

### **III. ANTHROPOSOCIOLOGY**

## **Social Anthropology in Economic Literature at the End of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

### ***Eugenic and Racial Explanations of Inequality***

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ABSTRACT. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Georges Vacher de Lapouge and Otto Ammon founded a school of thought denominated “social anthropology” or “anthropo-sociology,” aimed at placing racism on a scientific basis. Their intent was to create a new discipline into which the themes of biological heredity, natural selection, social stratification, and political organization were to converge. This paper intends to demonstrate the wide resonance that anthroposociology had in the economic literature, analyzing the thought of authors such as Carlos C. Closson, Vilfredo Pareto, and Thorstein Veblen. A particular focus will be on the racial and eugenic arguments used as explanation of social and economic inequality.

Social anthropology is today considered a flourishing branch of human knowledge, promoted all over the world by specialist journals and scientific institutions.<sup>1</sup> However, the social anthropology dealt with in these pages has little to do with this reality. The object of this research is the thought of authors such as the Frenchman Georges Vacher de Lapouge and the German Otto Ammon, who, in the second

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half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century promoted a new discipline, with an explicitly racist and eugenic content that they initially called “social anthropology” and later named “anthro[po]-sociology.” In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this discipline had vast resonance in European and American culture. Its fortunes were obscured with the beginning of the new century, but, however, were strongly rooted in Germany, where it became an incubator for the National Socialist eugenic projects (Mosse 1978). This work intends to demonstrate the wide resonance that this interpretation of social anthropology also had in the economic literature of the period.

One of the inducements to undertaking this research is the increasing interest shown by historians of economic thought in the relationship between eugenics, racism, and political economy. Numerous contributions on the question recently have been published,<sup>2</sup> nonetheless, neglecting the thought of the so-called school of social anthropologists. Much more studied instead is the reception given to the theories of Lapouge and Ammon in the sociological field,<sup>3</sup> where the parabola of the doctrine has been highlighted; after sudden popularity, sanctioned by the space dedicated to it in the major sociological reviews, social anthropology was progressively ousted from the scientific sociological panorama following its scientific delegitimization. In this paper we propose an analogous reconstruction from the economic standpoint. In analyzing the spread of anthroposociological theories in the economic field, major emphasis will be laid on the eugenic and racial explanations for social stratification, which constitute the heart of such a doctrine.

The paper is organized as follows. The first section is dedicated to a brief presentation of the social theories of Georges Vacher de Lapouge and Otto Ammon, the founders of the school of social anthropology. The second section comprises an overview of the articles that the most authoritative economic reviews of the period, principally the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* and the *Journal of Political Economy*, dedicated to the school, chiefly through the agency of Carlos C. Closson, an indefatigable popularizer of the theories of Lapouge and Ammon in the English-speaking world. The third section of the paper enters into the principal question; that is, the explanation offered by the social anthropologists for economic and social

inequality. The fourth section then discusses the influence of social anthropology on Vilfredo Pareto, one of the most authoritative scholars of social hierarchies, and shows how responsive he was to the topics discussed by Lapouge and Ammon. In the fifth part, the paper will illustrate the growth of criticisms of social anthropology and how it was ostracized with the coming of the new century, both by economists and by sociologists. In the last part will be discussed the role of Thorstein Veblen in the spreading of social anthropology in economic literature, before of its epilogue.

I

**The School of Social Anthropology:  
Georges Vacher de Lapouge and Otto Ammon**

AMMON AND Lapouge are authors who are seldom quoted in the history of social science.<sup>4</sup> At the turn of the century, however, their fame was notable and their writings were diffused by the journals of various scientific disciplines. The two scholars were, in truth, difficult to classify from a strictly disciplinary point of view, given that they operated in a grey area covering craniometry, anthropology, sociology, and economics. Their scientific aims were in fact intended to create of a new branch of knowledge, for which they coined the term “social anthropology” or “anthropo-sociology.”<sup>5</sup>

Each declared himself to be the founder of the new discipline, stating a precise period for its inception. As Lapouge wrote (1897: 57), “the establishment of anthro-sociology as a distinct branch of investigation dates from my lectures at the University of Montpellier (1886–1892) and from the publication by Ammon of his research on the conscripts of Baden.” Born in 1854, Lapouge became librarian at the University of Montpellier in 1886, after he failed to receive a university chair. His major works—*Les sélections sociales* (1896), *L'aryen, son rôle social* (1899), and *Race et milieu social* (1909)—are based on his lectures at Montpellier, where “he taught a variety of courses, conducted population survey, compiling craniometric data and publishing a flurry of articles.” During the late 1880s he wrote in the *Revue d'anthropologie*, but in 1895 the *Revue* “ceased to accepting his contributions.” In 1893 he left Montpellier and became a librarian in

