

Vilfredo Pareto's Sociology in his Letters to Maffeo Pantaleoni

1. Pareto's sociology is unique of its kind. The most specifically sociological themes — the form and equilibrium of society — are dealt with only in the last two chapters, and occupy little over 400 pages out of the 1,600 of the two volumes, that is, about a quarter of the work. The subjects covered in the first eleven chapters, despite the difficulty of defining the contents of this vast, ill-arranged and scattered material, may be grouped under three main headings — the distinction between logical and non-logical actions, the analysis and criticism of non logical-experimental theories, the analysis and classification of residues and derivations, and of the relations between them. What we find is partly a broad methodological introduction to historical and social science as a whole (and not only to sociology in the strict sense of the word) and partly a general theory of human action which should serve as an introduction to the study not only of sociology but also of anthropology and of history in general. In any case, we are given a series of preliminary investigations which are of interest, in the broad philosophical sense, to the study of most of those questions to which treatises on sociology are devoted.

Pareto's originally interests were those of an economist and an untiring defender of free trade, and also of a sociologist in the traditional manner, like Spencer — to mention a name that was particularly revered by him in his early years of research. From this attitude, he evolved to the point at which, in his last years, he wrote a work that was so vast in scope, and so original as to bear no resemblance to works of the same title (and in which he carried on a running argument with, among others, the earlier sociologists, beginning with Spencer himself). This is an evolution which deserves a thorough analysis. Such a study would lead to a better

understanding than has hitherto been the case of the nature, the substance, the heart of a work that even now, despite encomia and abuse, is by no means thoroughly quarried and is quite unknown to historians and philosophers to whom, most of all, given its character as an introduction and as a general theory, it should offer ample material for reflexion.

In the meanwhile, the recent publication under the auspices of the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, of the three volumes of *Letters to Maffeo Pantaleoni*, fully annotated by Gabriele de Rosa, offers an outstanding documentation to anyone desirous of undertaking research on these lines. The letters, written to the man who was for Pareto the dearest friend and the most highly esteemed economist, follow for over thirty years (from 1890 to 1923) every step of his life in the period in which he wrote his main works, from the *Course* (1896) to the *Treatise* (1916). It must be remembered that the *Treatise* is the fruit of thoughts and second thoughts, readings, notes and research, sketches, drafts and rewritings that lasted for twenty years, as Pareto himself recognized in a letter to Sensini of April 5 1917 (1). And it will be easily realized what a treasure-house of information that these letters represent for the reconstruction, almost day by day, of the origin of this work. In the present essay, I propose to follow the development of Pareto's sociological studies and the growth of the *Treatise*, using as my main source the three volumes of letters to Pantaleoni and, as a secondary source, other groups of published letters, of which those to Sensini (2) are of particular importance for our subject.

From 1898, the first year in which the exiled professor of Lausanne was called upon to cover not only political economy (on which he had been lecturing since 1893) but also sociology, up to 1916, the year in which the *Treatise* appeared — i.e. for about twenty years — Pareto never stopped reflecting on the problems of sociology, at first toying with the plan, and then carrying it out with untiring energy, of writing a vast and comprehensive work on the subject.

(1) "It seems to me ridiculous to go and whip out heraldic and even professorial titles if one is going to publish two big volumes incorporating twenty years' studies" (G. SENSINI, *Corrispondenza di Vilfredo Pareto*, Padua, Cedam, 1948, p. 101).

(2) See preceding note.

The correspondence enables us to single out two periods in these twenty years when his concentration on sociology seems to have been particularly intense: the years between 1897 and 1899, and those from 1906 to 1913. The first of these periods may be called that of conception; the second was that of creation and execution. I speak of conception in the first period because several of the intuitions that lie at the heart of the creative stage, in particular the distinction between logical and non-logical actions, are already clearly indicated in this first phase. The distinction between a planning and a creative phase is a useful one because, since it enables us to compare the initial project and the final execution, we can pick out those ideas in the plan which proved vital and those which were dropped. We are in a better position, moreover, to understand why the *Treatise* became what it did and must not be confused with the most of other works which bear more or less the same label.

Of the other two periods which make up these twenty years, the first (1900-1906) was the one in which Pareto brought out two of his fundamental works, the *Systèmes socialistes* (1902-03) and the *Manual of Political Economy* (1906). The second period (1913-1916) was the one in which he devoted a monkish patience to the grinding task, made even more exacting by the difficulties caused by the war, of correcting and revising the proofs, and also of compiling the indices (with the collaboration of Luigi Amoroso). Far from there being a lack of interest in sociology, it may be said that, in these two periods too, Pareto was constantly preoccupied with sociology. The first period was one of trials and partial experiments in which the work of planning continued, took shape and was so to speak tested by means of the vast *Introduction to the Systèmes* and the second chapter of the *Manual* called *Introduction to the Social Sciences*. These parts of his work show the trend towards methodology and general theory of action which was gradually to expand to the point at which it became, in the final work, all-absorbing. The second period saw the application of the finishing touches (which were by no means superficial, to judge from the evidence to be discussed below) to the work that had now been completed.

