PARETO AND THE MISSING CONCEPT OF PRUDENCE

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Vilfredo Pareto’s theories of elite circulation and revolution, which used Machiavelli’s *lions* and *foxes* as tentative psycho-cultural descriptors for mass social groups, both to theorise inter-elite conflict and relations between elites and non-elites, were an early accomplishment (Pareto 1991) following his turn from economics to a more all-encompassing social theory at the close of the 19th century. Although his (1984) *Transformation of Democracy*, completed shortly before his death in 1923, brought his sociological project to its completion, it is nonetheless the long four volume (1935) *Treatise on General Sociology*, completed around 1916, which remains the richest source for contemporary academics seeking to appraise his lasting contribution to social theory.

This article celebrates the centenary of the *Treatise’s* original publication by subjecting it to a new form of interpretation. Fundamentally at issue is the question of what sort of *Mirror for Princes* self-help guidance it offers – and for whom. This concern has particular urgency in view of the fact that Pareto’s contribution to sociology was deeply engaged with issues that mattered greatly to political activists in his day (Marshall 2007) and which, as will be illustrated in the present article, continue to matter greatly. For that reason alone it can be claimed that time continues to vindicate the timeless relevance of Pareto’s contribution to sociology. Similarly this may be why many social theorists continue to avoid Pareto. As will be clarified in this article, the analytical toolbox he offers is also a tinderbox which each successive generation of political activists may use to further ignite the major political conflicts of their day.

1. Lions and foxes today

Particular attention will be paid to how the psycho-cultural clash between the Machiavellian-Paretian *lion* and *fox* plays out today within online political activism. On many internet blogs and news stations, and in particular those leaning towards what is now widely termed the *alt right* (The Economist 2016), forms of political extremism that chime with many of Pareto’s ideas, and which were hitherto dismissed or suppressed by mass media, are now capitalising on record levels of distrust in mass media (Gallup 2015) to attract huge followings. Moreover some of these websites (e.g. Hamilton 2014) look explicitly to Pareto as a sociologist who opposed Marxism.

Were Pareto writing the *Treatise* today, he would doubtless have regarded the asymmetric *information wars* (Crilley 2001) which the *alt right* movement is waging against global mass media (which the *alt right* are increasingly denouncing as a *regressive* liberal-leftist media) as an important and perhaps even paramount domain of *non-elite* vs *elite* conflict. Notably, the terms *regressive liberal* and *regressive left* (Nawaz 2012, p. 201) are widely used by the *alt right* today to attack media and state policies that are perceived to reflect the hypocrisy of a naive cultural relativist stance which, on the one hand, purports to celebrate freedoms of thought and action, and yet, on the other hand, stifles critical debate on the aspects of extremist Islamist ideology which the *alt right* perceives to be colonising western countries and threatening these same values with extinction. It seems likely that Pareto, if writing today, may well have referred to this growing tension to illustrate his theory of revolution, according to which nothing incurs the wrath of the non-elite *lion* more than the hypocrisy, vacillation, weakness and myopia which they perceive the elite *fox* to possess (Marshall 2007, p.16)*.*

In this virtual environment of political conflict, exploration of and provisional commitment to political ideology seems to be increasingly bound up with preferences for tentative pseudo-identities (e.g. Erikson 1968; West, Martin 1994) which experimentally seek to resolve the identity confusions of modern life. As Zizek (2009) has famously argued, one no longer needs to believe in an ideology in order to commit to it; rather such commitment is increasingly taking on the character of enjoyment, which is superficially split from yet in servitude to the more serious mental health issue of exploratory identity consumption. Moreover Zizek sets this development within the broader context of capitalist consumption becoming the dominant frame for finding meaning which positions and values the self within the world. Accordingly it becomes important to inquire into the flow and tentative experimental uptake of extremist ideas through the internet, considering especially that Pareto’s sociology is centralised on two broad psycho-cultural patterns and related ideologies, which appear to be highly relevant to such experimental consumption by growing numbers of internet users drawn to online extremism.

As Aron’s (1968) contribution to Pareto scholarship emphasises, each new European political and economic climate creates a fresh challenge for re-examining the meaning of Pareto’s work, in terms of the shifting balance between its destructive and emancipatory potentials. The rise of Mussolini, the great totalitarianisms of the 20th century and then the cold war, all established new evaluative contexts which permitted Aron to revise his evaluations of Pareto in more kindly directions (Campbell 1986). It seems likely that were Aron, and indeed Pareto, alive today, issues of online political extremism in response to recurrent banking crises, the future of the European Union, Brexit, the migrant crisis and cultural clash linked to Islamic immigration, would almost certainly have played an important role in driving both Pareto’s social-theoretical work and Aron’s critical evaluation of it. Perhaps what is particularly different today, however, is the more experimental and subtle nature of the commitment to the dangerous *leonine* pattern that Pareto wrote about. This shift entails that political extremism need not require any public activity at all. Instead it can be pursued anonymously, by anyone, with no accountability or challenge, from an armchair. These circumstances of course allow ideological beliefs to fester through dehumanising rigid abstraction, in proportion to the degree of remoteness between the extremist activists and the social groups unfortunate enough to be selected as their ideological scapegoats, or who are otherwise significant to them as threat objects. Consequently, by degrees, such activism might often illustrate what Arendt (1968) called the *banality of evil*. Yet it may also swell the ranks of those groups known as *moderate extremists* who are of interest to psefologists due to the disproportionate influences they often exert during democratic elections (Merrill, Grofman 1999).

Consider, within those contexts, that at the time of writing this paper, the tiny extremist organisation *Britain First*, which draws recruits from the *British National Party* and the *English Defence League*, boasts that its *facebook* webpage has more than a million *likes*. This is more than has been achieved by the facebook webpages of the mainstream UK Conservative and Labour Parties combined (Withnall 2015). Even allowing for the rumoured possibility of some technological manipulation to produce this statistic, it is plain that extremisms are able to project voices which in previous decades were far less audible to mass audiences. To reiterate, then, insofar as such audiences follow increasingly individualised life courses of relative social alienation, they may be expected to increasingly turn to such sources. Ethical concern should perhaps give regard to the following matters under these circumstances. Firstly, it is concerning that the Machiavellian-Paretian *lion* or *type B* political actor (see Pareto 1935, § 2268) seems to be taking virulent new and technologically-liberated forms. Yet arguably what is even more concerning is what remains consistent with many grizzly historical precedents; that is, such types continue to wage a timeless conflict against the Machiavellian-Paretian *fox* (either in the specific form of the *type A* political actor or in the form of the *speculator* economic actor (see ivi § 2233), holding it in bitter contempt and to blame for much that is wrong with the world.

