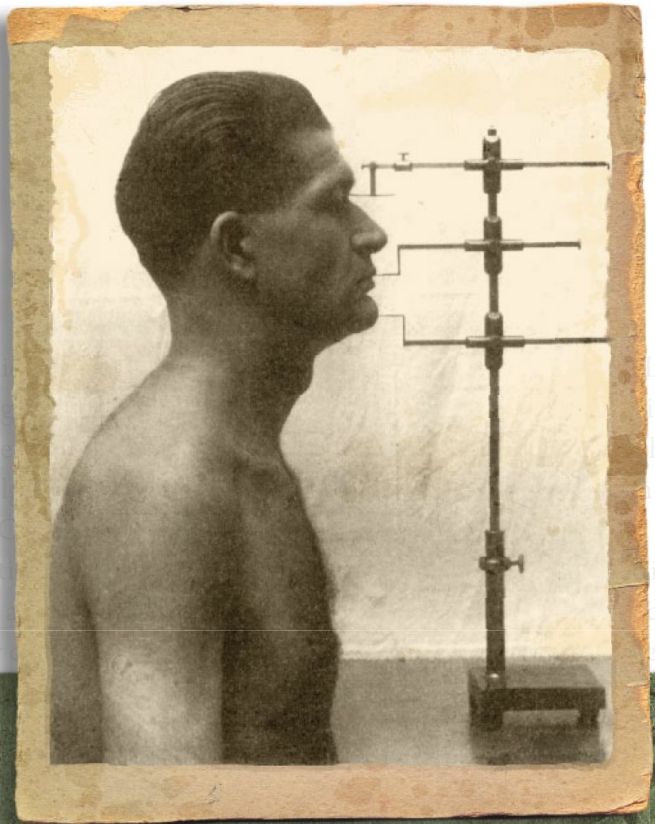


CEU Press Studies in the  
History of Medicine

Francesco Cassata

# Building the New Man

*Eugenics, Racial Science and Genetics in Twentieth-Century Italy*



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# **Building the New Man**

# **CEU Press Studies in the History of Medicine**

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*Eugenics, Racial Science and Genetics in Twentieth-Century Italy*

**Francesco Cassata**

Translated by Erin O'Loughlin



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*To my parents,  
Adele and Letterio*



# C O N T E N T S

Acknowledgements .....	ix	
Introduction .....	1	
CHAPTER I		
BETWEEN LOMBROSO AND PARETO: THE ITALIAN WAY TO EUGENICS .....		9
1. Lombroso's Way: the Problem of Degeneration .....	10	
2. Pareto's Way: the Problem of the Elite .....	21	
3. The Italian Committee of Eugenic Studies .....	40	
CHAPTER II		
EUGENICS AND DYSGENICS OF WAR .....		43
1. War as Counter-selection .....	44	
2. War as Gymnasium .....	55	
3. War as Laboratory .....	58	
4. Eugenics and the "Sons of the Enemy" .....	64	
CHAPTER III		
REGENERATING ITALY (1919–1924) .....		69
1. Ettore Levi and the IPAS Campaign for Birth Control .....	75	
2. A Concrete Proposal: Premarital Certificates .....	90	
3. Sterilization and Euthanasia .....	107	
4. The Work of the "Useless": Mental Hygiene in Italy .....	118	

CHAPTER IV

<b>QUALITY THROUGH QUANTITY: EUGENICS IN FASCIST ITALY</b>	135
1. Corrado Gini's Hegemony: Demography and "Regenerative" Eugenics	147
2. Constitutionalism and "Latin" Eugenics: Nicola Pende's Biotypological Institute	192
3. Demography and Biotypology: the Laboratory of Statistics at Milan Catholic University	214

CHAPTER V

<b>EUGENICS AND RACISM (1938–1943)</b>	223
1. Biological Racism and Hereditarian Eugenics	225
2. Environmentalist Eugenics: Psychological and Anthroppo-geographical Racism	246
3. Esoteric-traditionalist Racism and Eugenics: Julius Evola	263
4. Assortative Mating and Racism	268
5. Toward a National Genetic Center	272

CHAPTER VI

<b>TOWARD A NEW EUGENICS</b>	285
1. SIGE Schisms: Genetics against Eugenics	288
2. From Premarital Examination to Genetic Counseling	309
3. Eugenics and Catholic Medical Genetics: Luigi Gedda and the "Gregorio Mendel" Institute	335

CHAPTER VII

<b>AGAINST UNESCO: ITALIAN EUGENICS AND AMERICAN SCIENTIFIC RACISM</b>	353
1. The IAAEE and <i>The Mankind Quarterly</i> (1959–1965)	354
2. <i>Meticciano di Guerra</i> : Luigi Gedda and Reginald Ruggles Gates	356
3. Corrado Gini and the "Guerrilla War" against UNESCO	362
4. Epilogue: <i>Race and Modern Science</i>	378
<b>Conclusions</b>	381
<b>Bibliography</b>	387
<b>Index of Names</b>	419

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Francesco Cassata

March 2011

# INTRODUCTION



Francis Galton's gospel was quickly spread around the world. In 1924, a report of the International Commission of Eugenics published in *Eugenical News* listed fifteen countries in which eugenics had assumed an institutional form: England, Germany, the United States, Italy, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Norway, Argentina, Cuba and Russia; countries that were cooperating with the International Commission included Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, Australia and New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> In the same year, a bibliography dedicated to eugenic issues already counted 7,500 titles, including monographs and articles.<sup>2</sup>

It therefore seems most appropriate to approach eugenics as a cultural, social and political phenomenon with a broad international relevance. As Frank Dikötter put it, eugenics should be considered as “a fundamental aspect of some of the most important cultural and social movements of the twentieth century, intimately linked to ideologies of ‘race,’ nation and sex, inextricably meshed with population control, social hygiene, state hospitals, and the welfare state.”<sup>3</sup> Initially focused on the cases of Great Britain, the United States<sup>4</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> Mark B. Adams, ed., *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil and Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel J. Holmes, *A Bibliography of Eugenics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1924).

<sup>3</sup> Frank Dikötter, “Race Culture: Recent perspectives on the history of eugenics,” *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 2 (April 1998): 467. See also Marius Turda, “New Perspectives on Race and Eugenics,” *Historical Journal* 51, no. 4 (2008): 1115–24.

<sup>4</sup> Publications on eugenics in Great Britain and United States are too numerous to list here exhaustively. See, in particular, Lindsay Andrew Farrall, *The Origins and Growth of the English Eugenics Movement 1865–1925* (New York: Garland Pub., 1965); Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics. Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Richard A. Soloway, *Demography and*

Germany,<sup>5</sup> the historiography on eugenics has recently assumed a more open and varied comparative perspective, following the pioneering suggestions offered by Mark B. Adams in 1990:

Even if our ultimate goal is to comprehend the “essence” of eugenics as a phenomenon, or to find the invariant laws or processes underlying the character of knowledge, or even to ascertain what is unique or atypical in a given movement or development, we cannot hope to do so without comparative studies. And this is as true for eugenics and the history of the sciences generally as it is for embryology, molecular biology, or linguistics.<sup>6</sup>

Nowadays, the general interpretative framework seems extremely fresh and stimulating.

First of all, eugenics no longer appears as a homogenous movement, coherent within itself and essentially reducible to the Anglo-Saxon matrix. Instead, it could be described as a “multiform archipelago,” composed of multiple national styles:<sup>7</sup> the Scandinavian coun-

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*Degeneration. Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth Century Britain* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1990); Pauline M. H. Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics and Human Failings: the Eugenics Society, its Source and its Critics in Britain* (London–New York: Routledge, 1992); Garland E. Allen, “The Misuse of Biological Hierarchies: the American Eugenics Movement, 1900–1940,” *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 2, no. 5 (1983): 105–128; Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984); Edward J. Larson, *Sex, Race, and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Ian Robert Dowbiggin, *Keeping America Sane: Psychiatry and Eugenics in the US and Canada, 1880–1940* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Philip R. Reilly, *The Surgical Solution: a History of Involuntary Sterilization in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2001); Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak. Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003); Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> On German eugenics, see: Gisela Bock, *Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986); Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Peter Weingart, Jürgen Kroll, and Kurt Bayertz, *Rasse Blut und Gene: Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1988); Paul J. Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Paul J. Weindling, “The ‘Sonderweg’ of German Eugenics: Nationalism and Scientific Internationalism,” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 22, no. 3 (September 1989): 321–33; Sheila F. Weiss, “The Race Hygiene Movement in Germany, 1904–1945,” in Adams, ed., *The Wellborn Science*, 8–68; Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wipperman, *The Racial State: Germany 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> Adams, ed., *The Wellborn Science*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Weingart, “Science and Political Culture: Eugenics in Comparative Perspective,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 24, no. 2 (June 1999): 163–177. On international networks, see, in particular, Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

tries,<sup>8</sup> Central and Eastern Europe,<sup>9</sup> Latin America,<sup>10</sup> but also China, India, and Japan are among the regions and countries most recently studied.<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, on a theoretical level, next to Mendelism, which was dominant in the British and North American contexts, neo-Lamarckism has been identified as one of the constitutive elements of the eugenic discourse, above all in several nations, such as France, Russia and Brazil.<sup>12</sup> In

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1994) and *Die Internationale der Rassisten. Aufstieg und Niedergang der internationalen Bewegung für Eugenik und Rassenhygiene im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag, 1997). See also Alison Bashford, *Internationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Eugenics*, in Bashford and Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, 154–72.

