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## Revisiting Werner Sombart: Capitalism and Dehumanization Today

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### Abstract

This paper examines the processes of dehumanization in contemporary capitalism through a critical reinterpretation of Werner Sombart's sociological thought. Moving beyond purely economic explanations, Sombart conceptualizes capitalism as a civilizational and anthropological system that reshapes human subjectivity, values, and emotional life. Central to this analysis is the "objectification of the profit impulse," through which economic activity becomes autonomous from individual intentions and increasingly colonizes inner life.

The paper traces the transition from early industrial capitalism to today's digital and platform-based economy, showing how emotional engagement, creativity, authenticity, and passion are systematically mobilized as productive resources. Drawing on contemporary theorists such as Boltanski, Chiapello, Rosa, Han, and Illouz, the paper highlights how modern capitalism no longer relies primarily on external coercion, but on internalized motivation and affective attachment. This results in new forms of self-exploitation, temporal saturation, emotional exhaustion, and performative enthusiasm.

The study argues that Sombart anticipated many features of digital capitalism, including algorithmic governance, emotional commodification, and the construction of a "functional" human type. Finally, it reflects on possible pathways toward re-humanization, emphasizing the need for cultural, social, and institutional strategies that restore non-instrumental forms of subjectivity.

**Keywords:** Dehumanization; Digital Capitalism; Emotional Labor; Subjectivity; Werner Sombart