One relatively simple contributing explanation for this historical continuity is Marshall’s (2007 chapter 4, especially p. 87) suggestion that, very broadly speaking, the lion and the fox are explicable psychoanalytically as struggling with the same troubled inner life dominated by intrapsychic conflict between *obedience* and *defiance* since very early childhood. On this argument, lions cope through superficial resolution on the side of *obedience* while foxes opt for the *defiance* solution. However, both continue to experience these resolutions as precarious. What leads each to despise the other is that each then goes through life discerning a threatening and repressed aspect of the self in the other. Projecting aggression towards the other then becomes the solution. This maintains each type’s preferred conflict resolution by staving off the conflict anxiety which reveals these resolutions to be precarious – at least for a while. On that view, the *lion-fox* antagonism is an inevitable outgrowth from the presence of large numbers of intrapsychically conflicted persons in every society – and it can perhaps always be expected to strain towards political forms of expression.

To further theorise this conflict within the context of Zizek’s argument relating ideology to experimental identity consumption, we might surmise that just as each political extremism is increasingly constructed through the experimental consumption of a pseudo-identity, so too conceptions of social threat which sustain such extremism might increasingly be constructed from contrasting, vilified pseudo-identities with which downward social comparisons can be made and aggression can be discharged. Hence, conceivably, the clash between the *lion* and the *fox* could easily play out as intrapsychic conflict that manifests as a clash of two experimental personalities which emerge within one person at different times.

This approach to understanding the extremist political imagination, which in the light of the above arguments we might regard as often serving the simple purpose of routine everyday self-esteem maintenance, offers new context for valuing Pareto’s warning, made with the rise of Mussolini in mind, that the *lion* may one day «reach the *fox* with a well-aimed cuff» (Pareto 1935, § 2480, footnote). More fully, we might say that the problem whereby Pareto lays sociological emphasis on a psycho-cultural antagonism that can matter greatly to extremists by providing ideological justification for assaults on elite power, poses an enormous ethical challenge for Pareto scholarship. A key ethical question arising, then, is whether such conflict can be tamed or even redirected in some way – perhaps through some fresh appeal to those immersed in it.

To address this problem more fully, it is worth recognising that Pareto is conspicuous among early contributors to sociology for developing «the most elaborate approach to the psychological pole» within that discipline (Berger, Luckman 1971, p. 220); that is, Pareto’s *Treatise* shows how it is possible to explore major social phenomena through the lens of individual behavioural psychology. A problem arising, however, it is that although the *Treatise* strove to achieve something far more ambitious (by preferring the concept of complex equilibrium over psychological and other forms of reductionist explanation (Parsons 1941, p. 181) the centrality granted to what are clearly discernible as Machiavelli’s *lion* and *fox* patterns nonetheless invites irresponsible complexity reduction where readers, perhaps not fully familiar with Pareto’s work, are inspired to form ideologies focused on this clash of personality. Adding impetus to this, it is possible, to reiterate, that many of Pareto’s readers will do this to facilitate their own subliminal identity work. This possibility is further explicable with reference to Harold Lasswell’s (1951) key principle of political psychology which views *homo politicus* as someone who displaces private motives onto public objects. Taking this view, we begin to see more clearly that very powerful ego-defensive needs may underlie much of the fascination that exists with Pareto’s clash between the lion and the fox. By the same token, it becomes clearer that ethical problems and solutions associated with Pareto’s work are perhaps best framed on the same individual psychological levels as are likely to matter to many of his readers. It is with this possibility in mind that this paper proposes a new way to read the *Treatise* which its readers, drawn to the text by its implications for their identity work, are likely to value because it can also stimulate such identity work and send it in very positive directions.

Taking stock, the present paper directs some theoretical scrutiny both at the *Treatise* and at its likely contemporary readerships who may become ensconced in its ideas. In particular, this exercise requires asking how we might best frame the benefits available for those who either take the considerable time necessary to read the immense four volume text, or, as is more likely to be the case, to access its ideas indirectly and selectively – or indeed wishfully – through the many academic commentaries and online *précis* available which invite simplified understandings. The proposed solution will be the ethical imperative to make it more widely understood that reading Pareto’s *Treatise* can help conceivably any reader to improve their intellectual and ethical faculty of *prudence –* which will be conceived as a vital driver of self-development in general and of mature and democratic forms of political consciousness in particular. Moreover, it will be presented as a faculty whose development entails that individuals who are experimenting with, or who have thoroughly internalised, the *lion* or the *fox* pattern, strive to develop more reflective experimental use of such patterns. This concern to resituate use of animal spirits within a much broader and arguably much more fascinating context of being and identity, is intended to raise identity work to a much higher plateau - one far more concerned with ethics and reason, as well as with much better prospects for ongoing self-development and flourishing.

More fully, then, prudence is discussed below as a universal human faculty where a fundamental and irreducible motivation to look to the future with care, clearsightedness and apprehension, leads by degrees both to higher order self-governance and to virtuosity. A key consideration will be that it may be in the nature of the *Treatise* to invite misanthropic readerships which are excessively disinterested in, and perhaps in some cases more animatedly averse to, this notion of the ethical, truth-seeking, virtuous self. There is certainly some irony here. Readerships motivated to approach the textas truth-seekers may, as James Burnham (1943) argued convincingly in his portrayal of Machiavellians as *defenders of freedom*, find much of value that ordinary citizens need to know if they are to effectively pursue counter-Machiavellian strategies of political followership. And yet, such truth-seekers may be encouraged by what they read in the *Treatise* to attribute greatly diminished truth-seeking capacities to the social actors whose countless errors and misdemeanours (see Meisel, ed. by, 1965, p. 26 on Pareto’s *error complex*) fill its pages*.*

Following this line of criticism, it can be speculated that such disinterest or aversion might often underlie the dispositions of some readers to wallow, along with Pareto, in perceptions of the grim inevitability of elite rule and of what they perceive as the related frailty and foolishness of human nature (see Parsons 1949, p. 293; Meisel, ed. by, 1965, p. 26) rather than adjust towards a more balanced overview with reference to the dynamic emancipatory potential within human nature that might allow such problems to be overcome, and which thereby challenges Pareto’s historical pessimism. Anyone interested in the psychology of such readership may find longstanding research into the clustering of elitism, cynicism and low self-esteem (e.g. Sniderman 1975), that is often found within broader patterns of psychological conservatism (e.g. Wilson 1973), to be particularly illuminating.