- <sup>8</sup> On eugenics in Scandinavia, see: Gunnar Broberg and Nils Roll-Hansen, eds., *Eugenics and the Welfare State: Sterilization Policy in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1996); Dorothy Porter, “Eugenics and the sterilization debate in Sweden and Britain before World War II,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 24, no. 2 (1999): 145–162; Alain Drouard, “Concerning Eugenics in Scandinavia. An Evaluation of Recent Research and Publications,” *Population: an English Selection* 11 (1999): 261–70; Mattias Tydén, *The Scandinavian States: Reformed Eugenics applied*, in Bashford and Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, 363–76.
- <sup>9</sup> Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2002); Brigitte Fuchs, ‘Rasse’, ‘Folk’, ‘Geschlecht’. *Anthropologische Diskurse in Österreich, 1850–1960* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag, 2003); Kamila Uzarczyk, *Podstawy ideologiczne higieny ras i ich realizacja na przykładzie Śląska w latach 1924–1944* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2003); Magdalena Gawin, *Rasa i nowoczesność. Historia polskiego ruchu eugenicznego, 1880–1952* (Warsaw: Wydawnicwo Neriton, 2003); Heinz Eberhard and Wolfgang Neugebauer, eds., *Vorreiter der Vernichtung? Eugenik, Rassenhygiene und Euthanasie in der österreichischen Diskussion vor 1938* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2005); Gerhard Baader, Veronika Hofer and Thomas Mayer, eds., *Eugenik in Österreich: Biopolitischer Methoden und Strukturen vor 1900–1945* (Vienna: Czernin Verlag, 2007); Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling, eds., *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe 1900–1940* (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2007); Christian Promitzer, Sevasti Trubeta, Marius Turda, eds., *Health, Hygiene and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe to 1945* (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2011).
- <sup>10</sup> Nancy Leys Stepan, *The “Hour of Eugenics”: Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca–London: Cornell University Press, 1991); Alexandra Minna Stern, “From Mestizophilia to Biotypology. Racialization and Science in Mexico, 1920–1960,” in Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Rosenblatt, eds., *Race & Nation in Modern Latin America* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 187–210.
- <sup>11</sup> Frank Dikötter, *Imperfect Conceptions: Medical Knowledge, Birth Defects and Eugenics in China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Patrick McGinn, “‘Quality not quantity tells’: The Eugenics Movement in India,” unpublished manuscript; Sabine Frühstück, *Die Politik der Sexualwissenschaft: Zur Produktion und Popularisierung sexologischen Wissens in Japan 1908–1941* (Vienna: Institut Ostasienwissenschaften, 1997); Yuehtsen Juliette Chung, *Eugenics in China and Hong Kong: Nationalism and Colonialism*, in Bashford and Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, 258–73; Jennifer Robertson, *Eugenics in Japan: Sanguinous Repair*, in Bashford and Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, 430–48.
- <sup>12</sup> William H. Schneider, *Quality and Quantity. The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Nancy Leys Stepan, “Eugenics in Brazil, 1917–1940,” in Adams, ed., *The Wellborn Science*, 110–52; Gilberto Hochman, Nisia Trindade Lima, and Marcos Chor Maio, *The Path of Eugenics in Brazil: Dilemmas of Miscegenation*, in Bashford and Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, 493–510; Mark B. Adams, “Eugenics in Russia, 1900–1940,” in Adams, ed., *The Wellborn Science*, 153–216.; Nikolai Kremenstov, “From ‘Beastly Philosophy’ to Medical Genetics: Eugenics in Russia and the Soviet Union,” *Annals of Science* 68, no. 1 (January 2011): 61–92. On Lamarckian eugenics, see also: Peter J. Bowler, “E. W. MacBride’s Lamarckian Eugenics and Its Implications for the Social Construction of Scientific Knowledge,” *Annals of Science* 41, no. 3 (May 1984): 245–60.

parallel, “Nordic” eugenics has been coupled with “Latin” eugenics, widespread in Catholic countries such as Italy, France, Spain, Belgium and some Latin American nations.<sup>13</sup>

Thirdly, the definition of eugenics as a “pseudo-science” is being progressively substituted by an analysis that is more conscious of the relationships of eugenics to genetics and other scientific disciplines, such as demography, statistics and psychology.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, the myth of eugenics as an essentially reactionary ideology, mostly linked to sexist, racist, anti-Semitic and generally right-wing movements, has been replaced with an historically more mature evaluation, which is more knowledgeable about the fascination exercised by the eugenic thinking also in the left-wing milieu: from the first British feminists to German and Swedish social-democrats; from Spanish anarchists to French communists.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See, in particular, Marisa Miranda and Gustavo Vallejo, eds., *Darwinismo social y eugenesia en el mundo latino* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno de Argentina Editores, 2005); Armando García González, Raquel Álvarez Peláez, *En busca de la raza perfecta. Eugenesia e higiene en Cuba (1898–1958)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1998); “Dossier: Estudios sobre eugenesia,” ed. Raquel Álvarez Peláez, special issue, *Asclepio* 51, no. 2 (1999): 5–148; Patience A. Schell, *Eugenics Policy and Practice in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Mexico*, in Bashford and Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, 477–92.

<sup>14</sup> On genetics and eugenics, see: Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*; Diane B. Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1995); Jan Sapp, “The Struggle for Authority in the Field of Heredity, 1900–1932: New perspectives on the Rise of Genetics,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 16, no. 3 (1983): 311–42; Jonathan Harwood, “Geneticists and the Evolutionary Synthesis in Interwar Germany,” *Annals of Science* 42, no. 3 (May 1985): 279–301; Paul Weindling, “Weimar Eugenics: The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics in Social Context,” *Annals of Science* 42, no. 3 (May 1985): 303–18; Garland E. Allen, “The Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor, 1910–1940. An Essay in Institutional History,” *Osiris*, 2nd series 2 (1986): 225–64; Nils Roll-Hansen, “Geneticists and the Eugenics Movement in Scandinavia,” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 22, no. 3 (September 1989): 335–46; David Barker, “The Biology of Stupidity: Genetics, Eugenics and Mental Deficiency in the Inter-War Years,” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 22, no. 3 (September 1989): 347–75; Hans-Peter Kröner, *Von der Rassenhygiene zur Humangenetik* (Munich: Urban & Fischer, 1998); Nathaniel Comfort, “Polyhybrid Heterogeneous Bastards’: Promoting Medical Genetics in America in the 1930s and 1940s,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 61, no. 4 (October 2006): 415–55. On eugenics and demography, see: Edmund Ramsden, “Carving up Population Science: Eugenics, Demography and the Controversy over the ‘Biological Law’ of Population Growth,” *Social Studies of Science*, 32, no. 5–6 (October–December 2002): 857–99; Edmund Ramsden, “Social Demography and Eugenics in the Interwar United States,” *Population and Development Review*, 29, no. 4 (December 2003): 547–93; Edmund Ramsden, “Eugenics from the New Deal to the Great Society: Genetics, Demography and Population Quality,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 39 (2008): 391–406.

<sup>15</sup> See: Donald K. Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968); Michael Freedren, “Eugenics and Progressive Thought: a Study in Ideological Affinity,” *Historical Journal* 22 (1979): 645–71; Loren R. Graham, “Science and Values: the Eugenic Movement in Germany and Russia in 1920s,” *American Historical Review* 82, no. 5 (December 1977): 1133–1964; Diane B. Paul, “Eugenics and the Left,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45 (1984): 567–90; Kevin Repp, “‘More Corporeal, More Concrete’: Liberal Humanism, Eugenics and German Progressives at the Last Fin de Siècle,” *Journal of Modern History* 72

In the context of this fertile comparative approach, the Italian case— notwithstanding its crucial importance from an international point of view, due to the role of Fascism and of the Catholic Church—has long been neglected, or has been studied in an incomplete manner, as a component of the fascist population policy or state racism.<sup>16</sup>

Based on previously unexplored archival documentation, this book offers a first general overview of the history of Italian eugenics, not limited to the decades of the fascist regime, but instead ranging from the beginning of the 1900s to the first half of the seventies.

The word *eugenica* (or, less frequently, *eugenia* and *eugenetica*) began to spread in Italy in 1912, in the wake of the First International Congress of Eugenics, held in London, under the presidency of Leonard Darwin. Even recalling the intense proto-eugenic debate existing in Italy from the final decades of the nineteenth century, the Italian participation at the London Congress not only stimulated a process of institutionalization of Italian eugenics—through the constitution in 1913 of the first Italian Committee of Eugenic Studies—but also demonstrated from the beginning the particular originality of the Italian approach to eugenics. Neo-Lamarckian theoretical influences; Pareto's theory of the elite and social exchange; the anthropology of racial breeding and migrations; and the Lombrosian connection between genius and degeneration, all created a scientific and intellectual framework that made Italian eugenics inassimilable to the Anglo-Saxon model.

The First World War, which is addressed in chapter 2, represented an important moment of development for Italian eugenics. Interpreted as dramatic “counter-selection”; or, vice-versa, as a means of biological optimi-

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(2000): 683–730; M. Schwartz, *Sozialistische Eugenik. Eugenische Sozialtechnologien in Debatten und Politik der deutschen Sozialdemokratie, 1890–1993* (Bonn: Dietz, 1995); Richard Cleminson, *Anarchism, Science and Sex: Eugenics in Eastern Spain, 1900–1937* (Oxford–Bern: Peter Lang 2000); Richard Sonn, “‘Your body is Yours’: Anarchism, Birth Control, and Eugenics in Interwar France,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 4 (October 2005): 415–32; Richard Cleminson, “A Century of Civilization under the Influence of Eugenics”: Dr. Enrique Diego Madrazo, Socialism and Scientific Progress,” *Dynamis* 26 (2006): 221–51.

<sup>16</sup> On eugenics and fascist population policy, see: David Horn, *Social Bodies. Science, Reproduction and Italian Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Maria Sophia Quine, *Population Politics in Twentieth Century Europe: Fascist Dictatorships and Liberal Democracies* (London: Routledge, 1996). On eugenics and racism in fascist Italy, see: Roberto Maiocchi, *Scienza italiana e razzismo fascista* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1999); Giorgio Israel, Pietro Nastasi, *Scienza e razza nell'Italia fascista* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998); Aaron Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2002). Recent works have provided a more comprehensive approach. See, in particular, Claudia Mantovani, *Rigenerare la società. L'eugenetica in Italia dalle origini ottocentesche agli anni Trenta* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2004).

zation of the nation, the conflict provided eugenicists with important lessons: in particular, it demonstrated the relevance of a “unity of command” and the efficiency of direct state management, economically rational, of the biological resources of the nation.

