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On Schumpeter's "The Past and Future of Social Sciences": A Schumpeterian Theory of Scientific Development?

by Stefano Lucarelli[♦] & Hervé Baron[♦]

The present paper, taking the cue from the Italian translation of *Vergangenheit und Zukunft der Sozialwissenschaften* (*The Past and Future of Social Sciences*), a Schumpeter's book which was not always well understood in the literature, tries to pose some questions about Schumpeter's work. Firstly: is it possible, starting from that book, to reconstruct a Schumpeterian theory of scientific development? Subsequently: is *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* only «a brief outline of what first became the *Epochen [der Dogmen- und Methodengeschichte]* and finally the *History of Economic Analysis*», as Elizabeth Boody Schumpeter wrote in the Editor's Introduction (July 1952) to the *History of Economic Analysis* (p. XXXII), or should it be read as a complement of *Epochen* and, possibly, *History*? Lastly: is it correct to say that Schumpeter's work had the ambitious objective of developing a 'comprehensive sociology' as the eminent Japanese scholar Shionoya did?

JEL classification: A12, B25, B31, B41.

Keywords: Schumpeter, social sciences, method, scientific development.

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1. Introduction

The moved obituary that Wassily Leontief dedicated to Joseph Alois Schumpeter begins by quoting a passage from a not well-known Schumpeter's work, which was never published neither in English nor in French. Here, Schumpeter wrote: "Investigators existed in all times who stood on a height from which they were able to survey all the land around them rather than a single valley, who not only superficially and from a purely formal point of view recognized the right to exist of the various schools of thought – that amounts to very little – but who had a real understanding of their ideas and felt emotional affinity toward all of them." (Leontief (1950): 103). Leontief continues as follows: "Schumpeter was one of these exceptional men." (*ibidem*). The work we just mentioned is *Vergangenheit und Zukunft der Sozialwissenschaften* (*The Past and Future of Social Sciences*), eventually published in 1915 although Schumpeter began working on it from 1911. This book is an expansion of his farewell lecture at the University of Czernowitz in November 1911, and is not only remembered as an example of elegant writing¹.

In fact, in the obituary published by the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Haberler (1950) refers to *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* as "a sort of supplement to his *Dogmengeschichte*". The *Dogmengeschichte* is the *Epochen der Dogmen- und Methodengeschichte* (English edition: *Economic Doctrine and Method. An Historical Sketch*; henceforth we are going to refer always to that one), which had been commissioned by Max Weber for *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik* (1914). It is interesting to read both works simultaneously as they appear to complement each other in many important ways. They do not seem to be reducible to one another, despite the opinion of Elisabeth Boody Schumpeter who, in the Editor's Introduction (July 1952) to the *History of Economic Analysis*, refers to *Vergangenheit und Zukunft der Sozialwissenschaften* as «a brief outline of what first became the *Epochen* and finally the *History of Economic Analysis*» (p. XXXII). Machlup (1951: 148) also mentions, in a note, this short text but he uses it to explain Schumpeter's own epistemological position. In *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, Machlup identifies an example of the importance assigned by Schumpeter to the distinction between "basic assumptions" conditioned by facts and "aprioristic, unscientific speculations, little better than scholasti-

¹ It is worth noting that, for a very long time, *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* was available only in German and Japanese. There is now a good Italian edition, curated by Adelino Zanini, enriched by editor's notes, that also includes a brief editor's "Introduction" whose insights are extremely interesting. It should also be mentioned the short "Note to the translation", where Zanini discusses the difficulty potentially encountered by the reader when facing Schumpeter's typically obscure turns of phrase.

cism". Therefore, he suggests to read the 1911 farewell lecture in continuity with the methodological analyses found in Schumpeter's first book, *Das Wesen und der Hauptinhalt der theoretischen Nationalökonomie* (1908). Machlup's and Elisabeth Boody Schumpeter's readings seem to legitimize the idea that Schumpeter's elaboration on social sciences is nothing more than a preamble to his reflection on economic theory.

As a consequence, it might be worth wondering whether Schumpeter's *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* is a preamble that highlights significant differences, both in the method and in the evolution of analytical history, between economic theory and other social sciences. This issue alone, we think, could stimulate the curiosity of the scholar who wishes to understand the exact function, within Schumpeter's work, of his reflections on the past and future of social sciences. Those reflections took place over a period of four years, from 1911 to 1914 – Schumpeter ends his work during Christmas 1914. It was an extremely eventful period both in terms of theoretical developments in Austrian and German Universities, and with regard to Schumpeter's professional and intellectual life.

Indeed, between 1911 and 1914, the echo of the *Methodenstreit* was still reverberating in the debate concerning the value-free social science, which saw Max Weber respectfully but firmly argue with Gustav von Schmoller. That issue was part of the theoretical context within which *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* was produced. So, it is our conviction that this book intersects with this debate as well as with some different Schumpeter's elaborations – which eventually were conveyed on other writings of that period. In fact, between 1911 and 1912 Schumpeter publishes his most important book, *Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung*. The following year he defends the theory of the rate of interest – therein proposed – from severe criticism raised by his mentor, Böhm-Bawerk. Then, in 1914 he publishes the already mentioned *Economic Doctrine and Method. An Historical Sketch*. As for his teaching activity, besides giving lectures on economic theory during the Winter of 1910-1911, he holds a series of conferences on "State and Society", an issue that he will subsequently develop through a theory of social classes. Finally, the period from 1911 to 1914 represents the twilight of the Austro-Hungarian Empire: it thus prepares the end of the world in which Schumpeter shaped his framework.

To summarize: it is true that the 1915 essay is, in many respects, a text suited to the occasion; yet we argue that its importance should not be underestimated for more than one reason.

To properly expose these reasons, the present paper is structured as follows: due to the lack of an English edition, firstly, in § 2, a critical reading of the arguments expressed in *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* will be provided; subsequently, in § 3, the Schumpeterian theory of scientific development therein presented will be reconstructed, trying to demonstrate that *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* cannot be considered merely as a brief introduction of *History of Economic Analysis* but, instead, should be read as a kind of complement of *Economic Doctrine and Method* (and, furthermore, if compared with the *History* it presents important peculiarities); finally, § 4, some misunderstandings that emerged from a not entirely accurate interpretation will be highlighted, and some concluding remarks will be drawn.