Rennes. After 1900, his writings were published mainly in Germany, for the most part in the *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, the racist journal founded and financed by Ludwig Woltmann. In his last years, he became the *maître à penser* of the official race theorists of National Socialism. “He died in 1936, virtually ignored by French intellectual circles.”<sup>6</sup>

There is scarce biographical information on Otto Ammon (1842–1916). An engineer and journalist, he became one of the most influential racial anthropologists of his day, greatly influencing the move toward National Socialism in Germany (Gasman 1971: 148). Like Lapouge, he never held an academic post (Drouard 2005: 15). “His first contribution came as an unexpected result of an investigation of the army recruits of Baden,” which he carried out in 1890 as secretary to the anthropological commission of the archaeological society in Karlsruhe. Among many other things, “he found that there was a difference between rural and urban populations as regards hair-color, eye-color and head-form” (Hankins 1931: 110). The outcome of this research was his monographs (1890 and 1893) “that established his anthropometric credentials” (Llobera 2003: 105). His major work was *Die Gesellschaftsordnung und ihre natürlichen Grundlagen (The Social Order and Its Natural Bases)*, published in 1895 and translated into French in 1900. Albeit Lapouge designated Ammon as co-founder of his school of anthroposociology, the German writer always regarded Lapouge “as a student regards his master.”<sup>7</sup> Together with Lapouge, Ammon was one of the most fervent supporters of Social Darwinism, spreading the idea that society, like nature itself, is subject to universal laws of natural selection and that the social sciences could not disregard Darwin’s recent discoveries in the biological field.<sup>8</sup>

Social Darwinism appears in fact to be the cultural context in which to set Ammon and Lapouge’s anthroposociology, and it is therefore hardly surprising that almost all of those who interpret their work characterize them as “Social Darwinists.”<sup>9</sup> This appellation, while undoubtedly true, nonetheless contains some snares. “Social Darwinism” is indeed one of the most abused terms in the history of social sciences and also one of the most ambiguous. As Hawkins (1997: 32) has pointed out, “‘Darwinism’ was not a fixed entity” and “there are a series of indeterminacies surrounding some of its elements.” The

question whether Darwin himself was a Social Darwinist is not a trivial one. Problems arise, for instance, in looking at the historical relation between Social Darwinism and eugenics, as “it was possible to support one and not the other” (Hawkins 1997: 6). This was not the case for the anthroposociological theories, which postulated a very close association between Social Darwinism and eugenics. Furthermore, not all Social Darwinists followed the racist path, while Lapouge’s and Ammon’s Social Darwinism was indeed a theory with an explicit racist content. This ambiguity makes it difficult to evaluate the real intellectual debt of Ammon and Lapouge to Darwin.

In order to understand the cultural matrices of social anthropology, it is necessary to begin with the radical changes that took place in the social sciences towards the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the doctrine of social homogeneity was abandoned. Authors as diverse as Burke, Rousseau, or Smith, to cite but a few examples, held that the natural equality of human beings was an irrefutable principle. Inequality—both by those who condemned it and by those who legitimized it—was in fact considered by all as a socioeconomic fact, the product of historical evolution and of the social institutions.<sup>10</sup> Around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, instead, as the anthropology historian Marvin Harris has observed, there was no more “self evident truth” than the fact that all men were created *unequal*.<sup>11</sup> Inequality among individuals began to be held to be an objective and natural fact of a biological order as, indeed, was “the ‘fact’ that certain races were superior to others” (Hawkins 1997: 184). Toward the middle of the century, these ideas were widespread among the European intelligentsia, thanks above all to the literary fortune of the ideas vulgarized by Gobineau on the inequality and on the hierarchy of the human races (Battini 1995: 196). The theory of races formulated by Gobineau between 1853 and 1855 in his *Essay sur l’inégalité des races humaines* is without doubt an important juncture, as is recognized by the founders, for the birth of social anthropology.<sup>12</sup>

Ammon and Lapouge nonetheless make a leap in quality, in respect to Gobineau, in trying to give racism a scientific basis.<sup>13</sup> The distinction between races is in fact anchored on quantifiable empirical data, namely, the cephalic index.<sup>14</sup> Both Ammon and Lapouge used it to divide the European population into three fundamental racial types:

the *Homo Europaeus*, the *Homo Alpinus*, and the *Homo Meditteraneus*. *Homo Europaeus* had a lower cephalic index—that is dolichocephalic, with a long narrow skull—and is normally tall, light-skinned, and blond-haired; *Homo Alpinus* is instead brachycephalic, dark, and shorter in stature; *Homo Meditteraneus*, finally, although dolichocephalic, is also darker and shorter in stature and is found exclusively in the Mediterranean basin. The principal innovation introduced by the anthroposociologists “lay in the qualitative characteristics [they] associated with these head shapes” (Hecht 1999: 4). Dolichocephalic and brachycephalic individuals would in fact have different aptitudes, predispositions, and intellects that underlay their different social and cultural performance. *Homo Europaeus*, called *aryan* by Lapouge and *teutonic* by Ammon, was supposed to be active, enterprising, and ambitious, with a marked tendency to migrate and a singular attraction toward urban life; *Homo Alpinus* was instead more static, mostly concentrated in the agricultural centers, and little inclined to change and innovation.<sup>15</sup> The correlation identified between the cephalic index and human capabilities, the outcome of a titanic effort in measuring and cataloguing by Ammon and Lapouge,<sup>16</sup> was the proof, in their opinion, of the “scientific” nature of their racism. The hierarchy of races guessed at by Gobineau would therefore have found confirmation in anthroposociological research intended to demonstrate that even the qualitative differences between individuals could be traced back to quantitative, measurable facts.<sup>17</sup> These ideas were then formulated into a theory of social stratification, to be dealt with later, based on the correlation between socioeconomic status and racial stock.

Besides being based on the idea “that human racial differences are real, significant and scientifically measurable” (Leonard 2003: 689), Ammon and Lapouge’s anthropology also postulates that these differences can be inherited. In the wake of Galton, Ammon and Lapouge in fact maintain that “genius” and “intelligence,” no less than physical features, have a biological foundation and are therefore transmittable through heredity. The concept frame for this biological determinism is that set out by Galton with the distinction between “nature” and “nurture.”<sup>18</sup> The social context has no power to modify the individual and racial differences that derive from “innate characteristics” and

from biology. The condemnation Ammon and Lapouge make of those currents of Social Darwinism that accept the Lamarckian theory of the capacity to inherit acquired characteristics springs from this. The two anthropologists believed that education and social context do not have a role in the evolution of the races, not being able to produce real effects that could be transmitted to descendants.

A further component of social anthropology is natural selection.<sup>19</sup> The elimination of the least fit is a fundamental process in nature, which, nonetheless, works in a flawed and more complex fashion in human societies. “Natural selection” is transformed in fact into “social selection,” “in the measure in which social context exercises its influence on the natural environment.”<sup>20</sup> Contrasts between natural selection and social selection can occur, above all, when social institutions favor the proliferation of the mediocre and hinder the reproduction of the superior individual.<sup>21</sup> In modern society, in particular, norms and social practices that are in contrast to the bettering of the race prevail.<sup>22</sup> The brachycephalic individuals, despite being intellectually and socially “inferior,” have major reproductive powers and greater adaptability to social norms. From this derives the possibility that the brachycephalics will end by replacing the dolichocephalics through selection of a complex order, both biological and social.<sup>23</sup> Lapouge invoked in this context “an anthropological analogue to Gresham’s law in economics, according to which good coin was driven out of circulation by bad coin: when two races were mixed, the inferior would eventually predominate over the superior” (Hawkins 1997: 192).

The only way to invert the tendency toward biological decadence was that of eugenics.<sup>24</sup> Both Ammon and Lapouge came to maintain the necessity of the physical elimination of the “inferior” subjects, a task that, if not carried out by natural selection, would have to be performed by the state. The two anthropologists believed in this case that by catering to the predisposition of the inferior individual, such an aim could be easily pursued. The establishment of places particularly attractive to him or her—where alcohol could be distributed free, where vice could be spread, and libertine behavior favored—would in fact have led to a concentration of degenerate individuals who could easily be eliminated.<sup>25</sup> Naturally, such a project could never be carried

out under a liberal organization of society, which therefore had to give place to a centralized and state-controlled model of socialism (or National Socialism), aimed at bringing into being the real principles of the social hierarchy. "Substituting current humanity with a unique and perfect race" needs, Lapouge wrote, "almost of necessity, a socialist regime"; this requires, however, overcoming the traditional concept of socialism, which has "shown itself up to now to be prevalently leveling and detrimental."<sup>26</sup>

These are the principal traits of Ammon and Lapouge's social anthropology, a new racist theory that European and American culture at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century received as "scientific," "erudite," and "revolutionary."<sup>27</sup> The early diffusion is, in truth, circumscribed to France and Germany, where the two anthropologists worked. The first articles by Lapouge, appearing "in the major French anthropological publications from the mid 1880s to the mid 1890s" (Schneider 1990: 62), had scarce resonance outside France, as did the German-language publications by Ammon in the early 1890s. Things changed after 1895 for two reasons: first because anthroposociological theories began to cross the confines of the discipline of anthropology, finding acceptance even in the economic and sociological journals;<sup>28</sup> and second because the echo of the anthroposociological doctrines was amplified thanks to their diffusion through journals in the English language. Lapouge's and Ammon's theories had by then gained "an aura of scientific respectability" (Weiss 1987: 93–94) recognized at the international level. As pointed out by Poliakov, when leafing through the journals and the publications of the time, one is convinced that anthroposociology "was very much taken seriously. Certainly Lapouge led the way, above all in Germany, where Kaiser Wilhelm II championed him as 'the only great Frenchman'; but he had advocates in other European countries too" (1971: 306).