Anxieties over national regeneration, technocratic ambitions and new social welfare-oriented policies, which, after the war, accompanied the crises of the last liberal governments and the progressive rise of fascism, favored the affirmation of eugenics as a part of social medicine and public health. In this context, eugenics was progressively seen as a paradigm of national efficiency, based on the subordination of individual liberty to superior collective interests for the “defense of society and the race.” Such a technocratic and managerial conception of the population fascinated the Italian political elite in this period, the left as much as the right, ranging from nationalism to reformist socialism, and of course fascism. It was in these years—as discussed in chapter 3—that Italian eugenics was institutionalized, with the constitution of the Institute of Public Welfare and Assistance (*Istituto di Previdenza e Assistenza Sociale*, IPAS); the Italian Society for the Study of Sexual Questions (*Società Italiana per lo studio delle Questioni Sessuali*, SISQS); the Italian Society for Genetics and Eugenics (*Società Italiana di Genetica e Eugenia*, SIGE); and the Italian League of Hygiene and Mental Prophylaxis (*Lega Italiana di Igiene e Profilassi Mentale*, LIPIM). In the same period, the eugenic debate went through a season of extreme richness and variety, exploring the fundamental issues of birth control, premarital certification, sterilization and mental hygiene.

The orthodoxy based on the binomial “quantitative” eugenics—pro-natalist population policy was imposed officially and definitively in 1927. The turning point was above all political, and it was sanctioned by the alliance between fascist natalist policy, inaugurated in May 1927 with Mussolini’s famous Ascension Day Speech, and Catholic sexual morals, reaffirmed by the Holy See in December 1930, with the encyclical *Casti Connubii* [On Christian marriage]. SIGE’s leadership mirrored this ideological and political fusion: the president was the demographer and statistician Corrado Gini, who contemporaneously managed also ISTAT and CISP; the vice-president was Agostino Gemelli, founder and dean of the Milan Catholic University, and principle exponent of Italian Catholic eugenics.

On a more specifically scientific level, starting from the second half of the 1920s, the theoretical paradigm that fascist eugenics was based on was constituted by the convergence between Corrado Gini's "integral" demography—synthesis of demography, biology, anthropology, economy, sociology and, obviously, eugenics—and constitutional biotypological medicine. The latter was represented above all by the endocrinologist Nicola Pende, close to the Catholic environments. Both Gini's "regenerative" eugenics and Pende's biotypological "orthogenesis" opposed the "Nordic" Anglo-Germanic and Scandinavian model.

This opposition—scientific, ideological and political all at the same time—was expressed at an institutional level by Italy's exit from the IFEO, and the constitution in 1935 of the Latin Federation of Eugenic Societies: an alternative model, the birth of which coincided not surprisingly with the most critical phase of diplomatic relationships between fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

Starting from 1936, and in particular in 1938 with the introduction of state racism in fascist Italy, the ideological and political convergence of fascism and national socialism also influenced the relationship between eugenics and racism, feeding new tensions and oppositions. This issue is analyzed in chapter 5. Between 1938 and 1943 the nature/nurture debate became the battleground for the clash between the different racisms of fascism: "biological" (Telesio Interlandi, Guido Landra, etc.) and "esoteric-traditionalist" racism (Julius Evola, Giovanni Preziosi, etc.) adopted the negative Nazi eugenic model, while "nationalist" and "Mediterranean" racism (Giacomo Acerbo, Nicola Pende, etc.) remained faithful to the "Latin" model, environmentalist and neo-Lamarckian. The two positions were opposed in their definition of Italian racial identity, but converged in their discrimination of racial enemies, in particular the half-caste and the "Jew."

The end of the Second World War and the discovery of the tragic consequences of National Socialist racism did not signal the definitive end of eugenics. In the 1950s and 1960s, eugenics in Italy was not stigmatized as taboo, but it was progressively redefined, passing through a sort of *no man's land*, in which struggles and oppositions occurred on different levels. Institutionally and academically, the statisticians and demographers of SIGE clashed with the geneticists (Adriano Buzzati-Traverso, Giuseppe Montalenti, Claudio Barigozzi), who decided, in 1953, to constitute a new

autonomous association (*Associazione Italiana di Genetica*, AGI). Instead, the physicians (Carlo Foà, Luigi Gedda, Luisa Gianferrari) in 1951 constituted the first Italian Society of Medical Genetics (*Società Italiana di Genetica Medica*), opposed to both Gini's SIGE and the AGI. Politically, mainline Italian eugenics, after the Second World War, became an important component of international scientific racism, expressed by the IAAEE and the *Mankind Quarterly*, encountering the anti-fascist and anti-racist components of the reform and new Italian eugenics.

Finally, from an ideological point of view, Catholic, familial and natalist eugenics, supported above all by Luigi Gedda's "Gregorio Mendel" Institute, opposed secular eugenics, which advocated birth control and family planning policies. The history of eugenics and genetics in Italy after the Second World War is covered in chapters 6 and 7.

The book concludes in the second half of the 1970s, with the introduction in Italy of prenatal diagnosis in 1975, followed in 1978 with the approval of Law 194 on the legalization of abortion: the eugenic debate entered in a new phase—that of so-called *new eugenics*—which in Italy even today feeds an intense, and at times lacerating, political and cultural debate.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> On "new" eugenics, see Diane B. Paul, "Eugenic Anxieties, Social Realities, and Political Choices," *Social Research* 59, no. 3 (1992): 663–83; Jean Gayon and Daniel Jacobi, eds., *L'éternel retour de l'eugénisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006); Alison Bashford, *Where Did Eugenics Go?*, in Bashford and Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, 539–58.

# CHAPTER I

## BETWEEN LOMBROSO AND PARETO

### THE ITALIAN WAY TO EUGENICS



The First International Eugenics Congress was held in London between 24 and 31 July 1912, under the presidency of Leonard Darwin. The large Italian delegation included some of the most relevant figures of positivist science: jurist Raffaele Garofalo (1851–1934), anthropologists Giuseppe Sergi (1841–1936) and Vincenzo Giuffrida-Ruggeri (1872–1921), psychiatrists Enrico Morselli (1852–1929) and Antonio Marro (1840–1913), economist Achille Loria (1857–1943), sociologist Roberto Michels (1876–1936), and statisticians Alfredo Niceforo (1876–1960) and Corrado Gini (1885–1965). From a disciplinary point of view, it was a heterogeneous group, and also contained a reasonable cross-section of political orientations, from the socialism of Loria and Niceforo to the nationalism of Gini.

In the history of Italian eugenics, the First International Eugenics Congress was a defining moment, from two points of view. First, the London congress contributed to the process of organization and institutionalization of the eugenic movement. Before 1912, the Italian scientific and cultural context had seen some debate that centered around the problems of the biological regeneration of the nation. The hygienist utopia of Paolo Mantegazza, professor of the first chair of anthropology in Italy, physician and scientific popularizer of extraordinary success;<sup>1</sup> the eighteenth-century development of social medicine;<sup>2</sup> and the brief appearance, between

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Paolo Mantegazza, *L'anno Tremila – Sogno* (2nd ed.) (Milan: Treves, 1897); Paolo Mantegazza, *Un giorno a Madera. Una pagina dell'igiene dell'amore* (Florence: Salani, 1910).

<sup>2</sup> See, in particular, Gaetano Bonetta, *Corpo e nazione. L'educazione ginnastica, igienica e sessuale nell'Italia liberale* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1990) and Mantovani, *Rigenerare la società*, 87–114.

1910 and 1913, of a neo-Malthusian movement,<sup>3</sup> clearly demonstrate the presence of a sort of Italian *proto-eugenics*. But it was only after the London Congress that the term “eugenics” (in Italian, “eugenia,” “eugenica” or “eugenetica”) became diffused in the scientific press and amongst the wider public. In 1912, Serafino Patellani was assigned the first university course of “social eugenics,” and in 1913 an Italian Committee of Eugenic Studies was instituted at the Roman Society of Anthropology, with Giuseppe Sergi<sup>4</sup> nominated as president.

Secondly, the reconstruction of the scientific paths of the most important members of the delegation allows the identification of a set of problems at the origins of Italian eugenics: these included the notion of atavism, the relationship between genius and degeneration, the anthropological heterogeneity of the Italian population, and the demographic dynamic of social exchange. All these issues reveal the intellectual influence on Italian eugenics of two intellectual figures of extreme relevance in the history of social sciences: the anthropologist and criminologist Cesare Lombroso, and the economist and statistician (not to mention sociologist) Vilfredo Pareto.

The specificity of Italian eugenics in the international context, including its opposition—as much theoretical as ideological and political—to the Anglo-Saxon mainstream, developed from the singular convergence of these two different and conflicting streams of thought.

## 1. Lombroso’s Way: the Problem of Degeneration

The Lombrosian path to eugenics can be first of all identified in the particular meanings that *dégénérescence* assumes in the theoretical production of the well-known Italian criminologist. A great deal has been written on the importance of the concept of degeneration in the genesis of the eugenic discourse.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the degeneration–eugenics nexus varies notably according to the cultural reference scenarios.

<sup>3</sup> See Bruno Wanrooij, *Storia del pudore. La questione sessuale in Italia* (Venice: Marsilio, 1990); Giorgio Rifelli, *Per una storia dell’educazione sessuale* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> See “Notizie,” *Rivista di antropologia* 18 (1913): 289.

<sup>5</sup> See, in particular, Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*. The information available on Cesare

In particular, the theories of atavism and born criminal do not seem to share the pessimistic belief in the omnipresence and dissemination of degeneration that induced Francis Galton, in 1883,<sup>6</sup> to coin the term *eugenics* to indicate a program of planning and rationalization of human reproduction, aimed at the biological improvement of the species. Italian criminal anthropology identified the base cause of innatism to crime as arrested development. Therefore, the primary objective of the discipline was not to intervene in the reproductive process, but rather to isolate dysgenic types (antisocial delinquents) and segregate them from the rest of society. As a consequence, Lombroso's "new criminal therapy" outlined a large reformist project of social control, developed from a complex anthropological and psychiatric taxonomy: the regulation of migratory flows and a rapid repressive justice, the segregation of habitual criminals and the control of "honest, but weak" citizens, taxes on alcohol and a protracted surveillance of youth and derelicts through "voluntary" or "compulsory asylums" and "industrial schools." For born criminals and the criminally insane, measures were different and more serious: "life segregation," forced work, criminal asylums and, finally, the death penalty. It was above all in relation to this latter measure that the eugenic intent was explicit:

While it is correct to consider that the roots of certain evils cannot be overcome with the death of a few felons, it is however true that crime has diminished in intensity and ferocity in the last centuries thanks in part to the death penalty. Distributed so widely and with much publicity, if it has contributed to a share of new crimes with a spirit of imitation and ferocious public spectacle, it must also have diminished many others, preventing every evasion, every relapse and heredity in criminals, doing that which nature does in the selection of the species, when, from inferior beings, it gives us the grand dominators of the globe.<sup>7</sup>

The theory of born criminals was the subject of numerous criticisms, but the *cordon sanitaire* of social defense theorized by Lombroso, with its sequence

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Lombroso is vast: for a recent overview, see Silvano Montaldo and Paolo Tappero, eds., *Cesare Lombroso cento anni dopo* (Turin: UTET, 2009). See also Mary Gibson, *Born to Crime. Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology* (London: Praeger, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* (London: Macmillan, 1883).