This line of criticism might also take into consideration Marshall’s (2007) analysis of the Machiavellian-Paretian *lion* and *fox* which observes that the former finds validation within contemporary psychology as the widespread authoritarian-conservative pattern while the latter is widely studied today using the closely related patterns of Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism (all of which seem to be widespread and on the rise within contemporary society). Taking stock of that analysis, which advises that both *lions* and *foxes* are very real and, worryingly, do seem to be locked in psycho-political conflict in sociologically significant numbers today just as they were in Pareto’s time, one possible criticism which can be levelled against some contemporary *Treatise* readers is that they may warm to the text because what they find reflected, and, in effect, recommended to them as something that should be pushed to the fore within their political imaginations, is the very same distrustful and conflictual political consciousness as they themselves possess, either as *lions* or as *foxes*. What starts to emerge on this view is that both outlooks might then find academic validation for some pre-existing paranoia where combativeness and distrust, and perceptions of these same attributes in each other, might feed off one another and thus help to drive the real life antagonism between the *lion* and the *fox.*

This notion that both patterns possess the same basic conflict orientation (noting, of course, that they remain divided by preferences for *force* and *fraud* as strategic preferences for engaging in such conflict (ivi, p. 116) deserves some further clarification and evidence. A hallmark of the authoritarian worldview seems to be a view of the social world as one of *‘dog eat dog’* within a *‘competitive jungle’* (Duckitt 2001) where *‘animals either eat or are eaten’* (Lowenfeld 1945). Exactly this has also very commonly been claimed of both Machiavellians (Christie, Geis 1970) and narcissists (Horny 1950). There seems to be a real danger then, that for some readers of the *Treatise* at least, what is on offer is *mirror for misanthropes* guidance which centralises this conflictual orientation within political consciousness. Hence what Pareto scholarship requires is some theoretical counterweight to this potentially very powerful influence which Pareto may have on some of his readers – and in particular those readers who are most likely to harness Pareto’s insights to destructive ends. Vital within this context is the ethical imperative to ask *what is missing* from such misanthropic, conflictual and pessimistic understandings of social action, and which can thus point the way towards how such understandings may be improved through more enlightened reflection upon the learning value of the text.

In establishing the need for this paper, it was considered that although Pareto, following Machiavelli, provides highly astute learning examples with timeless relevance, the best educators are not those who, like Pareto, are pessimistic about prospects for learning from the mistakes of history, or indeed for achieving higher order intellectual and ethical governance over the psychological, cultural or other situational influences that lead social actors to make these mistakes. Prudence will now be discussed throughout the remainder of this article as the human faculty which provides such governance, and as a concept, not just missing from but also alien to Pareto’s sociological work, which is needed to solve the puzzle of what we can and should aspire to learn from that work today. More fully, prudence will be explained as perhaps the most important aspect of common humanity that matters as a factor in social action, which, being excluded from Pareto’s own account of social action, he could not turn to, either to attune the reader to the value of that work, or to encourage ethical responsibility in its use.

And yet, the present paper emphatically does not seek to claim that Pareto *must* be read as having underplayed the importance of prudence within his descriptive claims concerning social action. Some may value the arguments now presented below for alerting them to a vital factor in social action which Pareto erroneously did not consider important or relevant. Others may value these same arguments on the basis that Pareto can be read as implicitly warning of the absence of prudence as a factor in social action – and they may find it heartening that he, perhaps intentionally, or perhaps not fully appreciating the true nature of his communication, offers a voice which is clearly audible to, and can very productively instruct, the faculty of prudence which this article represents as universal within human nature.

The following section, *Prudence for Princes*, focuses theoretically on what prudence means and how reading the *Treatise* can help sharpen one’s faculty of prudence. Following that, the section on *Extremist Readerships* looks more specifically at online political extremism today, showing how a concern to read the *Treatise* with the purpose of cultivating prudence in mind, might help to rescue such individuals and redirect their political imagination and self-development in more constructive directions. Final conclusions are then drawn regarding the ethical future for Pareto scholarship.

1. PRUDENCE FOR PRINCES

To further examine this basis for reading and appreciating Pareto, prudence can perhaps best be introduced with reference to the origination of humanist psychology within Aristotle’s view that *phronesis* (practical wisdom) co-evolves with self-knowledge and virtuosity as people strain over time towards *eudaimonia* (happiness or flourishing) (Cooper 1975). Owing to this origin as *phronesis*, the faculty of prudence is usually considered operative outwith contexts of *sophia* (teachable theoretical reasoning) and *techné* (perfectable craftsmanship to create something specific to satisfy known criteria). Instead it pertains to *praxis* where there is some experimental and learning experience, and some mutually transformative relationship, between the human subject, on the one side, and the unique and constantly changing circumstances with which they engage, on the other side.

Prudence can therefore be considered a primary motivation, disposition or habit, inherent within each person’s being and continually striving for its own improvement, which comports people to engage with practical challenges that are not soluble by theoretical reason – and which can be said to correspond to the broad behavioural domain which Pareto equated to psychicially driven *non-logical conduct* (e.g. Pareto 1935, § 161). In Josef Pieper’s classic (1966) interpretation, this primary motivation comprises a fusion of intellect and ethical sense. These are considered so mutually interdependent as to constitute a singular motivation which drives enlightened self-governance, ethically engaged vigilance towards what is happening in the world around them, and commitment to dependent virtues such as fortitude, justice and temperance.