## II

### **Carlos C. Closson and the Spread of Social Anthropology in Economic Journals**

A SIGN OF THE incredible good fortune of social anthropology is the resonance this doctrine enjoyed in the major economic reviews,<sup>29</sup> fed



by an incessant publicity campaign conducted by Carlos C. Closson. We know very little of the meteoric academic career of Closson. He received his A.B. from Harvard University in 1892 and his A.M. in 1893.<sup>30</sup> After a fellowship in social science at Harvard, he was appointed instructor in Advanced Economics at the University of Chicago in 1894. He held the position until 1896<sup>31</sup> and, when he left, "Veblen was assigned the 'theory' courses, which were required for advanced degrees" (Dorfman [1934] 1947: 132). Closson declared himself a disciple of Lapouge, and he taught courses on "social selection" at Chicago (Hecht 2003: 122). Between 1895 and 1900, Closson's publishing activity was intense. He translated some of Ammon's and Lapouge's fundamental contributions for the English-language journals and published many essays himself on anthroposociology and social selection. But after 1900, the name of Closson suddenly vanished from any social and economic debates. His disappearance was as precipitous as the decline of what he ultimately called anthroposociology. What became of him in the new century is puzzling. We know only that he moved to Los Angeles and undertook a career as a businessman.<sup>32</sup> Thus it would seem that academic teaching and his scholarly activity were only a parenthesis in Closson's life.

The fortune of social anthropology in the economic journals appears in truth to be circumscribed to a limited time. The economic journals, in fact, acted as a sounding board for Ammon's and Lapouge's theories for only five years, from 1896 to 1900. With the beginning of the new century, the debate over social anthropology ceased suddenly, perhaps also due to some economists distancing themselves from it and its subsequent delegitimization.

Social anthropology held the limelight in the 1896 economic debate, with the publication of no fewer than four articles by Closson and the translation, by the same, of Ammon's work. Initially, Closson defined the new scientific approach as "the selectionist school of social sciences" (1896a: 156) in virtue of the key role played by the concept of "selection"; a few months later he began to talk of "social-anthropology" to underline the strict links between the new discipline and sociology, economics, and politics;<sup>33</sup> from 1897, the term "anthro[po]-sociology" begins to appear, which is the term destined to

consecrate the new school of Lapouge, Ammon, and Closson himself. Even among economists, social anthropology is presented as a “new” science, capable of unifying data and knowledge coming from disciplinary areas hitherto far distant. Its claim to be scientific rests on the ample use of empirical and statistical data and on its ability to enunciate universal laws deduced from that data. Therefore, the American economist underlines “the importance of the new science of anthroposociology for the whole range of the social sciences” but, above all, its repercussions in the “sociological field, from which, precisely, there derives its denomination as ‘anthropo-sociology’” (1898: 254–255).

Closson’s contribution, which forms an effective summary of the thoughts of Ammon and Lapouge, addresses two principal questions: one begins with the process of separation that pushes individuals possessing different characteristics in the racial sense to form distinct social groups; the other deals with social selection and its relationship with natural selection. From the former point of view, the American economist highlights how the diverse aptitudes of the human race are transformed into a division within society, both on a hierarchic plane (“disassociation by stratification”) and on a geographic one (“disassociation by displacement”). In both cases, social mechanisms act and lead to the separation of dolichocephalic subjects from brachycephalic ones: in the first case, through a concentration of the former into the higher classes of society; in the second, through the migratory phenomenon, leading to a concentration of the dolichocephalic in the cities. The underlying origin of this diversity of performance is held to be a biological fact: on the one hand, the fact that *Homo Europaeus*, or dolichocephalic, “seems to be superior in general psychic ability and character” and is therefore destined “to the higher position in the process of social stratification”;<sup>34</sup> on the other hand, the greater enterprise and aggressivity of *Homo Europaeus* would explain his major mobility compared to the brachycephalics, more given to the rural life.<sup>35</sup>

The second theme dealt with by Closson touches the center of one of the key concepts of social anthropology, that is, selection. The 1896 publication of Lapouge’s volume entitled *Les sélections sociales* led Closson to write a well-constructed summary in the *Journal of*

*Political Economy.* Lapouge's disciple started by indicating the principal aims of natural selection, which consist of the elimination of degenerate individuals and the perfection of the superior elements. As has already been said, however, the complexity of human society in general generates a contrast between natural selection and social selection. In society, in fact, selection at times inverts these aims.