<sup>7</sup> Cesare Lombroso, *Troppo presto. Appunti al nuovo progetto di codice penale con appendici* (1888; repr., Turin: Bocca, 1889), 23–4.

of prevention, socio-economic utilization, segregation and—only as a last resort—elimination of the dysgenic elements, had a lasting influence on Italian eugenics, defining its specific position in the international context.<sup>8</sup> Given this framework, it is not surprising that it was above all the anthropologists of the Lombrosian school who first called for a preventive recording of the population, in the conviction that the availability of data and numbers constituted the most rational techno-bureaucratic management of human material. The idea of a “biographical card” in fact came to be suggested multiple times: for the military, as desired by the medical captain Salvatore Guida in 1879; for criminals and workers, as hoped in the first decades of the 1900s by the legal physician Salvatore Ottolenghi, student of Lombroso and founder of the School of Scientific Police; and for students, according to the theories of Alfredo Niceforo in 1913.<sup>9</sup>

The atavistic model, which assumed a biological predisposition to evil, and the principle of social defense, based on the institutional practices of segregation, prevention and control, still fell within the Lombrosian theoretical scheme, with its belief in an evolutionary dimension of degeneration. From this point of view, Lombroso’s reflections on genius assume fundamental importance. Although deeming Galton’s *Hereditary Genius* a “valuable work,” Lombroso challenged its statistical data, declaring, in opposition to Galton, the weaker “hereditary action” of genius, compared to insanity.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, while on one hand a “fatal parallelism” existed between genius and degeneration, on the other, genius represented, in Lombroso’s views, a progressive anomaly *par excellence*: the genius action was innovating and could change the world, and degeneration could produce progress. While Galton maintained that natural selection needed to be reinforced with an artificial eugenic selection, for Lombroso, eugenics was a part of the same evolutionary mechanisms of natural selection, even in its degenerative aspects. It was not by chance that genius—carrier of degeneration, but innovator and creator of progress—represented only one aspect of the positive transgression of the norms theorized by Lombroso: revolutionary

<sup>8</sup> See Francesco Cassata, “Dall’Uomo di genio all’eugenica,” in Montaldo and Tappero, eds., *Cesare Lombroso cento anni dopo*, 175–84.

<sup>9</sup> On the projects of recording, see Mantovani, *Rigenerare la società*, 50–51.

<sup>10</sup> Cesare Lombroso, *Genio e follia in rapporto alla medicina legale, alla critica e alla storia* (Turin: Bocca, 1882).

spirit, modern evolutionary criminality, and the social function of crime were others.

Even this second dimension of Lombroso's anthropology exercised a lasting influence on nineteenth-century Italian eugenics. On many occasions, the refusal of negative eugenics (above all, sterilization) was inspired by the Lombrosian idea that biological degeneration could in reality generate genius; that the deformed or epilepsy sufferers could be hiding a Leopardi or a Manzoni in their midst.

In 1880 Lombroso founded the journal *Archivio di psichiatria, scienze penali ed antropologia criminale* [Journal of psychiatry, penal science and criminal anthropology]. In these pages, it is possible to notice the distinctive Lombrosian interpretation, and the attention with which the development of the international eugenic debate was followed is also evident. From its inception, the *Archivio* dealt with eugenics, informing its readers about the legislative initiatives on sterilization and castration introduced, in those years, in the United States and Europe.<sup>11</sup> The principle source was the *Eugenical News*, while the most perceptive editor seemed to be Prospero Mino, voluntary assistant of the medical clinic at the University of Turin, and author, in the 1920s, of a highly informative essay on "hereditary illnesses and their etiology."<sup>12</sup>

After the death of Lombroso in 1909, Mario Carrara, his son-in-law and successor to the direction of *Archivio* and the Institute of Legal Medicine in Turin, oriented the periodical towards a synthesis between biology and legal medicine, in which eugenics assumed a significant role. Author of several statistical-genealogical analyses on the intelligence of "men of genius,"<sup>13</sup> Carrara was strictly influenced by Lombroso's theories. He was convinced that the principle of "social defense" needed to be founded on the concept of "social danger," which came as much from an "originally deviant psychophysiological constitution" as from a constitution deviated by an "acquired

<sup>11</sup> See "Selezione artificiale," *Archivio di antropologia criminale, psichiatria e medicina legale*, 34, (1913): 468; "Sterilizzazione di criminali in America," *Archivio di antropologia criminale, psichiatria e medicina legale* 34 (1913): 613.

<sup>12</sup> For a critique of the concept of degeneration in a Mendelian framework, see in particular Prospero Mino, "Sulle malattie ereditarie e sulla loro etiologia (continuazione e fine)," *Archivio di antropologia criminale, psichiatria e medicina legale* 43 (1923): 5.

<sup>13</sup> Salvatore Ottolenghi and Mario Carrara, "Perioptometria e psicommetria di uomini geniali," *Archivio di psichiatria, scienze penali ed antropologia criminale* 13 (1892).

postnatal illness.”<sup>14</sup> On these premises, in 1911, Carrara rejected sterilization as a “scientific *boutade*,” which “everyone feels can have no practical importance,”<sup>15</sup> although he did not exclude the adoption of that practice—with the necessary precautions and guarantees—for a very limited number of extreme cases.<sup>16</sup> Instead he favored other measures of a eugenic nature, above all therapeutic abortion, for which he repeatedly requested decriminalization, and the “permanent segregation” of recidivist criminals.<sup>17</sup>

The 1912 First International Eugenics Congress undoubtedly marked a turning point for the *Archivio*'s coverage of eugenic themes. For the transition of the Lombrosian school to eugenics, the London Congress had a double importance. In the first place, the Italian delegation was a synthesis of those disciplines—anthropology, psychiatry, criminology, legal medicine—on which Lombroso had exerted a powerful influence. A glance through the names reveal intellectual figures—such as, in particular, Giuseppe Sergi, Raffaele Garofalo, Alfredo Niceforo and Enrico Morselli—whose scientific and personal links with Lombroso are well-known. Sergi broadly shared the Lombrosian position on atavism and the biological inferiority of females; in 1880, together with Lombroso, Garofalo was co-founder of the above-mentioned *Archivio*; Niceforo had been controversially labeled by Napoleone Colajanni as “the latest Lombrosian” for his statistical-anthropological investigation on the “cursed race” of Southern Italy;<sup>18</sup> while Morselli was particularly interested in Lombroso's innovations during his early years, although this interest never translated into open adherence, and was replaced in later years by a position of complete distance. It is also worth remembering the numerous exponents of legal

<sup>14</sup> Mario Carrara, “La difesa sociale nel Diritto private,” *Archivio di antropologia criminale, psichiatria e medicina legale* 44 (1924): 7; see also Carrara, *Lezioni di medicina legale* (Turin: Litografia A. Viretto, 1913); Carrara, “Influenze della biologia sulle leggi,” *La Parola* (September 1925) offprint.

<sup>15</sup> Mario Carrara, “Il VII Congresso Internazionale d'Antropologia Criminale,” *Archivio di antropologia criminale, psichiatria e medicina legale* 32 (1911): 664.

<sup>16</sup> [Mario Carrara], review of L. Altmann, *Die Fruchtabtreibung* (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1926), *Archivio di antropologia criminale, psichiatria e medicina legale* 46 (1926): 731; [Mario Carrara], review of G. Sampaio, *A esterilização eugénica e a deontologia médica* (1928), *Archivio di antropologia criminale, psichiatria e medicina legale* 49 (1929): 732; [Mario Carrara], review of O. Kankeleit, *Die Unfruchtbarmachung aus rassenhygienischen und sozialen Gründen* (1929), *Archivio di antropologia criminale, psichiatria e medicina legale* 50 (1930): 787.

<sup>17</sup> [Mario Carrara], “Primo congresso di Eugenetica sociale,” *Archivio di antropologia criminale, psichiatria e medicina legale* 45 (1925): 72.

<sup>18</sup> For comments on the debate regarding the “two Italies” from an anthropological point of view, see Vito Teti, *La razza maledetta: origini del pregiudizio antimeridionale* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 1993); Claudia Petraccone, *Le due Italie: la questione meridionale tra realtà e rappresentazione* (Rome: Laterza, 2005).

and military medicine, inspired by Lombroso, who took part in 1913 in the first Italian Committee of Eugenic Studies, starting with Mario Carrara and Salvatore Ottolenghi, Lombroso's assistant in Turin from 1885 to 1893.

But what characterized “Lombrosian” eugenics at the London Congress? Senator Raffaele Garofalo did not present a specific paper, but appeared as an honorary member of the Congress, implicitly revealing how important eugenics was for the Italian positivist school of criminal law. From 1885 in fact, the jurist had loudly supported the custody of the perpetrators of crimes against people in criminal asylums for indeterminate periods. This was because from the “precedence of other crimes, hereditary degeneration or a complex of marked psychological and anthropological characteristics, we can assume that the criminal is either a moral imbecile or an instinctive criminal.”<sup>19</sup> Garofalo believed above all in the need for eugenic protection, which justified the restoration of the death penalty to the penal code. In the past, the death penalty had had the merit of “rendering the reproduction of criminals impossible, and therefore leading to a lower number.”<sup>20</sup>

At the London Congress, Alfredo Niceforo was president of the Italian Consultative Committee. For Niceforo, eugenics was a theoretical corollary of his research on the anthropological causes—both hereditary and environmental—of the inferiority of the Italian “southern race” and the poor classes, which he had begun to investigate in the final years of the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> In Niceforo's view, biological weakness was the principle cause of socioeconomic inferiority: “The groups formed by individuals belonging to the lower classes present, in comparison with subjects of the higher classes, a lesser development of the figure, of the cranial circumference, of the sensibility, of the resistance to mental fatigue, a delay in the epoch when puberty manifests itself, a slowness in the growth, a larger number of anomalies and of cases of arrested development.”<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Raffaele Garofalo, *Criminologia. Studio sul delitto, sulle sue cause e sui mezzi di repressione* (Turin: Bocca, 1885), 449–50.