In order to make things easier for the reader, I have felt it desirable, therefore, to divide Pareto's two decades of sociological studies in the following manner: 1897-1900 (planning); 1900-1906

(preliminary work); 1906-1913 (work on the *Treatise*); 1913-1916 (correction and revision). Each of these periods is covered by a paragraph of the present essay.

2. In 1897, Pareto had finished the publication of his first major work, the *Cours d'économie politique*. Two chapters in the second volume (chapter I of Book II — *Principes généraux de l'évolution sociale*) and chapter II of Book III — *La physiologie sociale*) discussed sociological subjects, but these were current in the sociological science developing at that time. In the first of the two chapters in question, the main emphasis was on the so-called factors of social evolution with the usual references to Montesquieu, Spencer, Darwinism and to the theories of organic development, and with the proclamation of the belief, to which Pareto was always to remain faithful, in the interdependence of the various factors which determine social equilibrium and in the ununiform and fluctuating trend of social phenomena. In the second chapter, another of his favorite theses was outlined — that of social heterogeneity from which he deduced his critique of the theories of race and of the class struggle, and, via this critique, he arrived at a fairly significant reference to the theories which explain social phenomena by recourse to imaginary causes. This was perhaps one of the first pointers to the critique of the non logical-experimental theories which swelled to gigantic proportions in the *Treatise*. It is strange, too, that in one of the first references to his sociological studies, in a letter of 17 March 1897, the subjects to which he says that he is devoting his attention in order to develop them are those of the former and not of the latter chapter: "I have not yet written about sociology precisely because, given such appalling confusion, I prefer to begin by clearing up my ideas through delivering a course. I will not deal with the method, but it will be a development of, and a sequel to, my chapter on *L'évolution sociale*" (II, p. 52).

The opportunity to go deeper into sociology had been offered, as we have said, by the courses which he was asked to give from the second term in 1897 on. He speaks of them for the first time in a letter of 10 February, in which, apropos of the theories of Marx and Loria on the factors of social evolution, he adds: "Next term I will give a course on the rudiments of sociology in which

I will develop these social theories" (II, p. 34) (3). He threw himself eagerly into reading the sociologists. But he was not satisfied. He found the *Principles of Sociology* by Giddings poor. Tarde was another Lombroso who, "in between the odd truth, tells stories that send one to sleep". Even Guglielmo Ferrero follows the same path: "They are all novels" (II, p. 61). The further he goes in his studies, the more he realizes that in this field "there is a lot to be changed in what has been done up till now" (II, p. 77). The only one who, like an eagle, soars above the others is still Spencer (II, p. 61). During the second course, in February 1898, he complained to his friend that the lectures on sociology were "extremely difficult" (II, p. 179); and hence "the one lecture on sociology every week gives me more work than the three on economics" (II, p. 188).

The spirit in which Pareto had given himself up feverishly to the study of sociology was that of one who was eager finally to set against the "novels" a scientific theory of society. It was the state of mind of the explorer who has fought his way into a thick and dark jungle and does not know when he will get out of it. His friend asked him, it seems, whether he meant to publish his course on sociology (as he had published, after a few years of lecturing, the course on economics). He gave the following answer on 14 June 1897: "As to the *Sociology*, it will take years before I publish it. First of all I must reflect, work, collect documents, and so on and so on" (II, p. 83). A few months later, he sighs: "... I don't know whether I will manage to get by long enough to be able to finish off the job" (II, p. 121). But the following year, when he had come into a fat legacy, his first thought was to give up teaching in order to dedicate himself exclusively to composing the treatise on sociology — an obvious sign that, right from the first burst of enthusiasm for this kind of study, his passion had become almost exclusive. He explains that the main reason why he has not succeeded in writing the treatise is the time that he must devote to lecturing: "The main reason for ceasing to be a professor is to have time for that work" (II, p. 189). And a little further on in the same letter (12 April 1898): "From now on, I want to devote myself entirely to writing my treatise on sociology, and I will not

(3) There is a similar piece of information in the letter of March 10, II, p. 49.

do anything else, but for the odd literary composition in order to take my mind off an exclusively scientific job" (II, p. 191) (4). Some months later, realizing the vastness of the vast enterprise that he had taken on, he feels that he would be satisfied by beginning to write a little book called *La sociologie et l'économie* by way of introduction, because "my complete treatise will not be ready for a few years" (II, p. 208) (5). But, if it was to take eighteen years until the *Treatise* appeared, an article with that title did not come out till 1907 (6).

From one of the few letters of Pantaleoni that have survived, we know that he did not look with a favorable eye on his friend's action in throwing himself into such a desperate enterprise, thereby neglecting his economic studies, and tried good humouredly to make him change his mind. "I am convinced", he writes on 20 November 1898, "that, if you wish to help sociology to advance, you will need ten years of isolation, since you would never be content with turning out a book like all the stuff produced by such people as Le Bon, Tarde, Durkheim, Giddings and so on and so on, and perhaps after ten years you would see that it is all still not mature" (III, p. 347). But Pareto had now taken the plunge, and no friendly advice could stop him. In his reply, he explains that sociology offers greater satisfactions because more people read it, and he develops the point, on which he was often and gladly to return, that his fortunate circumstances make him particularly suitable for the work of reducing sociology to a scientific discipline. "I am not bound", he says, "to any party, any religion, any sect. Thus, I have no preconceived idea about the phenomena. I am not even bound to a country, and hence I escape the grip of patriotic prejudice which wreaks such havoc in the social sciences... From this complete liberty of mine I wish to reap the profits devolving from it, and write without those restraints which make so many others by no means impartial" (II, p. 281).