Closson indicates two principal forces that operate in society: the conservative force of biological heredity, which tends to perpetuate the same physical characteristics from generation to generation; and the evolutionary force of selection, which introduces changes and establishes which species have to progress and which to disappear (1896d: 453). These two forces act on the races, and the second in particular "is the great force in altering the quality of the population." This bettering, however, does not come about thanks to the action of the institutional environment but happens exclusively on the racial plane. Closson emphasizes one of the pillars of anthroposociology, that is, the sterility of "nurture": "[E]ducation has only a limited effect upon the single individual and even this effect is not in any appreciable degree transmitted to his descendants; it cannot be relied upon as the primary means of human improvement." The work of selection must therefore be such as to favor the development of the "ethnically superior elements," something that does not always happen because of the institutions and the social norms that have ended up by favoring the proliferation of the "inferior classes" (1896d: 459–462).

On this occasion Closson picks up on what truly obsesses Lapouge, that is, the danger of a deterioration of the race. Faithfully reporting the passages from Lapouge, the American economist indicates the two directions in which selection must proceed: "(1) to eliminate the degenerate, vicious and incapable elements, (2) to increase and perfect the superior element" (1896d: 565). There are naturally difficulties of a moral and social order that hinder the carrying out of a similar objective, above all, the need to impose a "social" control over the mechanisms of reproduction. Closson, however, held that such reforms were necessary "in the highest interests of human welfare." Singularly, the American economist is silent regarding the radical solutions prospected by Ammon and Lapouge, who, as we have seen, outlined the features of a National Socialist society in which the

question of the suppression of “inferior” individuals became a matter of state. His conclusion is nonetheless perfectly in line with the two founders of social anthropology. Without indicating the means that would allow them to reach their objectives, he enunciates the eugenic aims set out by the social anthropologists, toward which the action of social selection should be directed:

(1) to constitute a natural aristocracy among a given people; (2) to constitute specialized and distinct castes suited for the different branches of social works, (3) to transform a whole people in a given direction, (4) to form a universal dominant race, (5) to improve all humanity by utilizing the most perfect local types, (6) to substitute for existing humanity a single more perfect race, etc. (Closson 1896d: 465)

In the closing years of the century, the publishing activity of Closson continued to be intense (see Closson 1898, 1899a, 1899b, 1900a, 1900b, 1900c). Thanks to his numerous contributions, the American economist earned his stripes as the American representative of the school of the so-called anthroposociologists; in the economic literature of the period, that school was usually identified with the names of Ammon, Closson, and Lapouge (see Ripley 1900). We owe the English translations of the most important contributions of Ammon and Lapouge, which allowed the English-speaking public to have direct contact with the thoughts of the two anthropologists, to Closson himself.<sup>36</sup> We will return to these shortly, concentrating our attention above all on the concept of the social and economic hierarchies formulated by Otto Ammon. The German anthropologist’s theory is in fact of a certain importance and can in part be extrapolated from the eugenic and racist context in which it was formulated. It should not surprise us that such a theory has been revived, even in recent years, centering as it does on a problem that is still today at the hub of the social and economic debate.

### III

#### **The Statistical Basis of the Social and Economic Hierarchies**

TOGETHER WITH Lapouge’s book from 1896 on social selection, the volume written by Ammon in 1895, *The Social Order and its Natural Bases*, is without doubt one of the most representative of the social

and political philosophy of the anthroposociologists. The indefatigable Closson translated the first part of the book in the *Journal of Political Economy* in 1896,<sup>37</sup> integrating the writing with notes and personal paragraphs. In this essay, Ammon expounds a statistical model to explain the social and economic hierarchies that were destined to enjoy great success in the history of the social sciences.

From this perspective, Ammon is within a tradition of research that had illustrious precursors. In fact, we owe to Adolphe Quetelet and Francis Galton the earliest use of the normal law of errors as an instrument for describing the aptitudes and mental capacities of an individual. Right from his earliest book in 1835, *Sur l'homme . . . , ou essai de physique sociale*, Quetelet had presented data relative not only to the weight or height of human beings but also concerning intellectual capacity, moral traits, or specific social predispositions (for example, toward crime). Organizing the data in the form of frequency distribution, he had shown how all these characteristics revealed the typical form of the Gaussian curve, that is, symmetrically disposed around the mean value (or rather, that which in the repeated observation of any given phenomenon, for example, an astronomical one, corresponds to the correct value).<sup>38</sup> Quetelet interpreted such “bell-shaped” distribution of human aptitudes just as he interpreted the curve of the errors in astronomical observation. He then had recourse to these data to deduce the idea of the “average man,” that is, the entity that social physics should have dealt with (Gordon 1991: 530–531).