<sup>20</sup> Garofalo, *Criminologia*, 419.

<sup>21</sup> On this theme, see in particular Bernardino Farolfi, “Antropometria militare e antropologia della devianza (1876–1906),” in Franco Della Peruta, ed., *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, vol. 7, *Malattia e medicina* (Turin: Einaudi, 1984), 1181–1222.

<sup>22</sup> Alfredo Niceforo, “The cause of the inferiority of physical and mental characters in the lower social classes,” in *Problems in Eugenics: Papers Communicated to the First International Eugenics Congress held at the University of London July 24<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>* (London: Eugenics Education Society, 1912), 187.

Therefore the bio-psychical characteristics of the individual were the subject of social exchange: those most endowed tended to be concentrated in the superior classes, while the weakest and defective inevitably descended the social scale. Niceforo understood eugenics as an “anthropology of the poorer classes” or “anthropology of social classes,” which studied how to facilitate the natural circulation” of “social molecules”: upwards for the superior who find themselves below, downwards for the inferior who find themselves above.<sup>23</sup>

Among the Italian delegates to London, Giuseppe Sergi, who later became president of the first Italian Committee of Eugenic Studies in 1913, was the only member to have personally met Francis Galton: in 1886, when the British scientist visited Rome. He was later a guest in the Galton’s London house and met him again on the successive trips to Rome, the last of which was in 1903.<sup>24</sup> Sergi’s approach to eugenics can be seen, in addition to his knowledge of the theories of Darwin and Galton, and in general to Anglo-Saxon scientific culture, in his specific treatment of the problem of degeneration, to which he dedicated a specific essay in 1889. In it, defining degeneration as a form of “inferior adaptation,” a sort of residuum from the process of natural selection, Sergi described various categories of degenerates, which reproduced the usual positivist approach of social pathology: the insane, criminals, suicides, prostitutes, the “serfs and the servile,” vagabonds, beggars and parasites.

In the face of this harvest of human degeneration, what sense could “regeneration” still have? With lengthy citations from Herbert Spencer, Sergi passionately denounced the dangerous effects of “sentimental altruism”: protecting degenerates only increased their chances of reproducing. The “protection of the weak” could be useful for victims of misfortune or illness, but could not be extended to vagabonds, beggars and criminals.<sup>25</sup> Natural selection must therefore be supported by “artificial selection,” with the aim of the “regeneration” of the stock. This artificial selection had to be characterized by a double objective: “prevent

<sup>23</sup> Niceforo, “The cause of the inferiority of physical and mental characters in the lower social classes,” 189.

<sup>24</sup> Giuseppe Sergi, “Francis Galton,” *Rivista di Antropologia*, 41, 1 (1911): 179–81. On Sergi’s eugenics, see also Luca Tedesco, “‘For a healthy, peace-loving and hardworking race’: anthropology and eugenics in the writings of Giuseppe Sergi,” *Modern Italy* 16, 1 (February 2011): 51–65.

<sup>25</sup> Giuseppe Sergi, *Le degenerazioni umane* (Milan: Fratelli Dumolard, 1889), 204.

the increase of degenerates” and “diminish and make existing degenerates disappear.”<sup>26</sup> The first aspect dealt with the protection of parents, guaranteeing them “useful nutrition,” a job, “adequate rest” and the “necessary recreation.” As for children, Sergi identified various categories. For the children of “serious degenerates” (“those in advanced states of tuberculosis, rachitis and scrofula”) he hoped for “rapid elimination.” For the children of less serious degenerates, it was necessary to distinguish between “criminal” or “pathological” characteristics of degeneration, and decide the treatment accordingly. For the “children of normal parents who may lack resistance,” Sergi outlined a program of biosocial “regeneration,” that included correct nutrition, “protection from the external environment” and, above all, education.

As for the second aspect—the diminution of existing degenerates—Sergi called for the abandonment of sentimentalism in the name of “prudent philanthropy.” This signified the abolition of homeless night shelters and maternity shelters, condemnation to work through deportation to deserted isles, prohibition of marriage and prevention of illegitimate children.

In the first years of the twentieth century, Sergi’s interest in the theories of hereditary transmission continued, opening up the pages of his journal *Rivista di Antropologia* [Anthropological review] to what could be considered the first steps of genetics in Italy.<sup>27</sup> In the nature/nurture debate, Sergi clearly opposed the Mendelian-Weismannian paradigm in the name of the Lamarckian principle of the hereditariness of acquired characteristics, attributing the role of prime motor in the modification of the germ plasm to environmental conditions (social, economic, etc.)<sup>28</sup> At the London Congress, Sergi contested Franz Boas’ research on the role of the environment in the modification of the cephalic index of Italian immigrants in United States, but at the same time maintained that it was necessary to carry out “new and rigorous observations in order to be able to prove decisively that human heredity proceeds according to Mendel’s theory.”<sup>29</sup> Sergi’s

<sup>26</sup> Sergi, *Le degenerazioni umane*, 223.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Cesare Artom, “Principi di genetica,” *Rivista di antropologia* 19, 1–2 (1914): 281–410. On the initial phases of genetics in Italy, see Alessandro Volpone, *Gli inizi della genetica in Italia* (Bari: Cacucci, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Giuseppe Sergi, *Problemi di scienza contemporanea* (Milan: Remo Sandron Editore, 1904), 155

<sup>29</sup> Giuseppe Sergi, “Variazione ed eredità nell’uomo,” in *Problems in Eugenics*, 14.

skepticism regarding the risk of excessive “Mendelian” generalizations was connected to his definition of eugenics as a discipline suspended between biology and sociology, focused on the environmental role in hereditary transformations and on the centrality of “education.”<sup>30</sup> The same positivist concept of progress was used to justify the eugenic power of education: “We must concede some value to educational power, if the education is rational and under the guidance of biology and that genetics of which we until now know very little and which has different interpretations according to different theories.”<sup>31</sup>

Sergi’s sociological environmentalism was devised however, not as an alternative, but as a complement to negative eugenics: “It is not enough to eliminate the human elements that carry hereditary pathological and degenerative defects in whichever way such elimination will be carried out; it is necessary first of all to take care of the healthy elements of the race.”<sup>32</sup> Not surprisingly, in 1914, Sergi declared the social uselessness of “education of deficientes”: “The danger is not imaginary; because deficientes contain the seeds from which criminals, prostitutes, the mentally unbalanced, madmen, vagabonds and beggars grow.”<sup>33</sup>

It was a drastic position, which soon attracted accusations of cruelty from Paolo Mantegazza,<sup>34</sup> and from another eugenicist with Sergi in London: the noted psychiatrist, Enrico Morselli. Morselli, founder of the *Rivista di filosofia scientifica* [Review of scientific philosophy] and illustrious exponent of Italian anthropological psychiatry, offered an original interpretation of eugenics. This was based substantially on two elements: the methodological and epistemological centrality of psychiatry to the new discipline founded by Galton, and its intrinsic links with the “doctrine of race.” At the London Congress, Morselli emphasized, first of all, the determinant role of psychology in eugenics, together with biology and sociology.<sup>35</sup> In fact,

<sup>30</sup> Giuseppe Sergi, “L’eugenica. Dalla biologia alla sociologia,” *Rivista italiana di Sociologia* 18, no. 5–6 (September–December 1914): 630.

<sup>31</sup> Sergi, “L’eugenica. Dalla biologia alla sociologia,” 632.

<sup>32</sup> Sergi, “L’eugenica. Dalla biologia alla sociologia,” 632–33.

<sup>33</sup> Sergi, “L’eugenica. Dalla biologia alla sociologia,” 632–33.

<sup>34</sup> Claudio Pogliano, “Eugenisti, ma con giudizio,” in Alberto Burgio, ed., *Nel nome della razza. Il razzismo nella storia d’Italia, 1870–1945* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1999), 426–27.

<sup>35</sup> Enrico Morselli, “La psicologia etnica e la scienza eugenistica,” *Rivista di psicologia* 8, no. 4 (July–August 1912): 290.

it was the work of psychiatry to analyze and explain the principle problem of eugenics, that is, that of “pathological heredity in families.”<sup>36</sup> Morselli’s nationalist outlook viewed Mendelism as pervaded with a “Germanic mentality affected by metaphysics”<sup>37</sup> and unable to explain the hereditary roots of the most relevant mental pathologies. Instead of Mendel’s laws, Morselli preferred Bénédict-Auguste Morel’s “theory of degeneration,” as he claimed explicitly in 1915: “In substance, eugenics derives from the Morelian doctrine. [...] The exogenesis of illnesses is not only individual: it is becoming, through hereditary transmission, endogenesis, which is collective.”<sup>38</sup> The entire “essence of eugenics” can be found in Morel’s laws, not only in their scientific aspects, but also in the political and social ones. In fact, since Morel believed in “a well coordinated plan of prophylactic measures for physical and moral hygiene,” Morselli felt that “if society does not want to adopt energetic means, such as the sterilization of degenerates, to arrest the physical decadence of the race and the perversion of its intellectual and moral qualities,” then the “most competent eugenicists” should at least provide for education.<sup>39</sup>

Having identified the connection between psychiatry and eugenics, Morselli came directly to a differentialist “psychology of races.” If the “destiny” of every race was marked out by the stage to which it had attained in the “psycho-physical hierarchy of man,” and if the aim of each race could be identified as the “preservation of its own ethnic type,” then eugenics must not only aim at the “realization of a uniform type of man,” but instead must “vary its practical efforts according to the natural differentiation of work among races and nations during the bio-historical period.”<sup>40</sup> In this way, eugenics became a “doctrine and practice of prophylaxis of the race,”<sup>41</sup> becoming a central mechanism in evolutionary anthropology and positivist racism. The “protomorphic races,” that is, those that were “enormously inferior in morphological, physiological, psychological and sociological

<sup>36</sup> Enrico Morselli, “L’eugenica e le previsioni sull’eredità neuro-psicopatologica,” *Quaderni di Psichiatria* 2, no. 7–8 (July–August 1915): 322.