It is very probable that the real reason for this enthusiasm for sociology is another one; but it was one of those that cannot be

(4) See also below, pp. 192, 193, 196, 198, 199.

(5) He reverts to the same point in the next letter, of June 10, II, p. 208.

(6) This is the article "L'économie et la sociologie au point de vue scientifique", in the *Rivista di scienza*, I, 1907, pp. 293-312.

communicated even to friends, for fear of appearing conceited. Pareto must have had the impression that he had made one of those discoveries which open up infinite horizons — the distinction between logical and non-logical actions with the consequential hypothesis (the confirmation of which would have called for an immense collection of facts from the most diverse periods and societies) that most actions contributing to the shaping of a given society are of the second type. He was prompted by this discovery to regard as wrong most social theories which had been worked out up till then, since their starting point was the opposite hypothesis. Moreover, he was inclined to see the main cause of the error of these theories in the very fact that they too were the product of non-logical actions masquerading as logical actions. Before tackling the study of the social uniformities, it was therefore essential to realize that the facts, as they appeared to the sociologist, were distorted by the manner in which the protagonists themselves, or the historians or the politicians, had an interest in presenting them. It followed that a preliminary investigation was called for of the relation between the real and the apparent motives of the actions. This study would in effect be a general introduction to any future study of the history of mankind. It was basically what I have elsewhere called, for the sake of brevity and to use less esoteric language than Pareto, "a critique of ideologies" (7) regarded as a prerequisite for the understanding of social reality. The programme drawn up was so vast and rich in developments that we need hardly be surprised that, when it began to take shape, at least in general outline, he threw himself head long into it. The first mention of the distinction between logical and non-logical actions is met with in a letter of 17 May 1897, that is, at the beginning of his lectures on sociology, and it is presented as the very keystone of the system. "...let me say in passing, the principle of my sociology lies precisely in this, that I separate logical from non-logical actions, and show that, for most people, the second category is far longer than the first" (II, p. 73). To put the point more crudely, this theory is usually regarded as saying that men are

(7) "Vilfredo Pareto e la critica delle ideologie", in *Rivista di filosofia*, XLVIII, 1957, pp. 355-381.

moved by feeling more than by reason. And the formula is repeated on the most various occasions by way of an *obligato* comment on the misdeeds of the corrupt politicians and on the pseudo-scientific sermons of his colleagues: "Be convinced that reason can do little or nothing to give shape to the social phenomenon. The forces that are operating are quite different. I would like to prove that in my sociology" (II, p. 121) (8).

From these first years of fervid sociological apprenticeship, three articles survive published in the *Rivista italiana di sociologia* which had at that time started its long career. In 1897, there was published the introduction to the course on sociology at Lausanne in which, rather than mark out a programme, Pareto called for a scientific sociology (9). In 1899, another article of a general nature was published (10). It dwelt in particular on the need to distinguish between theory and practice, and it already refers to the possible importance for an objective examination of the social phenomena of the distinction between the contribution of reason and that of feeling ("It is childish to believe that men are convinced by logical demonstrations") (11). In 1900, an article of political criticism came out (12) which applied the theory that an increase in religious feeling is an indication of the decadence of an *élite*. In it Pareto refers to the treatise that he was working on, and immediately puts his cards on the table as regards the prevalence of non-logical actions in society. "Most of men's actions flow not from logical reasoning but from feeling" (13).

3. In his letters from 1900 to 1905, almost all trace of sociology is lost. If on 1 October 1898, in the first fine rapture of his ideas about the reform of sociology, he writes that sociology "at present is moving forward at a snail's pace, indeed far slower" (II, p. 236),

(8) Cf. also II, pp. 163, 245, 333, 406-407, 408, 413, 414, 430, 436; III, 33, 214-215, 231, 295.

(9) "Il compito della sociologia nelle scienze sociali", in *Rivista italiana di sociologia*, I, 1897, pp. 45-54.

(10) "I problemi della sociologia", in *Rivista italiana di sociologia*, III, 1899, pp. 145-157.

(11) *Op. cit.*, p. 155.

(12) "Un'applicazione di teorie sociologiche", in *Rivista italiana di sociologia*, IV, 1900, pp. 401-456. There is a reference to his article in a letter to Pantaleoni, II, pp. 318-319.

