



Vilfredo Pareto. History, his history

Mario Aldo Toscano

Volume 22, numéro 2, 2018

1918. Ways Out of the War

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1058558ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1058558ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Georg Simmel Gesellschaft

ISSN

1616-2552 (imprimé)

2512-1022 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Toscano, M. A. (2018). Vilfredo Pareto. History, his history. *Simmel Studies*, 22(2), 71–98. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1058558ar>

Résumé de l'article

Pareto biographical and intellectual experience offers a privileged point of view on First World War. His life work, Treatise on General Sociology, was published in 1916 by Barbera Publisher in Florence. It is through the conceptual tools contained in this work that he deciphers the ongoing conflict. His interpretative method is based on the distinction between residues and derivations. The firsts are the real motifs that determinate actions, the seconds are false explanations men create to justify their behaviour. War is a conflict between residues and more specifically between two residues: the persistence of aggregates – a conservative residue, politically represented by Germans and Central Powers – and the instinct for combinations – typical of innovators, represented by the Allies. Post war disorder cannot last and be tolerated by any stable social system. Pareto in a first moment is sceptical toward Fascism but he was fascinated by Mussolini's personality later, when he recognises him as the only man capable to re-establish social order in a country out of control. Pareto's support to Fascism is ultimately a support to a realistic principle able to use Machiavelli methods to beat all fractions that without a political synthesis can threat the social life of a country.

MARIO ALDO TOSCANO

Vilfredo Pareto. History, his history

Abstract. Pareto biographical and intellectual experience offers a privileged point of view on First World War. His life work, Treatise on General Sociology, was published in 1916 by Barbera Publisher in Florence. It is through the conceptual tools contained in this work that he deciphers the ongoing conflict. His interpretative method is based on the distinction between residues and derivations. The firsts are the real motifs that determinate actions, the seconds are false explanations men create to justify their behaviour. War is a conflict between residues and more specifically between two residues: the persistence of aggregates – a conservative residue, politically represented by Germans and Central Powers – and the instinct for combinations – typical of innovators, represented by the Allies. Post war disorder cannot last and be tolerated by any stable social system. Pareto in a first moment is sceptical toward Fascism but he was fascinated by Mussolini's personality later, when he recognises him as the only man capable to re-establish social order in a country out of control. Pareto's support to Fascism is ultimately a support to a realistic principle able to use Machiavelli methods to beat all fractions that without a political synthesis can threat the social life of a country.

1. Anno domini 1916

1. 1916 is a middle year. The war has already been raging for two years; two years to its conclusion.* A year that encourages meditation on what has happened - while concerns increase about what will happen.

The *Bewegungskrieg*, war of movement, or *Blitzkrieg*, lightning war, as already theorised by the German strategy manuals, is over.

* Translation by Chiara Santini-Parducci.

The rapid and successful destructive making of the war goes out in the harshness of the position war. In the trenches, the mass deaths of the great battles are prolonged in the daily trickle of individual deaths.

“It’s like being/in the autumn/on the trees/the leaves”, says Ungaretti (*Soldiers*, 1918); every pity, “crushed by the soles” tries in vain to survive, echoes him from afar Majakovskij (*The war is declared*, 1916). But in the heart “no cross is missing”, says Ungaretti again. The number of deaths is inexorably increasing: a total of 37 million, 16 million dead and more than 20 million injured and mutilated. In Italy the tragic amount will be of 1,240,000 victims: 651,000 dead, 589,000 injured (188,944 disabled).

The year 1916 was a special year for Vilfredo Pareto; his *Treaty of General Sociology*¹ [Treaty of General Sociology] is published by Barbera, in Florence. It was his life’s work, the work to which he entrusted his scientific truth about human events and, despite being an inveterate skeptic, some expectation of well-deserved, though late, recognition, of which Italy will prove to be rather stingy. Although he obtained, as a young engineering graduate from the Polytechnic of Turin, important positions in the administration — first of railways and then of ironworks in Tuscany — he had not found, in his homeland, an academic position adequate to his qualities and ambitions as a scholar (first of economics and then of social sciences). It was only because of his solid and far-sighted friendship with Maffeo Pantaleoni, an economist who appreciated the uncommon qualities of Pareto,

¹ Almost 20 years after the publication by Barbera, in Florence, the English version of the *Trattato* is completed and printed with the title: V. Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, edited by Arthur Livingston, translated by Andrew Bongiorno and Arthur Livingston, with the advice and active cooperation by James Harvey Rogers (1935). There are no English translations of the many essays, articles and letters which make up the numerous and variously titled volumes of Pareto’s collected papers. The translation of the quotations from these volumes is made by the local translator.

that he was proposed for the succession to the chair of Leon Walras, a French economist of Dutch origin, at the University of Lausanne. As early as 1893, Pareto moves to Switzerland, where he finds the most favourable conditions for cultivating his interests and for carrying out intense scientific and publishing activities.

Like many other characters of the nineteenth century, he was entirely taken by his passion, his vocation, his *daimon*. The same happened, to remain in his field of choice, to Comte and Spencer, devoted throughout their lives to their cause, in which they believed in an unwavering way. Pareto, who had no particular beliefs, trusted firmly in his discovery, contained precisely in the *Treatise*: that is, in the crucial distinction of residues and derivations, which made possible to decipher the actions of men, apparently guided by the abstract reasoning of their mental elaborations (*derivations*), substantially directed by concrete non-rational anthropological constants (*residues*) that govern, like as many grey eminences, the authentic motivations of the action. We must always keep these two separate and interdependent categories within reach in order to proceed, as we shall see, to the interpretation of war, the immense event of which he was a witness.

The transition to sociology that the *Treaty* brought about was based on the fact that his own 'official' profession as an economist revealed to him, from time to time, the importance of the *non logical* elements - to use his language - of human behavior and that economy itself - no matter how relevant its formal constructs and its mathematical applications - had finally to come to terms with something greater, more radical and more decisive.