2. A reading of *Vergangenheit und Zukunft der Sozialwissenschaften*

Vergangenheit und Zukunft is an organic elaboration, divided into five parts. Our reading is mainly meant to expose Schumpeter's exposition.

The *first part* is the shortest (pp. 3-9). It is a sort of introduction where the Author primarily declares his aim: showing how the functioning of social sciences is connected to their past, and where such working may lead them in the future. Evidently, this is a difficult task, in particular because there is *not only one* social science, but a number of different social sciences, whose boundaries are intertwined in multifarious ways². Schumpeter's argument follows a chronological order (that will be maintained until the third part of the essay). Despite the fact that Homer and Herodotus are mentioned, the reconstruction starts from the Middle Ages, an epoch in which social sciences *do not exist*. As a matter of fact, the knowledge typical of that time – one can think of theology or jurisprudence – did not have *social issues* or *human psyche* as objects of observation. Rather, we find a dogmatic knowledge aimed at confirming a revealed system that was considered as valid, always and forever. Thus, it is immediately clear what cannot be regarded as science, namely *dogmatic knowledge*³.

Schumpeter describes the Renaissance as an era during which scientific thinking managed to emerge even in spite of an ongoing lack of centrality accorded to social issues. As he puts it: "Nobody

² See Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 3-4. From now on, all quotations from *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* are to be intended as translated by us. Although we tried to make the text as accessible as possible to the English reader, we also considered important to maintain a certain syntactical adherence to the original German version.

³ We would like to note that Schumpeter also finds the way to express a brief but interesting opinion on the actual use of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy by medieval theologians and jurists. In his opinion, they simply made a pretentious use of it, whose addition to knowledge amounts to nothing. See footnote in Schumpeter (2014[1915]: 7).

investigated yet under the veil of religious enthusiasm that covered religious wars, nobody saw what was hidden beneath such gigantic social needs”⁴.

The *second part* of the text addresses the emergence of the concept of *social phenomenon* within scientific thinking (pp. 8-59). According to Schumpeter, the origin of social sciences dates back to the 18th century: the end of the wars of religion, as well as the take-off of the industrial Revolution, led to an upheaval affecting the entire political sphere. In this context, the ancient knowledge, that is, theology and jurisprudence, was put into question by the rise of new issues, in turn stemmed from a new type of scholars. Social sciences, however, do not emerge in a linear way, and the rise of several debates do not imply in itself the creation of new knowledge characterized by the modern scientific method. In the slow process leading social sciences to free themselves from medieval knowledge and Renaissance tradition, what strikes Schumpeter’s attention is primarily the role played by the so called *natural theology*. In his own words: “[Many of those new scholars] did not simply split up from theology; rather, they brought part of it along with them. Finally, the separation occurred, but in the first place it took the form of natural theology. [...] It was not a doctrine that dealt with social functions and phenomenal forms of religion [...]; it was rather a close examination of the truth of fundamental faith propositions, and an attempt to logically prove or confute these very same propositions. [...] [S]uch discussions were only meant to be precursors of scientific investigation directed to the psychological and sociological factors of religious life”⁵.

⁴ Our translation of the following passage: “Niemand blickte noch unter den Schleier der religiösen Begeisterung, der die Religionskriege umhüllte, niemand sah, was an gewaltigen sozialen Notwendigkeiten darunter verborgen lag”, in: Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 8-9.

⁵ Our translation of the following passage: “[Viele jener neuen Gelehrten] schieden nicht einfach von der Theologie, sondern zogen ein Stück mit sich fort. Schließlich kam es zum Scheiden, aber vorher noch zur „natürlichen Theologie“. [...] Und sie war nicht [...] keine Lehre von den sozialen Funktionen und Erscheinungsformen der Religion [...] sondern eine Diskussion des Wahrheitsgehaltes des fundamentalen Glaubenssätze, ein Versuch, diese Glaubenssätze logisch zu beweisen oder zu widerlegen. [...] [D]aß solche Diskussionen Vorläufer waren für jene wissenschaftliche Untersuchung der psychologischen und soziologischen Tatsachen des religiösen Lebens”, in: Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 18.

It is also worth underlying that, in an excerpt that is concise but extremely dense, the attention given to theology is by no means marginal. Undoubtedly, in this attitude one could recognize the influence of Weber's famous inquiry into the relationship between religion and society. However, at a closer sight such an influence appears to be absent: in fact, Schumpeter focuses on a typical “concept” of the 18th century theology which is able to provide “congenial ground” for social sciences, namely *deism*. Quite straightforwardly, this reference to the religious dimension does not rely on ethics, nor is useful to identify the spiritual conditions for the rise of the capitalist mode of production. The two approaches do not overlap: these are very significant differences with regard to Max Weber's research. Schumpeter considers deism as an intermediate stage between the belief in revelation of previous generations of researchers and the different types of materialism (Cfr. Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 20) that developed in the 19th century. He is interested, as we are going to clarify later on, in a line of reasoning aimed at highlighting *the evolutionary logic* of social sciences.

In order to clarify the complex relationship between theology and science, it is worth quoting at length also the following passage: “[...] I would say that the acknowledgment or the knowledge of the regularity of all events that gives rise to the entire science could be resolved by referring to the following stages: firstly, it is meant as extramundane effect of the divine will; secondly, as manifestation of something spiritual that is not distinct from the world; thirdly, as expression of some particular natural realities of existing ‘forces’; finally, as experiential relationship between interrelated phenomena. With regard to the contents, scientific knowledge can be the same regardless of the view we rely on. In single offshoot, the 18th century had already accomplished the fourth stage. Basically, it still stems from the first stage. And a great mass of thinkers largely stood between the second and the third stage”⁶. It seems to us that, according to Schumpeter, we need to take into account the influences that dogmatic attitudes cyclically exert over scientists. Indeed, Schumpeter is convinced that dogmatics is first of all a peculiar characteristic of metaphysics, thus – we might add – of a large part of the Western philosophical tradition. In other words, metaphysics is nothing else than one of those annoying guests which accompany the work of social scientists⁷. He would like to get rid of it because, according to an idea that is still widely spread nowadays, metaphysics does damage to the work of scientists who study social reality.

It is also remarkable that Schumpeter does not reduce psychology to hedonistic egotism – as it was the case in Bentham’s utilitarianism. Unmistakably, utilitarianism is described as an extremely reductive way to conceive behavioral motives⁸.

