Vilfredo Pareto: Sociologist and Philosopher

Life, Work and Impact of the 'Karl Marx of Fascism'

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Few nations have made more impressive contributions to political and social thought than Italy — one need only mention names such as Dante, Machiavelli, and Vico. In the twentieth century as well, the contributions of Italians have been of the highest significance. Among these are Gaetano Mosca's theory of oligarchical rule, Roberto Michels' masterful study of political parties, Corrado Gini's intriguing sociobiological theories, and Scipio Sighele's investigations of the criminal mind and of crowd psychology.1 One of the most widely respected Italian political theorists and sociologists in this century is Vilfredo Pareto. Indeed, so influential are his writings that "it is not possible to write the history of sociology without referring to Pareto."2 Throughout all of the vicissitudes and convulsions of twentieth-century political life, Pareto remains "a scholar of universal reputation."3

Pareto is additionally important for us today because he is a towering figure in one of Europe's most distinguished, and yet widely suppressed, intellectual currents. This broad school of thought, which includes such diverse figures as Taine, Burckhardt, Donoso Cortés, Nietzsche, and Spengler, stands in staunch opposition to rationalism, liberalism, egalitarianism, Marxism, and all of the other familiar offspring of Enlightenment doctrinaires.

Life and Personality

Vilfredo Federico Damaso Pareto was born in Paris in 1848.4 Of mixed Italian-French ancestry, he was the only son of the Marquis Raffaele Pareto, an Italian exiled from his native Genoa because of his political views, and Marie Mattenier. Because his father earned a reasonably comfortable living as a hydrological engineer, Pareto was reared in a middle-class environment, enjoying the many advantages that accrued to people of his class in that age. He received a quality education in both France and Italy, ultimately completing a degree in engineering at the Istituto Politecnico of Turin where he graduated at the top of his class. Thereafter he worked as a civil engineer, first for the state-owned Italian railway company and later in private industry.

In 1889 Pareto married Dina Bakunin, a Russian who preferred a very active social life. This clashed with Pareto's own love of privacy and solitude, and after twelve years of marriage Dina abandoned her husband. His second wife, Jane Régis, joined him shortly after the collapse of his marriage, and the two remained deeply devoted to one another throughout the remainder of Pareto's life.

During these years Pareto acquired a deep interest in the political life of his country, and expressed his views on a variety of topics in lectures, in articles for various journals, and in direct political activity. Steadfast in his support of free enterprise economics and free trade, he never ceased arguing that these concepts were vital necessities for the development of Italy. Vociferous and polemical in his advocacy of these ideas, and sharp in his denunciation of his opponents (who happened to be in power in Italy at that time), his public lectures were sufficiently controversial that they were sometimes raided and closed down by the police and occasionally brought threats of violence from hired thugs. Making little headway with his economic concepts at the time, Pareto retired from active political life. In 1893 he was appointed Professor of Political Economy at the University of Lausanne (Switzerland), where he established his reputation as an economist and sociologist. So substantial did this reputation eventually become that he became known, by both adversaries and admirers, as “the Karl Marx of the Bourgeoisie” or “the Karl Marx of Fascism."5 In economic theory, his Manual of Political Economy6 and his penetrating critique of Marxian socialism, Les Systèmes socialistes,7 remain among his most important works.

Pareto turned to sociology somewhat late in life, but he is nonetheless widely acclaimed in this field. His monumental Treatise on General Sociology, and two smaller volumes, The Rise and Fall of the Elites and The Transformation of Democracy, are his sociological masterworks.8

The title of Marquis had been bestowed on Pareto’s great-great-great-grandfather in 1729 and, after his father’s death in 1882, that dignity passed to Pareto himself. He never used the title, however, insisting that because it was not earned, it held little meaning for him. Conversely, after his appointment to the University of Lausanne, he did use the honorific “Professor,” because that was a title he felt he merited due to his lifetime of study.