This paper cannot devote significant attention to detailed analysis of this claim of fusion between intellect and ethical sense. Clearly the concept of evil genius represents a problem for it. Nonetheless, suffice to say that truth benefits from ethics to stimulate its theoretical imagination, and in particular to stimulate the long and large view of things where consideration is shown for others, using flexible intertemporal framing. Ethical resolve also strengthens willingness to acknowledge and confront truth, which is otherwise highly susceptible to amnesia and distortion. Some converse benefits for ethics of truth-seeking are also easy to establish. Ethics needs a concern for truth because without it, it remains blind and cannot experiment and progress within the world. To extend this ‘vision’ metaphor, *clearsightedness* is an important and rather ingenious term which Pieper repeatedly uses to stand for the fusion of truth with ethical sense. The term refers not simply to visible possibilities for thought and action, but more fully to what possibilities have ethical significance for the further cultivation of the self, which, moreover, matter from the standpoint of someone who is able to make intertemporal trade-offs between what matters over short and longer terms.

Very similarly, when interpreting the older Ancient Greek term *phronesis,* Martin Heidegger famously refers to this same faculty as a mode of being-in-the-world characterised by *caring, seeing and knowing*. This has led directly to the more recent concept of *caring leadership*, whose behavioural manifestations as *leaping into* and *leaping ahead* within situations (see Tomkins, Simpson 2015) further serves to affirm that clearsightedness requires an extremely active intellect where great creative imagination is placed at the service of foresight. Taken together, these basic concepts situate us on exactly the ontological territory we need to be on if we are to appreciate the vital aspect of humanity missing from Pareto’s account of social action – and which we should perhaps regard as the motivation, disposition or habit that makes humans vigilant against and comported to learn from the failures – we might now turn to call these *failures of clearsightedness* – which fill the *Treatise.*

Following Thomas Aquinas’ late 13th Century *Summa Theologiae*, whose seminal writings on prudence were incorporated within the Cathechism of the Catholic Church only as recently as the 1990s, the teleology for Aristotelian flourishing was extended beyond the notion that human flourishing can be derived from participation in public life, to further encompass Christian salvation; that is, it now became prudent to prefer martyrdom to worldly goals. In this vein Aquinas differentiated between true prudence, which effectively became an ethical and intellectual faculty bound up with the Christian mystery of virtuous personhood – considered in particular as something that both precedes and forever remains held partly in reserve from worldly manifestation and engagement, and *false prudence*, which he considered dedicated to destructive pursuit of worldly goals (Pieper 1966). As a tentative aside, it is interesting to once more contemplate differences between *lions* and *foxes* with this in mind.

Of very specific interest to the present article is that at this point *false prudence* stands revealed as perhaps equating to animal spirit guidance. Aquinas’ view of false prudence focuses on a worldly decay of ethics and intellect through *astutia* and *covetousness*. Here in particular we begin to appreciate more keenly how prudence and Pareto’s *Treatise* are linked. Aquinas’ warnings against false prudence, considered as *covetousness* and *astutia*, certainly provide an analytical lens enabling the excesses of the Machiavellian-Paretian *fox* in political life (e.g. Pareto 1935, § 2268), and their equivalent in economic life, the *speculator* (e.g. ivi, § 2233), to be better explained and understood. A close reading of Pieper’s text can be very revealing in this respect. Moreover, we can begin to appreciate that prudence becomes protective against such false prudence where it comprises a *mindfulness* that can help people, as they experience their own emotional responses to changing circumstances, to avoid falling prey to such false prudence, as well as to help others avoid falling prey to it (and to remain vigilant against being preyed on by others who have succumbed to it). *Mindfulness* is important then, as a faculty within general social cognition, which permits us to better appreciate the nature of prudence in its aspect as a foil to false prudence. McEvilley (2006) in particular, writing from a concern to trace the lineage of ideas from Ancient India to pre-Socratic Greece, has suggested that mindfulness underlies both ancient and modern understandings of *phronesis*.

More fully, then, it might be ventured that Pareto’s *Treatise* can usefully be read *as if* its fundamental concern is to enhance the prudent mindfulness of elite and/or non-elite social actors who confront the various political, economic and social challenges which Pareto began to outline and interrelate in his historical cycle theory (see especially Powers 1987). Taking this approach it becomes possible to argue that reading Pareto can help people appreciate how these challenges can, rather than stimulate the intellectual and ethical decay associated with the mindlessness that results from seizure by an animal spirit, instead stimulate the tightly interrelated co-development of their powers of ethics, reason and self-knowledge.

Of course, Pareto’s *Treatise* expressly regards such processes of virtuous self-improvement and flourishing (whether secular-psychological or spiritual) as lying beyond the concerns of the social scientist (e.g. Parsons 1949, p. 181; Pareto, 1935, § 59). Moreover, insofar as it employed Machiavelli’s *fox* and *lion* animal spirits, recast as class I and class II *residues* in an effort to render them scientifically valid and grant them broader psycho-cultural meaning as the key independent variables within his representation of social equilibrium (ivi, §§ 2079-2080) it may be strongly construed that he viewed virtuous self-improvement as sadly lacking throughout human history. Furthermore it is notable that throughout the *Treatise* Pareto repeatedly mocked Aristotelian humanism’s purported link between virtue and happiness instead of problematizing or seeking to distil some value from it (e.g. ivi, § 966, pp. 1486-1496). Such passages of course support the common view of Pareto as standard-bearer for Machiavelli’s much earlier war on two fronts against both humanist and Christian misrepresentations of human nature – which essentially argues that it is beast in man that matters if we are to discern the behavioural realities that drive public affairs.