Under many points of view the volumes he had published before the *Treaty* (in particular, the *Cours d'Economie Politique*, 1898; *Le systèmes scialistes*, 1901-02 and the *Manuale di economia politica*, 1906), all of considerable analytical and critical consistency, could well be considered preparatory works in which one breathed the

air of a path that pushed towards further goals, finally achieved in the *Treaty*.

Pareto was a tenacious and assiduous worker, but he was not spared from highly unpleasant personal vicissitudes and, for those times, with no easy way out. He had married in Florence, in 1883, Alexandrina Bakunina who left him, in 1900, fleeing to Russia with a servant. The Court of Florence granted Pareto the separation because of his wife's fault in 1903. Divorce was not allowed by Italian law; and Pareto, no matter how much he thought about it, as an honourable man, does not want to become either French or Swiss, in order to obtain, by changing citizenship, the dissolution of a broken bond. That was the worry of his life. It will accompany him like a heavy shadow even when, in a somewhat out of the ordinary way, in 1906, he establishes, a new and luckier partnership with Parisian Mrs. Jeanne Regis. It will last for the rest of his life and will constitute for him a basis of safety both for physical health and for intellectual work.

With the resources coming from his uncle Domenico's legacy, Pareto had bought a villa, in 1900, in Celigny, on Lake Geneva. There, he spent his days meditating and writing; observing the slightly mobile waters of the lake, the shadows of the trees that extended over the water, walking slowly, well covered and protected by a woollen hat, for what he had pompously called *the Avenue of the Philosophers*. Always lovingly taken care of by Mrs. Regis, by her daughter, Marguerite, familiarly known as Chinetta, and also by a host of cats, including the favorite Theophilus and Mirrinas (Toscano, 1996).

2. At the outbreak of the war Pareto was 66 years old: at Villa Angora, so named after his favourite cats, he led a very secluded life. He'd never been a man of the world, really. The *Belle Époque*, which had shattered itself on the war, had nevertheless touched him: and, both for the personal conjugal history - from certain points of view worthy of a *feuilleton* not without twists and turns - prolonged until the end of its days, and precisely for his professional position. It is true, as we said, that he was an

emigrant, but he had also found a hospitable land; because of his individual skill, but also by virtue of a widespread atmosphere of consideration of intelligence as extraterritorial heritage. Before the war, there was indeed a supranational interdependence and almost a republic of science, literature and the arts that allowed individual exponents to travel around Europe and the world, always accompanied by a sort of charismatic halo. War will irreparably change things and those travelers of the spirit will have to regress from the greatest homeland to the individual homelands of tribal belonging and fight ‘unnaturally’ against each other armed.

The *Belle Époque* dispensed the glories of the nineteenth-century myth of material and moral progress and cosmopolitanism. Paris, the *Ville Lumière*, shone indeed with lights; it had been once again in 1900 (after the 1889 edition of the Eiffel Tower) the seat of the world exhibition and the seat of the Olympics organised by the Baron De Coubertin, after those of Athens in 1896. It was teeming with artists: Monet (1840-1926), Renoir (1841-1919), Degas (1834-1917) and Signac (1863-1935) are still alive; Picasso and our Modigliani are active. Modigliani will hold his first personal exhibition on 3 December 1917 at the Berthe Weil Galleries, closed only a few hours after the opening by order of the chief of police scandalised by the female nudes in the window. Debussy produced the last volume of his *Studies* (he died in 1918), Proust dispersed his family wealth in casinos and playing awkwardly on the stock exchange (he died in 1922). An infinite number of other personalities of the time populate the cafés and bistros, the galleries and theatres, the boulevards and the *maisons*.

In Vienna, Arnold Schönberg and his students Alban Berg and Anton Webern started their dodecaphony work at the so-called Second School in Vienna. Sigmund Freud and Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931) work. Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoscha work in their studios. The exuberant and the neoclassical architect Adolf Loos performs. Karl Kraus frequents the Café central, the Café Museum, the Café Griensteidl, in Michaelerplatz 2, and writes his *Last Days of Humanity*, which will

be released in 1922, and in which he represents with unparalleled energy satirical landscapes of customs in which « characters from operetta recited the tragedy of humanity ».

In Berlin it would not have been difficult to meet in the *Bayerisches Viertel*, the Bavarian quarter of the wealthy bourgeoisie built in those years, characters such as Albert Einstein or Erich Fromm. And György Lukàcs, who with his friend Ernst Bloch attended Georg Simmel's private lessons, and who will print, precisely in Berlin, *The Theory of the Novel* in 1916.

London is also no stranger to avant-garde artistic movements, which however tend to moderate in the *Great English Vortex* to which Ezra Pound, an anglicised American, gives a great contribution in contrast to Marinetti's futurism. Emmelyne Pankhurst, who founded the *Women's Social and Political Union* in 1903, fought for universal suffrage for women, enshrined in the House of Commons in 1918.

Of course, the process of change is visible and involves all areas of associated life. The cities we have talked about become metropolises counting few million inhabitants. They become more sumptuous and dynamic: electricity, electric trams, and cars supplant ancient carriages and omnibuses with horses; the first airplanes take flight in the skies. Inside the houses comfort is raised with running water, lighting and telephone. Cinema takes its first important steps; *leisure time* is increased and grows, and with free time, sports, travel and trips out of town spread. Women throw away their corsets and do not mind to show all their appeal; even men become less clumsy and more beautiful; an entire generation decides to become more youthful. "The rhythm of the world had changed," says Stefan Zweig in his biography (Zweig, 2014). "Only those who have known that era of trust in the world - he adds - can know that all that came after was decadence and obscurantism".

Although restricted in their human niche, to their works and their days, as Hesiod said, intellectuals did not want to give up

their vocation. Many applied- just like Pareto - their theoretical-methodological constructs to the reality they lived providing interpretations that tended to take it away from the contingency to propose it in the *format* of worldview and history. These were complex interpretations, almost whole hermeneutics, ultimately based on feelings elevated to values, as such non-rational, yet rationalizable. All this did not happen without contradictions, lacerations and anguish. The contrast between the two brothers Thomas and Heinrich Mann is emblematic. The former looks with euphoria at the war, and with “the deepest sympathy for this hated Germany, so full of enigmas and destiny”; the latter opposes a clear rejection, denouncing the “gregarious of the spirit” who, rather than educate the people and curb them in their instincts, prefer to run after them (Mann, 1963: 160).