Pareto’s great intelligence caused him difficulties in working under any kind of supervision. All of his life he moved, step by step, toward personal independence. Because he was thoroughly conscious of his own brilliance, his confidence in his abilities and in his intellectual superiority often irritated and offended people around him. Pareto, in discussing almost any question about which he felt certain, could be stubborn in his views and disdainful of those with divergent opinions. Furthermore, he could be harsh and sarcastic in his remarks. As a result, some people came to see him as disputatious, caustic, and careless of people’s feelings.

At the same time, though, Pareto could be generous to those he perceived as “underdogs.” He was always ready to take up his pen in defense of the poor or to denounce corruption in government and the exploitation of those unable to defend themselves. As sociologist Charles Powers has written:9

> For many years Pareto offered money, shelter, and counsel to political exiles (especially in 1898 following the tumultuous events of that year in Italy). Like his father, Pareto was conservative in his personal tastes and inclinations, but he was also capable of sympathizing with others and appreciating protests for equality of opportunity and freedom of expression.10 Pareto was a free thinker. In some respects, he is reminiscent of an early libertarian. He was possessed of that duality of mood we continue to find among people who are extremely conservative and yet ardent in their belief in personal liberty.

Because he was an expert in the use of the sword, as well as a crack shot, he was disinclined to give way before any threats to his person, a mode of behavior he considered cowardly and contrary to his personal sense of honor. More than once he sent bullies and thugs running in terror.11

During his final years, Pareto suffered from heart disease, and struggled in considerable ill health. He died in Switzerland on August 19, 1923.

Liberalism

A lifelong opponent of Marxism and liberal egalitarianism, Pareto in 1902 issued Les Systèmes socialistes, perhaps his most withering broadside against the Marxist-liberal worldview. Considering the almost universal acceptance today of the most salient features of the Marxist-liberal outlook, it is regrettable that this work has not been translated into English in its entirety. Only excerpts have appeared in print. In an often quoted passage that might be taken as a prophetic warning for our own age, Pareto wrote:12

> A sign which almost invariably presages the decadence of an aristocracy is the intrusion of humanitarian feelings and of affected sentimentalizing which render the aristocracy incapable of defending its position. Violence, we should note, is not to be confused with force. Often enough one observes cases in which individuals and classes which have lost the force to maintain themselves in power make themselves more and more hated because of their outbursts of random violence. The strong man strikes only when it is absolutely necessary, and then nothing stops him. Trajan was strong, not violent: Caligula was violent, not strong.
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> When a living creature loses the sentiments which, in given circumstances are necessary to it in order to maintain the struggle for life, this is a certain sign of degeneration, for the absence of these sentiments will, sooner or later, entail the extinction of the species. The living creature which shrinks from giving blow for blow and from shedding its adversary's blood thereby puts itself at the mercy of this adversary. The sheep has always found a wolf to devour it; if it now escapes this peril, it is only because man reserves it for his own prey. Any people which has horror of blood to the point of not knowing how to defend itself will sooner or later become the prey of some bellicose people or other. There is not perhaps on this globe a single foot of ground which has not been conquered by the sword at some time or other, and where the people occupying it have not maintained themselves on it by force. If the Negroes were stronger than the Europeans, Europe would be partitioned by the Negroes and not Africa by the Europeans. The "right" claimed by people who bestow on themselves the title of "civilized" to conquer other peoples, whom it pleases them to call "uncivilized," is altogether ridiculous, or rather, this right is nothing other than force.

In another portion of this same work that calls to mind the words of German philosopher Oswald Spengler, Pareto similarly warns against what he regarded as the suicidal danger of "humanitarianism":13

> Any elite which is not prepared to join in battle to defend its position is in full decadence, and all that is left to it is to give way to another elite having the virile qualities it lacks. It is pure day-dreaming to imagine that the humanitarian principles it may have proclaimed will be applied to it: its vanquishers will stun it with the implacable cry, "Vae Victis." ["Woe to the vanquished."] The knife of the guillotine was being sharpened in the shadows when, at the end of the eighteenth century, the ruling classes in France were engrossed in developing their "sensibility." This idle and frivolous society, living like a parasite off the country, discoursed at its elegant supper parties of delivering the world from superstition and of crushing "l'Infâme," all unsuspecting that it was itself going to be crushed.