(13) *Op. cit.*, p. 402.

in a letter of 27 November 1905 he says: "My *Précis de Sociologie* is sleeping like the silkworms" (II, p. 453). The study of sociology had led him, as we have seen, to make an analysis of theories on society as a necessary first step. This analysis, in its turn, led to the elaboration of the distinction between scientific and non-scientific theories. Of the non-scientific theories the most important, historically and practically speaking, were certainly those of socialism, starting with that of Marx. The intensive and full study he made of them, collected in the two volumes of *Systèmes socialistes* (which came out in 1902 and 1903), may be regarded not so much as a pause in his sociological work as an unavoidable detour which was to help him to come back to the highway, more mature and more experienced. It is no accident if, in the very midst of his sociological interests, he set about preparing a course, in the first term of 1898-99, on the history of Socialist doctrine (II, p. 242) of which he has this to say: "The Socialists will not be pleased with my history of their doctrines" (II, p. 246). In a little under two years of unrelenting and extremely productive toil, the impressive work was completed. On 2 February 1900, he writes: "I am working like a dog (I should say, like a cat) around the book that we are doing with Racca on the *Systèmes socialistes*" (II, p. 303). And, as early as 18 September 1901, he proclaims: "My book, *Les Systèmes socialistes*, is finished, except for the chapter that is to be written by Racca" (II, pp. 374-75). This does not mean that the composition of this work was inspired only by scientific motives and that considerations of political polemics and personal passions had nothing to do with it (the fight against humanitarianism, the religion of our age). But what is certain is that only a fully documented analysis of as important a class of social theories as the Socialist ones could have given him a confirmation of several hypotheses which, at the time when they had dawned upon him had seemed particularly useful for the study of sociology on a new basis. These hypotheses were the prevalence of sentiment over reasoning in men's behaviour, the very human desire to give a logical veneer to non-logical actions, the distinction between the truthfulness and practical effectiveness of theories. The first chapter of the *Systèmes*, which is devoted to the clarification of these problems, contains the whole *Treatise* in a nutshell, and may well

be regarded as the first draft, however rough, imperfect and incomplete, of the future work on sociology (14).

In the following three years, Pareto devoted himself not only to his usual journalistic activities (particularly intense in *Il Regno*) but also to the *Manual of Political Economy* which was to appear in 1906. But he had not yet finished printing the *Manual* than his mind was already running ahead to his next book, which was, this time, to be his treatise on sociology. On 1 April 1905, he writes to his friend: "My *Manual* is now coursing as fast as your greyhound. It will be out in a few months. I am very pleased with it" (II, p. 442). A few days later, on 9 April, informing Sensini of its publication, he plans a reprint of the *Course* in five volumes, the first of which was to be called *Précis de sociologie* (15), and, a little further on, he explains: "I have been dealing with this question for a number of years, and it is only now that I am getting ready to publish the *Précis de sociologie* (*Corrispondenza*, p. 8). Sociology appears to him, as it had in his earliest studies, a kind of introduction to the study of economics, and not an independent discipline. Moreover, with the *Précis*, regarded as the first volume of the *Course*, Pareto was merely developing the plan of the *Manual*, in which, in a long introductory chapter called *Introduction to social science*, Pareto recast the draft on sociology already sketched out, as we have seen, in the *Systèmes*. Here, too, the exposition, although more systematic, was entirely focused on the distinction between real relations (objective relationship) and imaginary relations (subjective relationship) and on the importance of the study of the influence of the one group on the other. Hence the great interest for sociology of the study of subjective phenomena and of their relationship with objective ones (paragraph 9). The

(14) The relation between the *Systèmes* and the *Treatise* has been recognized by Pareto himself in an addition to the French translation of the *Treatise*, which was inserted in the second Italian edition of 1923. Referring to a criticism of it, he writes: "The defect of *Les systèmes socialistes* is quite a different one from that noted in this censure. It is the consequence of the fact that the author was not at that time in possession of the theory of derivations which was developed in the present *Treatise*; he applied it in advance without having a clear conception of it, and the result has been a certain fluctuation" (paragraph 2142, note 1, p. xci).

(15) "At last my *Course* is out of print and, instead of having it reprinted, I will rewrite the whole of it. It will be in five volumes, viz: 1) *Précis de sociologie*; 2) *Economie pure* (without mathematical formulae); 3) *Economie mathématique*; 4) and 5) *Economie appliquée*".

five points touched on in this chapter, with the usual string of examples drawn from ancient and modern theories (even Spencer has now been relegated among the reprobates), are as follows: 1) the characteristics of the subjective relationship; 2) what objective relationship corresponds to the subjective one; 3) how does the subjective relationship arise, and how is it determined; 4) how is the objective relationship transformed into a subjective one; 5) what is the social effect of this subjective relationship. If this subjective relationship which is formed in men's minds is called an "ideology", we realize that the sociological problem *par excellence* seemed to Pareto to be that of determining the nature and function of ideologies in society. Every now and then, when he set about writing something about sociology, the problem of the critique of ideologies took over and became the more or less exclusive subject of the disquisition.

