciplines are responsible for hate and the discourse on it? One answer jumped immediately to mind: not literature or literary criticism but psychology would be the obvious place to look in order to understand the sources of hate. But, with all due respect to psychology, it is equally clear that questions about hate cannot be addressed entirely within the professional or clinical sphere of psychology. First of all because, when we talk about hate today, we evidently have a political problem in mind, which cannot be addressed by psychology alone. Here one might also think about how the psychologization of politics can backfire, for example when it functions as the pathologization of political opponents. This tendency is arguably already discernible in Adorno-Horkheimer's *Elemente des Antisemitismus*. Even if the diagnosis itself is correct, it can easily be interpreted in the context of political conflict as a moral stigmatization and political attack – an attempt to strip certain figures or ideas of their legitimacy. This may be effective in many cases, especially if the object of the attack is genuinely marginal, but as soon as the ›pathology‹ has occupied the political power-centers, it can easily rebuff or reverse the charges. This dynamic was recently on display in the U.S., in attempts to diagnose Donald Trump's narcissism and dementia.

3 In the present volume, see especially the contributions of Jürgen Brokoff, Peter Glasner, Jakob Norberg and Stefan Winterstein, which pose fundamental questions about the dynamics of hate in relation to individual, collective, rhetorical and literary performances. Especially Winterstein's analysis of the isolating function of hate in the first person, as an aspect of literary interiority, sheds critical light on the more familiar tendencies of hate to galvanize collective sentiment (as in Glasner) or to function as a category of third-personal ascription (as in the categories of hate speech and hate crimes). See also Fatima Naqvi: *The Literary and Cultural Rhetoric of Victimhood. Western Europe 1970–2005*. New York: Palgrave 2007. Naqvi argues for a constitutive role of victimhood (evidently connected to hate) in contemporary identity- and subject-formation, with respect to which literature, art and film provide a meta-commentary and symptomography.

Another form of responsibility for the discourse on hate can be found in criminal justice systems, which are responsible for ascribing specific forms of thought, speech and action with the label ›hate‹. For example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation defines a »hate crime« as »a criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.«⁴ The decisive aspect of this definition is its emphasis on intent (motivation or partial motivation). Crimes motivated by hate are crimes that are not randomly directed, nor against a specific individual for specific reasons, but based on »bias« against a specific identity, i. e. against and because of the group to which the individual belongs or is imagined to belong. As juristically solid as this may be – for example as a means of imposing stronger punishments for such crimes, in order to deter them and thereby protect society from hate-filled subjects – they do not contribute in a meaningful way to our understanding of the sources of hate. The definition of ›hate‹ simply applies based on the criminal acts and their overt motivations. Reasons and causes need not be pursued further.

The question of causality may have the appearance of objectivity, but as soon as it is asked, a further question imposes itself: What are the reasons for seeking to ›understand‹ hate and those who act based on it? How can we understand hate without risking contaminating ourselves with this toxic emotion? What would it even mean to ›understand‹ or ›sympathize‹ with a pathological, criminal and irrational form of emotionality? On this point, the literary classics may yet offer some insights. A literary *locus classicus* of the representation of hate, for example, would be Edmund's monologue from the first act of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. This speech creates a transparency of motivation that allows the audience to look into the mind of the figure, thereby contributing to the sense of comprehensibility of his subsequent actions:

[...] Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me?
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous and my shape as true

4 Quoted from Southern Poverty Law: Frequently Asked Questions About Hate Groups. <https://www.splcenter.org/20171004/frequently-asked-questions-about-hate-groups#hate%20group> (10.08.2018).

As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
With base? With baseness, bastardy? Base, base? (I/2)⁵

The innate yet partial social banishment of a category of individuals – bastards – whose inalterable identity allows them no chance of dignity or recognition, property or power, produces a feeling of denigration and simultaneous self-assertion, of superiority over the hated, unequal, non-consanguineous brother. A lot can be learned from such literary conjectures, but one may also rediscover in them much that is already overly familiar, for example topoi of envy and resentment. What Shakespeare presents to us, his audience, is ultimately only a speculation, even if it comes with the pedigree of antiquity and mythic coherence. It is only one more famous legend of the origins of hate. But does this kind of rationalization help with understanding, or may it not also further veil and mystify? Do literary depictions of hate rest only on psychological stereotypes, which incessantly reproduce themselves but are not finally provable in their truth content? At this level there is no shortage of plausible but not easily provable explanations of the origins of hate – for example, a popular one in the last two centuries, the narrative of economic or cultural exclusion as the trigger of societal hate.