Marxism

A substantial portion of Les Systèmes socialistes is devoted to a scathing assessment of the basic premises of Marxism. According to historian H. Stuart Hughes, this work caused Lenin “many a sleepless night."14

In Pareto’s view, the Marxist emphasis on the historical struggle between the unpropertied working class — the proletariat — and the property-owning capitalist class is skewed and terribly misleading. History is indeed full of conflict, but the proletariat-capitalist struggle is merely one of many, and by no means the most historically important. As Pareto explained:15

> The class struggle, to which Marx has specially drawn attention, is a real factor, the tokens of which are to be found on every page of history. But the struggle is not confined only to two classes: the proletariat and the capitalist; it occurs between an infinite number of groups with different interests, and above all between the elites contending for power. The existence of these groups may vary in duration, they may be based on permanent or more or less temporary characteristics. In the most savage peoples, and perhaps in all, sex determines two of these groups. The oppression of which the proletariat complains, or had cause to complain of, is as nothing in comparison with that which the women of the Australian aborigines suffer. Characteristics to a greater or lesser degree real — nationality, religion, race, language, etc. — may give rise to these groups. In our own day [1902] the struggle of the Czechs and the Germans in Bohemia is more intense than that of the proletariat and the capitalists in England.

The political movement known as Marxism, Pareto believed, represented merely an attempt to supplant one ruling elite with another. However misguided, Marxists struggled for their utopian goal with the passion and tenacity of millennial visionaries. Wrote Pareto:16

> The socialists of our own day have clearly perceived that the revolution at the end of the eighteenth century led merely to the bourgeoisie’s taking the place of the old elite. They exaggerate a good deal the burden of oppression imposed by the new masters, but they do sincerely believe that a new elite of politicians will stand by their promises better than those which have come and gone up to the present day. All revolutionaries proclaim, in turn, that previous revolutions have ultimately ended up by deceiving the people; it is their revolution alone which is the true revolution. “All previous historical movements” declared the Communist Manifesto of 1848, “were movements of minorities or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority.” Unfortunately this true revolution, which is to bring men an unmixed happiness, is only a deceptive mirage that never becomes a reality. It is akin to the golden age of the millenarians: for ever waited, it is for ever lost in the mists of the future, for ever eluding its devotees just when they think they have it.

Dynamic Sentiment

One of Pareto's most noteworthy and controversial theories is that human beings are not, for the most part, motivated by logic and reason but rather by sentiment. This idea appears repeatedly in Les Systèmes socialistes, and in its most fully developed form in Pareto's vast Treatise on General Sociology. In his Treatise, Pareto examined the multitudes of human actions that constitute the outward manifestations of these sentiments, classifying them into six major groups or "residues." All of these are common to the whole of mankind, Pareto comments, but certain "residues" stand out more markedly in certain individuals. Additionally, they are unalterable; man's political nature is not perfectible but remains a constant throughout history.

Class I is the "instinct for combinations." This is the manifestation of sentiments in individuals and in society that tends towards progressiveness, inventiveness and the desire for adventure. Class II residues have to do with what Pareto calls the "preservation of aggregates," and encompass the more conservative side of human nature, including loyalty to society's enduring institutions such as family, church, community and nation, and the desire for permanency and security. Following this comes the need for expressing sentiments through external action, Pareto's Class III residues. Religious and patriotic ceremonies and pageantry stand out as examples of these residues, and are manifest in such things as saluting the flag, participating in a Christian communion service, marching in a military parade, and so on. In other words, human beings tend to express their feelings in symbols. Next comes the social instinct, Class IV, embracing manifestations of sentiments in support of the individual and societal discipline that is indispensable for maintaining the social structure. This includes phenomena such as self-sacrifice for the sake of family and community, and concepts such as the hierarchical arrangement of societies. Class V is the quality in a society that stresses individual integrity and the integrity of the individual's possessions and appurtenances. These residues contribute to social stability, systems of criminal and civil law being the most obvious examples. Finally, Class VI is the sexual instinct, or the tendency to see social events in sexual terms.