This happened even though, in these very years, the general programme of the course on sociology was much more vast and though the critique of ideologies only accounted for a single chapter, with consequent benefits to the harmony of the individual parts. See the *Programme et Sommaire du Cours de Sociologie* that Pareto sent in April 1905 to Sensini who published it as an appendix to the *Corrispondenza* (16). Of the five parts into which the *Course* is divided, the sociological introduction of the *Manual* corresponds to the third one which is called *Le phénomène objectif et le phénomène subjectif*. The first part is on general principles (it corresponds to the first chapter of the *Manual*). The second, fourth and fifth parts deal with the traditional problems of sociology which had not found their place in the *Manual*. And, what is even more surprising, they were not even to be included in the *Treatise*, which was not to be the homogeneous development of the whole course, but in the main of those introductory and methodological questions which alone had constantly attracted his attention and which he had been elaborating, re-elaborating and expanding with every new work.

4. The year 1906 was one of preparation. At the beginning of the year, Pareto had been invited by the Faculty of Law of Bologna

(16) *Corrispondenza*, pp. 143-162.

University, through his friend and colleague, Tullio Martello, who was lecturing there on economics, to give a short course on sociology in the spring. He tells Pantaleoni of this in a letter of 27 January (17). The course was in ten lectures and lasted from 15 to 31 March. A Bologna review *La libertà economica*, edited by Alberto Giovannini, published the first lecture under the title of *The method of sociology* (in issue No. 53 of 16 March 1906, pp. 680-685). In this address, Pareto repeated his usual views on the characteristics distinguishing a scientific sociology from a metaphysical one. A *Programme for a course on sociology* appeared in the issues of 5 and 20 June (pp. 758-759; 773-776). This was merely an almost literal translation into Italian of the first two chapters of the *Programme* referred to in the previous paragraph. And an article, also concerning methodology, *Of the difficulty of putting across concepts that are not familiar to everyone*, was printed in number 64-65 of 5 October, pp. 823-825, which took to task a review of the first article signed by E. Carpani in the *Rivista di cultura* of 1 August 1906. To Pantaleoni who urged him to say something new, he replied: "Now just tell me where I can lay hands on anything new to say. In my course on sociology there are things that are not in my books, but you need have no doubt that most people misunderstand the things in my books; hence, every explanation may seem new" (II, p. 457).

For the whole year, the treatise on sociology resumed its central place in his thoughts, but it is very probable that he did not write anything. On 20 May, he confided to Sensini: "I have not yet begun to write my volume on Sociology, and I fear it will be some time until it is ready" (*Corrispondenza*, p. 16). In a letter of 9 December to Pantaleoni, he gives the impression of someone who is going to launch out on a great undertaking that very moment: "I am persuaded that sociology's main enemy is sentiment; and, if it has hitherto made little progress, that is largely due to the fact that it has been studied with an ethical, humanitarian or other purpose. I will study it only from the scientific point of view, and be concerned solely with the facts; and, thanks to this circumstance, and not because of any merit I may have, I hope to be able to achieve some good results" (II, p. 465). Perhaps

(17) Cf. also *Corrispondenza*, p. 13.

the final incentive to undertake the drafting was the invitation by the publisher Barbera to prepare a *Manual of Sociology* for him. Pareto announces this invitation in a letter which follows immediately on the one quoted (20 December 1906, II, p. 466). In any case, a few days later, in a letter of 7 January 1907 to Sensini, he says that he has no time to think of a new edition of the *Course* "because [he] has too much work on the Sociology" (*Corrispondenza*, p. 27).

For six years, from then up to the end of 1912, Pareto, having given up lecturing, immured at home with his cats, was deaf to any other call but that of driving ahead with his *Treatise* which assumed terrifying proportions in his hands. It is an intense, exclusive and absorbing work, written in a state of continual excitement and amidst great hopes, as if he were a gold prospector who had at last struck an unknown and inexhaustible vein (18). He writes nothing else. He gives up almost completely the usual collaboration with reviews and papers. The bibliography of his writings, which had been abundant in other years, was extremely scanty in this period (only ten articles or so). He breaks off only for a few months in the summer of 1910 to dash off *Le mythe vertuiste*. Pantaleoni tried once again to bring him back to economic studies (19), but Pareto punctiliously repeated the view that nobody had ever been in such a favorable situation as he to deal with sociology: to write on economics one must be penetrating; to be concerned with sociology, one must be *au dessus de la mêlée* and live like a hermit; as long as he was engulfed in politics, he had not understood anything about social reality; it was a stroke of good luck that Italy had cast him off; in that way he had acquired the independence necessary to understand things — the unvarnished truth. How many years would it be for these circumstances to be repeated and for the right man such as he himself to be born again in order to enable social science to advance (III, pp. 70-71). Despite the playful tone, he seems to be trying to make his friend understand

(18) "I am going ahead with my *Manual of Sociology*. I am pleased with it, but I fear that the public will not understand me and will not want to understand me. My approach is too new, and perhaps I should have begun with other publications in order to prepare the milieu" (III, p. 42).

(19) Cf. the letter of October 17, 1907 in *Appendix*, III, p. 364.

that economics had been a profession. Sociology had become a mission (20).