A decisive emphasis on experience is the lowest common denominator of different areas of knowledge emerging in the course of the 18th century. Schumpeter briefly examines these areas: psychology (pp. 26-31), logic (p. 31), aesthetics (pp. 31-32), ethics (pp. 32-37), law (pp. 37-48), political economy (pp. 48-50), and historical investigation (pp. 50-57). For the purposes of our argument, suffice it to account for his considerations concerning law and political economy.

⁶ Our translation of the following passage: “[...] würde ich sagen, daß die Annahme oder Erkenntnis der Gesetzmäßigkeit alles Geschehens, auf der alle Wissenschaft beruht, sich in den folgenden Etappen durchringt: Zuerst wird sie verstanden als Wirkung außerweltlichen Götterwillens, dann als Äußerung eines mit der Welt identischen geistigen Etwas, dann als Ausdruck irgendwelcher natürlicher, aber als besonderer Realitäten existierender „Kräfte“, endlich als erfahrungsgemäß gegebene Beziehung zwischen den sich gegenseitig bedingenden Erscheinungen. Inhaltlich können die Erkenntnisse der Wissenschaft dieselben sein, welcher Anschauung man auch huldigen mag. Das 18. Jahrhundert vollendete in einzelnen Ausläufern schon die vierte Etappe. Ausgegangen ist es im Wesen noch von der ersten. Und die Masse der Denker hält überwiegend zwischen und dritten”, in: Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 23.

⁷ Another one possibly being, within *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, the “political dimension” of theories, as we will show below.

⁸ See Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 29-31.

The pages devoted to law, or, more precisely, to *natural law*, are of great importance: in fact, the history of natural law serves the function of distinguishing between knowledge concerning the nature of legal phenomena and that referring to aspirations for ideal systems. Thus, such distinction allows us to identify the differences between research programs based on *factual reality* on the one hand, and, on the other one, *dogmatic* or *metaphysical* approaches – recalling one more time that Schumpeter assigns to this expression a negative meaning. It is from this divergence that the different social sciences originated. According to Schumpeter’s vivid expression: “What the Nile is to Egypt, natural law was to social sciences’ intellectual life in the 18th century”⁹. It is worth noting that, by using the term natural law, he intends to refer to positive science that is characterized by an inductive method. In turn, such method is grounded on the awareness that law developed on the basis of social needs rather than of abstract speculation. Schumpeter outlines the history of a discipline that evolves with difficulty because it finds it hard to drop the idea that it is possible to identify a moral law which remains valid for all historical epochs and all places. The most important outcome of this difficult process is the sociology of law, which could come into being only after a series of misunderstandings that justified a distorted image of natural law as “a quite trivial and unscientific mixture of Enlightenment biases [and] dull scholastic dogmas”¹⁰.

It is at this stage of reasoning that Schumpeter provides contemporary economists with a thought-provoking opportunity: political economy would have arisen from natural law. As natural law, in fact, also political economy deals with the reality of facts, but it also faces the same risks: it claims to discover laws that are valid in all times and places, that is to say, an economic system which is consistent with human nature¹¹. But Schumpeter points out that historical materials become part of scientific thinking only if: 1) they become a field of application of the outcomes of social sciences, and: 2) they can highlight regularities that lead to formulate the outline of more or less general scientific laws¹².

The *third part* of *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* (pp. 59-81) aims at grasping the disturbing factors that, during the 19th century, have prevented many possible achievements from being obtained. Schumpeter identifies the “spiritual tendency” (*Geistesrichtung*) of the 18th century in the Enlightenment philoso-

⁹ Our translation of the following passage: “Was der Nil für Ägypten ist, das war das Naturrecht im 18. Jahrhundert für das sozialwissenschaftliche Geistesleben”, in: Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 38.

¹⁰ Our translation of the following passage: “ein enges, banales, unwissenschaftliches Gemenge von Aufklärungsvorurteilen, von dünnen, scholastischen Dogmen”, in: Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 41.

¹¹ See Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 50. We would like to highlight that this is a dogma that still seems to characterize economic orthodoxy.

¹² See Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 51-52.

phy and in political liberalism. The identification of this “spiritual tendency” leads Schumpeter to formulate the “diffusion model” of the ideas that are able to bring about a change in social equilibrium. As he writes: “New ideas and tendencies arise first in inner circles. They acquire their own prophets and supporters and, in case they succeed, a big dust cloud will rise over them, and attract the eye of other circles, thus misleading, for a long time, about the number of proselytes that is actually negligible. At first, other circles absorb only the battle cries while they comfortably remain on their own old way. In case it is necessary to go further than that, such battle cries stimulate nerve centers as it were truly a serious matter, but then they show how little of the new ideas has been absorbed, in such a way that a situation similar to an economic crisis takes place”¹³. This dynamics is characterized by further misunderstandings of ideas as they gradually spread, thus resulting in fragile institutional structures that legitimate a counter-revolution.

One kind of counter-revolution characterizing the transition between the 18th and 19th century is proved by Romanticism’s strong opposition to Utilitarianism. Therefore, Schumpeter recalls Carlyle and describes him as a genius who is blind before science. He detects the same blindness in a scientist who has nothing to do with Romanticism, Comte, whom Schumpeter considers victim of the belief that nothing good had been done, in the past, in the field of social sciences. However, these two examples (Carlyle and Comte) do not seem to be the main objects of Schumpeter’s criticism. Rather, he seems to be more interested in criticizing the “dogmas” of the Historical School¹⁴. In these pages, Schumpeter’s anger towards the Historical School is somehow tamed, and his judgments are not as disrespectful as in the pages of *Das Wesen und der Hauptinhalt der theoretischen Nationalökonomie*¹⁵. However, he shows how the critical stance against natural law and economic theory is mainly due to political rea-

¹³ Our translation of the following passage: “Neue Ideen und neue Richtungen entstehen zunächst in engsten Kreisen. Da gewinnen sie ihre Propheten und Kämpfer, und von da aus entsteht im Falle des Erfolgs die große Staubwolke, die den Blick weiterer Kreise anzieht und large darüber täuscht, wie verschwindend, rühren diese Schlagworte an empfindliche Stellen und sieht es so aus, wie wenn sie blutiger Ernst werden sollten, dann zeigt es sich, wie wenig das Neue noch assimiliert ist und es entsteht eine Situation, die völlig analog einer Wirtschaftskrise ist”, in: Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 64. About the translation of “Schlagworte” as “battle cries”, see below note 24.

¹⁴ See Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 75-81.