Galton took Quetelet's discussion even further, concentrating his attention prominently on the distribution of the “qualitative” characteristics (genius, intelligence, capacity, etc.). In his *Hereditary Genius* (1869), the English statistician had in fact assumed that talent was distributed normally and that deviations from the mean followed the Gaussian law of errors (1869: xi). Availing himself of the same formula used by Quetelet,<sup>39</sup> he had estimated the number of persons belonging to the diverse social classes, ordered in ascending order starting from the class of “true idiots and imbeciles” up to the class of the “geniuses.” The result was a symmetric representation aimed at demonstrating “the vast abundance of mediocrity (i.e., the standard of intellectual power)” and “the rarity of commanding ability” (1869: 30–31). The fact that the law of errors had one of its most evident

manifestations in the human world was, in his opinion, due on the one hand to the action of natural selection and on the other to heredity. Through natural selection, the physical and intellectual characteristics that were best suited to the species ended up by becoming mean average characteristics, according to modalities very similar to those described by Quetelet in his works of social physics. Heredity contributed then to reinforcing this dynamic, operating in such a way that the talents and the aptitudes of the individuals as well as their physical characteristics were subject to the normal distribution. With his starting point as the idea that intelligence was transmissible only through heredity, Galton therefore stated the need for a new science—eugenics—that would be able to better the “mental qualities” of individuals through control over the mechanics of reproduction.

In trying to demonstrate the normal distribution of human capacities, neither Quetelet nor Galton had extended their research to the field of income distribution. Only incidentally did they mention the fact that such a distribution mirrored the personal distribution of earnings and wealth.<sup>40</sup> Ammon’s objective was precisely that of filling this gap. On the one hand, he insisted that the intuition by Galton and Quetelet of the normal distribution of aptitude was well-founded; on the other, he set himself to demonstrating how such a distribution perfectly corresponds to the distribution of earnings and wealth.

On the first point Ammon uses a statistic artifice, considered as able to give Galton’s theory even more foundation. The English scholar had assumed a priori that the distribution of aptitude was normal; Ammon instead proposed a simulation that was intended to demonstrate the statistic process that generates such a distribution, which would find confirmation also in the theories of probability. The German anthropologist imagined that the gifts of each individual concern four distinct areas: intellectual, moral, economic, and physical. He then supposed a scale of evaluation from 1 to 6 for each of these areas, in which 1 is the minimum aptitude value and 6 is the maximum. Evidently excellence will correspond to a combination of six points in all four areas (for a total of 24), while inferiority is measured by one point in each area (a total of four points).

Thanks to the theory of probability, Ammon continued, it is possible to know the type of distribution that would prevail in this hypothetical

community. It is sufficient to think of dice, of the “throwing” of four data, each of which represent the intellectual, moral, economic, and physical traits of the individual. The number of all the possible combinations ( $6 \times 6 \times 6 \times 6 = 1,296$ ) is equal to the total population. The lowest probability ( $1/1296$ ) will be associated both with the combination with the highest total score (24)<sup>41</sup> and with the combination with the lowest score (4).<sup>42</sup> The two cases correspond to the extremes of the social scale, that is, to the individuals who are more gifted, on the one hand, and to the those who are totally bereft of intellectual, social, and physical aptitude, on the other. An ever-increasing frequency will be found for the intermediary combinations, with the probability and the maximum frequency associated with the average value (which in the case hypothesized corresponds to the sum of 14, which can be realized by 146 different combinations). The correspondence between the statistical significance of the experiment and its economic and social relevance was, in Ammon’s opinion, quite evident:

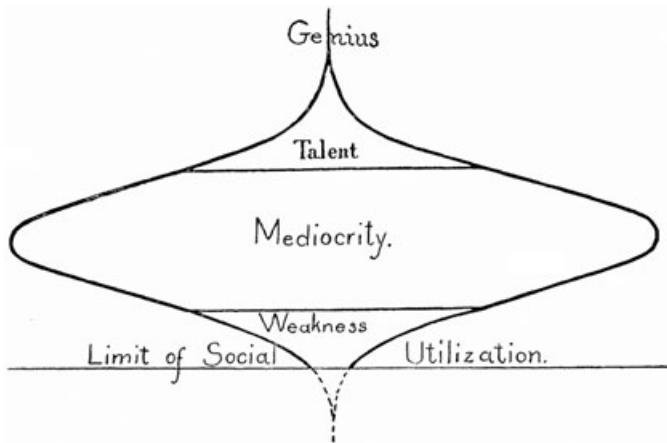
The number of extremely high throws, as well as of extremely low ones, is comparatively small, while the average or nearly average throws appear very frequently. Directed toward our present subject, this signified that the number of men of genius and high talent is relatively small, because in accordance with the mathematical laws, the necessary combination of traits can appear only seldom. Correspondingly, the number of the weak-minded and of the imbecile is relatively small, while the number of those of about average ability is far in excess of that of the two extremes. (Ammon 1896: 209–219)