<sup>37</sup> Morselli, “L’eugenica e le previsioni sull’eredità neuro-psicopatologica,” 323.

<sup>38</sup> Morselli, “L’eugenica e le previsioni sull’eredità neuro-psicopatologica,” 324.

<sup>39</sup> Enrico Morselli, “La rivendicazione delle leggi di Morel,” *Quaderni di Psichiatria* 3, no. 11–12 (November–December 1916): 278.

<sup>40</sup> Morselli, “La psicologia etnica e la scienza eugenistica,” 292.

<sup>41</sup> Morselli, “L’eugenica e le previsioni sull’eredità neuro-psicopatologica,” 321.

aspects” were distinct from the “archimorphic”<sup>42</sup> races (black, white and yellow); the “fight for ethnarchy,” that is, for racial superiority, would necessarily lead to the disappearance of the first group, and the assertion, within the second group, of the “leucodermic” groups. Morselli’s “sociological optimism” even theorized a eugenic utopia of the “future man” or *Metanthropos*: “a perfect being in terms of anthropinic specifications, eurhythmic in the proportions of the body, with an advantageous stature, the head always erect, in possession of complete verticality without his current damage.”<sup>43</sup> Endowed with “superior intelligence,” the *Metanthropos*, thanks to technical-scientific progress, would dominate nature, but with a substantial harmony between the different ethnic groups.<sup>44</sup> If therefore, the course of history realized the perfection of humanity, eugenics would be called to support evolution, forcing the race to follow its destiny, until it reached the utopia of *Metanthropos*.<sup>45</sup>

From the point of view of eugenic policies, Morselli, although stressing the scientific weakness of eugenics, nevertheless proposed the introduction of an obligatory premarital examination, and maintained the importance of educating individuals to have a sense of responsibility towards the collective.<sup>46</sup> Morselli supported, although with some reserves, the education of the insane, and he insisted that it was important to prevent an approximate eugenics from cancelling the therapeutic work of psychiatry, by judging it “useless.” This was one of the reasons why he strongly opposed Sergi’s affirmations. Education of the insane, according to Morselli, if limited to those few “educable” individuals, who with hard work would be able to reach some awareness of self and the coordination necessary to carry out simple manual work, could not be considered, as Sergi suggested, as an open sore through which degenerative infection would penetrate the social body. There were very few re-educated feeble-minded who were able to re-enter the social circuit, and they usually regressed and ended up in asylums. In

<sup>42</sup> Enrico Morselli, “La lotta per l’etnarchia,” *Nuova Antologia* 151, no. 938 (1911): 232

<sup>43</sup> Enrico Morselli, *Antropologia generale. L’uomo secondo le teorie dell’evoluzione* (Turin: Un. Tip. Ed., 1911), 1335.

<sup>44</sup> Enrico Morselli, “Progresso sociale ed evoluzione,” *Rivista italiana di Sociologia* 15, no. 5 (September–October 1911): 528.

<sup>45</sup> Morselli, *Antropologia generale*, 1336.

<sup>46</sup> Morselli, “Leugenica e le previsioni sull’eredità neuro-psicopatologica,” 331.

general, the number of “mediocre, deficient, retarded or insufficient feeble-minded people,” who, “enhanced by orthophrenia,” would be able to reach the threshold of marriage, had been greatly overestimated. In Morselli’s opinion therefore, no orthophrenic “veneer” should prevent eugenics from keeping feeble-minded people at a discreet distance from marriage and procreation.<sup>47</sup> Instead, the problem was the economic and social cost of orthophrenia compared to eugenics. Wouldn’t it simply be healthier and more economically advantageous to sterilize the “defectives”? To his friend, the physiologist Charles Richet, vice-president of the French Eugenics Society and 1913 Nobel laureate, who in 1919 had stressed the importance of a radical *sélection humaine*,<sup>48</sup> and to other European and North American supporters of “elimination by death,” Morselli responded in 1923, in an essay in defense of a eugenics based not on authorized euthanasia, but on a wise program of social medicine.<sup>49</sup>

## 2. Pareto’s Way: the Problem of the Elite

Between 1896 and 1906—that is in the chronological framework in which *Cours d’économie politique* [Course of political economy],<sup>50</sup> *Les systèmes socialistes* [Socialist systems]<sup>51</sup> and the *Manuale di economia politica* [Manual of political economy]<sup>52</sup> were published—Vilfredo Pareto developed an anthropological conception of social stratification, which constituted a significant connecting element between his economic and statistical analysis of the distribution of wealth (the well-known “income curve”) and the political and sociological theory of circulation of the elite.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Enrico Morselli, “Problemi di psicopatologia applicata. È socialmente utile l’educazione dei frenastenici?,” *Quaderni di Psichiatria* 2, no. 5 (May 1915): 223–31.

<sup>48</sup> Charles Richet, *La sélection humaine* (Paris: Alcan, 1919).

<sup>49</sup> Enrico Morselli, *L’uccisione pietosa (l’eutanasia) in rapporto alla medicina, alla morale e all’eugenica* (Turin: Bocca, 1923).

<sup>50</sup> Vilfredo Pareto, *Cours d’économie politique*, 1–2 (Lausanne: F. Rouge Lausanne, 1896–97) [ed. used: Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1961].

<sup>51</sup> Vilfredo Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2 (Paris: Giard & Brière, 1901–02) [ed. used, Turin: UTET, 1974].

<sup>52</sup> Vilfredo Pareto, *Manuale di economia politica* (Milan: Società Editrice Libreria, 1906) [ed. used, Milan: EGEA-Università Bocconi, 2006].

<sup>53</sup> On Pareto’s social anthropology, see in particular Terenzio Maccabelli, “Social Anthropology in Economic Literature at the End of the 19th Century. Eugenic and Racial Explanations of Inequality,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 67, no. 3 (July 2008): 481–527.

The starting point of Pareto's anthropology can be identified in the concept of social heterogeneity, adopted with the intent of providing an explanation for the invariability and universality of the "income curve." The unequal division of wealth did not depend, Pareto argued, on chance or social organization as much as on the unequal distribution of "psychical and physiological qualities" of individuals: society, Pareto declared, was composed "of elements that are more or less different, not only in their evident characteristics, such as sex, age, physical force, health, etc. but also in their less easily observable, but not less important, characteristics, such as intellectual and moral qualities, activity, courage, etc."<sup>54</sup> In 1896, Pareto explicitly declared that he had largely adopted the "doctrine of social heterogeneity" from the writings of Otto Ammon and Georges Vacher de Lapouge,<sup>55</sup> important social darwinists of the late nineteenth century. However, although acknowledging his intellectual debt to *anthroposociology*, the economist rejected Ammon and Lapouge's racial typology and hierarchy, maintaining that the concept of race lacked an adequate level of scientific validity. When one talked about the Latin race, or the Germanic race, etc.—Pareto declared in *Cours*—one was adopting an ethno-linguistic meaning of the term "race," which had no meaning from a zoological point of view. Not surprisingly, in these same years, Pareto was involved in a controversy with Cesare Lombroso, namely about the problem of the scientific value of the concept of "race." Although acknowledging Lombroso's "genius," Pareto reproached him for his lack of "scientific rigor," in particular as regarded his use of the concept of race.<sup>56</sup>

For Pareto, saying "that there exist in society men who possess certain qualities in higher measures than others and saying that there exists a class of men absolutely *better* than the rest of the population is not the same thing."<sup>57</sup> Social heterogeneity did not imply a racial hierarchy, but instead fed a complex mechanism of "social selection." Yet, as far as social selection was concerned, Pareto was still in debt to Ammon and Lapouge. In Pareto's discourse, selection was a necessary condition for the preservation of

<sup>54</sup> Pareto, *Manuale di economia politica*, 94–95.

<sup>55</sup> Vilfredo Pareto, "La curva delle entrate e le osservazioni del prof. Edgeworth," *Giornale degli Economisti* 13, no. 10 (1896): 443.

<sup>56</sup> See Vilfredo Pareto, "L'uomo delinquente di Cesare Lombroso e Polemica col Prof. Lombroso," in Giovanni Busino, ed., *Écrits sociologiques mineurs* (Geneva: Droz, 1980), 111–25.

<sup>57</sup> Pareto, *Cours d'économie politique*, 1–2, 392.

vital organisms. Every society contained “elements unfit to the conditions of life”<sup>58</sup> and if the activity of these elements was not contained within certain limits, then society would be “annihilated.”<sup>59</sup> There were three possible measures, of decreasing effectiveness, that could help to avoid this danger: first, “destroy the unfit elements”; second, “prevent the harm they might do, either by instilling fear of the consequences of their actions, by taking away their liberty to act, or by placing them outside of society temporarily or indefinitely”; lastly, “amend them and modify their nature.”<sup>60</sup>

The destruction of inferior elements, “widely used by breeders and farmers,”<sup>61</sup> was “incontestably effective”; but, in Pareto’s opinion, inapplicable in human society. This was not only because of the “frightening abuses” that would result from its adoption, but above all because it contradicted that “sentiment of altruism and pity that is indispensable for a society to subsist and prosper.” Therefore, it was necessary to substitute direct selection with “indirect” selection: according to Pareto, there were “many means, unfortunately very imperfect, with which inferior elements can be eliminated.” Regarding the selective effectiveness of penal legislation (death penalty, exile, slavery for criminals) and of war, Pareto kept his distance from Ammon and Lapouge, expressing several reserves. Instead, the “most important selection” would be accomplished by the differential reproductiveness of different social classes. From a “qualitative” point of view—Pareto confirmed—a “higher death rate, particularly for infants, eliminated the weak and deformed in great numbers.”<sup>62</sup> In addition, in the human species, the “death rate of adults eliminated many individuals who do not have enough self-control to resist depraved inclinations, at least when pushed to certain excesses.” A man of weak character more easily became an alcoholic, accelerating “his degeneration and that of his descendents.”