To conclude these preliminary considerations: The identification and legal incrimination of hating subjects as a factor to be reckoned with in modern societies only repeats and reinforces the forms of identification and exclusion which are often supposed to contribute to hate in the first place (as in the case of Edmund). To put it a little more emphatically: If hate is countered with love, if haters are identified as deficient subjects whereas lovers are taken to be morally superior and essentially better, then this represents not only a full departure from the realm of psychology, it also expresses the political problem of hate in accordance with Carl Schmitt's notorious friend-enemy distinction. Perhaps we feel it necessary to accept this consequence in the name of securing ourselves against hate (e. g. in the form of foreign or domestic ›terrorists‹), but at least we should be honest about the fact that this means conceding that hatred as a Schmittian organizational form is the dominant normal situation (or at least an inevitable byproduct) of the socioeconomics of modern global societies. Contrary to such a neo-gnostic worldview, and despite the possibility of its current structural dominance, I offer a first citation from my main dialogue partner in this essay, Nicolaus Sombart's *Die deutschen Männer und ihre Feinde: Carl Schmitt – ein deutsches Schicksal zwischen Männerbund und Matriarchatsmy-*

5 William Shakespeare: *King Lear*. Ed. R. A. Foakes. London: A & C Black Publishers 1997, pp. 179–180.

thos (1991). On the topic of anti-Semitism, which Sombart understands as the European *Urphänomen* of hate, he writes: »Zu sagen, Antisemitismus hat es immer und überall gegeben, ist bereits ein antisemitisches Argument.«⁶ To generalize the point slightly, if hate is accepted as an unavoidable societal fact, without making any effort to question its sources, this means implicitly granting its right to exist and thereby tacitly allowing that those who hate may be, if not justified, then at least fatally incurable in their condition.

2 THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY

In order to develop an important background for Sombart's ideas, which may help to clarify where his »bizarre analyses« (see footnote 1) are coming from, I now wish to briefly backtrack to Theodor Adorno's speculations on the authoritarian personality, which has certain affinities to Sombart's untimely Schmitt book. My main goal here is to highlight a theoretical line that is evidently of great contemporary relevance (not just for Sombart), but which has been largely disqualified as ›out of date‹ in comparison to more recent theoretical trends. In support of this return to the »AP«, I draw support from a recent essay by the Andreas Peglau on the *Nicht-Veralten des ›autoritären Charakters‹*.⁷ Peglau claims that the current scholarship on *Rechtsextremismus* has largely ignored or explicitly dismissed the works of Wilhelm Reich, Erich Fromm and the 1950 authoritarian personality study, while the recent works frequently are at a lower theoretical level than those of the mid-twentieth century theorists at their best. Nicolaus Sombart, according to my hypothesis, can be located on this ›outmoded‹ theoretical line. This point can be easily missed, however, since starting in 1980s Sombart increasingly identifies himself with earlier and less well-known figures such

6 Nicolaus Sombart: *Die deutschen Männer und ihre Feinde. Carl Schmitt – ein deutsches Schicksal zwischen Männerbund und Matriarchatsmythos*. Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag 1991, p. 275 (further citations marked with the abbreviation DMF).

7 Andreas Peglau: *Vom Nicht-Veralten des ›autoritären Charakters‹: Wilhelm Reich, Erich Fromm und die Rechtsextremismusforschung*. In: *Sozial.Geschichte Online* 22 (2018), pp. 91–122. See also, published after the completion of the present essay: Robyn Marasco (Ed.): *The Authoritarian Personality*. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 117:4, October 2018.

as Otto Gross, Theodor Däubler and Johann Jakob Bachofen – a canon he inherits from his lifelong mentor, Carl Schmitt.⁸