¹⁵ Even if Schumpeter, at that time, does apply a sort of “Monroe doctrine of economics”, as claimed by Kesting (see Kesting (2006): 390), it does not mean that he considers the Historical School as relevant – from a theoretical point of view. See, for instance, Schumpeter (1908): 125, where we can read what follows: “The Historical School tells us *nothing new*, it reminds that every phenomenon is a result of multifarious influences, of complicated processes” (emphasis added), our translation of the following passage: “Die historische Schule sagt uns nichts Neues, hinweist, daß jede Erscheinung ein Resultat vielgestaltiger Einflüsse, komplizierter Prozesse ist”.

Once in Czernowitz, however, Schumpeter seems far away from the beliefs expressed in his 1908 book, in particular that that economic theory might develop only by removing all connections to the other social sciences, specifically to history (See Swedberg (1991), Chapter 2).

sons. In fact, the legislative reforms inspired by liberal economic policies were contrasted in the name of general principles or generic arguments. Therefore, he points out that this attitude entails a wrong image of the past; further, it disperses important scientific knowledge and eventually wastes precious time.

The *fourth part* of Schumpeter's work (pp. 81-108) is devoted to the present of social sciences. Schumpeter tries to identify the negative effects of dogmas on the work of social scientists in order to formulate a theory of social sciences' development. He points out that all researchers, of "all schools and tendencies of the 19th century, regardless their own will, and without being aware, have carried on the usual paths. In fact the continuity that they intended to break has been actually preserved by strict requirements". Finally and most crucially, Schumpeter underlines "that the entire work of the 19th century has kept following the same direction that previous centuries had"¹⁶. We basically find the same idea expressed by Schumpeter in the *Methodenstreit in Economic Doctrine and Method. An Historical Sketch*: disputes among schools often make little sense and they only result in a waste of time¹⁷.

In the evolution of social sciences, subterranean and forgotten points of view can arise again, but, according to Schumpeter, that does not directly depend on the political dimension, or on power relations among different schools of thought. He goes beyond such an interpretation by claiming that "in general, it might be said that whenever science [...] is associated with a partisan position, either political or philosophical, it is exposed to unscientific attack, and ends up being involved in the same fate as the politics or philosophy in question"¹⁸. Therefore, also the political dimension, as metaphysics, plays a disturbing role that is potentially devastating for any scientific debate.

This said, among the *endogenous* variables influencing scientific evolution, Schumpeter identifies: 1) the shift of moods or opinions of social groups; 2) the diversity of social groups and individuals who are *leaders* from age to age; 3) the narrowness of view of individual researchers; 4) the research

¹⁶ Our translation of the following passages: "alle die Schulen und Richtungen des 19. Jahrhunderts, gegen ihren Willen, ohne ihr Wissen, weitergearbeitet haben in den eingeschlagenen Bahnen, daß die Kontinuität, die sie zerreißen wollten, gewahrt wurde von ehernen Notwendigkeiten", and "daß alle Arbeit des 19. Jahrhunderts in derselben Linie liegt wie die der Jahrhunderte", in: Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 85. We will further articulate this issue later on, by discussing the notion of "logic of thing".

¹⁷ On this point, see Schumpeter (1954[1914]), chapter IV: 167 and subsequent in particular.

¹⁸ Our translation of the following passage: "können wohl allgemein sagen, daß wenn immer Wissenschaft [...] mit politischer oder philosophischer Parteistellung assoziiert wird, sie Angriffen außerwissenschaftlichen Charakters ausgesetzt sein und in das Schicksal der betreffenden Politik oder Philosophie mehr oder weniger hineingezogen werden muß", in: Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 95. The previous passage can help us understanding that Schumpeter's thought on the evolution of the social sciences is characterized by a sort of "impolitical radicalism". On this topic, see Zanini (2005), particularly Chapter 3.

groups' ability to disseminate their work and cooperate, and finally; 5) the vanity and lack of generosity that ensure that the researcher tries to make his view prevail and destroy the other ones¹⁹.

Nevertheless, there is a “logic of things” (*Logik der Dinge*)²⁰ which implies an actual coexistence between factors of discontinuity and factors of continuity. Such a logic produces a line of development which is certainly not straight but, in the end, proves consistent. In general, any tendency to destroy the research carried out by scientists who belong to different schools generates an opposite reaction. It is therefore possible to identify, if not a law, at least a *logic of development* that may seem paradoxical only at first sight. As Schumpeter argues: “the less consistent a unitary program of work constantly appears to be, the more consistent will be the development that depicts the long-term retrospective panorama”²¹.

In the *fifth* and *last part* of this work (pp. 109-136), Schumpeter tries to apply the above expressed “logic of things” to the future of the social sciences. After having highlighted the problems resulting from naive dilettantism, he recalls the debate on the evaluation of the social sciences. He restates the boundaries within which the work of social scientists has to be kept, a work that cannot invade the normative ground of the “ought” [*Sollen*]. Indeed, he warns that: “[P]revailing or exclusive concern about resolving practical issues on the agenda could overwhelm the interest in purely scientific work, and thus jeopardize the progress of science. Practical questions [...] represent for science what the primary search for food represents for production: in both cases one aims directly at the goal without first creating, through a careful preparatory work, the necessary tools. And yet, it is only a long, disinterested analytical work, without any practical implementation, that helps science moving forward”²².

The last pages of *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* stress that each social science – and particularly economics – turns into many schools and theories, but that tools used in every different fields aim to just *one* scientific method that is always the same. Schumpeter seems to be spurred on by great hopes for the culture of his time that, because of his specialization, he considers able to explain many problems.

¹⁹ See Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 94-99.

²⁰ See Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 102.

²¹ Our translation of the following passage: “weniger konsequent jemals ein einheitliches Arbeitsprogramm dauernd festgehalten werden kann, um so konsequenter wird sich die Entwicklung der retrospektiven Übersicht über große Zeiträume darstellen”, in: Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 102.

²² Our translation of the following passage: “[D]ie ausschließliche oder vorwiegende Beschäftigung mit praktischen Tagesfragen droht das Interesse an der Arbeit nach lediglich wissenschaftlichen Gesichtspunkten zu erdrücken und damit den Fortschritt der Wissenschaft zu gefährden. Praktische Fragen [...] sind sie für die Wissenschaft das, was in der Produktion die primitive Nahrungssuche ist : man geht in beiden Fällen direkt auf sein Ziel los, ohne erst in langer Arbeit die Werkzeuge dazu zu schaffen. Und doch ist es allein diese lange, desinteressierte, an keine praktische Anwendung denkende Arbeit, die der Wissenschaft weiterhilft”, in: Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 115-16.