By going through the correspondence with Sensini, we can follow the progress of the work, stage by stage (21). There is hardly a letter from these years in which there is not an allusion to the work in hand. But, despite the mass of reading, notes and sheets already written, he does not see exactly — even two years later, in March 1909 — how the book will turn out. He continues to refer to it as a "manual". He is thinking of a big volume in French and of a summary in Italian (III, p. 131). He is in general satisfied with the way the work is going, but he is perfectly aware that it will take some years. In October 1909, he tells us that he is writing quite a few sheets every day; in January 1910, that he will need a year or two before he can publish; in August, he announces that he has written six chapters (that is, about half the book). In general, he complains that the work is coming along slowly, but one has the impression that progress is inexorable. In October 1911, he hopes to have finished in three months (but it was to take almost a year). After three months, in February 1912, he says that completion is in sight. In March, he begins to hope that he will soon get to the end, but in June he recognizes that the material is so extensive that the end will simply never come. Only on 12 September 1912 can he finally announce that most of the manuscript is with the printer, and in the beginning of November he begins to correct the proofs (22). He writes to Pantaleoni on November 4: "I am snowed under by proofs, which come on top of the revisions that I have to do for the last chapters of the *Sociology* (III, p. 168).

In the years during which he composed the treatise, Pareto published two articles on sociological subjects. The first, already cited, *L'économie et la sociologie au point de vue scientifique*, came out in 1907. It is of little interest, apart from a laudatory reference

(20) The same concept is to be found, though in more compressed form, in the letter of December 10, 1916, when the *Treatise* had already been published (III, p. 199). Cf. also III, p. 206.

(21) For the letters to Pantaleoni, cf. III, pp. 40, 42 (already cited), 67, 86, 89, 111, 131, 160, 163, 167. He refers to the work on his sociology, too, in the letters to Nicola Trevisonno (1909-1913), published in *Appendix*, III, pp. 440, 443, 454, 455-456, 456.

(22) The information given above is derived from *Corrispondenza*, pp. 45, 47, 52, 65, 69, 70, 72, 78, 80.

to *La morale et la science des moeurs* by Lévy-Bruhl, which was never mentioned in the major work. The second article, *Non-logical actions*, is the almost literal reproduction of the chapter with the same title in the *Treatise*, from paragraph 147 to paragraph 247, except for paragraphs 187-216. Of greater interest, in my opinion, as throwing light on the function which Pareto assigned to sociology, is a letter to Pantaleoni of 15 March 1907, in which, after having clarified one of his favorite theses — the difference between the direct line AL which links the logical world L to action A, and the indirect line LPSA which links the logical world L to action A, via the feelings (“sentimenti”) S, he concludes: “One of the main tasks of sociology consists in studying the line LPS and then the line SA. As to the line AL, this is a matter for logic and not sociology” (III, p. 24). And this was in fact the function discharged in the greater part of the *Treatise*; and it was to be the function which, in addition to distinguishing sociology from logic, was to distinguish Pareto’s sociology from the works that had been written up till then (and also from those that were to be written after). There is a clear and forceful summary of this vital core, out of which his sociology developed, in the following five propositions which, too, are set out in a letter to his friend (24 September 1909); “1) Men’s theories and beliefs are the cloak of their feelings, which are the only driving force behind human actions; 2) in social evolution, it is possible to arrive at one and the same goal with theories and beliefs that are different, opposed to each other and in patent contradiction; 3) theories are the language of feeling...; 4) as a language gives way to another (e.g. Latin to Italian), in the same way a theory gives way to another (Marxism to theory x); 5) at times the change-over is only a matter of form (paganism and Christianity); at times, it is one of substance, and an effort is made to preserve the form (rationalistic Protestants believe they are Christians; Sorel thinks he is a Marxist)” (III, p. 141).

5. The proof-reading took much longer than had been expected. The publisher hoped to issue the two volumes at the end of the first term of 1913 (23). As it was, they were to come out at the end

(23) For this information and that given below cf. *Corrispondenza*, pp. 80, 84, 88, 90, 92, 96, 98; and III, pp. 172, 176, 177, 194. Cf. also T. GIACALONE-MONACO, “Vilfredo Pareto”, *Dal carteggio con Carlo Placci*, Padua, Cedam, 1957, pp. 90, 92, 93.

of 1916. Pareto was generally less optimistic than the publisher. He complains of the delays in printing; but I have the feeling that he was one of these authors who drive their printers to despair because he did not confine himself to correcting and filing but rewrote, switched passages about and made additions (24). When war broke out, he had proof-read a third of the second volume. Pareto wanted to suspend work because it appeared to him unseemly to go on with a peace-time book during the war. But Barbera decided to press on to the end. By October 1914, there were only two chapters to be done. But, because of the greater difficulties of communication, the movement of the proofs from Lausanne to Florence slowed down. Then time was needed for the indices, the compilation of which was entrusted to Amoroso. In March 1915, Pareto was counting on the publication taking place in a few months' time. But over a year was to go by before he could announce (in August 1916), this time correctly as it turned out, that the publisher had decided to bring it out in October, even if October then became November (25). On 11 November 1916, he wrote to Sensini: “The *Sociology* is about to be published...”; on 20 November to Pantaleoni: “By the way, Barbera is publishing my *Sociology* on the 25 of this month. God, the censorship and the mail willing, you will soon be getting a copy” (III, p. 194).