In 1916, Weber wrote to his sister Lili on the occasion of the death in battle of her husband Hermann Schäfer that, after all, if one had to die, he had been lucky to die in this war “because this war is - whatever the outcome - truly great and wonderful above all expectations”. He is to suffer other deaths in the family: that of his brother Karl. Weber is in Berlin, where he “feels the history of the world pulsating” (Toscano, 2006); he is troubled by the problem of peace. Time does not play in favour of Germany: also because the entry of the United States into the war is feared; and is, actually, imminent. In Berlin, he deals with the theme of the idea of Central Europe, in order to find a solution to the problem of Poland. He is a strong critic of the management of the war and exposes himself to the accusation of wanting to be the anti-Kaiser.

Emile Durkheim in France, in that year 1916, was also touched by an unbridgeable pain: the loss on the Bulgarian front of his son André. That same year, by the height of his misfortune, Durkheim also had to face the prodigious attack of a senator from La Mancha, Gaudin de Vilaine, who questioned his loyalty, accusing him of being in cahoots with the German *Kriegministerium*. He will never come to terms with all this, but he continues to make available all his residual energy to support the morale of his

compatriots with booklets that expose Germany's responsibilities in the war: *Qui a voulu la guerre? L'Allemagne au-dessus de tout*, followed by, *Lettres à tous le Français, with Ernest Lavisse*. But he is exhausted, afflicted by his inconsolable mourning; he has no time to see the end of the war. He dies on November 15, 1917 (Toscano, 1996: 5–59).

3. As we've seen, war shakes families. Freud is in Vienna and tries to save his psychoanalysis magazines and his profession while his three sons fight for Austria: Martin in Galicia and Russia, Oliver interrupts his engineering studies and works to expand a hospital in Vienna, Eduard enlists in 1914 and is decorated for his courage.

In Italy, Pirandello sees his son Stefano imprisoned by the Austrians and returned sick, and his wife worsening of her mental disorders that will take her to the asylum in 1919 and then to death. But many intellectuals were directly involved in the conflict. Everywhere.

Ravel in France is an ambulance driver; Musil in Austria is an officer in Alto Adige and Asiago and then, in 1916, editor of the *Soldaten Zeitung* in Bolzano; Egon Schiele, called to the army in 1915 and treated with care for his art, can continue to paint, but will not escape a premature death at only 28 years, with his wife Edith, victims of the Spanish epidemic that reaps in those years 20 million victims in Europe. His friend, Oskar Kokoscha, enlisted and wounded, is dismissed for mental infirmity; Umberto Saba is a typist and airplane wood test pilot; Italo Svevo maintains Austrian citizenship and manages his paint shop in Trieste. Ungaretti, as we know, enlisted as a simple infantryman in the 19th Regiment fights in the trenches on Mount San Michele.

In Russia, at the beginning of the war, in Moscow in 1914, Pitirim Aleksandrovich Sorokin took his degree in criminology with a thesis in systematic sociology, which he published in 1921, and in 1917 he was to become Kerensky's special secretary, head of the

provisional government overthrown by the Bolshevik revolution in October.

The question that the war imposed to intellectuals had several answers. In Italy, the two major exponents of idealism, Croce and Gentile, also expressed themselves on this point. The answer was univocal and called for a dramatic separation between the scholar and the person.

In May 1915, Croce did not hesitate to stigmatise the betrayal of intellectuals who decided to participate in the war with the pen and not with the rifle. It is not at all praiseworthy to overturn, as many eminent scholars in France and Germany do, the concepts of science to support this or that cause by estimating that they work as good citizens and patriots: “But above the very duty to the homeland there is the duty to the Truth, which understands and justifies the other”. They deceive themselves and, on the contrary, they disdain their land, “which must be able to count on the seriousness of its scientists as on the modesty of its women” (Croce, 1965: 54–55).

In an article of March 1916, entitled *Deformazioni storiche*, in controversy with Victor Delbos, Maurice De Wulf and Emile Boutroux, Gentile warns that “to take it upon oneself with Goethe or Hegel or Fichte because one is at war with Germany is to obey a passion; which is not licit to those who teach and must purify the souls, and raise them even in the struggle....”; and it is disgraceful “to close one’s eyes and condemn oneself to disown facts and concepts and values that are incontrovertible, which, ordinarily, any self-respecting scholar does not believe possible to question” (Gentile, 1989: 240).

There are strong tensions in European culture. Pareto is a loner who participates in the debate in his own way.

In 1916, as we know, the *Treatise* was published; Pareto writes to his friend Sensini on 28 October 1916: “It seemed to me that, with the war, the printing of my *Sociology* should be suspended. But Barbera wanted to follow and so I continue the printing (Sensini,

1948: 90). The text is a ‘monstrous’ work: in the sense, comments Bobbio, of prodigious, deformed and extraordinary (Bobbio, 1964: I–XI). Pareto had long matured it and it certainly belongs to those nineteenth-century works that tend to establish something like a milestone in the field. Pareto claims the *character* of Pareto: “in order to study social doctrines from an exclusively experimental point of view, it was necessary to have a man who completely separated himself from the world, so as not to have even indirectly, in life, any practical effect that would escape the influence that friends and acquaintances may have. Fortune wanted that such a man secluded himself in an hermitage in Céligny and it would have been better still if he could retire in an even more secluded place...” I don’t know if my *Sociology* is a work that is worthwhile, or if it is not worthwhile, and it’s not up to me to decide this; but it’s as you like, it’s certain that it’s the result of my special conditions and that it was and is for me singular luck to be able to live in Céligny far from the noises of the world” (Pareto, 1962: 99).

The *Treatise* systematically puts into form concepts and data that had long been clear in the Wallachian mind, so much so that they were used well before their paradigmatic placement. The whole course of the war is interpreted by Pareto on the basis of the acquired and definitive canons.