Apart from that, Schumpeter seems to be sure that the development of social sciences will go on and that in the future even some results of his own epoch will be considered wrong. But, in any case, the scholars that are to come will continue the current work²³.

Indeed it is clear that *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* aims to give a theory of scientific development.

3. Situating *Vergangenheit und Zukunft der Sozialwissenschaften* in its suitable place: theories of development, metaphysics, ideology

After having provided the reader a precise idea of the contents of *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, we shall go a step further. In fact, if we observe Schumpeter's theory of social sciences evolution, some parallelisms with his theory of economic development can be clearly appreciated. Firstly, we find a situation which is similar to the circular flow (*Kreislauf*), whose perspective shows the social sciences as resting on a unique spiritual tendency (*Geistesrichtung*). Such was the framework at the end of the 18th century, according to Schumpeter. Moreover, just as the circular flow of the economy is periodically broken by the appearance of the entrepreneur-innovator, so in the scientific field we sometimes participate to a diffused reaction *vis-à-vis* a given spiritual tendency. Since at the very beginning the innovators are few, however, the new tendencies only rise in narrow circles at a first stage. Subsequently, as the innovative entrepreneurs are followed by plenty of imitators, new scientific ideas attract the attention of other circles which eventually accept them. More precisely, Schumpeter argues that these new circles appropriate only the new "battle cries" (*Schlagworte*)²⁴, while effectively maintaining a certain fidelity to the old ways. Finally, just as the arrival of imitators erodes the entrepreneurs' profit and channels the economic system towards a new situation of circular flow through the deflation of the boom, so when the new battle cries reach the nerve centers they show how little of the new things has been assimilated. As Schumpeter says, such a situation is very much similar to an economic crisis²⁵.

²³ Cfr. Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 135-36.

²⁴ Schlagwort is a word composed by Schlag, which means "shock", and Wort, which means "word". Schlagwort is not employed by Schumpeter in the sense of "scientific" or "fundamental keyword". It could be rendered by "slogan", but in this specific context it refers to a collective reaction of full and uncritical agreement with the new ideas. Thus, it can be properly translated by "battle cry".

²⁵ On the analogies between economic and scientific evolution, cfr. Schumpeter (1961 [1926]), in particular chapter 6: 212-255 and Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 64.

Beyond convergences however, also differences should be underlined. Those, in fact, are no less remarkable. Whereas in the economic field the emphasis is on the moment of *discontinuity*, on the breakup of the circular flow²⁶ – that is what really counts – in the methodological field the opposite occurs. Here what gets emphasized is the moment of *continuity*, of what Schumpeter calls “the logic of the things” (*Logik der Dinge*). Thus, it seems to us that a crucial contradiction between continuity and discontinuity can be highlighted in the Schumpeterian reflection about social sciences. On the one hand, he clearly states that the phenomenon of grouping is remarkable, and that schools contrasting each other do exist²⁷. On the other hand, however, he suggests that there is no true difference in principles and methods: what really counts is a proper scientific work separated from metaphysical – and possibly political – biases. In the scientific world the conflicts and the disputes are apparently dominant. Yet he believes that, at a deeper level, it is probable to reach a development of various (social) sciences which is consistent with the objective problems that must be solved. Here Schumpeter’s goal, namely the analytical penetration of the basic elements of the social world, emerges in a very clear way. To further stress this point, we can use the evocative expression proposed by Shionoya, even though we project it on a different argumentative background²⁸: “Although the process of scientific activity is in a tangle like a tropical forest, the history of science can be written as if it was a logically consistent architecture” (Shionoya (2009): 591).

Nonetheless, we may ask the following question: how is it possible to grasp this contradiction between continuity and discontinuity within the framework provided by the young Schumpeter? In order to answer, we need to discuss the concept of science as employed by Schumpeter. As convincingly argued by da Garça Moura (cfr. da Garça Moura (2002 & 2003)), he holds a conception of the *structure of scientific theories* that presupposes the social world as a closed system. Furthermore, da Garça Moura pointed out that a *closed* system is “a system characterized by universal constant conjunctions of events of the form ‘whenever event *x*, then event *y*’” (da Garça Moura (2003): 280). In contrast, *open* systems “are systems in which such conclusions are not typically obtained” (da Garça Moura (2003):

²⁶ See Schumpeter (2011[1911]): 79-154, *i.e.* the English translation of the first edition of *Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung* (II chapter). See also Shionoya (2004): 337, where we can read: “In sharp contrast with economic statics, Schumpeter constructed a dynamics or a theory of economic development [...]. He defined economic development by reference to three elements: its cause (innovation), its carrier (entrepreneurship), and its means (bank credit). Economic development is *the destruction of circular flow* [...].” (Our emphasis)

²⁷ See Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 79-81. Here he gives the example of the historical school of economics.

²⁸ In fact Shionoya is talking about the methodological assumption of Schumpeter’s *universal social science*, a concept we are going to put into question. See § 4 below.

280). Open systems, thus, are such that *radically new* and *unexpected* events are always possible (cfr. also: da Garça Maura (2002): 815). In fact, in the seventh and last chapter of the original edition of “Theory of Economic Development”, omitted in later editions, Schumpeter is particularly clear about the necessity of adopting a closed system framework as the starting point for a scientific investigation of economic development²⁹. As shown, once again, by da Garça Maura (2003: 288-293), Schumpeter’s subsequent methodological stances indicate that this allegiance endured. Nevertheless, Schumpeter conceives of the *social world* as an *open system*. This point is easily proved by recalling the meaning he attributes to the notions of economic development (that is: *introduction of innovations* and *structural changes*) and scientific development (that is: *grouping* and *contrasting schools*). It is also clear that all this is at odds with his methodological agenda. This is what substantiate Schumpeter’s contradictions concerning continuity and discontinuity with regard to the development of social sciences. So, how does Schumpeter deal with such contradictions? He tries to overcome them by linking cyclical development to the fact that one can reject scientific method under pressure of a dogmatic perspective (*i.e.* metaphysic), which in social sciences always tends to come back. In others words, there would be a tension between metaphysics and analytical thinking.