A graphic representation of such distribution would appear similar to that obtained by Galton from the Gaussian formula of errors (see Figure 1).<sup>43</sup> Ammon, however, considered a partial modification of the figure to be necessary to make it conform more to what he believed to be the real form of the “social pyramid.”

Two important aspects stand out: in the first place, the substitution proposed by Ammon of the image of the pyramid with a figure similar to that of an “onion,” considered to be more appropriate in representing the “true” form of social stratification; in the second place, the expediency of avoiding the lowest part of the curve to underline the imperfect symmetry of the social hierarchy. The solution proposed by the German anthropologist arose from his conviction that natural

Figure 1

Ammon's Social Pyramid



selection eliminates subjects with excessively low aptitudes, considered insufficient to survive in society.<sup>44</sup> The lower limit of the social hierarchy commences in fact after the line that Ammon defined as the "limit of social utilization."

Ammon's reasoning proceeded with what is perhaps the earliest attempt to demonstrate the coincidence between the "intelligence curve" and the "wealth curve," a hypothesis already outlined by Galton but without the necessary support of the statistics of incomes. Using these fiscal statistics,<sup>45</sup> the German anthropologist superimposed the Galtonian curve of ability on the curve of the distribution of incomes, revealing a notable correspondence between the two curves. The economic and social stratification illustrated by the statistics on incomes is therefore held to be the reflection of the diverse combinations of the aptitudes possessed by the individuals. Ammon therefore concluded that that "two truths" emerge from the comparison of the two curves:

- (1) that the form of the curve of incomes (except at the base) very nearly coincides with Galton's curve of the distribution of ability, and (2) that the income curve is not symmetrical above and below but corresponds more



nearly to what we have called the "true form of the social pyramid" . . . which like the income curve, stands upon a horizontal base line. (Ammon 1896: 226)

As we have seen, up to this point Ammon's reasoning seems to be free of racial connotations. His conceptual model decrees only the inevitability of a hierarchical organization of society without giving any indication as to the subjects who should occupy the different rungs on the social scale. We could even deduce that such distribution is governed by "chance." The fact that the number of more gifted individuals (and, as such, at the apex of the social-economic hierarchy) is limited is the exclusive outcome of the laws of statistical probability. In Ammon's concept, however, natural selection does not "play at dice," to paraphrase a celebrated aphorism. The model is therefore led back to a framework of biological determinism. The superiority of the individual at the apex of the social hierarchy is not only due to the fact that "the average ability among the higher classes is more favorable than among the lower" but also, and above all, to the fact that "this difference rests upon a hereditary base." It is not therefore a case of casual extraction by chance that assigns to each individual his or her proper stock of aptitudes, but instead the individual's descent from a bloodline with determinate biological characteristics.

The statistical model elaborated by Ammon is supported by "The Fundamental Laws of Anthro-po-Sociology," as the title of the essay published by Lapouge in the *Journal of Political Economy* in 1897 tells us. The essay summarizes the principal findings by Lapouge, Ammon, and Closson, transformed into a long list of social laws. Two of these are of particular importance: (1) the law of the distribution of wealth, and (2) the law of stratification. They permit "the filling in" of the stylized representation of the social hierarchies proposed by Ammon with the different racial types.

The first law states the major quota of wealth possessed by the dolichocephalic subjects.<sup>46</sup> This theory is supported by Lapouge with numerous tables and correlation indexes that were meant to show the evidence of a major financial contribution in the areas where the *Homo Europeaus* or Aryan type was dominant. This is the sign, in the opinion of the French anthropologist, of the diverse "economic efficiency" of the races. The correlation indexes in particular

“demonstrate the economic, and especially the commercial, superiority of *Homo Europaeus*” (Lapouge 1897: 63). Lapouge stated that the law has a universal nature when a comparison is made between dolichocephalic and brachicephalic populations. On the other hand, the existence of a correlation between the cephalic index and wealth in those countries composed almost exclusively by dolichocephalic subjects was still controversial. In such a case it would not in fact be a comparison between *Homo Europaeus* and *Homo Alpinus* but “between different degrees of dolichocephaly among the former racial element” (1897: 66). The formulation of the law with greater universality is therefore that which states “in the countries where *Homo Europaeus* predominates, wealth is in general the greatest (England, the United States, Holland, etc.)” (1897: 66).