Foxes and Lions

Throughout his Treatise, Pareto places particular emphasis on the first two of these six residue classes, and to the struggle within individual men as well as in society between innovation and consolidation. The late James Burnham, writer, philosopher, and one of the foremost American disciples of Pareto, states that Pareto's Class I and II residues are an extension and amplification of certain aspects of political theorizing set down in the fifteenth century by Niccolò Machiavelli.17 Machiavelli divided humans into two classes, foxes and lions. The qualities he ascribes to these two classes of men resemble quite closely the qualities typical of Pareto's Class I and Class II residue types. Men with strong Class I residues are the "foxes," tending to be manipulative, innovative, calculating, and imaginative. Entrepreneurs prone to taking risks, inventors, scientists, authors of fiction, politicians, and creators of complex philosophies fall into this category. Class II men are

“lions” and place much more value on traits such as good character and devotion to duty, than on sheer wits. They are the defenders of tradition, the guardians of religious dogma, and the protectors of national honor.

For society to function properly there must be a balance between these two types of individuals; the functional relationship between the two is complementary. To illustrate this point, Pareto offers the example of Kaiser Wilhelm I and his chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. Wilhelm had an abundance of Class II residues, while Bismarck exemplified Class I. Separately, perhaps, neither would have accomplished much, but together they loomed gigantic in nineteenth-century European history, each supplying what the other lacked.18

On the other hand, seen from Pareto’s standpoint, the regime of French emperor Napoleon III was a lopsided affair, obsessed with material prosperity and dominated for almost 20 years by such “foxes” as stock-market speculators and contractors who, it is said, divided the national budget among themselves. “In Prussia,” Pareto observes, “one finds a hereditary monarchy supported by a loyal nobility: Class II residues predominate; in France one finds a crowned adventurer supported by a band of speculators and spenders: Class I residues predominate."19 Even more to the point, whereas in Prussia at that time the requirements of the army dictated financial policy, in France the financiers dictated military policy. Accordingly, when the “moment of truth” came in the summer of 1870, the vaunted Second French Empire fell to pieces and was overrun in a matter of weeks.20

Justifying 'Derivations'

To rationalize their essentially non-logical, sentiment-driven actions, Pareto observed, people often employ ostensibly logical justifications (or what he called “derivations"). Pareto named four principle classes of derivations: 1) derivations of assertion; 2) derivations of authority; 3) derivations that are in agreement with common sentiments and principles; and, 4) derivations of verbal proof. The first of these include statements of a dogmatic or aphoristic nature, for example the saying, “honesty is the best policy.” The second, authority, is an appeal to people or concepts held in high esteem by tradition. To cite the opinion of one of the American Founding Fathers on some topic of current interest is to draw from Class II derivations. The third deals with appeals to “universal judgment,” the “will of the people,” the “best interests of the majority,” or similar sentiments. And, finally, the fourth relies on various verbal gymnastics, metaphors, allegories, and so forth.

An understanding of Pareto’s outlook provides fresh insights into the paradox of human behavior. His theories of “residues” and “derivations” are a direct challenge to rationalism and liberal ideals in that they illuminate the primitive motivations behind the sentimental slogans and catchwords of political life. Pareto devotes the vast majority of his Treatise to setting forth in great detail these observations about human nature, and

to demonstrating the validity of his observations by citing examples from history. His legendary erudition in fields such as Greco-Roman history is reflected throughout this massive tome.

Natural Equilibrium

“Residues” and “derivations,” Pareto argued, are mechanisms by which society maintains its equilibrium. He viewed society as a system, “a whole consisting of interdependent parts. The 'material points or molecules' of the system … are individuals who are affected by social forces which are marked by constant or common properties."21 When imbalances arise, a reaction sets in whereby equilibrium is again achieved. Pareto believed that Italy and France, the two modern societies with which he was most familiar, were grossly out of balance, and that “foxes” were largely in control. Lengthy are his laments in the Treatise about the effete ruling classes in those two countries. In both instances, he held, revolutions were overdue.