These views also invite closer speculation on Pareto’s purpose in writing the *Treatise.* Noting that Pareto stands paramount among other major 19th and 20th century contributors to Italian social theory – perhaps most notably, Mosca and Gramsci – whose deliberations on human nature and/or strategy reveal a shared Machiavellian philosophical and psychological realist ancestry, one important general similarity in the basic motivations of both Machiavelli and Pareto becomes very clear. In focusing their historical and political discussions upon those *vulpine* (fox-like) and *leonine* (lion-like) behavioural patterns whose social agencies both thinkers considered fundamental determinants of either success or failure for social action, both were evidently providing historical learning examples for imitation or avoidance. Hence it makes sense to view the *Treatise* as situated somewhere within the *Mirror for Princes* guidance tradition that is perhaps most commonly associated with Machiavelli’s (1961 (1513]) *The Prince.*

Yet it remains important to inquire into exactly how such learning examples might play into our meaningful understanding. Precisely what should be learned? What should be imitated or avoided? There are important ontological issues here. It is argued below that the most valuable *Mirror for Princes* guidance available within Pareto’s *Treatise* is in fact very far removed from the misanthropic and pessimistic heart of Machiavellian realism with which we commonly associate Pareto. In fact, when we resituate Pareto within the more mainstream *Mirror for Princes* tradition which is careful to remind readers of their ethical responsibilities and linked capacities for self-governance, some surprising opportunities are created for strengthening the argument that we need the concept of *prudence* to solve the puzzle of what can be learned from Pareto.

To resituate Pareto in this way, Chapter xviii of *The Prince* is instructive (ivi, pp. ???). It mentions that Achilles and other ancient Princes learned from the half-man, half-beast Centaur Chiron, when to behave as men and when to ‘knowingly adopt the beast’. Notably this idea resonates with the point made at the start of this paper about commitment to ideology today increasingly having the character of experimental consumption. Machiavelli’s discussion then very famously advises power-seeking Princes to aspire to be ‘lions’ adept in the use of ‘force’ at times when it is necessary to ‘fright away the wolves’– and at other times to be ‘foxes’ when it is necessary to use ‘fraud’ to ‘avoid the snares’. It is argued elsewhere (e.g. Marshall, Guidi 2012) that this is a very rich idea which can be construed as referring to a functional need and, more specifically, to an evolutionary-hardwired behavioural tendency (Lopreato 1980; Crippen, Lopreato 1989), for people to become vulpine to cope with the social ‘snares’ that threaten to impede individual advantage within complex social environments, and to become leonine in order to thwart the ‘wolves’ that threaten social structures and resource flows during times of crisis and austerity. Furthermore this can be regarded as the original blueprint for Pareto’s theory of elite (mal)adaptation to the grand historical cycle (e.g. Pareto 1935, § 605–606, 2353–66, 2367–84).

Noting that this idea lies at the crux of Pareto’s sociological theory proposed within the *Treatise,* it becomes important to consider what sort of precedent Machiavelli sets in his consideration of what it means to be human when faced with the challenges posed by ‘snares’ and ‘wolves’. Chapter xviii does hold out some hope for political education to allow choices to submit to the right animal spirit, at the right time, to be planned, yet for Machiavelli, as later for his disciple Pareto, psychological pessimism creeps in with the expressed view that Princes tend to remain possessed by one animal spirit or the other. The key point we can take from this, then, is that within this chapter, Chiron makes a valuable point about self-governance in relation to animal spirits which, renders him an able spokesman for the mainstream *Mirror for Princes* tradition, and which renders his advice particularly valuable today - and yet which Machiavelli considered strongly at odds with behavioural reality.

To rescue the study of Machiavelli’s vulpine and leonine animal spirits from this trap by resituating it within a less pessimistic and more psychologically mature form of *Mirror for Princes* guidance, we can usefully enrich the meaning of Chiron’s instruction by first of all reiterating that some capacity for mindfulness, or indeed what psychologists variously prefer to call *metacognition* or *self-monitoring,* or higher level *self-governance*, is necessary if the deployment of one’s animal spirits is to be subject to some reasoning intelligence, monitoring and control. Prudence can readily be situated within this conceptual space. Pieper’s classic (1966) discussion of Prudence as the first of the Cardinal Virtues makes explicit reference such higher order governance by the prudent person, and with specific reference to the imperative that it should reign over lower order instinctual governance of the beast. Consider, again in reiteration, that prudence has, down the centuries been widely associated with the co-growth of practical wisdom with self-knowledge. This is why common depictions of prudence as a female allegorical figure, as typified by the statue of Prudence in St Peter’s Basilica in Rome, show her clutching a serpent (representing wisdom) in one hand and a mirror (representing self-knowledge) in the other. To understand Chiron’s instruction as having the character of animal spirit governance, then, we need therefore only think of Prudence’s mirror, further identifying this as the mirror required within *Mirror for Princes* guidance.

To make more practical sense of Chiron’s instruction from the standpoint of prudence’s mirror, it can be further observed that the higher order self-governance provided by the faculty of prudence can be considered *sophrosynic* in character. One common way to understand prudence as a virtue is, as is commonly proposed for virtues in general, to equate it with a capacity for balance and moderation between extreme positions. This is one of the main denotations of the Ancient Greek term *sophrosyne*, the other being its tendency to be used in Ancient Greece to refer to balance and moderation which is protective against *hubris* in particular (North 1966). Hence this term challenges us to understand how prudence can entail a balanced engagement with the problem of when to be man, and when to be beast, by strongly connoting the hubris, and by that token, the absence of self-knowledge, that might easily occur when people assume it is easy to choose man over beast. Such ‘hubris’ is often very commonly and passionately expressed. One famous example of this is in Victorian Poet William Henley’s (1888) poem *Invictus* which depicts each person as the ‘captain of their soul’. Another is in philosophy of character emphasising individual responsibility for one’s own character (Kupperman 1991). Hence this hubris problem is not something that can lend itself easily or uncontroversially to a balanced handling by those who experience it.

A sophrosynic approach to prudence might lead us to view the higher order self-governance of the prudent person as appreciating (perhaps using learning examples from Machiavelli or Pareto) just how precariously social actors often hang in the balance between man and beast, and furthermore to appreciate how difficult it is to pick up and put down the *lion* and the *fox* at will. Taking that approach, it arguably becomes possible to extract much of the value of Machiavellian-Paretian psychological realism while not succumbing to its pessimism. This notion of a *sophrosynic* understanding of prudence might then be further extended to also cover a less introspective and more outward care and concern which contemplates the salience of leonine or vulpine stances within the elites at any given time, which Pareto might be construed as facilitating through his work on elite circulation and the grand historical cycle.