In the course of the proof-reading, Pareto refers to two appendices (26); but these were never to be published. In the *Foreword* to the *Treatise*, he refers to an *Appendix* in which he proposes to study the theoretical outcome of the sociological experiment underway, but he postponed this project till the end of the war. This is probably the same appendix announced to Pantaleoni in a letter of 5 January 1916: “Perhaps the day will come when it will be possible to write freely. If by then I am still alive, I will write about these questions, and will put an appendix to my *Sociology*” (III, p. 186). In paragraph 2293, he refers to an *Appendix II* which was to contain statistical data regarding the movement of France's

(24) Sending a copy of the first proofs to Treviso, he recommends him not to show them to anyone. He considers them “a very defective proof”, since “it has a large number of corrections, modifications, additions to the second proofs” (III, p. 456).

(25) *Corrispondenza*, p. 98.

(26) *Corrispondenza*, p. 90.

foreign trade. In the same *Foreword*, he announces that "the appendices, the additions and the corrections to Volume II will make up a section that will be issued after the war". As it is well known, the *Addenda* and *Corrigenda*, which fill some twenty pages after the indices, refer only to the first volume (but some of the corrections are to the second as well). We know, too, from the correspondence with Barbera, published as an appendix to the letters to Pantaleoni, that Pareto had promised to write a third volume, but, once the first two had come out, he postponed this till peace was concluded "since only then can it be written" (III, p. 438) (27). And this third volume, too, was never to see the light.

In spite of this unfulfilled promise, sociology continued to be Pareto's main interest after the publication of the *Treatise* right up to his death. He prepared a French edition (which was published by Payot in 1917-1919) and in which he made some additions to the second volume. He also prepared a second Italian edition which came out in 1923, while the Egyptologist, Giulio Farina published in 1920, also with Barbera, the *Compendio di sociologia generale* (28). He repeatedly expressed his intention of dedicating the last years of his life to a clear-sighted observation of politics with a view to finding confirmations of the uniformities discovered in his *Treatise*. In a letter to Pansini of 11 June 1917, he speaks of "seeking experimental confirmations of the uniformities set out in the *Sociology*" (29). He told Sensini, a year before he died, on 1 April 1922: "I am writing articles in papers and reviews because they afford me an opportunity of applying and verifying the general theorems of the *Sociology*" (*Corrispondenza*, p. 135). In one of his letters from his last years (24 December 1921) to Pantaleoni, he clearly gives to understand, in one of his usual outbursts against politicians, the importance that he attributes to the *Sociology* and

(27) Cf. also a letter to Vittore Pansini, quoted by T. GIACALONE-MONACO, *Pareto and Sorel*, II vol., Padua, Cedam, 1961, p. 202. It is probably this third volume to which reference is made in paragraph 15 of the *Treatise*: "In another work it will be possible to continue the study I have undertaken and look for the particular forms of the various social phenomena of which we have here found the general forms".

(28) There is a not entirely favorable judgement on the *Compendio* in a letter to G. H. Bousquet in 1922: "Lettres de Vilfredo Pareto à G. H. Bousquet", in *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, XXXI, 1953, p. 278.

(29) *Op. cit.*, p. 200.

his pride in having written it: "Lastly, I must recognize my debt to Bondi and Luzzatti, since it was they who, involuntarily, drove me in to going to Lausanne and to dedicating myself completely to science. But for them, I would perhaps never have written the *Sociology*" (III, p. 301).

6. As we have seen, Pareto was perfectly conscious of having composed an original work. After so many years, and after so much water has passed under sociology's bridges, we are in a position to say that its originality lay in the very fact that most of the questions dealt with were new as compared with the usual matter covered by that science. It has been rightly observed that the great treatises on sociology of the positivistic age were more like philosophy of history, except for the claim, not always justified, that they derived principles from the observation of facts. In reality, Pareto's *Treatise*, if we disregard the last two chapters which discuss the *élites* and their movement, has no connection with a philosophy of history.

Where Pareto had gone beyond his contemporaries was in having, if I may be pardoned an Irishism, taken one step back, that is, in having realized that, before constructing new theories, it was a good thing to become aware of the mistakes that infected the old ones. For over a thousand pages, the *Treatise* could also be considered as a vast critique of the sources, those, of course, that are used by historians, sociologists and social scientists in general to reconstruct facts, and go back from facts to principles. The central idea behind this critique of the sources is that men in most cases are dominated by their passions when they act, but tend to clothe these impulses in logical or pseudo-logical arguments. It is from this central idea that the fundamental themes of the *Treatise* are derived — the characterization of non-logical actions, the distinction between logico-experimental theories, where the criterion for evaluation is truth or error, and non-logico-experimental theories, which have to be evaluated by the yard-stick either of their persuasive force or social utility; and lastly the distinction, within non-logico-experimental theories, between those elements which are a manifestation of feeling (residues) and those that show the need to reason about them (derivations). But, as will be seen, these three considerations do not take us beyond research preparatory to sociology strictly

speaking. The question under examination, in a word, is not so much society itself as theories about society. For this reason, I strongly believe that we may speak of the *Treatise*, without forcing matters too much, as an introductory illustration, enriched with extremely abundant examples, to several of the basic principles of historical and sociological research.