As we have already noted, when a ruling class is dominated by men possessing strong Class I residues, intelligence is generally valued over all other qualities. The use of force in dealing with internal and external dangers to the state and nation is shunned, and in its place attempts are made to resolve problems or mitigate threats through negotiation or social tinkering. Rulers in such societies routinely seek to justify their timidity with false humanitarianism.

Misguided Charity

In the domestic sphere, the greatest danger to a society is an excess of criminal activity, with which Class I types attempt to cope by resorting to various supposedly charitable gestures, such as efforts to “rehabilitate” criminals. The inevitable result, as we know only too well, is a country awash in crime. With characteristic sarcasm Pareto comments on this phenomenon:22

> Modern theorists are in the habit of bitterly reproving ancient “prejudices” whereby the sins of the father were visited upon the son. They fail to notice that there is a similar thing in our own society, in the sense that the sins of the father benefit the son and acquit him of guilt. For the modern criminal it is a great good fortune to be able to count somewhere among his ancestry or other relations a criminal, a lunatic, or just a mere drunkard, for in a court of law that will win him a lighter penalty or, not seldom, an acquittal. Things have come to such a pass that there is hardly a criminal case nowadays where that sort of defense is not put forward. The old metaphysical proof that was used to show that a son should be punished because of his father’s wrongdoing was neither more nor less valid than the proof used nowadays to show that the punishment which otherwise he deserves should for the same reasons be either mitigated or remitted. When, then, the effort to find an excuse for the criminal in the sins of his ancestors proves unavailing, there is still recourse to finding one in the crimes of “society,” which, having failed to provide for the criminal’s happiness, is “guilty” of his crime. And the punishment proceeds to fall not upon “society,” but upon one of its members, who is chosen at random and has nothing whatever to do with the presumed guilt.

Pareto elucidates in a footnote:23

> The classical case is that of the starving man who steals a loaf of bread. That he should be allowed to go free is understandable enough; but it is less understandable that “society's” obligation not to let him starve should devolve upon one baker chosen at random and not on society as a whole.

Pareto gives another example, about a woman who tries to shoot her seducer, hits a third party who has nothing to do with her grievance, and is ultimately acquitted by the courts. Finally, he concludes his note with these remarks:24

> To satisfy sentiments of languorous pity, humanitarian legislators approve “probation” and “suspended sentence” laws, thanks to which a person who has committed a first theft is at once put in a position to commit a second. And why should the luxury of humaneness be paid for by the unfortunate victim of the second theft and not by society as a whole?… As it is, the criminal only is looked after and no one gives a thought to the victim.

Expanding on the proposition that “society” is responsible for the murderous conduct of certain people, with which viewpoint he has no tolerance, he writes:25

> In any event, we still have not been shown why people who, be it through fault of "society," happen to be "wanting in the moral sense," should be allowed freely to walk the streets, killing anybody they please, and so saddling on one unlucky individual the task of paying for a "fault" that is common to all the members of "society." If our humanitarians would but grant that these estimable individuals who are lacking in a moral sense as a result of "society's shortcomings" should be made to wear some visible sign of their misfortune in their buttonholes, an honest man would have a chance of seeing them coming and get out of the way.

Foreign Affairs

In foreign affairs, "foxes" tend to judge the wisdom of all policies from a commercial point of view and usually opt for negotiations and compromise, even in dangerous situations. For such men profit and loss are the prime determinants, and though such an outlook may succeed for some time, the final result is usually ruinous. That is because enemies maintaining a balance of "foxes" and "lions" remain capable of appreciating the use of force. Though they may occasionally make a pretense of having been bought off, when the moment is right and their overly ingenious foe is asleep, they strike the lethal blow. In other words, Class I people are accustomed by their excessively-intellectualized preconceptions to believe that "reason" and money are always mightier than the sword, while Class II folk, with their native common sense, do not nurse such fatal delusions. In Pareto's words, "The fox may, by his cunning, escape for a certain length of time, but the day may come when the lion will reach him with a well-aimed cuff, and that will be the end of the argument."26

'Circulation of the Elites'

Apart from his analyses of residues and derivations, Pareto is most celebrated among sociologists for the theory known as "the circulation of the elites." Let us remember that Pareto considered society a system in equilibrium, where processes of change tend to set in motion forces that work to restore and maintain social balance.

Pareto asserts that there are two types of elites within society: the governing elite and the non-governing elite. Moreover, the men who make up these elite strata are of two distinct mentalities, the speculator and the rentier. The speculator is the progressive, filled with Class I residues, while the rentier is the conservative, Class II residue type. There is a natural propensity in healthy societies for the two types to alternate in power. When, for example, speculators have made a thorough mess of government, and have outraged the bulk of their countrymen by their corruption and scandals, conservative forces will step to the fore and, in one way or another, replace them. The process, as we have said, is cyclical and more or less inevitable.

Social Opportunity

Another aspect of this theory of the circulation of elites should be noted. According to

Pareto, wise rulers seek to reinvigorate their ranks by allowing the best from the lower strata of society to rise and become fully a part of the ruling class. This not only brings the best and brightest to the top, but it deprives the lower classes of potential leaders of talent and ability who might one day prove to be a threat. Summarizing this component of Pareto's theory, a contemporary sociologist observes that practicality, not pity, demands such a policy:27

> A dominant group, in Pareto's opinion, survives only if it provides opportunities for the best persons of other origins to join in its privileges and rewards, and if it does not hesitate to use force to defend these privileges and rewards. Pareto's irony attacks the elite that becomes humanitarian, tenderhearted rather than tough-minded. Pareto favors opportunity for all competent members of society to advance into the elite, but he is not motivated by feelings of pity for the underprivileged. To express and spread such humanitarian sentiments merely weakens the elite in the defense of its privileges. Moreover, such humanitarian sentiments would easily be a platform for rallying the opposition.

Few aristocracies of long standing grasp the essential nature of this process, noted Pareto, shortsightedly preferring to keep their ranks as exclusive as possible. Time takes its toll, and the rulers become ever weaker and ever less capable of bearing the burden of governing:28

> It is a specific trait of weak governments. Among the causes of the weakness two especially are to be noted: humanitarianism and cowardice — the cowardice that comes naturally to decadent aristocracies and is in part natural, in part calculated, in "speculator" governments that are primarily concerned with material gain. The humanitarian spirit … is a malady peculiar to spineless individuals who are richly endowed with certain Class I residues that they have dressed up in sentimental garb.

In the end, of course, the ruling class falls from power. Thus, Pareto writes that "history is a graveyard of aristocracies."29

Pareto and Fascism

Pareto frequently expressed boundless contempt for the pluto-democratic governments that ruled Italy throughout most of his life. As Arthur Livingston writes, "He was convinced that ten men of courage could at any time march on Rome and put the band of 'speculators' that were filling their pockets and ruining Italy to flight."30 Consequently, in October 1922, after the Fascist "March on Rome" and Benito Mussolini's appointment by the King as Prime Minister, "Pareto was able to rise from a sick-bed and utter a triumphant 'I told you so!'"31 Yet Pareto never became a member of the Fascist Party. Well into his seventies, and severely ill with heart disease, he remained secluded in his villa in Switzerland.

Years before the “March on Rome,” a youthful Mussolini had attended Pareto’s university lectures in Lausanne, listening to the famed professor with rapt attention. “I looked forward to every one,” he later recalled, “for here was a teacher who was outlining the fundamental economic philosophy of the future."32 After his elevation to power, Italy’s Duce sought immediately to transform his aged mentor’s thoughts into action:33

> In the first years of his rule Mussolini literally executed the policy prescribed by Pareto, destroying political liberalism, but at the same time largely replacing state management of private enterprise, diminishing taxes on property, favoring industrial development, imposing a religious education in dogmas …

During the final months of his life, Pareto was accorded many honors by the new Fascist regime. Mussolini designated the Pareto as delegate to the Disarmament Conference at Geneva, made him a Senator of the Kingdom, and listed him as a contributor to his personal periodical, Gerarchia.34 Although he was obliged to decline many of these honors due to the state of his health, he remained favorably disposed towards the Fascist regime, exchanging letters with Mussolini, and offering advice in the formulation of economic and social policy.35

Even more than his economic theories, Pareto’s sociological views influenced the policies of the Fascist state. His “Sociologia generale has become for many Fascists a treatise on government,"36 noted one writer at the time. Furthermore, there was conspicuous agreement between Pareto and the new Fascist government at the most foundational level. His theories of rule by elites, his authoritarian proclivities, his uncompromising rejection of the liberal concept of “economic man,” and his belief in an aristocracy of merit are all signal components of the Fascist credo. Without question, the Fascist movement was greatly indebted to the illustrious sociologist for much of its own political theory.

Some writers have speculated that had Pareto lived he would have found many points of disagreement with the Fascist state as it developed. While it is true that he expressed his disapprobation over limitations placed by the regime on freedom of expression, particularly in academia,37 it should be noted that it was in Pareto’s nature to find fault with nearly all regimes, past and present. It should therefore not be surprising that he found reason occasionally to criticize the Fascists.

Neither Pareto nor Mussolini, it should be pointed out, were rigid ideologues. Mussolini once declared, perhaps a bit hyperbolically, that “every system is a mistake and every theory a prison."38 While government must be guided by a general set of principles, he believed, one must not be constrained by inflexible doctrines that become nothing more than wearisome impedimenta in dealing with new and unexpected situations. An early Fascist writer explained, in part, Mussolini’s affinity with Pareto in this respect:39

> "To seek!" — a word of power. In a sense, a nobler word than "to find." With more of intention in it, less of chance. You may "find" through a coincidence, and you may "find" something that is false; but he who seeks goes on seeking increasingly, always hoping to attain to the truth. Vilfredo Pareto was a Master of this school. He kept moving. Without movement, Plato said, everything becomes corrupted. As Homer sang, the eternal surge of the sea is the father of mankind. Every one of Pareto's new books or of the new editions of them, includes any number of commentaries upon and modifications of his previous books, and deals in detail with the criticisms, corrections, and objections which they have elicited. He generally refutes his critics, but while doing so, he indicates other and more serious points in regard to which they might have, and ought to have, reproved or questioned him. Reflecting over his subject, he himself proceeds to deal with these points, finding some of them specious, some important, and correcting his earlier conclusions accordingly.

Though Italian Fascist rule came to an end with the military victory of the Anglo-Americans in 1945, that mighty upheaval has not seriously diminished Pareto's influence. New editions of his works, and new books about his view of society, continue regularly to appear. That his ideas endured the catastrophe of the war virtually without damage, and that they are still discussed among and debated by serious thinkers, suggests their universal vitality and timelessness.

Notes

1. See, for example, W. Rex Crawford, "Representative Italian Contributions to Sociology: Pareto, Loria, Vaccaro, Gini, and Sighele," a chapter in An Introduction to The History of Sociology, Harry Elmer Barnes, editor (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1948); Howard Becker and Harry Elmer Barnes, "Sociology in Italy," a chapter in Social Thought From Lore to Science (New York: Dover, 1961); and, James Burnham, The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom (New York: John Day Co., 1943).
2. G. Duncan Mitchell, A Hundred Years of Sociology (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1968), p. 115.
3. Herbert W. Schneider, Making the Fascist State (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1928), p. 102.
4. Biographical details are taken from Charles H. Powers, Vilfredo Pareto, vol. 5, Masters of Social Theory, Jonathan H. Turner, editor (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1987), pp. 13–20.
5. Pareto's Marxist opponents called Pareto "the Karl Marx of the Bourgeoisie." During the 1920s and '30s it was commonplace to call him "the Karl Marx of Fascism," an appellation often proudly bestowed on Pareto by the Fascists themselves.