- 8 I have been able to date this shift in Sombart's thinking based on the following sources: The intense focus on Otto Gross seems to have been a result of Sombart's reading of Martin Green: *The von Richthofen Sisters. The Triumphant and the Tragic Modes of Love*. New York: Basic Books 1974. The transformative impact of this book on Sombart's understanding of the generation of his father (Werner Sombart) is documented in an essay published in *Merkur* in 1976: Nicolaus Sombart: Gruppenbild mit zwei Damen. Zum Verhältnis von Wissenschaft, Politik und Eros im wilhelminischen Zeitalter. In: *Merkur* 30 (1976), pp. 972–990; republished as Nicolaus Sombart: Max Weber und Otto Gross. Zum Verhältnis von Wissenschaft, Politik und Eros im wilhelminischen Zeitalter. In: *Nachdenken über Deutschland. Vom Historismus zur Psychoanalyse*. Munich: Piper 1987, pp. 22–51. In this essay, Sombart develops major themes of *Die deutschen Männer und ihre Feinde*, and settles on Schmitt as the focal point for his extensions of Green's material (even if numerous topics of Sombart's discussions with Schmitt significantly pre-date the reading of Green). Schmitt's correspondence reflects the publication of the Green essay as a rupture in his relationship with Nicolaus: »Der dreifache, von Nicolaus Sombart rite vollzogene Vätermord [...] wird Ihnen [Hans-Dietrich Sander] nicht entgangen sein; dergleichen gehört zu den schon seit langem nicht mehr schönen Künsten, ignoriert die Kern-Frage (nämlich Politische Theologie und Versailles) und hat den Vorteil, dass drei auf einen Schlag guillotiniert werden: Max Weber, Werner Sombart und – tiefgebeugt und gottergeben – Ihr alter Carl Schmitt.« Quoted from Schmitt und Sombart: Briefwechsel von Carl Schmitt, Nicolaus, Corina und Werner Sombart. Ed. Martin Tielke and Gerd Giesler. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot 2015, p. 124. Sombart however continues his dialogue with Schmitt regarding major theses of *Die deutschen Männer*, especially in the letter from July 28, 1978, which begins: »Lieber Herr Professor, Ist es möglich, dass Däubler Bachofen nicht gekannt hätte?« (Briefwechsel, p. 131). Evidence of Sombart's interest in *The Authoritarian Personality* can be found at the *Literaturarchiv* in Marbach, in a photocopied typescript of an unpublished lecture with the title *Der denazifizierte Hitler* (»Strasbourg, den 14. August 1977«), in which Sombart comments on the analytic genre of »Psychohistorie«, leading him to enthusiastically invoke the Authoritarian Personality study as a main example: »Eine wichtige Rolle in diesem Zusammenhang spielt zweifellos der Freudo-Marxismus, zu dessen Produkten ja auch Adornos amerikanische Studie »The Authoritarian Personality« gezählt werden muss. Sie ist ein Stück psychohistorischer Hitlerdeutung!« (Bestand: Der Merkur. Briefe an ihn [Paeschke] von Sombart, Nicolaus 1976–1978, 80.3, p. 10).

To establish the connection to the 1950 *Authoritarian Personality* and Sombart's theses, the two most important concepts from Adorno are »the usurpation complex« and »the manipulative type«:

(1) To make theoretically plausible the concept of a »usurpation complex«, Adorno mentions its crucial status in »occidental drama«, which attests to its »deep-rooted basis in instinctual dynamics.«⁹ The quasi-universal nature of this complex inheres, according to Adorno, in the inextinguishable human outrage at the fundamental illegitimacy of all privileges: »In the depths of his heart, everyone regards any privilege as illegitimate. Yet one is forced continuously, in order to get along in the world as it is, to adjust himself to the system of power relationships that actually defines this world« (AP 688). This accommodation to the world as it is – is at the same time a repression, which produces psychological disturbances. An ambivalent polarity emerges from this repression, producing on the one hand an identification with power and illegitimate privilege, on the other hand with the figure of the usurper who promises to overturn the structures through which power is illegitimately distributed. »Deep-lying, archaic mechanisms seem to be involved«, Adorno remarks, and concludes with the following speculative hypothesis:

[...] [P]eople are afraid of not really being the children of their parents. This fear may be based on the dim awareness that the order of the family, which stands for civilization in the form in which we know it, is not identical with »nature« – that our biological origin does not coincide with the institutional framework of marriage and monogamy, that »the stork brings us from the pond.« We sense that the shelter of civilization is not safe, that the house of the family is built on shaky ground. We project our uneasiness upon the usurper, the image of him who is not his parents' child, who becomes psychologically a kind of ritualized, institutional »victim« whose annihilation is unconsciously supposed to bring us rest and security. (AP 689)

(2) The »manipulative type« is, according to Adorno, the most dangerous kind of authoritarian personality. Onstage he (or she?) might be called »the intriguer«. Adorno reads the topos and psychology of fratricide into the motivational structure of such figures (of which Shakespeare's Edmund would certainly be an example): »Manipulativeness may be one form in which death wishes for the siblings are allowed to come to the fore« (AP 769). What makes this type distinct,

- 9 Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson & R. Nevitt Sanford: *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper 1950, p. 688 (further citations abbreviated AP).

however, is that he or she does not act out of affect, but instead pursues fixed ideas in a purely instrumental way, while looking on the world as an empty schema that only needs to be administered. This type does not »express« hatred emotionally, but comports himself (to follow Adorno's gendering) with »sober intelligence, together with [...] [the] almost complete absence of any affections« (AP 767). Under conditions of U.S. democracy, the researchers were only able to locate a few examples of this type, but imagined it as dominant under full-blown German fascism (AP 767). Thus, in order to exemplify this type, Adorno mentions Hitler and Himmler, while leaving a special place for Carl Schmitt as the prime example of this type. In a discussion of the attitudes of an extremely fascistic »insect toxicologist« (an occupation of evident symbolism in this context), Adorno writes: »His political concepts are defined by the friend-foe relationship, in exactly the same way as the Nazi theoretician Karl [sic] Schmitt defined the nature of politics. His lust for organization, concomitant with an obsession with the domination of nature, seems boundless« (AP 769).