In conclusion, then, insofar as it has a potential to provide historical learning examples for sophrosynically mindful prudence, the *Treatise* might be repositioned more effectively as an outgrowth from the broader and more mainstream medieval and renaissance *Mirror for Princes* tradition that reflects the early Christian appropriation of the Ancient Greek virtue doctrine that has practical wisdom at its core, and which since Thomas Aquinas 13th century contributions to Christian theology has been widely associated with the term *prudence.* A good example of such guidance is Thomas Aquinas’ (c. 1260) *De Regno ad Regem Cypri (*trans. *On Kingship to the King of Cyprus*). This advises Kings (*ibidem*, i, Chapter 1) that humans differ from animals because they are imbued with reason, knowledge and speech. The guidance speaks down the centuries to conceivably any reader by advising that they have the capacity to be ‘kings unto themselves’ – an interesting expression perhaps containing a veiled warning against hubris.

1. LEONINE EXTREMISM

The above arguments have developed a conception of prudence as something very delicate and at high risk of failure, thus setting a challenge for readers of the *Treatise* to strive over time, with growing self-knowledge, to acknowledge and eliminate their own frailties.Looking more closely at what *Prudence for Princes* guidance is on offer within the *Treatise* however entails looking specifically at what can be learned from Pareto’s many discussions of the influences of the class I and class II residues upon elite social actors. The present article cannot look in detail at the vulpine (fox-like) themes associated with the former and at the leonine themes associated with the latter. What can be asserted, to give some very brief examples, however, is that the prudent person can be theorised as needing to understand how prudence can be strengthened and/or undermined through both the vulpine preference for change and novelty, on the one hand, and the leonine preference for permanence and continuity on the other – these being the basic opposing principles that form the class I and class II residues respectively (see Pareto 1935, Chapter vi). Then it becomes important to further overlay the broad personality constellations of narcissism-Machiavellianism-psychopathy and conservatism-authoritarianism (Marshall 2007) in order to produce a richer understanding of the range of matters which the prudence person needs to give regard to. More fully still, it can be argued that to think thoroughly about what is happening within the complex social world, and about what possibilities for action (*leaping in* or *leaping ahead*) exist within that world, all individuals involved in political activism aspiring to improve their political consciousness need to allow *both* sets of principles and linked personality constellations to enrich their imaginations and, more specifically, to contribute to that clear-sighted vigilance towards both self and others, within the social world, that prudence entails.

It can also be argued that prudence requires political activists to be proficient in deriving practical insights from along the full length of this bi-polar continuum – and at making sensible trade-offs whenever these two opposing principles and personality constellations clash within their descriptive and/or normative imaginations. The great Paretian tragedy of their tendency to succumb to either the class i or class ii residues thus becomes comprehensible as a tragedy of imprudence, where their descriptive and normative imaginations remain immovable, or indeed at narrow bandwidth, within the class i – Class ii residue continuum. Instead of (let us call it) *scanning* backward and forward along this Paretian continuum as the intellectually and ethically free mind should if it truly aspires towards balanced and critical understanding, efforts by political activists to be prudent might easily remain dangerously underdeveloped of they stick or stay blinkered within this continuum.

At this point it is interesting to ask who are today’s most outspoken and controversial *leonine* political activists and just how amenable or obstinate might they be when presented with the above advocacy of mental agility? This question can be addressed, at least to some theoretical extent, with reference to one particularly extreme example of leonine political activism from the political blogosphere. This is selected on the basis that it would almost certainly have drawn Pareto’s interest were he writing about the clash of lions and foxes today.

The writer J. R. Nyquist has himself acquired a very ‘leonine’ reputation for his longstanding warnings that the USA remains at perilous military threat from Russia and China. In a recent online article (Nyquist 2014a) which despairs that the US government «has fallen to foxes» (ivi, pp. ???) and is therefore wholly unprepared to take these threats seriously, he seeks to emphasise just how psycho-culturally out-of-season leonine politics has become by giving the example of one particularly outspoken kindred leonine spirit called Ann Barnhardt. His commentary ends thus: «This brings us to the analysis of Ann Barnhardt, who in every respect presents the face of the outcast lion. She gives voice to everything that is out of fashion, yet obviously true. What she says is impossible, and what she proposes is outlandish in the eyes of all foxes» (ivi, p. ???). In a separate article (Idem 2014b) attention is drawn to Barnhardt’s gender. A man, Nyquist observes, would have found it reputationally much harder to adopt her extreme stances – entailing that perhaps today we can expect truer representations of the leonine pattern in *lionesses* rather than in *lions.*

The stances in question align broadly with those of many right wing paleoconservative Patriot groups in the USA and are spread across regular blog postings on the *barnhardt.biz* website and in numerous videos posted on Ann Barnhardt’s *youtube* video channel. Notably Barnhardt explicitly positions herself as a non-elite voice. Her Barnhardt axiom (posted to *barnhardt.biz* on December 19th 2015) holds that «The fact that a given person is holding or seeking high-level public office is, in and of itself, proof that said person is morally and/or psychologically UNFIT to hold public office». Anyone who knows the *Treatise* well will find in this axiom a very close correspondence with what Pareto says in his special (political) sociology (Pareto 1935, § 2268) concerning the dishonest deal-making skills and other ‘aptitudes for combinations’ which politicians require if they are to rise to the higher (vulpine) echelons within governing political parties.

More fully, Barnhardt’s stances emphasise a need for gun ownership and survivalist preparation in relation to what is perceived as extreme threat posed by Islam (which Barnhardt repeatedly calls a totalitarian political ideology), the lending practices of large financial institutions, the welfare state, the US federal government and reserve, and mass apostasy in the Catholic Church presided over by the ‘*Antipope Bergoglio’* who she deems intent on building an apostate one world religion as a theological corollary to the New World Order. She often advocates a need for *long guns and ammo* because *it’s them or us* when discussing these threats. Such rigid categorical friend-foe coding directed towards multiple threat objects is of course something we might expect to find towards the extremities of conservatism-authoritarianism, which is to say, of Pareto’s *leonine* pattern.