6. Manuale di economia politica was first published in Milan in 1906. An English-language edition, Manual of Political Economy is available with Ann Schwier as translator, and Ann Schwier and Alfred Page as editors (New York: August M. Kelly, 1971).
7. First published in Paris in 1902–3. The complete text has never appeared in English. A lengthy excerpt appears in Adrian Lyttelton, editor, Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1975), pp. 71–90.
8. Trattato di Sociologia generale was first published in two volumes in Florence in 1916. It first appeared in English in 1935 under the title The Mind and Society: A Treatise on General Sociology (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), translated by Andrew Bongiorno and Arthur Livingston. It was reprinted under this same title in 1963 (New York: Dover), and remains in print (New York: AMS Press, 1983); Pareto's monograph, "Un Applicazione de teorie sociologiche," first published in 1901 in Revista Italiana di Sociologia, has been published in English under the title The Rise and Fall of the Elites: An Application of Theoretical Sociology (Totowa, New Jersey: The Bedminster Press, 1968; reprint, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1991). Pareto's Trasformazioni della democrazia was first published in Milan in 1921. It has appeared in English, The Transformation of Democracy (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1984), translated by R. Girola, and edited by Charles Power.
9. Charles H. Powers, Vilfredo Pareto, vol. 5, Masters of Social Theory (1987), p. 19.
10. This term, "equality of opportunity" is so misused in our own time, especially in America, that some clarification is appropriate. "Equality of opportunity" refers merely to Pareto's belief that in a healthy society advancement must be opened to superior members of all social classes — "Meritocracy," in other words. See C. H. Powers, Vilfredo Pareto, pp. 22–3.
11. C. H. Powers, Vilfredo Pareto, p. 20.
12. Adrian Lyttelton, editor, Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1975), pp. 79–80.
13. A. Lyttelton, ed., Italian Fascisms (1975), p. 81.
14. H. Stuart Hughes, Oswald Spengler: A Critical Estimate (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 16.
15. A. Lyttelton, ed., Italian Fascisms (1975), p. 86.
16. A. Lyttelton, ed., Italian Fascisms (1975), pp. 82–3.
17. James Burnham, Suicide of the West (New York: John Day Company, 1964), pp. 248–50.
18. V. Pareto, The Mind and Society: A Treatise on General Sociology (New York: Dover, 1963), 2455. Instead of page numbers, citations from this work are identified by section or passage numbers. Citations are thus uniform in all editions.
19. V. Pareto, The Mind and Society: A Treatise on General Sociology (New York: 1963), 2462. This work is henceforth referred to as V. Pareto, Treatise.
20. V. Pareto, Treatise, 2458–72.
21. Nicholas Timasheff, Sociological Theory: Its Nature and Growth (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 162.

22. V. Pareto, Treatise, 1987.
23. V. Pareto, Treatise, 1987n.
24. V. Pareto, Treatise, 1987n.
25. V. Pareto, Treatise, 1716n.
26. V. Pareto, Treatise, 2480n.
27. Hans L. Zetterberg, “Introduction” to The Rise and Fall of the Elites by Vilfredo Pareto, pp. 2–3.
28. V. Pareto, Treatise, 2474.
29. V. Pareto, Treatise, 2053.
30. V. Pareto, Treatise, p. xvii.
31. V. Pareto, Treatise, p. xvii.
32. Benito Mussolini, My Autobiography (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1928), p. 14.
33. Franz Borkenau, Pareto (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1936), p. 18.
34. F. Borkenau, Pareto (1936), p. 18.
35. F. Borkenau, Pareto (1936), p. 20.
36. George C. Homans and Charles P. Curtis, Jr., An Introduction to Pareto (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1934), p. 9.
37. F. Borkenau, Pareto (1936), p. 18; In a letter to Mussolini written shortly before his death, Pareto cautioned that the Fascist regime must relentlessly strike down all active opponents. Those, however, whose opposition was merely verbal should not be molested since, he believed, that would serve only to conceal public opinion. “Let the crows craw but be merciless when it comes to acts,” Pareto admonished Mussolini. Quoted in: Alistair Hamilton, The Appeal of Fascism: A Study of Intellectuals and Fascism (New York: 1971), pp. 44–5.
38. Margherita G. Sarfatti, The Life of Benito Mussolini (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925), p. 101.
39. M. Sarfatti, Life of Benito Mussolini (1925), p. 102.

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