The significance of the fact that Schmitt comes up here in passing to exemplify an extreme point on the famous F-scale should perhaps not be overestimated. It would also be too much to assume that Adorno's suggestion made a major difference for Sombart. But the affinity is striking, between the distanced empirical-typological method of the AP and Sombart's historical-psychological-biographical study, which also reads Schmitt as the exemplary *Typus* of a dominant characterological configuration in Germany in the first decades of the twentieth century. Sombart, rather than rely on the AP's methods of »opinion research« to unfold the authoritarian psyche in a cross section of contemporary society, focuses on a single case study, Carl Schmitt, whom he had known and learned from since childhood. Sombart thus sets aside the concept of an »authoritarian personality« and proceeds in a much more drastic way, presenting Schmitt as the living archetype of German masculinity in the late Wilhelminian and Weimar era. Sombart thus reads Schmitt as the epitome of a gender-theoretical syndrome that was produced en masse during his father's generation. In this context, Schmitt represents a kind of hypertrophic form, but also functions as an indicator and symptom for the pathological potentials of late modernity and of humanity more generally.

3 NICOLAUS SOMBART'S THESIS ON »GERMAN MEN«

In the present context, I will not be able to systematically present Sombart's long and often extremely questionable book in its full length and complexity. I thus limit myself to selectively underscoring a few central ideas. But first, because the book and its author seem to be almost completely unknown, I am obliged to digress in order to provide some background and orientation.¹⁰

Sombart, born 1923, deceased 2008, was the son of the famous national economist Werner Sombart. Second only to Max Weber, Sombart senior represented the upper bourgeois figure of the internationally famous German mandarin – the lifestyle and intellectual style of the institution of German *Wissenschaft*. Nicolaus was thus »to the manor born«, a sociologist *von Haus aus*, inculcated with the aura of a massive paternal library – even if his actual academic career failed to fulfill these high expectations. From early on he was an outsider, fought in the war, and, after the destruction of his family's home, sought refuge in Heidelberg, where in 1951 he completed a dissertation with Alfred Weber on Saint-Simon and the origins of sociology as a *Krisenwissenschaft*. He was a founding member of the *Gruppe 47* and a friend of Reinhart Koselleck. He abandoned his academic career for a position (starting 1954) as a cultural attaché at the *Euro-parat* in Strasbourg. During the roughly five decades of his later life, he remained academically active (at the periphery), publishing essays and shorter works (especially in *Merkur*), as well as a series of memoirs and, undoubtedly in some sense his life's work and testament, *Die deutschen Männer und ihre Feinde* from 1991.¹¹ Also, as quickly becomes evident upon reading the obituar-

10 My primary sources for these narratives are Sombart's two memoirs: Nicolaus Sombart: *Jugend in Berlin (1933–1943)*. Ein Bericht. Munich: Hanser 1987; Nicolaus Sombart: *Rendezvous mit dem Weltgeist*. Heidelberger Reminiszenzen 1945–1951. Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer 2000.

11 The relation of Sombart's memoir project to *Die deutschen Männer* would be worth a more careful study. On the one hand, Sombart systematically integrates many of his »theoretical« ideas in autobiographical and historical anecdotes. On the other hand, all of his work is permeated by a strong aversion to *Wissenschaft*, *Theorie* and the professorial habitus. This standpoint must have contributed to his prioritization of memoirs over scholarly (or semi-scholarly) writings. Especially striking in this regard is Nicolaus's judgment of his own father, who spent the last decades of his life on an expansive new »Kulturtheorie«, which Sombart as a youth enthusiastically supported. But in

ies, Sombart was perhaps best known for his unconventional lifestyle, which contributed to making him an academic and cultural outsider and may continue to present challenges in relation to his work's main theses. To put it simply (at risk of oversimplification), Sombart was a vocal defender of sexual liberation, which he also made a part of his public persona and reputation, presenting a consistently (Otto Grossian, or perhaps one could say: hedonistic or libertine) pro-sex and pro-sexuality platform against the repressive attitudes that, for him, ruled in the generation of Schmitt.¹² Leaving aside biographical elements that may have been perceived as »scandalous«, the attempt to reconcile Sombart's views on sexuality and culture with dominant psychoanalytical, feminist and Foucauldian theorizations would be an extensive task whose outcomes I am not ready to predict. For now, I would simply say that Sombart's understanding of his own politics, based on his belief that the origins of societal violence should be sought in the realm of sexuality, are broadly liberal-progressive and intensely opposed

retrospect he wished he had encouraged his father to commit his life's story and experiences to posterity (Sombart: *Jugend in Berlin*, p. 40).