If we try and see what Pareto himself thought of this point, once he had laid down his pen, we will be surprised to note that, in the *Index to the contents*, the first time that he mentions the verbal manifestations with which men tend to conceal their own instincts, he warns us: "One of the aims of the present work is to scrip off these veils from reality"; and, still more vigorously, when he comes to the item *Derivations*, he makes this comment: "The whole of the present work is a search for the reality that is concealed behind the derivations, as I have understood them from the documents". In a letter to Pantaleoni, after having for the hundredth time repeated that men act according to their feelings and not their reasonings, he concludes thus: "I find it impossible to understand history without that principle; but, with the help of it, a lot of things seem to me very easy to grasp" (III, p. 231) (30).

These, and only these, are the subjects, as we have seen, to which Pareto frequently reverts in his letters, when he sets out to explain the basic criteria which inspire his work as a sociologist. And for this reason, too, the reading of the correspondence seems to us particularly instructive. In the years that followed the publication of the *Treatise*, Pareto speaks with unconcealed pleasure of his work; often he speaks only to complain that nobody manages to approach it from the right angle or to understand its real meaning (but he makes an exception for the extensive summary by Sensini in the *Rivista italiana di sociologia*) (31). He refers to it as to a text in which the intelligent reader might find the key to historical events, past, present and future, and in which, at bottom,

(30) A similar affirmation is to be found in a letter several years earlier (December 7, 1907) to Antonucci, *Alcune lettere di Vilfredo Pareto pubblicate e commentate da A. Antonucci*, Rome, edited by Professor P. Maglione, 1938, pp. 24-25.

(31) G. SENSINI, "La sociologia generale di Vilfredo Pareto", in the *Rivista italiana di sociologia*, XXI, 1917, pp. 198-253. On this review, cf. III, p. 215; *Corrispondenza*, p. 106. He also praises the review by Papini (*Corrispondenza*, p. 101).

everything has really been said which had to be said (32). Two passages, at least, seem to me to be particularly indicative of this attitude, and I quote them as a conclusive, and I hope concluding comment on the preceding development:

1) Letter of 4 September 1919: "To deal with a question there are two methods to wit: (a) one says what one imagines is *useful*; (b) one says what one thinks is in accordance with *experience*. One is different from the other. This is one of the basic principles of my *Sociology* (III, p. 254).

2) Letter of 22 May 1921: My *Treatise on Sociology* is an attempt, however imperfect, to introduce into the social sciences that *relativity* which, in a much more perfect way, has now been introduced into the physical sciences. From the metaphysical absolute, we are gradually moving towards experimental relativity. A tremendous step forward had been made by Galileo, Copernicus and Newton. Another is now being made by Einstein. Who knows whether, a century from now, an odd copy of the *Sociology* will have escaped being devoured by the rats, and some researcher will find that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was an author who tried to introduce the principle of relativity into the social sciences. And he will say: 'Why on earth was this not understood, when this principle made such easy inroads into the physical sciences?' I think he will reply: 'Because at that time, as at all times, the social sciences were immensely backward as compared with the physical sciences' (III, p. 283).

Both passages bring out aspects of the work which are, broadly speaking, methodological. The second one clearly specifies, no matter whether rightly or wrongly, the novelty of the work as consisting in a reform of method. In the speech delivered on the occasion of the honours paid to him by the University of Lausanne on July 6 1917, Pareto concluded that the only objective of the *Treatise* "I say, only, and I stress the point — is to seek for experimental reality through the application to the social sciences of the methods that have proved their worth in physics, chemistry, astronomy, biology

(32) Cf. for example the characteristic letter of December 20, 1918 in which, with a touch of self-importance, he refers his friend to some of the best known theses of his sociology (III, pp. 241-243).

and other similar sciences" (33). Precisely because he had introduced a reform of methods, Pareto felt that he had succeeded in establishing uniformities which corresponded more closely to the facts and in being able to make more probable forecasts. Which explains, among other things why, once he had written the *Treatise*, he adopted that purely contemplative attitude towards history, an attitude of detached disinterest, of tranquil (*ma non troppo*) impassiveness of a bystander who looks on at what is happening in the world because he can in any case do absolutely nothing about it. Like the astronomer, who, after having formulated his theory about the eclipse, which is his business, patiently takes his stand at the telescope to observe the movement of the stars which is not his business. Not that Pareto did not realize how singular and socially useless his attitude was. But he set his mind at rest by comparing himself to the friars of the Middle Ages who had preserved Greek and Latin texts and thus helped on, though indirectly, the culture of mankind: provided, of course, that there were not too many of them. And he concluded, in an ironical vein: "A lot of hermits like the one at Céligny would be harmful, but only one will do no harm. A nut in a barrel makes no noise" (III, p. 255).

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(33) Published by G. BORGATTA, "L'opera sociologica e le feste giubilari di Vilfredo Pareto", in *Riforma sociale*, XXVIII, 1917, pp. 601-641. The passage cited is on p. 614. Pareto's address, called "Il metodo sperimentale nelle scienze sociali", was published also in *La libertà economica*, XV, August 15, 1917, pp. 207-212