2. Causes and conditions of the conflict

1. Already in 1914, Pareto expressed himself, especially in the articles published in the “Regno”, a weekly magazine founded by Enrico Corradini, in favor of war and Italy at war. But in Switzerland, free from environmental pressures, although the usefulness of the War for Italy is clear, it does not skimp on, as we shall see, appreciation for the values of Germanism and criticism of the Anglo-American plutocracy and the ineptitude of the Latin peoples. But he’s a patriot, albeit in exile and with a great desire to remove the frills from the ‘facts’. Pareto has the clear perception that it is an epoch-making event, that it will change the

connotations of the world.”The combination - he wrote to his friend Pantaleoni on August 19, 1914 - for which a century later, from 1814-15, we have from the beginning a remodelling of the whole of Europe, it’s strange. Those who will be alive in about thirty years’ time will be able to discern in this event many things that we, because of too much proximity, do not see” (Pareto, 1962: 174).

Strong of his double fundamental reading key, he enjoys, he says, ”reading the lies of the press of all the belligerents. I’m getting German newspaper passages translated. They’re just getting high. Only those who will be alive in twenty years’ time will know the truth of the present facts” (Pareto, 1962: 231). Apparently, he wouldn’t have spared his colleagues Weber and Durkheim. What is really hidden behind the turns, the contortions, and conscious lies of the protagonists on the war scene? Pareto explains it in an article entitled *Conflict of races, religions and nations*, which appeared in the “Giornale d’Italia” of September the 2nd, 1914 (Pareto, 1973: 523–28).

If it is true that the causes of social phenomena are multiple, and sometimes countless and even obscure, in this case some triggering factors are prominent and manifest, if one have the means to go beyond the surface of events as they are propagandised.

The reasons for the ongoing ‘great clash’ - as Pareto says - are therefore: 1. the contrast between Germanism and Slavism; 2. the disagreement between aristocratic militarism and social democracy; 3. the divergent interests of the various states.

Europe includes communities that respond to the name of Germans, Slavs, Anglo-Saxons, Latins. While Slavs and Germans have a great force of expansion, Anglo-Saxons are now in a defensive situation, protecting their previous conquests; the Latin peoples (France, Spain, Italy) have lost all strength and common conscience and do not tend to aggregate towards a centre and much less to recognise themselves in the legacy of ancient Rome.

So the Germans do not stop extolling Arminio and do not hide the desire to annihilate the “putrid Latin”, they tend to European hegemony and to transfer to Berlin the role that was of ancient Rome; the Slavs aspire to gather in an organism not dissimilar from the German empire; the Anglo-Saxons want to preserve the British empire. These attitudes, completely visible and exhibited, are not rhetoric, they tend to reveal the deep feelings that animate the contenders. They are like thermometers measuring temperatures: high among the Germans; remarkable among the Slavs; not too low among the Anglo-Saxons, almost zero among the Latins.

As for the second reason, we don’t realise enough, says Pareto, but the democratic-social faith, which takes on the character of a true and proper religion, is spreading throughout the world, comparable to that of Christians under the Roman Empire. Western Europe is almost completely conquered by it; Germany is loyal to aristocratic militarism, which is also a faith, and so we are in the presence of two wars of religion. Russia is partly extraneous to these processes, but it was induced into war for historical and political reasons: it could not allow, as indeed England, Germany “to eat the artichoke leaf by leaf”.

The third set of factors: the diverging interests of the various states. Diplomacies could have constructively operated before handing over the floor to the military. Italy, which has not yet entered the war, can act in this direction with prudence and determination: since the conflicting interests can finally be reconciled. But the general problem is that the other two categories of cases cannot be administered by negotiation methods. The conflict will therefore be long and complicated. And it is a blatant denial for all those who thought that technological advances and the increased power of the means of destruction would have dissuaded them from resorting to war. Nor does it underpin those who believe that in the long run wars are unsustainable for economic reasons. The modern states, Pareto recalls, have immense reserves and before capitulating they can

impose sacrifices in all directions: savings up to the unthinkable and regress the people to the conditions in which they lived a century ago. Billions and billions are therefore available for war. Pareto concludes: “the events that we now see happen will take their place among the greatest and most momentous events in history; they manifest the beginning of a new era”.

2. On 15 October of the same year, a new article appeared in the same “Giornale d'Italia”, in which Pareto reveals, already in the title, his intellectual preferences: “Instead of providing artillery and weapons, they spent money for electoral purposes, but the states defend themselves with weapons not with chatter” (*Invece di provvedere artiglierie ed armi, si spendevano quattrini per fini elettorali, ma gli stati si difendono con le armi non con le chiacchiere*) (Pareto, 1973: 29–32).

Who's our guy picking on? The target are the ‘humanitarian sluggishness’ and the democratic weaknesses of peoples such as the English, French, Italian and Belgian. They neglected to prepare for war following a series of ideological reasons that inevitably clash with the ‘hard’ reality: they thought that war was impossible for the advancement of the feeling of justice and rights, for the evolution of the proletariat that, according to international class consciousness, would not allow fratricidal struggles, for the improvement of weapons that would prevent, having become too destructive, their use. In this way, funding for arms was diverted to customers so that they could facilitate electoral success. According to Pareto, “the principles of international law, pacifism, morals, the ‘immanent’ justice of holy evolution, and of many other similar entities” - united in the rubrication of metaphysics - function as narcotics, they do not allow the concrete reality for which states defend themselves with arms to be seen. But the problem of force is not a problem of the use of material power alone: it takes faith to use force well. This is what Pareto, with a clear warning to Italy about to enter the war, underlines in an article of November the 16th, 1914, in the “Giornale d'Italia”, with the title “No advantages are obtained without sacrifices” (*Non si ottengono vantaggi senza sacrifici*) (Pareto, 1973: 537–39). Pareto reminds that strength

is true strength when it joins the ideal. Interest must go hand in hand with feelings. “The living faiths that aim for ideal ends are almost the only forces that can validly oppose the domination of material and immediate interests and that can make the prosperity of the country prevail over the individual gain”. The superior art of government must know how to use the two levers, and use them intelligently, in different and often unforeseen circumstances. The Germans are mistaken for “having participated too much in the Pan-Germanist sentiments” and have completely neglected, blinded by pride and forgetting Bismarck’s teachings, the diplomatic preparation for the war. While the mistake of the Italians in the Libyan war was to act only upon interests, without arousing a minimum of popular enthusiasm that could involve the whole operation. If Italy goes to war, it is good to remember that no advantage can be obtained without sacrifice: “history absolutely denies such a presumption, and the people who allow themselves to be lured by it are not heading towards prosperity and glory, but towards ruin and disheartenment”.