- 12 Increasingly, in the 1980s and 1990s, the tendency of German sources (including to some extent Sombart) is to suppose that the traditional patriarchy had been mostly defeated, thereby invalidating the old repression theories. If anything, the main risk in the age of neoliberalism is overcompensation in the other direction. See, for example, (cited affirmatively in Dörr: *Müttermythos und Herrschaftsmythos*, p. 21): Jörg Lau: *Männerhaß und Männerselbsthaß als kultureller Mainstream*. In: *Merkur* (655/666), Sept./Oct. 2004, pp. 933–944. Lau's attack on Klaus Theweleit (who overlaps with Sombart in certain regards) would miss the mark entirely in Sombart's case, insofar as Sombart argues that male self-hatred is perpetuated precisely in ultra-patriarchal formations which deny the feminine in men. See also (likewise cited by Dörr: *Müttermythos und Herrschaftsmythos*, p. 23): Jochen Hörisch: *Feminismus/Gender Studies*. In: *Theorie-Apotheke. Eine Handreichung zu den humanwissenschaftlichen Theorien der letzten fünfzig Jahre, einschließlich ihrer Risiken und Nebenwirkungen*. Frankfurt a. M.: Die Andere Bibliothek 2004, pp. 104–121. Hörisch's intentionally provocative Bachofen-centric account of feminism is the only one I know of that mentions Sombart. Hörisch's discussion on feminism's ability to survive its own successes contains points that are probably no longer politically correct (if they ever were). In any case, this work from 2004 obviously does not reflect the latest in what might be called »neopatriarchal« trends. On the other hand, see: Barbara Vinken: *Die deutsche Mutter. Der lange Schatten eines Mythos*. Munich: Piper 2001, who states on the first page: »Hierzulande ist seit den zwanziger Jahren in Sachen Gleichberechtigung nicht viel passiert« (p. 7).

to the ideological legacy of the German *Sonderweg*. But beyond these broad strokes, individual aspects of his ideas could (and should) be critiqued and second-guessed at numerous levels.¹³

In the context of my own intellectual autobiography, it may also be helpful to readers, given how unknown Sombart and his books are, if I here briefly mention how it was that he came to be a part of my intellectual household: I read him for the first time in the late 1990s at the suggestion of Anselm Haverkamp and, for reasons that I can only speculate about, this was an epoch-making encounter. What Sombart recounted was for me at the time completely unheard of – an *Aufarbeitung* of the German past that I did not entirely trust, but which seemed all too plausible. I would compare the first reading experience to that of Freud's *Der Mann Moses*. One can read this kind of psychohistorical speculation in a completely skeptical way – or one can try to do so –, but the narrative remains spellbinding. It is a grandiose piece of grand theory, presented and told with maximum literary and rhetorical finesse.

I leave it to others to decide whether Sombart made a big impact in my subsequent work. I can say that I regularly included him in my bibliographies and perhaps sometimes may have indulged in some »Sombartian« turns of argument. Until recently, I never thought to actually work on this unusual and somehow shady figure. To do so now seems important though, not only at a self-analytical level, but for more generally political reasons – because Sombart's psychohistory of German men unfortunately seems to have lost little of its relevance (despite obvious massive changes in the state of sexual emancipation globally). Also, at a more academic-pragmatic level, Sombart's analytic framework remains very useful in dealing with literary authors of the twentieth century. Thomas Mann, Frank Wedekind, Stefan George, Hugo von Hofmannsthal are regularly mentioned by Sombart, but many whom he doesn't name, such as Heimito von Doderer, also fit the paradigm (father- and sexuality-problems, tied to the origins of his anti-Semitism). After working for more than a decade on a figure like Doderer, one wants to understand how it was, for example, that he was able to write the ultimate satire of patriarchy, the father-novel *Die Merowinger oder Die Totale Familie* (1962).

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- 13 For example, Sombart's emphasis of the late Schmitt's turn toward the sea and the theory of sea power could be read as an anti-German/pro-English celebration of colonialism. One could debate the fairness of this reading, but Sombart's anti-German/pro-French views also lead him, quite explicitly, to a psychoanalytically inflected liberal-Eurocentric vision of civilizational universalism.