There is more, however. We argue that our perspective can also help to understand Schumpeter’s hostility to metaphysics itself. Furthermore, to properly understand this point it is important to take into account the philosophical streams that characterized the German-speaking world in the early 20th century. Those compose a quite complex *ensemble* which cannot be comprehensively addressed in this paper. However, what we really need here is simply to point out the modality through which Schumpeter refers to Kant in *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*. Interestingly enough, the author of the *Critique of the Pure Reason (Kritik Der Reinen Vernunft)* is quoted nine times in this text. He is presented as the one having the merit of separating science from metaphysics: “Only when it has been acknowledged – as Kant manifestly and permanently did – that everyone can observe the world, even the social world, only from their own subjectivity, and also that all objective needs can be reflected in the psyche, only then, we can say, the social sciences started to rapidly transform”³⁰. Indeed, Schumpeter confines Kant’s critical philosophy to the horizon of a “theory of knowledge” and does not take into account

²⁹ See Schumpeter (2011[1911]): 155-226.

³⁰ Our translation of the following passage: “Erst wenn man erkannt hat – wie definitiv von Kant verkündet wurde –, daß jeder nur von seiner Subjektivität aus in die Welt überhaupt und also auch in die soziale Welt blicken kann, und ferner, daß sich alle eventuellen objektiven Notwendigkeiten nur in der Psyche spiegeln können, kann man sagen, daß die Sozialwissenschaften flott geworden sind”, in: Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 27.

Kant's intention to develop metaphysics as the *science* of Reason's limits³¹. Rather, Schumpeter seems to anticipate the attitude expressed in the *Vienna Circle manifesto* (1929): "The metaphysician and the theologian believe, thereby misunderstanding themselves, that their statements say something, or that they denote a state of affairs. Analysis, however, shows that these statements say nothing but merely express a certain mood and spirit"³². And this is, maybe, the reason why Kant's "Copernican revolution", and in general the philosophical problems (mainly: the attempt to eliminate the contrast between *deductive apriorism* and *experience*) he tried to solve, are of interest to Schumpeter almost exclusively for their effects on the separation between science and metaphysics.

An in-depth reflection on the role of metaphysics in the reflections conducted by Schumpeter in Cernowitz is useful to compare *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, *Economic Doctrine and Method* and, finally, *History of Economic Analysis*. Is *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* only «a brief outline of what first became the *Epochen* [that is: *Economic Doctrine and Method*] and finally the *History of Economic Analysis*», as Elizabeth Boody Schumpeter wrote in the Editor's Introduction (July 1952) to the *History of Economic Analysis* (p. XXXII), or should it be read as a complement of *Economic Doctrine and Method* and, possibly, *History*?

We find that it is possible to detect a certain complementarity between the Czernowitz essay and *Economic Doctrine and Method*. In order to properly understand it, however, it is necessary to immediately add that it is not a complete and perfect one. Such a relationship is analogous to the link between the frame (*Vergangenheit und Zukunft*) and a detail (*Economic Doctrine and Method*) of the painting it contains³³. In fact, while *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* is to be assessed as a reflection on the sociology of science (whose main outcome is an evolutionary theory which is able to contextualize the development of all social sciences), *Economic Doctrine and Method* specifically deals with the evolution of the economic science. In so doing, it attempts, among other things, to meet the needs of the book series in

³¹ Significantly enough, the "popular exposition" of the *Critique of the Pure Reason* is entitled by Kant *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics that Will Be Able to Present Itself as a Science* (*Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können*) – emphasis added in both cases. To our knowledge, the best contribution on this subject is Gagliardi (1998).

³² Quoted from *The scientific conception of the world. The Vienna Circle*, available here: <http://evidencebasedcryonics.org/pdfs/viennacircle.pdf>.

³³ Something similar has been recognized also by Shionoya, even though from a different argumentative standpoint. Cfr. Shionoya (2005), chapter 9: 177 n, where we read: "[*Vergangenheit und Zukunft der Sozialwissenschaften*] is an expansion of his farewell lecture at the University of Czernowitz in 1911. It can be argued that Schumpeter's early studies on economic thought consisted of *Epochen der Dogmen- und Methodengeschichte* [...] and the 1915 book; the former deals with economic theory and the latter with the social sciences, including sociology".

the context of which it was published³⁴. A real consonance between the two writings can be found only at the end of *Economic Doctrine and Method*, where Schumpeter writes:

The vehemence of the controversies about methods and doctrines in our discipline often seems to interrupt the continuity of development. This vehemence can be explained partly by the inherent character of economics and the political interest which people take in economic theses that are either really or allegedly economic; partly it results from the fact that determined scientific work in this field is of comparatively recent date. Nevertheless it is surprising how comparatively little the controversy of the day influenced the course of quiet studies at the time.

If we look through the veil of the arguments employed in the struggle we see much less of the contrasts which are usually formulated on principle with such acerbity. We see that these contrasts are not always irreconcilable materially and that the different schools do not easily overcome each other to the point of annihilation. (Schumpeter (1954[1914]): 200-201)

This is, quite clearly, akin to what we can observe in *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, in which Schumpeter speaks about the “logic of things” (*Logik der Dinge*).

Just as discontinuity, also continuity will constantly exert its role. Nevertheless, the very factors that justify the hypothesis according to which discontinuity would become weaker, will also promote the “logic of things”. [...] The less violent will be advances and repercussions, the larger will be the space in which an impartial methodological *communis opinio* exerts its validity. Furthermore the thick clouds of dust will be less present and the battle cries will be less loud [...] (Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 107; 108)³⁵

The same line of reasoning is even more direct in the work solely related to the economic science:

[...] Phases of development cannot be passed over in the case of an organic body any more than in the case of political, social or scientific bodies. Nevertheless the misdirection of energy will abate as time goes on and then it will be

³⁴ Something similar has been recognized also by Kesting. See Kesting (2006): 407 n, where we read: “*Epochen der Dogmen- und Methodengeschichte* is part of the monumental *Grundriß der Sozialökonomik*, a handbook, the publication of which was dominated by members of the Historical School. The fact that Schumpeter was entrusted by Max Weber to write the chapter on the history of economics [...] demonstrates the high reputation Schumpeter already enjoyed amongst the members of the Historical School [...]. However, the initiative for such an inquiry did not come from Schumpeter himself [...]”