Pareto suffered witnessing the swaying of Italy and the clever and ambiguous attitudes of the political forces that did not promise anything good and above all greatly damaged the good name of Italy. He writes to his friend Pantaleoni: “Italy is now at a strange crossroads and, according to appearances that may even be fallacious, might rise in great fortune, or be ruined. It is certain that for the time being, by hesitating, it has become, abroad, unliked by God and by his enemies. No one talks about it positively, neither on the side of the central empires, nor on the side of the allies; but if it has so much military and financial power to impose itself on these and those, it will renew the deeds of Rome. Otherwise, it will have the fate of Italy in the Renaissance” (Pareto, 1962: 173). In reality, things will occur in a different way, and yet not without reasons that, as we shall see, Pareto will be able to give himself. Meanwhile, the nature of the conflict is clear and there can be no pretence to disguise the irreconcilable harshness of the clash. On the one hand, the Germans, definite in their mission to dominate

the world as a superior people and in their religious faith in a holy war to annihilate heretics; on the other hand, the Democrats, who show themselves to be less radical and totalitarian, and less cruel. “It may be that the triumph of the Democrats ends up costing the defeated more money but less blood, less pain” (Pareto, 1980: 624–43).²

The war that was never to happen, according to the prophecies, is announced as one of the most devastating that has ever happened. Nor are the reassuring dissertations about future peace valid, says Pareto: “they can be useful consolation for those who suffer, they are certainly not probable predictions for the future”. What does the future hold for us? There are two hypotheses: that the war ends without winners and without losers, in which case a truce will take place; an unstable situation, given that the forces in the field retain their original prerogatives. Or it will end with the victory of one of the contenders; if the Allies win, it’s impossible to foresee how Germany can be reduced to impotence more than Napoleon was able to do after Jena. “On the contrary, as it happened then, the pains of the defeat could revive and strengthen the patriotic feelings of the Germans”. If the Central Empires win, it’s difficult to imagine how the immense British empire, ready to gather the different members for revenge, could be destroyed: “to make the work more effective could be added the powerful force of the United States of America” (Pareto, 1980: 643). In the East, it will also be impossible to subdue the immense Russian empire and prevent it from being redeemed.

3. As for his personal feelings, Pareto is fascinated by the power of Germany, but he strongly doubts his metaphysical and theological character, which is not alien to aberrations of any kind. Germany is therefore an immoderate power, which simplifies the world against the social and moral complexity of human multiplicity. On the other hand, he is particularly disappointed with the softness of plutocratic democracy, prone to corruption,

² Previously in Pareto (1915).

duplicity and cyhaltronage. Pareto oscillates between the two positions without finally sidestepping for either of them. With the fear of bitter disappointment in both cases.

As we have seen, one of Pareto's polemical targets is pacifism. In those years authoritative voices of intellectuals rose everywhere against the war.

In Switzerland, in Geneva, Romain Rolland, a French writer and musicologist known for his pamphlet "*Au-dessus de la mêlée*", keeps alive the debate. In 1915 he will be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. As much as he had a chorus of detractors against him, he wasn't an isolated voice. "Amongst our peoples of the West, there is no reason for war. In spite of what a press infected by a minority that has an interest in perpetuating these hatreds repeats, brothers of France, brothers of England, brothers of Germany, we do not hate each other". Like Rolland, Bertrand Russell, in England, rejects any justification for the war and writes, in 1916, a letter to the American President Woodrow Wilson in which he complained not only about the loss of human life but also about the loss of civilisation as a whole: "The freedom that our ancestors won through secular struggles was sacrificed in one day, and all nations are regimented for the sole atrocious purpose of destroying each other" (Castelli, 2015). In the same way, Bernard Shaw did not hesitate to denounce the fact that the fighters on different fronts were all Christians: "We quickly transformed the temples of peace into temples of war".

No one will be able to stop 'the useless massacre' and 'the suicide of Civil Europe' as Benedict XV will say in his unfortunate letter of 1 August 1917, accused by the French of being a *German pope* and by the Germans to be a *French pope*, ignored by Wilson, simply called *Cursed XV* by the Italians.

It's 1916. A year in the middle: but for war, it's simply war. The battles follow one another: are underway the decisive battle of Verdun, beginning on 21 February 1916 and ending in December of the same year, and the ninth battle of the Isonzo. In that year

Cesare Battisti, Fabio Filzi, Damiano Chiesa and Nazario Sauro, heroes of Italian irredentism, were tried and executed by the Austrians.

Elsewhere, far enough away from the fronts, the daily life of science and literature continues. In memorable and less memorable form.

In that year Albert Einstein published in the no. 7 of the *Annalen der Physik*, IV Folge, Band 49, pp. 769–822, his *Foundations of the theory of relativity* (*Die Grundlage der allgemeinen Relativitätstheorie*).

The Dadaist manifesto is published in Zurich and, on May 11, *Le figaro*, in Paris, puts on the front page Filippo Marinetti's manifesto on speed "which agitates, precipitates the blood circulation of the railway, automobile and airplane of the world".

Pareto would have welcomed with a good dose of sarcasm the fact that among the things to remember of that year there was no mention of his *Treatise*, and instead there was mention of *The Wolf Cub's Handbook* of the founder of the boy scouts, the English Sir Robert Baden-Powell,

In 1917 Pareto celebrated its Jubilee with the University of Lausanne, it's the opportunity both to receive the homage of many continental universities and to denounce the lack of warmth with which Italian universities and the Italian state participate - and it would be better to say didn't participate - in the event. The Italian university is populated with boot-lickers, says Pareto, and he is happy to stay in Switzerland, "away from the Camorra of Italian universities" (Pareto, 1962: 218).

4. Meanwhile, the Americans have decided to go to war with the Allies. Wilson's speech of 15 December 1917, in which he announced the event, sounds to him as a sermon "of those in use at the time of the Crusades. Jesus Christ has been replaced by Holy Democracy" (De Rosa, 1964: 138). And all the rhetoric that accompanies it - the struggle of good against evil, justice, rights, peace, generosity, devotion to the cause - in his mind sounds empty and, compared with empirical facts, false.

Pareto reserves a different attitude to the October Revolution in Russia: what precedes the revolution demonstrates the ancient axiom that “without force, a government cannot last”. And it is for this reason that the Tsar has lost the match, and Kornilov and Kerenski after him. And it is very likely that “the only force that will oppose the demagogic plutocracy will be that of uncompromising socialism” (De Rosa, 1964: 135), capable of transformations equal to those that occurred with Christianity.

Pareto keeps a diary for his personal use. It was later published under the title *Mon Journal*: it is a small sequence that lasted from April 4 to May 18, 1918 (Pareto, 1973).

Things are not yet clear on the horizon. The derivations - i.e. the lucubrations behind which the remnants nest - are rampant: they are found in the speeches of Czernin, Clemaceau, Lloyd George and the inevitable Wilson. He continues to insist on America's mission: which one? It does not take long for him to see the ambition to run Europe. Wilson supports the self-determination of peoples. Does that apply to England and the peoples of its vast empire? Does that apply to the United States itself? “And the Red Indians? Let's talk about it shortly. According to which principle the United States took their territories and hunt for its miserable remains?” (Pareto, 1973: 825–33). The experimental reality, beyond the propaganda public talks, speaks another language and it won't need long to reveal the mystifications.

Pareto deals with two other topics circulating in the public debate, particularly in Italy: that of the bourgeoisie and that of defeatism. The bourgeoisie - or so-called bourgeoisie - are only preparing to commit suicide. “The feudal lords, with the crusades for the Christian faith, prepared their ruin. Our bourgeoisie, with the Crusades for Holy Democracy, are also preparing for their annihilation (De Rosa, 1964: 127). However, it is not certain that all this will not be of benefit to society,” he comments rather whisperingly.

Defeatism, which threatens any form of dissent from the cause of war - in all belligerent countries - is also an expression of the weakness of the bourgeois class, which reacts with an additional of repressive attitudes. In the “Rivista d'Italia” of July 31, 1918, Pareto published an article with the explicit title of “The supposed principle of nationality” (*Il principio presupposto di nazionalità*) (Pareto, 1980: 744–54). Although the concepts of nation, of people and of the likes have been and are used very frequently, they are quiet undefined, says Pareto. They are evoked - and this guarantees their demagogic duration in time - not because they speak to reason, but because they speak to feelings, and they are skilfully manipulated to favour the interests of specific parties in conflict. Those who have real beliefs may be disinterested in these *manoeuvres*. Pareto did not propose anything new compared to what was his point of view now said and repeated on all occasions. But it was a ‘sensitive’ subject: the newspaper precedes the article with a note stating that the editorial line is different. Shortly afterwards, on 12 August, “Il Secolo” published a commentary by Luigi Paone entitled *Disfattismo in grande stile*. Inside it it’s reaffirmed that ideals move people and that Italy expects great results from its American ally. Pareto will wait a few months to laugh about it. The hopes placed in the Americans and in President Wilson in July 1918 and May 1919 were dashed and everyone spoke badly of the Americans. “I am glad - comments Pareto - to have escaped from the passion that produces such ramblings” (De Rosa, 1964: 161).

At the beginning of 1918 Pareto returns to the theme of war: thick veils - he says - still hinder the view of the future. The Germans continue with their logomachies on the *Kultur*, President Wilson never ceases to praise democracy. Pareto prefers to deal with the economic conditions of the conflict. Everywhere farmers have been tied to the cart of war and have done good business. But it is completely wrong to believe that war can bring wealth for everybody. Some may profit from particular contingencies; “No one will be able to say that the current war has procured

advantages for everybody, without exception of any kind, a greater quantity of food, of clothes, of saving”.

André Renard, reports Pareto, estimates that at the end of 1917 the war cost the Allies 385 billion francs, at the Intesa 213.2 billion francs, for a total of 598.2 billion francs. Others and much more horrible, are, as we have reported, the costs in human victims. The war will not be able to last much longer and a period of peace will open for Europe, but, exhorts Pareto, “peace must not be made in such a way as to leave in the presence of winners and losers now irreconcilable” (Pareto, 1980: 695–718).

3. Latest events and disputes

1. A year and more after the end of the hostilities, Pareto makes, in his *Epilogue* (Pareto, 1980: 855–915), a retrospective assessment of the war, wondering about the prospects of the post-war period.

The defeat of the central empires was primarily caused by pride and presumption. Bethman-Hollweg and von Jagow, protagonists of the German strategies, perched in their patriotism, have completely ignored predictable processes such as: the descent into the field of Russia, England, Italy and the United States. “Who does not see, in such an operation, before and after the declaration of war, the signs of feelings similar to the religious, which prevail over the combinations of reality? Faith in the ‘destinies of Germany’, its military power and ‘organisation’, the dogma of its ‘vital interests’ clouded the eyes of its rulers” (Pareto, 1980: 879–84).

The demagogic plutocracy has defeated its rival: the revolutionary feelings of the Bolsheviks stand against it. In the meantime, accounts are being settled between groups that have collaborated in the victory and claim recognition of their interests. But the bourgeoisie shows everywhere, and in Italy in particular, its inconsistency, and “listen open-mouthed to the strangest fools, closes its eyes to the most obvious contradictions...” is, in sum at

the mercy of his enemies, including the socialists who want to assert their reasons.