I could say much more about these topics, and hopefully at some future point I will, but for now I will conclude by presenting condensations of a few main theses from Sombart's *Die deutschen Männer*:

(1) Sombart's Schmitt book, as I mentioned, is based on eccentric gender-theoretical premises, which include a strong biopolitical dimension (though Sombart doesn't call it that). How does this work? To put it in Sombart's words: »[...] [D]er Mann weiß, daß nicht er es ist, sondern die Frau, die das Leben spendet und Herrin über den Tod ist« (DMF 80). The masculine lust for power, according to Sombart, rests upon a feeling of inferiority – upon the repressed knowledge that all power depends upon and derives from sexual reproduction. Masculine power is not original or originary but essentially derivative. I quote Sombart again: »Es gibt keine männliche Macht. Es gibt nur männliche Gewalt. Die wahre Macht, die einzig effektive, dauernde, liegt beim Weibe« (DMF 197). The mechanisms of Oedipal compulsion, according to Sombart's biopolitical claim, reproduce the binary decision/division between male and female. The modern state intensifies this binarism »[...] als unilaterale pro-männliche Lösung der Bisexualität, als Abwehr der Identitätsdiffusion des Bisexuellen zugunsten des männlichen Pols; die säuberliche Scheidung von männlich und weiblich« (DMF 177).¹⁴ Thus the identity-political distinction is repressively reproduced in polarized binary gender identities, and all other political enmities and phenomena of hatred are derived from this primary act of repression. This is at any rate what Sombart hopes to show in his analyses of the »Schmitt case«.

(2) The title-thesis of Sombart's book claims that »Männerbund und Matriarchatsmythos« are »zwei Seiten derselben Medaille« (DMF 208). According to him, the whole complex of matriarchal thought of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was predominantly a masculine phenomenon, a phantasmatic reaction of men to largely self-imposed ultra-patriarchal social conditions. Psychoanalysis itself, Sombart argues, was a historical reaction to and attempted therapy for the psychological consequences of the modern German fanaticism for an ultra-masculinist idea of the state. The fact that Carl Schmitt of all people is supposed to be exemplary of this phenomenon fits with the thesis of Sombart's earlier essay on Otto Gross and Max Weber, according to which: »Politisch gesprochen liegt der Mythos des Matriarchats rechts – weit rechts.«¹⁵ This is still the standard reading of the Bachofen-reception – but, as Sombart notes, Otto Gross was at the complete opposite end of the spectrum. In the later book on

Schmitt, Sombart has a more complex and unconventional explanation, which emphasizes a series of anarchist-romantic left-matriarchal protagonists (especially Gross and Däubler) in order to develop a genealogy which, Sombart claims, was crucial for Schmitt's understanding of the historical trends he sought to oppose. Sombart inherits this genealogy from Schmitt and seeks to reestablish an affirmative relation to it. Sombart thus in effect joins the ranks of his mentor's most profound »enemies«.

The whole construction remains highly ambivalent at a number of levels. On the one hand, Sombart invokes and cites Bachofen emphatically in his claim that the course of history and society can only be understood through the »Zusammenhang des Geschlechtsverhältnisses und des Grades seiner tiefern oder höhern Auffassung mit dem ganzen Leben und Geschicken der Völker« (DMF 291, Sombart quoting Bachofen). On the other hand, Sombart distances himself from precisely this conception:

Es ist nicht unsere Absicht, uns hier auf eine Abwägung der Glaubhaftigkeit und wissenschaftlichen Brauchbarkeit derartiger Hypothesen einzulassen. Sie scheinen uns indessen von allerhöchstem Interesse, um zu begreifen, was eigentlich in den Köpfen von Männern wie Otto Gross, Ferenczi und Carl Schmitt spukte – Männern, die in der patriarchalischen Wissenschaftstradition des 19. Jahrhunderts aufgewachsen und ausgebildet worden sind. (DMF 327)

Sombart's reader is thus confronted with a choice between a dualistic, very probably essentialist position and a psychological analysis of precisely those subjects who were able to commit themselves to such a position: »Ob es sich um ein umgreifendes Weltprinzip oder eine Projektion des menschlichen Geistes handelt, müssen wir hier nicht erörtern« (DMF 341).

Sombart proceeds to argue, however, that numerous problems of psychology, society, *Wissenschaft* and institutions, along with their products and byproducts, have incessantly reproduced the gender-blindness of »der abendländischen Metaphysik« and of German theory up to Habermas and Luhmann. Thus, even though Sombart aligns himself with the »left matriarchalists«, he opposes both fundamentalist gender-essentialist dualism and gender-free (implicitly masculinist) conceptions of the modern individual. To put it in the terms of Hans Blumenberg (with Eric Voegelin),¹⁶ one could perhaps say that for Sombart the ultimate source of

14 Sombart does not understand bisexuality primarily as a gender identity but as a historical problem of anthropological bimorphism.