On a quantitative level, demographic selection had the additional advantage of acting on a much higher number of individuals, and according to Pareto, its effectiveness was clearly demonstrated by the immunizing effect of some diseases:

<sup>58</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 541.

<sup>59</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 541.

<sup>60</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 541.

<sup>61</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 542.

<sup>62</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 545.

The races which were exposed to certain influences, to certain illnesses, ended up resisting them victoriously, precisely because the elements that did not resist were eliminated from selection. A race that is removed from these influences for a long time and is then suddenly exposed could be destroyed, because, not having operated the selection, this race will not have any resistance to the danger that threatens.<sup>63</sup>

Pareto's discourse was an attempt to reconcile selective action with "humanitarian" sentiment:

The problem to resolve is the following: first of all, are there some means to diminish, reduce to a minimum, the number of birth of individuals unfit to the conditions of social life? Following from this, if it is not possible to decrease these births, if the increase of the number of these individuals becomes a danger for society, how can we eliminate them, with a minimum of error in their choice and in the suffering inflicted on them, and without overly upsetting the humanitarian sentiments, which it is useful to develop?<sup>64</sup>

To answer this question, Pareto first turned on the "philanthropists," the "reformers," the "humanitarians," and in general all people who denied the innate inequality of individuals, claiming to resolve eugenic problems with the tools of education, hygiene and social medicine.

Equally firm was his rejection of eugenic utopias based on rigid control of reproduction, carried out by public authority through coercive means. Although the principle of "appropriate choice of reproducers" in order to "improve the race,"<sup>65</sup> had been recognized "in every age" (and here Pareto cited Theognis of Megara, Plato, Plutarch, Campanella, and finally, Lapouge), the difficulty lay in the "means of execution, to apply this principle to the human species." The coercive eugenic means suggested by Lapouge were received by Pareto, in *Cours*, with "repugnance" and stigmatized as the final outcome of state socialism:

We consider it useful to see where this path ends up, which, beginning with State monopolies and keeping on with obligatory unions, obligatory insur-

<sup>63</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 546.

<sup>64</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 554.

<sup>65</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 559.

ance, collective organization of production and the constitution of a welfare state, is leading to the destruction of every individual initiative, the annihilation of all human dignity, and the reduction of men to the level of a flock of sheep.<sup>66</sup>

A measure such as an obligatory premarital certificate would become, as Pareto claimed in the *Systèmes socialistes*, the paradigmatic expression of “medical-hygienist madness.”<sup>67</sup> Along the same lines, Pareto cited the case of the collectivist community constituted in Oneida, in the state of New York between 1847 and 1879, as an example of the non-viability of negative and coercive eugenics:

This community voluntarily placed itself under rigorous discipline, and also practiced a community of goods. As was to be expected, this did not endure for long; after 33 years of existence, it had been transformed into a simple holding, and had no appreciable effect on the improvement of the race.<sup>68</sup>

In this context, Pareto's eugenic proposal rested on two fundamental points.

First, he proposed—citing in particular *La viriculture* of the liberal economist Gustave de Molinari<sup>69</sup>—“automatic internal forces,” instead of “external coercive forces.” Only a radical change in individual morals could contribute to improvement of the species:

If the foresight of the results of the sexual act could become one of the principles of individual morals, it would be a great step towards the possible improvement of the species. This foresight would encourage the individual to not bring children into this world, if there were reasons to believe that he would transmit to them some illness or defect, and if there were no means to conveniently relieve it. G. de Molinari, with his usual elevated point of view, has dealt with the problem of automatic internal forces and their relationship with the improvement of the human species.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Pareto, *Cours d'économie politique*, 1–2, 394.

<sup>67</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 561.

<sup>68</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 559.

<sup>69</sup> See Gustave de Molinari, *La viriculture* (Paris: Guillaumin et Cie, 1897).

<sup>70</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 561.

Second, the theory of the circulation of the elite had, in Pareto's vision, a eugenic function. In a letter from December 1903, Pareto acknowledged the influence of Ammon and Lapouge in the formulation of his theory: "From Mosca I have taken nothing. I have however taken much, a great deal, and I have clearly stated so [...] from Ammon, and a little also from Lapouge. The scholars can moreover see how I partly dissent from them, and have added things."<sup>71</sup>

Despite this intellectual debt, Pareto radically rejected the racial typological description of the elite created by Ammon and Lapouge. The "chosen" subjects—he stated in *Cours*—are simply "individuals whose life activity is more intense" and such activity could "be good as much as bad."<sup>72</sup> No empirical evidence led to the identification of "aristocracy" in the dolicocephalic blonds of Ammon and Lapouge:

Ammon and De Lapouge specify too much when they wish to give us the anthropological characteristics of this elite, these eugenic races, identifying them as dolicocephalic blonds. For now, this point remains obscure, and lengthy studies are still necessary before we will be able to establish whether the psychical qualities of the elite are translated into exterior, anthropometric characteristics, and before we can know precisely what these characteristics are.<sup>73</sup>

Therefore, it was not the morphological and racial differences that fed social selection, as much as the "invisible hand" of the market, the free competition between individuals:

If, in fact, it were possible to recognize the character and attitudes of people from some exterior signs, such as form of the cranium, hair color, eye color, etc. the problem would be easily resolved. Unfortunately, these theories have uncertain relationships with reality, and for the moment, there are no other means to select men, if not that of testing what they can do, and putting them in competition, one against the other. This has a place, albeit a very imperfect one, in our societies, and history shows us that their progress is intimately linked to the extension of this use.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Vilfredo Pareto to Giuseppe Prezzolini, 17 December 1903, in Pareto, *Epistolario. 1890–1923* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1973), 1, 507. See also Pareto, *Manuale di economia politica*, 302 (with reference to Ammon and Lapouge) and Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 131 (with reference to Ammon).

<sup>72</sup> Pareto, *Cours d'économie politique*, 1–2, 416.

<sup>73</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 133.

<sup>74</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 342.

In particular, the dynamic interaction between economic conditions and movement of the population explained, in Pareto's view, the circulation of the elite on which the process of social selection depended. In one passage of *Cours*, which focused on the opposition between the stability of the income curve and the internal mobility of the defined area of the curve, Pareto compared the social organism to a living organism:

The social organism in this way resembles a living organism. The external form of a living organism—for example, a horse—is almost always constant, but internally, there are ample and sundry movements. The blood circulation rapidly moves certain molecules; the processes of assimilation and of secretion incessantly modify the molecules of which its tissue is made up.<sup>75</sup>

The circulation of social “molecules” originated from the “influence of the economic conditions on the movement of the population.”<sup>76</sup> In the inferior social strata—Pareto declared—“this influence is a powerful agent of zoological selection”; in the superior strata it “acts at times to limit the number of births, and, in this way, further becomes an agent of selection, facilitating the chosen subjects, born in the inferior strata, to access the superior strata.”<sup>77</sup> In the introduction to *Systèmes*, Pareto further defined the role of “pressure of subsistence” on the dynamic of circulation of the elite:

It seems highly probable that the rigorous selection that occurs in the inferior classes, above all for children, has a more important action. The rich classes have few children and almost all survive; the poor classes have many children and lose great numbers of those who are not particularly robust or well endowed. It is the same reason for which the perfected animal and plant races are very delicate, in comparison with the ordinary races.<sup>78</sup>

From Pareto's point of view, those who wished to persuade the higher social classes to have more children (the “ethicists”), and those who wished to reduce the infant mortality rate of the lower social classes (the “humanitarians”) were both mistaken. Both solutions ended in altering the perfect eugenic equilibrium of the circulation of the elite:

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<sup>75</sup> Pareto, *Cours d'économie politique*, 1–2, 397.

<sup>76</sup> Pareto, *Cours d'économie politique*, 1–2, 416.

<sup>77</sup> Pareto, *Cours d'économie politique*, 1–2, 416.

<sup>78</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 134.

If the rich classes in our societies were to have many children, it is likely that almost all would survive, even the frailest and least endowed. This would proportionately grow the degenerate elements in the superior classes and retard the access of the inferior classes to the elite. If selection were to no longer exercise its effects on the inferior classes, these would cease to produce elite members, and the average quality of society would be considerably lessened.<sup>79</sup>

Differing from Ammon and Lapouge, Pareto believed that the lower social classes did not represent a threat to the aristocracy, but rather constituted a reservoir for the continuous formation of the elite: the inferior classes, and in particular, the “rural classes,” were the “crucible in which, in shadow, the elite of the future are born. These are like the roots of a plant, while the elite is the flower. This flower fades and must fade, but it is immediately replaced by another, if the roots are not damaged.”<sup>80</sup> Experience in fact demonstrated that within the inferior classes, individuals existed who were better endowed than those in the superior classes: “Whoever has spent some time among the manual workers knows that one encounters among them individuals who are more intelligent than this or that scientist, laden with academic titles.”<sup>81</sup> And it was this—Pareto controversially emphasized—that made Candolle’s and Galton’s statistics on the genealogy of men of genius unreliable. In an attempt to explain how “first class elements” could come from the rural classes, Pareto introduced a biological hypothesis which was to have a notable afterlife in Italian eugenics: “It could be that the same fact that the rural classes develop their muscles and rest their brains has precisely the effect of producing individuals who are able to rest their muscles and excessively work their brains.”<sup>82</sup> Consequently, preventing the circulation of the elite through the introduction of a rigid caste system could not lead to anything but “decadence”:

Modern authors, in the search for something new, have developed a great love for the institution of the Indian caste system. These authors cannot explain how this excellent system has not prevented the Indians from becoming prey

<sup>79</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 135.

<sup>80</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 134.

<sup>81</sup> Pareto, *Cours d'économie politique*, 1–2, 396.