³⁵ Our translation of the following passage: “Wie die Gründe der Diskontinuität, so werden auch die der Kontinuität fortwirken. Aber eben die Momente, die die Prognose rechtfertigen, daß die Gründe der Diskontinuität immer schwächer wirken werden, werden die Macht der „Logik der Dinge“ fördern. [...] Immer weniger heftig werden Vorwärtsbewegungen und Rückschläge werden, immer größer das Gebiet methodologischer und sachlicher *Communis opinio*, immer weniger dicht die Staubwolken, weniger laut die Schlagworte [...]”

easier to survey the basic outlines of the work done in the field of social science during the last 150 years and to discover its underlying unity. (Schumpeter (1954[1914]): 201)

Let us now consider the *History*. As a first remark, we can note that we are dealing with a different approach: otherwise put, the frame is different. Actually, even if Schumpeter continues to show a strong aversion against metaphysics, the *History* cornerstone is, from a methodological point of view, the concept of “vision”. Accordingly, the major problem it deals with is ideology.

The argument we put forward at this regard is that the references to metaphysics which we find in the 1915 text *do not* have the same function as those to ideology in the *History*. In *Vergangenheit und Zukunft's* metaphysics possesses three characteristics: 1) it brakes the scientific work; 2) it is completely useless; 3) its effects decrease in the course of (and because of) scientific development. Although also ideology, about which Schumpeter reasons in his “historical methodological phase”³⁶, brakes scientific progress, the scientist cannot properly work without it. Indeed, ideology is contained within the vision, without which, for the last Schumpeter, there cannot be science.

This point can be shown by means of the following philologically questionable but logically legitimate operation. In fact, the clearest definition of ideology found in Schumpeter’s writings is the one contained in his 1949 article *Science and Ideology*. Here, ideologies are «truthful statements about what a man thinks he sees», namely «superstructures» erected on reality. Such superstructures constitutively depend on the underlying objective social structure, yet they tend to reflected it in a distorted way (Schumpeter (1949): 349). However, Schumpeter sees the ideological bias as a danger for economic science. It is not, to be sure, the only peril: in fact, it is also necessary to take into account the possible distortion of facts or procedural rules on the part of advocates, as well as value judgments, which often reveal the ideology but do not coincide with it³⁷.

The pursuit throughout the *History* of an evolutionary reading of economics – which is almost reduced to a toolbox – by means of its purification from ideology, finds its precise confirmation in the above-mentioned *Science and Ideology*. Let us consider, for instance, the unfinished first chapter of the *History*:

³⁶ According to Kesting’s classification. Cfr. Kesting (2006): 388; 401-404.

³⁷ On this point, see Schumpeter (2006 [1954]): 35.

It is true that in economics, and still more in other social sciences, this sphere of the strictly provable is limited in that there are always fringe ends of things that are matters of personal experience and impression from which it is practically impossible to drive ideology, or for that matter conscious dishonesty, completely. The comfort we may take from our argument is therefore never complete. But it does cover most of the ground in the sense of narrowing the sphere of ideologically vitiated propositions considerably, that is, of narrowing it down and of making it always possible to locate the spots in which it may be active. (Schumpeter (2006[1954]): 40)

If we now complete it with the closing lines of the 1949 article, the issue of ideology as unavoidable element is adequately clarified:

That prescientific cognitive act which is the source of our ideologies is also the prerequisite of our scientific work. No new departure in any science is possible without it. Through it we acquire new material for our scientific endeavors and something to formulate, to defend, to attack. Our stock of facts and tools grows and rejuvenates itself in the process. And so, though we proceed slowly because of our ideologies, we might not proceed at all without them. (Schumpeter (1949): 359)

To summarize: the above mentioned passage by Elisabeth Boody Schumpeter legitimated the idea that, in Schumpeter, an investigation of the social sciences is nothing but a preamble to a reflection on the economic theory. Our argument, as deployed in this section, suggests instead that things are much more complex than that.

4. A *unicum* within Schumpeter's writings?

In order to reconnect the different lines of our reasoning it seems us useful to recall that the most recent works released by historians of economic thought assign an important role to *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* in their interpretations of Schumpeter's methodology. In particular, we are referring to Kesting's and Shionoya's works. Against the background of the reading of *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* that we have provided so far, the way those scholars interpret the 1915 essay seems to be improper.

Kesting (2006) tries to articulate a periodization of Schumpeter's thought based on research topics and methodological approaches. Mainly, what is shown is that they change within his work. Even if we are sympathetic to his vision, which emphasize discontinuity rather than continuity in Schumpeter's trajectory, we cannot but note that *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* does not fit very well within his periodi-

zation – as Kesting himself admits³⁸. Maybe *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* should be considered as a kind of *unicum* within Schumpeter’s writing³⁹.

Kesting (2005) tends to read *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* in continuity with *Das Wesen und der Hauptinhalt der theoretischen Nationalökonomie* (1908). According to Kesting, both these works provide evidence of a research interest that can be found in all Schumpeter’s work, although he never managed to express it completely. Such research interest is a theory which aims at understanding of the *process of science development*. As we have already pointed out, in the Czernowitz essay there certainly is an attempt to define a logic of scientific development. Nevertheless, the differences between *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* and the 1908 book are extremely significant. In *Das Wesen*, Schumpeter not only focuses exclusively on economic theory (as he will do in *Economic Doctrine and Method*), but he also strongly stresses its independence from other disciplines. He even argues that “relations between pure economics and other disciplines, which occupy too much space in premises and conditional statements, tell us very little – if anything. In the interest of clarity, it is necessary to highlight their pointlessness, and throw off this dead weight”⁴⁰ (Schumpeter (1908): 553). Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that, already in 1908, Schumpeter seems to be aware that some phenomena affecting economic reality cannot be analyzed in the static context provided in *Das Wesen*. It is Schumpeter’s interest in dynamics that will drive him to write, in 1911, his most innovative work, *Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung*. This research path will also lead him to drastically reconsider the relationships between economic theory and other social sciences. It seems to us to have shown that *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* represents an important proof of this change of perspective⁴¹. This could be seen as a second evidence of the fact that *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* might be considered a kind of *unicum* within Schumpeter works. Indeed, it is the *first* and *only* time he uses a framework – which is similar to the one de-

³⁸ See Kesting (2006): 407 n, where he admits that, with respect to the “theoretical methodological phase” of his classification of Schumpeter’s evolution, “the publication of *Vergangenheit und Zukunft der Sozialwissenschaften*, which can be characterized as a programmatic work, was not initiated [unlike *Economic Doctrine and Method*, ndr] by another person and is therefore a little out of place”

³⁹ The point is very complex and, here, it can only be enunciated. The 1915 essay, in fact, can be considered one of the most mature achievements of a “spiritual tendency” (*Geistesrichtung*) which concerns the vision of social sciences within the Mittel-European world of the *belle époque* (whose violent end will be dramatically brought about by WWI). As argued by De Vecchi (cfr. De Vecchi (1995): xiii): “Schumpeter’s Austrian period began and ended the creative part of his life. Later on he will revise his ideas in the light of other historical experiences, in other settings, in connection with other scholars and using other methods of analysis”.