What is of particular interest, however, is how Barnhardt also carries this leonine outlook, which would have been immediately recognisable to Pareto, through a particular theological turn. Before explaining this point some preliminary background is necessary. As a former owner of her own livestock and grain commodity brokerage, *Barnhardt Capital Management,* whose fortunes were linked to the 2011 demise of the derivatives trader MF Global amidst corruption involving improper account transfers, Barnhardt became greatly interested in the psychological underpinnings of corrupt behaviour. More fully, she became concerned by its implications, when writ large within culture, for economic and political life. In this general respect Barnhardt can be considered very similar to Pareto (see Marshall 2007, pp. 13-15), and, more fully, to contemporary business ethics commentators who regard corporate psychopathy as largely to blame for the recent financial crisis (see, in particular, Boddy 2011). Moreover, in positing a psycho-cultural foundation for recklessness, corruption and short-termism she reflects a genuine psycho-cultural problem that has attracted burgeoning interest from risk culture academics (see Power *et al*. 2012) and to some extent also from post financial crisis regulators (e.g. Financial Stability Board 2014).

To understand Barnhardt’s unique contribution to how we might theorise the psycho-cultural drivers of what she considers impending economic collapse, we might consider her eight part youtube video posted in November 2012 entitled *The Economy Is Going To Implode.* This covers such matters as unsustainable debt recycling through the common practice of fractional reserve banking, unsustainable treasury crises for national governments, and the growing debasement of currencies – which Barnhardt considers linked to a decline in the virtuosity that ultimately gives currencies their value. Much of this is certainly reminiscent of what Pareto said concerning the willingness of vulpine elites to ‘mortgage the future’ (Pareto 1935, § 2309). Later, in May 2016, Barnhardt posted a 2 hour 53 minute long video which she considered her last on the basis that it offered a final all-encompassing explanation for what she termed the ‘psycho-spiritual pathology driving the civilizational collapse we are seeing unfold before our eyes today’. This video is entitled *Remember Lot’s Wife: diabolical narcissism, the overarching global pathology*. In making this argument, diabolical narcissism becomes ‘the global overarching pathology’ that has come to dictate our cultural life, and which will eventually cause economic collapse. This of course immediately sets us thinking of Pareto’s representation of the rise of the class I residues as the historical cycle turns through its individualised pole, when governing elites increasingly run out of capital for political patronage and financial elites starve the capital producing industries of the capital they need to drive further economic growth (see Powers 1987). However, Barnhardt considers this cultural decline spiritual rather than purely psychological. Narcissism is ’diabolical’ because it centres on a spiritual renunciation of love. According to Barnhardt (2016):

Diabolical Narcissism [(DN)] is the condition in which a human being freely chooses to adopt the psycho-spiritual comportment and emotional palate of the fallen angels. Simply put, the DN chooses, exactly as the fallen angels chose, to voluntarily purge himself of all love. As a result, he is voluntarily incapable of empathy, and incapable of the emotions derived from love, namely happiness, gratitude, joy, and sadness. DNs are capable only of the demonic emotional palette of anger, hatred, envy and fear. They view other human beings as 3-dimensional cartoons to be used as the DN sees fit to provide him with diabolical narcissistic satisfaction. And, like the angelic demons, deep down, Diabolical Narcissists know that they are monstrosities, and thus are animated by an unquenchable spite, especially toward those “mere humans”, so far beneath them, and yet capable of that which they have freely rejected: love (ivi, p. ???).

Notably, this psychological portrait is in keeping with much that is commonly said of the dark triad of narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy, as discussed at length by Marshall (2007). Very similarly, in a 16th September 2016 posting on *barnhardt.biz*, diabolical narcissism is identified in this passage of Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov:*

The man who lies to himself and listens to his own lie comes to such a pass that he cannot distinguish the truth within him, or around him, and so loses all respect for himself and for others. And having no respect he ceases to love, and in order to occupy and distract himself without love he gives way to passions and coarse pleasures, and sinks to bestiality in his vices, all from continual lying to other men and to himself.

The key psychological observations here, once more, might equally have come from psychological literature on the dark triad; moreover they exactly match those of Josef Pieper (1966) on the matter of how clearsightedness becomes impossible when one succumbs to the false prudence of *astutia.* It is easy to miss the significance of such observations. Essentially what they reveal is that the extremist lion’s contempt for the fox is now very well informed and highly nuanced. It is able to draw on numerous very respectable sources in order to paint its hostile psychological portraits.

Clearly, then, what makes this form of political activism extremist is, in part at least, the use of these psychological frames in order to – and in this case perhaps literally – *demonise* large social groups. Yet to further understand what makes activists like Ann Barnhardt extremist, in other words to inquire as to the source of their leonine ferocity and commitment to force over fraud as their preferred political strategy, the role which virtue doctrine plays in their thinking is arguably key. From this standpoint, what matters is not so much their sociological, economic or cultural insight *per se*, as their rare willingness to speak out, leaping into and leaping ahead within the debates they ignite, offering provocative criticisms and making provocative demands for remedial action. Some evidence supporting this view can be found in a 3rd October 2010 posting to the Ann Barnhardt youtube channel where the ‘false virtue’ of ‘niceness’ is attacked as «the instrument that is being used to murder civilization, the United States and orthodox Christianity». What appears to matter in particular to Barnhardt here, is that the virtuous often do not have the luxury of being regarded as ‘nice’; that is, virtuosity may require putting oneself at considerable risk by provoking others – which is only likely to happen if they are willing to sacrifice themselves. Thinking from this standpoint, such risk may sometimes entail speaking out and taking actions to resist others in situations where most people would instead acquiesce within a cultural relativist ‘niceness’ whose effect is to facilitate their selfish, petty or cowardly utilitarianism. In Barnhardt’s own case, such speaking out is notoriously illustrated by her 3rd April 2011 youtube video where she read and then burned selected passages from the *Quran* – knowing well that she would receive death threats as a consequence.