With regard to Bolshevism, Pareto reiterates that it has many characteristics similar to previous revolutions, particularly the Christian one. It reveals, going deeper, a particular intensity of the residue of the fourth class, in relation to sociality, proposing to expand social solidarity. It will inevitably come into conflict with other societies, but its political capacity does not exclude that it can find grounds for conciliation both within individual societies and within the existing societies as a whole. Russian Bolshevism will not be an easy interlocutor, however, and will really bring something new to the international scene.

Pareto also deals with the problem of guilt. His judgment is very negative. A logic without reason seems to have taken possession of the Allies who want to try the Kaiser and other German rulers: a real legal monster, in which the accused is judge, and judges, “without any law that there is, but guided only by feeling” (Pareto, 1980: 909–13).

After the signing of the peace treaty, so little exciting for Italy, Pareto focuses on the post-war issue in our country.

And, as we know, the post-war situation is marked by the advent of fascism. The theme of the relationship between Pareto and Fascism will be much debated and preserves still today its interest both biographical and historical. It should be remembered that Pareto knew Fascism for less than a year after the march on Rome on 27-29 October 1922. He died at 1:00 p.m. on August 19, 1923.

His path starts from the denunciation of the enormity of the Allies in negotiating peace and in proceeding to the signing of treaties. The excesses against Germany would have done nothing more than solicit the desire for revenge; and France has queued up to follow a dangerous vindictive slope. The Allies have done badly in taking the Fiume issue as an excuse to exclude Italy from the peace process. Pareto was close to those who stigmatised the

mutilated victory and found himself infected by the patriot disease of which many were affected and on which he had often ironised. «The fact that no sophistry can change - he writes - is that Italy had part, and what part!.. to the war, and had to accept peace from others, contrary to commitments, deliberate and concluded” (Pareto, 1980: 812).³

The post-war period is difficult for all countries: if we consider what happens in Germany, Russia or France, we can perhaps better understand that Italy could not escape the turbulence of both international and local character.

Pareto is very worried; he doesn't see any way out of the crisis, however much he tries to understand the “future wave curve on which we are moving” (Pareto, 1962: 251). He has no confidence in the socialist solution and whoever believes in it, he says to his friend Pantaleoni, will face heavy disillusionment. “By now, strength, and strength only, will resolve the conflict” (Pareto, 1962: 276). There is no doubt that it is this conviction, certainly not episodic, that directs Pareto towards the analysis of ‘rampant’ fascism. Fascism seems to him - he wrote again to the Pantaleoni on 2 May 1921 - still a romantic episode and it is not known if it will be able to transform in a phenomenon of historical importance.... The fascists have material courage, but not a strategic plan; they are not yet an organic party. And again, to his friend, he trusted the rejection of the fascist methods, of the trucks that run through the countryside to carry out raids, of the destruction of cafes and restaurants, of theatrical censorship (Pareto, 1962: 289).

Mussolini is for some time, in his correspondence, Mussolino, with a precise allusion to the bandit Musolino. To his friend Pantaleoni he says that “he is a fixer”, who lacks an ideal (Pareto, 1962: 285), while the party lacks a myth, and the intention to dominate according to clear goals.

³ Previously in Pareto (1919).

On the 29th of October he wrote to Pantaleoni that “tomorrow the telegraph will also let us know that there is a fascist ‘revolution’. If it doesn’t happen now, it’s probable that it will never happen; which doesn’t mean that another revolution is impossible”. Mussolini - Pareto stops making fun of his surname - no longer seems to him to be a wheeler-dealer, but “a statesman of uncommon merit”, however much he doubts that he can get rid of the ballast of his followers. If Mussolini succeeds in resolving the general economic problem, “he will carry out a work in front of which Hercules’ labours are nothing” (Pareto, 1962: 315–17).

In reality, what led Pareto towards the moderation of his initial ideas was the hope that it would be possible in some way to restore law and order in Italy. Since it was not possible for a society to last without effective general legislation or to avoid the *homo homini lupus* of Hobbesian memory. On the other hand, he points out, he had already shown, in his sociology, the historical uniformity according to which “where the government neglects to protect the citizens, private forces arise to replace it” (Pareto, 1962: 309)⁴.

If we consider two articles, one (*Fascism*) written for “La Ronda” in January 1922 and the other for the Spanish newspaper “La Nación” of March 25, 1923, the evolution of Pareto’s judgment on Fascism is quite evident and, one should say, compromising, if we do not have the foresight to bring the temporal terms of the speech to that time, and to that phase of Fascism. We will remember that many intellectuals - including Benedetto Croce - gave credit to *that* Fascism.

2. In the article of January 1922 (Pareto, 1980: 1078–89), when crucial events were still to come, Pareto tells us that this is nothing new in history: the prevailing features of the ‘movement’ are extra-legal violence and a myth whose crucial core is nationalism.

⁴ Allusion to § 2180 of the *Trattato*.

As for extra-legal violence, if one looks beyond the duration of an individual's life, one sees everywhere how legality and extra-legality are in a fluid state "so much so that human disputes usually take place, necessarily, now within, now outside of certain norms of morals or laws". In the case of Italy, the antagonistic forces are essentially two: socialism and fascism. The struggle is only apparently a struggle of ideas, it is a struggle of feelings. The fascist faith is inferior to the socialist one; it is still in a nebulous state and has not much to contrast with the solid structure of historical materialism. Compared to the shortcomings of Fascism, much larger and heavier seem to be those of the bourgeoisie. It never goes all the way in its determinations; it prefers to play both sides of the fence, and, as in the case of D'Annunzio, "his little soul allowed him to follow Caesar to the Rubicon, but never to cross it with him". Today he invokes the protection of the fascists, but at the same time he aspires to the 'collaboration' of the socialists. Should the advent of socialism be considered inevitable? Let's be prudent, warns Pareto: social cycles are precisely cycles, they have ups and downs and it is not given to know where in the cycle we are. On the other hand, fascism belongs to a class of essentially transitory phenomena, says Pareto, which may have a temporary importance, but remain secondary to the great factors of social evolution of which they may be important clues for the study and prediction of social phenomena.

The second article (*El fenomeno del fascismo*), published in Spanish in 1923 (Pareto, 1980: 1168–73), has different tenor. Faithful to his experimental beliefs, Pareto acknowledges that, for having conquered power, fascism is a force, a true force. And he tries to explain to his audience and himself what happened. Two periods must be distinguished in the brief history of Fascism. In the first, fascism presents itself as a spontaneous and somewhat anarchic reaction of a part of the population to the red tyranny. It is more action than theory and carries out a task, not new in history, of social protection in private form.

The success of these first steps is due to the inability of Giolitti and his successors to reaffirm the authority of the State, cutting the grass under the feet of fascism. That's not what happened. As for the socialists, they made the mistake of looking more at the short time than the long time: rather than taking advantage constructively of the fact of having conquered municipalities such as Milan and Bologna, they squandered their wealth of credibility by occupying land and factories, claiming reductions in working hours and increased wages and "to obtain various benefits". It was the beginning of the end. The fascists have been able to act differently: there are black sheep among them, admits Pareto, devoted to their advantage, but most "pursued an ideal more or less mythical, the exaltation of national feeling and the power of the state, the reaction against democratic ideologies, pseudo-liberal, pacifist, humanitarian."

Fascism has given vigour to central government and the economy according to solutions based on collective utility and not on individual interests. "The future will tell us if a new era has begun like this, or if we will return to the old mistakes": Fascism has restored confidence to the bourgeois and intellectual classes and given to the nationalist religion an action purpose, social renewal.

One should not underestimate a particular contingency enjoyed by the movement: the quality of its leader. Once in government, he was able to impose discipline on his followers, making the rule of central power prevail and affirming 'the mysticism of obedience'. He is, says Pareto, a first-rate politician, capable of leading the movement, and correcting the initial defects. In a letter to Placci, Pareto boasted about having had him, without his knowledge, for a short time among those who followed his courses in Lausanne: "He revealed himself just like the man that Sociology can invoke" (Giacalone-Moncano, 1957). He will have to use power firmly, but also in moderation; the great national and international problems loom "but the beginnings are good and open hope for a happy future" (Pareto, 1980: 1173).

In the space of a few years, his attitude has changed; according to the Machiavellian principle of force, having conquered power is a guarantee of reality, a fact that cannot be ignored.

Pareto continued his sociology in reading Fascism and Fascism provided him with a case of application as unexpected as it was fortunate. From the point of view of his intellectual biography, in fact, one could say that *he did not adhere to fascism, but adhered to himself* by exposing the halo of the validation of his theses in the wonderful public context that provided the current history. The scholar's pride was therefore understandable. Those who do not know enough about the complex and intense backdrops of Pareto may believe, according to the arguments and expressions used by himself, that there are no overwhelming doubts about Pareto's benevolence towards Fascism and from a practical point of view may exhibit further 'evidence' of his arrangement.

Pareto is, in fact, very much in vogue. Mussolini asks him to represent the Italian government in the Commission for the reduction of armaments at the League of Nations in Geneva. He doesn't believe in disarmament, but he bends to the authoritative request.

He is also offered a senator's chair, but the curse of his wrong marriage still falls on him. To divorce, he became a citizen of Reggenza del Carnaro (ephemeral territorial creation of the poet Gabriele d'Annunzio), and is not allowed, residing abroad, to maintain Italian citizenship. The Commission verifies powers decrees that it will not be eligible to be senator.

Pareto's story is a particular story. The historical factor that he had recognised in the early twenties as saving for the destinies of Italy, turned, just two decades later, into the general agent of his worst catastrophe. It was really true that the undulating movement of history, so dear to Pareto, however known in its form, continued to be unpredictable in substance.

Bibliography

- Bobbio N. (1964). “Introduzione al Trattato di sociologia generale”, in: V. Pareto, *Trattato di sociologia generale*. Milano: Comunità, pp. I–XL.
- Castelli A. (2015). *Il discorso sulla pace in Europa 1900-1945*. Milano: Angeli.
- Croce B. (1965). *L'Italia dal 1914 al 1918. Pagine sulla guerra*. Bari: Laterza, pp. 54–55.
- De Rosa G. (ed.) (1964). *Carteggi paretiani, 1892-1923*. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.
- Gentile G. (1989). *Guerra e fede*. Ed. by H. A. Cavallera. Firenze: Le Lettere.
- Giacalone-Moncano T. (1957). *Vilfredo Pareto dal carteggio con Carlo Placci*, Lettera n. 36. Padova: Cedam.
- Mann T. (1963). *Epistolario 1889-1936*, ed. by L. Mazzucchetti, Mondadori, Milano.
- Pareto V. (1915). “La guerra e i suoi principali fattori sociologici”, in *Scientia*, March 1915.
- Pareto V. (1919). “Realtà”, in: *Idea nazionale*, September the 7th 1919.
- Pareto V. (1935). *The Mind and Society*, ed. by A. Livingston, translated by A. Bongiorno and A. Livingston, with the advice and active cooperation by J. H. Rogers. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- Pareto V. (1962). *Lettere a Maffeo Pantaleoni, 1890-1923*, ed. by G. De Rosa. Rome: Ed. di Storia e letteratura, volume III.
- Pareto V. (1973). *Scritti politici*, volume II. Torino: UTET.
- Pareto V. (1980). *Scritti sociologici minori*. Ed. by G. Busino (2nd ed.). Torino: UTET.
- Sensini G. (1948). *Corrispondenza di Vilfredo Pareto*. Padova: Cedam.
- Toscano M. A. (1996). *Trittico sulla guerra. Durkheim, Weber, Pareto*. Bari: Laterza.

Toscano M. A. (2006). *Ostmark 1916*. Milano: Jaca Book.

Zweig S. (2014). *The World of Yesterday: Memoirs of a Autobiography*. London : Pushkin Press.