⁴⁰ Our translation of the following passage: “Beziehungen der reinen Ökonomie zu anderen Disziplinen, die sich in Vorworten und gelegentlichen Äußerungen so breit machen, haben uns nur wenig zu geben – oder nichts. Im Interesse der Klarheit ist es geboten, ihre Nichtigkeit zu betonen und diesen Ballast über Bord zu werfen”.

⁴¹ On this issue, see note 15: it shows Schumpeter’s change of opinion about, for instance, the Historical School.

veloped in *Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung* – to examine the *evolution* of both economic theory and, more generally, social sciences⁴².

Shionoya, in several works (1997; 2004; 2009), stresses that Schumpeter's work has the ambitious objective to develop a "comprehensive sociology". To the contrary, from a closer reading of *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, it seems to us that it is possible to argue that Schumpeter is *not* interested in developing a universal social science aimed at unifying the different fields of knowledge that he examines. Instead, he assumes the inescapable fact that social science(s) cannot but be a plurality:

If social science were as an organic whole, whose parts interact in a single plan, then, our assignment would be easier than it is [...]. But social science is so little an "architecture" of the whole, as it is the science in its totality. It is rather a conglomerate of single elements, that often adapt slightly to each other [...]. And therefore, in principle, there is not a social science, but only social sciences, whose boundaries are intertwined in a manifold way. (Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 3-4)⁴³

Moreover, Schumpeter's view of "sociologizing" (*Soziologisierung*) social sciences, expressed in the last part of the Czernowitz essay, does not mean that he strives for a "comprehensive sociology" in Shionoya's terms (that is to say, as "an approach to social phenomena as a whole which is supposed to be a synthesis of interaction between every single area and all others in a society" [Shionoya 2004: 5]). It is our conviction that Shionoya misinterprets the meaning of *Soziologisierung*, because the word does not imply a process of convergence of different disciplines, or a sort of supremacy of sociology over other sciences. About law, for instance, Schumpeter himself writes:

On one hand, we mean to reach knowledge of juridical phenomena starting from the understanding of the society's nature and, on the other hand, we mean to understand the way our thinking and feeling operate. Therefore we intend – if I can express myself that way – sociologizing and psychologizing legal science; understanding theoretic-

⁴² The framework used in the *History* is, as we have seen, different.

⁴³ Our translation of the following passage: "Wäre die Sozialwissenschaft ein organisches Ganzes, dessen einzelne Teile sich einem einheitlichen Plan einfügen würden, so wäre unsere Aufgabe leichter als sie ist [...]. Aber die Sozialwissenschaft ist so wenig ein „architektonisches“ Ganzes, wie die Wissenschaft überhaupt. Sie ist vielmehr ein Konglomerat von einzelnen Bausteinen, die oft herzlich wenig aneinanderpassen wollen [...]. Und deshalb gibt es im Grunde keine Sozialwissenschaft, sondern nur Sozialwissenschaften, deren Kreise sich vielfach schneiden."

cally, scientifically and analytically, the juridical proposition, the juridical condition, the application of law as social phenomena. (Schumpeter (2014[1915]): 82-83)⁴⁴

So, we suggest that “sociologizing” (*Soziologisierung*) indicates the scientific method which marks those disciplines whose objects of analysis are social phenomena. Even if the scientific method is always the same, several research programs are, in sociological terms, pertinent to different disciplines.

To conclude, our effort in this article was to shed new light on one moment of Schumpeter’s production, namely an essay which emerged in a profoundly significant conjuncture of his intellectual trajectory, and to which he dedicated a long time. It is important to newly stress that such a text does not intend to establish a “comprehensive sociology”; rather, it advances a historically determinate interpretative scheme of the evolution of social sciences. Against the background of this scheme, Schumpeter re-articulates some crucial moments of the history of social sciences in Europe. He does so in a particular time and in a specific place: his perspective is that of a social science scholar whose education is rooted in the apex of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The period in which *Vergangenheit und Zukunft der Sozialwissenschaften* is elaborated and written coincides with the years immediately preceding WWI. As it is well-known, such a tragic event brought about relevant changes in the global role of social sciences, as well as a downsizing of the political and cultural centrality of the *Mittel Europa* in which Schumpeter grew up. Moreover, the Great War produces a fundamental shift in his own research path. Thus, we argued that this text cannot be regarded as a mere anticipation of the *History*. That said, however, it cannot be considered as perfectly congruent with *Economic Doctrine and Method*. Quite to the contrary, we are convinced that *Vergangenheit und Zukunft der Sozialwissenschaften* is, in a certain sense, a *unicum* in the context of the Schumpeterian *oeuvre*.

In order to give consistency to this argument, we compared it to a relevant section of the most recent literature. We took into careful account those scholars (Kestin and Shionoya) who have influenced the international debate by properly stressing the importance, for Schumpeter, not only of economics but also of other social sciences. What we found is that such interpreters have partially overlooked some fundamental elements which can be brought to full light by reflecting on *Vergangenheit und Zukunft* a little more profoundly.

⁴⁴ Our translation of the following passage: “Man will vordringen zum Verständnis des Rechtsphänomens aus dem Wesen der Gesellschaft heraus einerseits und aus der Art und Weise wie unser Denken und Fühlen arbeitet andererseits: Man wie Rechtswissenschaft, wenn ich so sagen darf, soziologisieren und psychologisieren; man will den Rechtssatz, den Rechtszustand, die Rechtsanwendung als soziale Phänomene wissenschaftlich – analytisch – theoretisch verstehen.”

Actually, the absence of an English translation of the original German version, as well as the necessity to assess the specific meaning assumed within Schumpeter's reflection by some German expressions, may explain why some notable misunderstandings arose. We do believe that, through the interpretative effort proposed in this article, it is possible to clarify both the role played by metaphysics in the framework employed by Schumpeter in *Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, and the contextualized meaning to be attributed to the notion of *Soziologisierung*.

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