<sup>82</sup> Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, 1–2, 135.

to numerous conquerors, lacking all caste, nor how some thousands of British were enough to maintain British dominion over a country that counts around two hundred million inhabitants.<sup>83</sup>

At the First International Eugenics Congress in London, many of the Italian contributions revealed a clear Paretian influence. The most transparent example was undoubtedly the economist Achille Loria, who—reprising his previous criticism of Otto Ammon's anthroposociology<sup>84</sup>—contested the relationship between the economic elite and the biological elite:

Economic superiority is by no means an index of superior psycho-physical aptitudes, whether because many of those who now possess that position do not acquire it by virtue of the possession of elevated mental capacity, or because all the others who have inherited these positions from preceding possessors are completely devoid of such aptitudes. Thus, economic superiority cannot in any case be assumed to be the measure or reflection of psycho-physical superiority.<sup>85</sup>

According to Loria, only this argument could inspire a “decisive” and “rational” eugenics,<sup>86</sup> which would not nourish classist prejudices, but on the contrary, would lead to “a minute and positive examination of individual characters.”<sup>87</sup>

Roberto Michels' contribution also reflected on elite theory. Although an exponent, in those years, of the nascent neo-Malthusian movement, at the London Congress, socialist Michels propounded the general criteria of a eugenics based not so much on birth control as on the organization of the mass party. On this latter topic Michels had focused a few years earlier his most famous essay *The sociology of the political party in modern democracy*, a fundamental contribution, along with Gaetano Mosca's and Vilfredo Pareto's works, to the elite theory of political power. According to Michels,

<sup>83</sup> Pareto, *Cours d'économie politique*, 1–2, 416–17.

<sup>84</sup> See Achille Loria, “L'antropologia sociale,” in Achille Loria, ed., *Verso la giustizia sociale—(Idee, battaglie, apostoli)* (Milan: Società Editrice Libreria, 1908), 562–73.

<sup>85</sup> Achille Loria, “The psycho-physical elite and the economic elite,” in *Problems in Eugenics*, 181–82.

<sup>86</sup> Loria, “The psycho-physical elite and the economic elite,” 183.

<sup>87</sup> Loria, “The psycho-physical elite and the economic elite,” 183. During the Congress, Loria's position garnered the approval of the anarchist philosopher Kropotkin.

the organization of modern parties favored the selection of a new psycho-anthropological type—that of the political leader—characterized by oratory ability and physical good looks, and additionally, by a series of psychological endowments:

Firstly, energy of will which enables them to dominate weaker characters; secondly, superiority of knowledge, which compels respect; “catonian” depth of conviction, a force of ideas which often borders on fanaticism and which, from its intensity, commands the admiration of followers; self-confidence pushed even to the point of self-conceit, which has the power, however, of being communicated to the mass; in certain rarer cases, finally, goodness of heart and disinterestedness.<sup>88</sup>

Selecting a form of superiority not linked to income, but to physical and psychological gifts, party organization had a double eugenic function: it guaranteed self-made men from the working classes social access to leadership roles in worker movements; and it favored the affirmation of socialist leaders, indirectly feeding the realization of a social policy which would be more effective eugenically, as it would reduce the economic-social inequality and re-establish “the struggle for life on a more healthy and more natural basis, and allow a greater quantity of men to occupy in society the place to which their special and inborn qualities and their cleverness and energy give a kind of moral and logical right.”<sup>89</sup>

Not surprisingly, Michels dedicated a collection of articles entitled *Problems in applied sociology* to Pareto, which was published in German in 1914, and then in Italian in 1919. The first chapter of this essay was specifically devoted to eugenics. The proletariat (or better, the “people”), because of its numeric consistency and the “sad biological conditions in which it finds itself,” should be, according to Michels, the subject of specific eugenic study and activity. Product of a synthesis between biology and political economics, eugenics had the crucial job of understanding to what point the inferiority of the poor classes derived from an “unyielding anthropological base”<sup>90</sup> or whether it was a product of economic consequences.

<sup>88</sup> Roberto Michels, “Eugenics in party organisation,” in *Problems in Eugenics*, 234–35.

<sup>89</sup> Michels, “Eugenics in party organisation,” 237.

<sup>90</sup> Michels, *Problemi di sociologia applicata* (Turin: Bocca, 1919), 4.

Eugenics' objective therefore did not consist in the "artificial production of supermen,"<sup>91</sup> but rather in the "biological improvement of the race," pursued through two principle activities. These were, first, negative measures discouraging the "physically unfit or morally inferior elements" from reproducing (for example, the obligatory sterilization of carriers of hereditary illnesses and of sexual criminals), and, secondly, a social reform policy, aimed at "improving the economic and social conditions of mankind." In particular, it was this last aspect that Michels identified as the "pivot of eugenic work."<sup>92</sup> Not surprisingly, this last form of positive eugenics was to mark in Michels' progressive shift from socialism to fascism. No longer a supporter of birth control and sterilization, but of the eugenic and demographic value of Italian emigration, in the 1920s, Michels did not hesitate to protest against E.W. MacBride, vice-president of the British Eugenics Education Society, guilty of having defined the Southern Italians as a "ethnic group close to Negroes."<sup>93</sup>

Along the same lines of Pareto's anthropology, but with a level of scientific originality far superior to that of Loria or Michels, we also find Corrado Gini's eugenics. Gini's eugenic discourse could not be adequately understood, if not within the systematic process of statistical and demographic revision with which, between 1907 and 1912, he treated the problem of the differential birth-rate of the social classes.

Already in his graduating thesis, published in 1908 with the title *Il sesso dal punto di vista statistico* [Sex from a statistical point of view],<sup>94</sup> Gini dealt with the issue of the "circulation of social classes and populations," introducing for the first time the hypothesis that the cause of differential birth rate could be reduced to the environmental influence on "germinal elements." Animals kept in captivity demonstrated, according to Gini, that "the maturation of the germinal elements is obstructed by captivity, as it impedes muscular activity, makes the environment uniform, and greatly reduces the reactions of the organism."<sup>95</sup> In the same way, in the human

<sup>91</sup> Michels, *Problemi di sociologia applicata*, 14.

<sup>92</sup> Michels, *Problemi di sociologia applicata*, 14.

<sup>93</sup> Roberto Michels, "Sulla teoria e sulla pratica dell'Eugenica," *Echi e Commenti* 3, no. 27 (1922): 14.

<sup>94</sup> In 1907, the thesis was awarded the Vittorio Emanuele Prize for social and political sciences at the University of Bologna.

<sup>95</sup> Corrado Gini, *Il sesso dal punto di vista statistico. Le leggi della produzione dei sessi* (Milan: Remo Sandron, 1908), 454.

species, the “development of sex” appeared favored by those conditions—muscular work, “active rural life,” sport—that “command in the organism, and through it, in the germinal cells, a lively reaction, which is obstructed on the other, by the opposite conditions of health and tranquility.” This physiological reason could explain, therefore, in Gini’s view, the lesser prolificacy of the aristocracy compared to the lower social classes and the decreasing birth rate of the “white races”:

If the stimulus to procreation has lost its intensity, that is due above all, I believe, to the diffuse economic well-being, the decreased physical activity, the broadening and accentuating of that complex of characteristics that we call civilization, the final limit of which is a beatific state, in which every desire is sated and every effort suppressed.<sup>96</sup>

In October 1908, just a few months after the publication of *Sesso*, Gini gave a contribution to the Second Meeting of the Italian Society for the Progress of Science, titled *The different growth of the social classes and the concentration of wealth*. This was later published, in 1909, in *Il Giornale degli Economisti* [The economists’ journal]. This essay explicitly proposed the objective of providing the “statistical proof” of the different growth of the social classes. In researching the probable causes of this demographic phenomenon, Gini challenged Pareto’s *Systèmes Socialistes*, claiming that it had exclusively emphasized the action of natural selection, without giving enough attention to the role of the environment. On the basis of De Vries’ mutation theory, Gini again accentuated the importance of environmental influence:

In a bad environment, a selected race will worsen, in spite of the most active selection; in a good environment, a race improves, even if subjected to reverse selection. This phenomenon has been ascertained for plants, and seems to hold true for all organisms, and, in particular, for man.<sup>97</sup>

As in *Sesso*, the cause of the “lesser reproductive activity” of the rich compared to the poor was here attributed to their “lower force of sexual instinct.”

<sup>96</sup> Gini, *Il sesso dal punto di vista statistico*, 458–59.

<sup>97</sup> Corrado Gini, “Il diverso accrescimento delle classi sociali e la concentrazione della ricchezza,” *Giornale degli Economisti* 2, no. 37 (January 1909): 35.

This conclusion, Gini argued, was “in harmony with the facts of biology, zootechnics and medicine, which demonstrate how the sexual functions are favored, in superior species, by a life of physical fatigue, and in inferior species manifest themselves in alternate generations, under the stimulus of unfavorable environmental conditions.”<sup>98</sup>

Having delineated the different growth of the social classes as a “biological law valid for all human societies,”<sup>99</sup> Gini listed the possible applicable consequences of this theoretical result. First of all, Pareto’s circulation of the elite was substantially confirmed, although Gini preferred to refer to it as “social exchange,” because, on a demographic plane, the upward current did not correspond to a parallel downward current. Also from a eugenic point of view, Pareto’s ideas were reaffirmed by Gini, in direct opposition to Karl Pearson’s eugenic arguments. In contrast to the beliefs of British main-line eugenics, the poor classes did not in fact constitute a biological threat, but rather a necessary resource:

The great mass of population is constituted by those whom we call the poor classes; from them, as if from an immense breeding ground, the elect originate, in relatively small numbers, either through personal merit or through force of circumstances. They originate, arise, shine and are extinguished, like rockets; only insignificant traces fall to earth.<sup>100</sup>

A further consequence was relevant for the anthropological field: following the mechanisms of social exchange, the physical and psychological characteristics of the lower classes would be extended to the rest of the population, contributing to the change of their anthropological and cultural characteristics.

Finally, in the economic field, Gini proposed an alternative to Pareto’s wealth distribution curve (or Pareto’s law), according to which the income distribution was constant in space and time. Gini’s new index was based on a mathematical method that took into account not only the number of recipients within the various classes of income or fortune, but also the total amount of their income or fortune. Gini’s index,  $\delta$ , described a general ten-

<sup>98</sup> Gini, “Il diverso accrescimento delle classi sociali e la concentrazione della ricchezza,” 37.

<sup>99</sup> Gini, “Il diverso accrescimento delle classi sociali e la concentrazione della ricchezza,” 33.

<sup>100</sup> Gini, “Il diverso accrescimento delle classi sociali e la concentrazione della ricchezza,” 38.