15 Sombart: Max Weber und Otto Gross, p. 34.

16 See especially the discussions in Jacob Taubes (ed.): *Religionstheorie und Politische Theologie*. Bd. 2: *Gnosis und Politik*. Munich: Fink 1984. See also Yotam Hotam:

»gnostic recidivism« (to the friend-enemy distinction) always lies in the pathologies of gender relations, which patriarchy distorts into compulsory binarisms.

The archenemy of patriarchy is, according to Sombart, the feminine, especially the feminine in »man«, with the oppression of women as an inescapable consequence of this form of rule (Herrschaft). The dualism at stake is once again asymmetrical insofar as the idea of male domination conveyed in the term »patriarchy« refers, according to Sombart, to the reality of modern social forms, whereas »matriarchy« gestures toward something imaginary, which »keiner konkreten geschichtlich-gesellschaftlichen Realität und Erfahrung entspricht, sondern nur terminologisch ein breites und diffuses Feld von Aspirationen, Wünschen, Modellvorstellungen, Idealen, Spekulationen und sozialen Forderungen anzeigt« (DMF 339).

(3) Thus matriarchy is bound up with the historical dynamics of utopian thought – which in itself is almost self-evident, with or without Sombart. This utopian moment, however, also opens up an important place for literature as the privileged form of quasi-utopian, quasi-theoretical modeling of the non-patriarchal past and future. This point is also of systematic importance in the context of Sombart's own anti-theoretical, anti-*Wissenschaft* self-positioning. He does not want to write any purely »scientific« treatises in the style of Werner Sombart, Max Weber or the Carl Schmitt of the 1920s, nor of Habermas or Luhmann, but conceives his book more upon the model of the later Schmitt (e. g. *Land und Meer* or *Der Nomos der Erde*) as a historico-philosophical *Dichtung*, a legend of the origins of hate. As a consequence, Sombart should not be read as a »theorist« (though this could also be read against the grain) but primarily as a literary author. As someone who experienced academia as an outsider and an insider, he came to see it as a prime example of a system governed by patriarchal power, inescapably implicated in the praxes and political theologies of patriarchy: »denn Theorie ist immer Gewalt« (DMF 95). Literature, on the other hand, seems to be in a position (granting some idealization)¹⁷ to conserve the core of matriarchy under the conditions of patriarchy: »Verschüttet und verzerrt durch die patriarchalische Denkstruktur, bleibt die matriarchalische Mythologie in

Moderne Gnosis und Zionismus. Kulturkrise, Lebensphilosophie und nationaljüdisches Denken. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2010.

17 In this context, Sombart neglects to mention the androcentric metaphysics of the male creator »ex nihilo«, in whose image literary and artistic creation was normatively conceived. For a more extended and radicalizing treatment of this problem in literature and art, see Klaus Theweleit: *Buch der Könige*. Bd. 1: Orpheus und Eurydike. Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern 1988.

Märchen, Sagen, Epen lebendig – bis hin zum »Nordlicht«-Epos Theodor Däublers« (DMF 307–308). This is basically Bachofen's theory of literature, which sought to uncover the traces and commemorations of a superseded matriarchy in the myths of the patriarchal cultures of antiquity. This thesis is merely adopted by Sombart, without scrutinizing or significantly developing it. Many lines of possible inquiry thus remain open.

Literature on this model would by no means be something to naively celebrate as »anti-patriarchal« (as it sometimes seems in Sombart). One would instead need to make more of the ambivalences and argue, first, that modern art and literature (and above all their concept of the »creative« author) are not exempt from the patriarchal dominance that permeates modern societies. Second, it would be necessary to make certain complex distinctions, for example between anti-patriarchal vs. feminist thought and literature. The two are often thought to go together, but the cases of Schmitt and Sombart show that this is not necessarily the case. Patriarchy and anti-patriarchy are evidently complementary and compensatory functions within patriarchal societies. Feminism likewise can be thought of as a movement within and against patriarchy, but insofar as patriarchy refers primarily to actually existing institutional forms (as Sombart suggests), the choice between »within or against« may appear as an either-or between focusing on the social status of women (empirically, biologically, in terms of identity) vs. more broadly on »the feminine« vs. on the organizations of state, law and family that perpetuate gendered forms of violence (with the empirical gender of individuals as the medium of this violence). An example of these differences, which includes subtle contradictions without being necessarily incompatible, can be seen in the difference between »affirmative action« vs. »institutional reform« (reform of the societal organizations into which admission/participation is to be granted).