A similar view of virtue and its consequences is memorably encapsulated in Geach’s (1977) observation that ‘people need virtues like honeybees need stingers’. It is also emphasised by Pieper (1966) in his argument that the basic motivation of prudence must be strong if people are to commit to the further virtues of fortitude, justice and temperance. When we situate Pareto’s leonine pattern back within the context of Machiavelli’s deceptively simple functionalist argument that we need lions to ‘fright away the wolves’, this ‘leonine’ stance makes perfect sense as a fundamental willingness to make sacrifices to protect others during times of crisis and austerity. At this juncture it may also be reiterated that sociobiological analyses of Pareto by Lopreato (1980) and Crippen, Lopreato (1989) discuss this as a possible evolutionary adaptation always present within some members of every population.

In turning to address the question of how prudence might be helpful in guiding further maturation of such extremist political consciousness, what arguably matters is that many elements of prudence are already available to be built upon – for example the willingness to commit to virtue, to leap in and leap ahead, to take the long term view, and to regard love as foundational for being. Consider that, in such cases, if prudence were to take further root as higher order self-governance, and as a new focus for ongoing identity work, then growing familiarisation with other key elements of prudence such as that *scanning* activity mentioned earlier may prove curative. A further important consideration here is that, following Thomas Aquinas, Pieper (1966) lists the main qualities of mind necessary for prudence to function as including *memoria* (true memory), *docilitas* (an openness for thinking deliberatively with others) and *solertia* (clear-sightedness under pressure). Arguably, effective use of these is likely to promote more nuanced social cognition and may be particularly useful for mitigating against the rigid categorical thinking that tends to prevail within political extremism. For cases of right wing extremism that take a strong theological turn, there may also be curative value in engaging with Pieper’s representation of prudence as lying at the heart of the Christian mystery of being.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that learning from the *Treatise* might more productively refocus from issues of animal spirit (mal)adaptivity towards a concern with the higher order agenda of how the individual human subject, concerned to see the world clearly and to act ethically within it, might use their understanding of Pareto’s text to achieve, and help others achieve, a higher order ethical self-governance over all the visceral and instinctual influences upon thought and action which Pareto’s text highlights. As Simone Weil famously put it on the first page of her (1943) essay on *Human Personality*, it is not being dismissive to say to someone «your person does not interest me» (Weil, 1962). This is because what the expression refers to is the idea that the human being who resides behind, and who wears, the personality, is of far greater interest than any personality itself. This underlying being, Weil says, is where suffering, and the need for empathy and respect, ultimately resides. Correspondingly, it has been implied within this article that this underlying being should matter more within social theory than personalities – or animal spirits.

Given that Machiavelli’s lion and fox animal spirits are meaningful as visceral guides to behaviour, functioning as heuristics to allow social actors to cope quickly and in information poor environments to the challenges of the day, and given also that Aristotle’s *phronesis* is typically considered a faculty of practical – rather than theoretical – reasoning also allowing such challenges to be addressed, it is only a slight conceptual shift that permits mental activity involving Machiavelli’s lion and fox animal spirits to be theorised as bound up with the mental activity of prudence. This new interpretation has taken a subtle step forward from an earlier proposal by Marshall, Guidi (2012). They argued that much of the value of *leonine* and *vulpine* animal spirit guidance, is to allow social actors to address the ‘thoroughgoing uncertainty’ aspect of the challenge associated with practical reason, by permitting each animal spirit to colour what they should desire, what they should believe, and how they should act. This exercise entailed inquiring into the hallmark desires, beliefs and behaviours of the Machiavellian-narcissist-psychopath and the conservative-authoritarian, respectively. Marshall & Guidi suggested that when social actors fail to align their desires, beliefs and actions as logical sequences within each of these two psycho-cultural paradigms, they may experience these failures as cognitive dissonance which motivates remedial mental activity aimed at greater alignment. Hence, their approach conceived of practical rationality under animal spirit guidance as dynamic and capable of some limited improvement, yet it did not fully engage with the concept of practical reason as Aristotle understood; rather they remained disinterested in Aristotelian humanism’s concern with co-evolution between the faculty of practical reason, self-knowledge and wisdom, towards human flourishing.

The present article improves on Marshall & Guidi’s analysis by exploring how we deal with risk and uncertainty in unique, everyday situations, not just through recourse to personality but through recourse to what virtue doctrine, nesting prudence in particular, views as a higher order concern with goodness and truth. Taking this approach, it has been possible to look once more, yet through a new and far superior conceptual lens, at how the whole person engages in practical reasoning. It is hoped that Pareto’s readers will increasingly look through this same lens to find meaning within the *Treatise*.

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ABSTRACT

The article proposes that Pareto’s ‘Treatise on General Sociology’ deserves to be read with an ethical concern to establish how it can help its readers become more prudent. This concern is accorded urgency in view of the fact that the book offers ideas which chime with those held by growing numbers of online extremist political activists loosely linked to what is increasingly called the ‘alt right’. The central argument is that the full ‘Mirror for Princes’ guidance value of the text can be realised when readers disregard its Machiavellian-Paretian psychological realism which over-emphasises the influences of animal spirits on thought and behaviour, and instead turn to a much broader and ethically richer vision of human behaviour based on prudence*.*

KEYWORDS: Pareto; Machiavelli; Mirror for Princes, Prudence; Phronesis.

PARETO E LA MANCANZA DI UN CONCETTO DI PRUDENZA

Sommario

L’articolo si propone di mostrare come il *Trattato di Sociologia Generale* di Pareto meriti di essere letto con un intento etico volto a rivalutarne i contenuti dedicati al comportamento umano basato sulla prudenza.

L’urgenza di proporre questo nuovo modo di leggere il *Trattato* trova una giustificazione in una fase storica in cui l’opera di Pareto viene a presentare evidenti assonanze con i contenuti espressi dal movimento di destra attivo sul web denominato ‘alt-right’. La tesi principale di questo articolo è che il significato del testo paretiano come ‘specchio del principe’ può essere realizzato appieno solo mettendone in secondo piano il realismo psicologico Macchiavelliano-Paretiano, per cui tutta l’enfasi va sull’influenza degli spiriti animali sul pensiero e sul comportamento, e ponendo invece maggiore attenzione ad una più ampia e più ricca prospettiva etica del comportamento umano come basato sulla prudenza.

Parole chiave: Pareto; Machiavelli; Specchio del Principe; Prudenza; Phronesis.

Jel Classification: