**SOMBART, Werner (January 19, 1863 – May 18 1941)**

Werner Sombart, German economist and sociologist, was born into an upper class family in Ermsleben. After studying economics and law, Sombart received his doctoral degree from the University of Berlin in 1888. In the early years of his career, he was an avowed Marxist and his most influential work *Modern Capitalism*, first published in 1902, defined the development of capitalism in three stages – early, high and late– each governed by a guiding spirit. For Sombart, this spirit, rather than the mode of production, was the most basic layer of social organization. Despite this historicist disagreement with Marx, Sombart’s communist leanings and sympathy for organized labor saw him struggle to find acceptance in the German academic establishment. It was not until 1917 after a nationalistic shift in his writing that Sombart was able to secure a full professorship at the University of Berlin. Sombart’s wartime publications signaled a transition in his thought to a new emphasis on “German socialism,” which would characterize his work during the Weimar Republic. Sombart saw German socialism as the highest form of economic development, which would inevitably replace high capitalism. The relationship of his later thought to organized anti-Semitism and National Socialism remains contentious.

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