One would also have to consider at what point the »anti-« of anti-patriarchy ultimately causes feminism and anti-patriarchy (or feminist vs. anti-patriarchal literature) to become mutually exclusive. The more intense the violence of patriarchy, the more powerful and complexly sublimated the backlashes. The problem with the »anti-« is that it reintroduces binary gender difference and the friend-enemy polarity, thereby turning Sombart's anti-Schmitt thesis back into a Schmittian identity-political program.¹⁸ But one would also have to concede in one way or another (even on Sombart's model) that the »identities« have been

18 Those with doubts about the connection of Schmitt with identity politics should read the paragraph of his constitutional theory (§ 16) in which he names »identity« and »representation« as the most essential concepts of the modern state: Carl Schmitt: *Verfassungslehre*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot 2003 (1928), pp. 200–220.

historically and societally reproduced as real and concrete, with real and concrete political functions and possibilities, which do not allow them to simply be ignored or set aside.

Sombart, who typically seems to advocate for a more radical and free version of liberalism (perhaps bordering on libertarianism or hedonism), occasionally imagines the impending end of the classical culture of the written word as the only way out of the West's patriarchal *Wahnsystem*. He lived long enough to witness at least the partial realization of this dream of freedom in the end of literacy, and found himself caught between the generations, as well as between academic and non-academic cultures. The unpredictable leaps in the ›emancipation‹ of post-war generations left him behind, as can be seen in his Heidelberg memoir from 2000, especially in a chapter in which the patriarchal-bourgeois *Lebensform* of the aged Benedetto Croce functions as a kind of utopian ideal of spiritual continuity across the generations, kept alive in the face-to-face relation to an aged mentor – as opposed to pure book-learning and especially to a world whose idea of reading is »Surfen im Internet.«¹⁹

Die deutschen Männer from 1991 is only a moment in Sombart's life and thought, which are presented more extensively in his memoirs. This moment also exists in a complex relation to the political situation of the post-89 world. Even if it was a turning point, it may not prove to have been in the direction of utopia. It would be premature to prophesy the end of patriarchy and its syndromes based on Sombart – even if he himself prognosticates in that direction. But one may still sympathize with him in seeing this telos as the only remaining viable trajectory of *Geschichtsphilosophie*. Regarding the various ›syndromes‹, one may also feel conflicted: Sombart interprets the theoretical disinterest in gender as a philosophico-historical category as a silencing, repression and an »occultation« (*Okkultierung*, to use his preferred term). But the interest in such »occult« topics may also have its psychological sources and resources. The plausibility of Sombart's origin-stories, therefore, like that of Shakespeare's dramas, draws on specific social-historical and psychological preconditions. In order to find such stories plausible, a spectator of historical dramas must be able to discover himself or herself in the same or similar entanglements as the figures on the stage – and at the same time be motivated by the urge to reflect upon and move beyond such scenarios.

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Grundloser Hass: Formen idiosynkratischer Rede

Jörg Kreienbrock

IDIOSYNKRASIE

Hans Castorps Leben auf dem *Zauberberg* ist von einem unerklärlichen Hass auf das Zuschlagen von Türen gezeichnet: »Eine Tür war zugefallen, [...] und das war ein Geräusch, das Hans Castorp auf den Tod nicht leiden konnte, das er von jeher gehaßt hatte. Vielleicht beruhte dieser Haß auf Erziehung, vielleicht auf angeborener Idiosynkrasie – genug, er verabscheute das Türenwerfen und hätte jeden schlagen können, der es sich vor seinen Ohren zuschulden kommen ließ.«¹ Die Idiosynkrasie, auf welcher Castorps Hass *vielleicht beruht*, und wie sie Silvia Bovenschen in ihrer Studie *Über-Empfindlichkeit. Spielformen der Idiosynkrasie*² beschreibt, verweist auf eine körperliche, rational nicht zu begründende Abneigung, die scheinbar grundlos auftritt. Die Pointe für die Tradition medizinisch-anthropologischer Reflexionen über die Idiosynkrasie von Ptolemaios und Galen bis zu Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Walter Benjamin und Theodor W. Adorno liegt darin, dass der Auslöser der idiosynkratischen Abneigung im Dunkeln bleibt. Die Gründe für Castorps idiosynkratischen Hass bleiben unerklärt. Es kommt »zu unterschiedlichen individuellen Reaktionen auf gleiche Reize«, wie es Werner Stegmaier in seiner Rekon-

¹ Thomas Mann: *Der Zauberberg*. Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Hg. v. Michael Neumann. Bd. 5, 1. Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer 2002, S. 72.

² Silvia Bovenschen: *Über-Empfindlichkeit. Spielformen der Idiosynkrasie*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 2001.