The second law concerns social stratification. It states, independently of the degree of wealth, that dolichocephalic subjects have higher social status.<sup>47</sup> That is, there would seem to be a “correlation between race and social position,” proven by the correspondence between the cephalic index “and the profession of the individuals concerned” (1897: 87). It is evident that if social status runs side by side with income and wealth, then the law of the distribution of wealth and the law of stratification are no less than two faces of the same coin. The superimposition of the curve of ability and the curve of incomes proposed by Ammon intends, in fact, to demonstrate, as we have seen, exactly the convergence of the economic hierarchy with the social hierarchy. The two laws of anthroposociology tell us in substance that we will find the *Homo Europaeus* or *Aryan* at the apex of both hierarchies.<sup>48</sup>

Lapouge mentions finally a variant on the laws of distribution of wealth and stratification: “the law of the intellectual classes.” This law does not have recourse to the cephalic index, but to a measure that had notable success prior to the research of Lapouge and Ammon and that was subsequently abandoned. The law of the intellectual classes was formulated by posing a strict correlation between the dimension of the cranium and the intellectual profession.<sup>49</sup> In this case, too, Lapouge did not consider that the greater dimensions of the head are an acquired characteristic; he considered instead that this is a biological fact that is reproduced through heredity in the circles of the intellectual elite:

The greater size of the head among the intellectual classes is not due to an expansion of the brain by its training and activity, the difference is, according to my own researches, quite as marked between young children of the intellectual classes as between adult members of the same groups. (Lapouge 1897: 90)

Thus, the essential data of the anthroposociological theories are always the hereditary nature of intellectual, social, and economic superiority. Environment, education, and in general the social institutions are factors that are irrelevant in this concept frame. Ammon, Lapouge, and Closson continuously reiterate that “nurture” succumbs to the laws of “nature” (in particular, that of biological heredity). The individuals found on the lower levels of the social scale must not attribute their status to the institutions that underpin society, but exclusively to their insufficient genetic gifts.<sup>50</sup>

Social organization, however, maintains an important role from the eugenic point of view, in that it can ease or hinder the perfection of the race. As we have already said, this is the principal obsession of the anthroposociologists. The model of society they appeal to in order to avoid this danger is expressly anti-democratic and illiberal. Ammon, no less than Lapouge, states that the organization of the hierarchy has to crystallize into separate “social classes” in such a way that marriage and reproduction of the species takes place between individuals of the same status. “Nature,” writes the German anthropologist, “commends the union of like and like” (Ammon 1896: 235). The principal cause of the deterioration of the race is “panmixia,” or the “crossing” of individuals with different genetic gifts. A stable distinction between social classes—“the most remarkable [institution] which the evolution of social life has produced”—instead reduces such a danger, “and thereby makes possible a much more frequent production of highly endowed individuals” (1896: 233–234).

Each attempt to modify the social stratification, improving the conditions of the more poverty-stricken classes, would in fact have deleterious effects; it would stimulate panmixia, lethal to the positive destiny of the race. “Ammon used the opinions and language of Weismann and Galton to support his claim that the various social classes represented a necessary form of natural selection, and should be preserved intact at all costs” (Weiss 1987: 95). According to the

social anthropologists, egalitarian ideas<sup>51</sup> in fact represented the greatest peril for the human race, destined to precipitate into a nightmare of mediocrity:

If social distinctions could be abolished and if men ceased to marry preferably within their class, the consequence would be a marked diminution in successive generations in the proportion of individuals of high endowment. There would be correspondingly a decrease in the proportion of those of exceptionally weak capacity, and the result would be even greater proportion than at present of persons of mediocre or average ability. (Ammon 1896: 236–237)

The model of representation of the social hierarchies furnished by the anthroposociologists, cleansed of its racial content, furnishes important suggestions for economists and statisticians. It is in fact one of the earliest models in which emphasis is placed on a “personal” distribution of income and wealth. It is not by chance that Vilfredo Pareto, an author who is traditionally remembered as being the first to make that step from “functional” distribution to “personal” distribution, was strongly influenced by the anthropological literature of the end of the century, even if he distanced himself from it.

#### IV

##### **A Sympathetic Critic: Vilfredo Pareto**

THE RECEPTION TO the anthroposociological theories given by Vilfredo Pareto is a question of a certain importance. He is probably alone among economists in giving ample space to the discussion of the theories of Ammon and Lapouge, albeit in a mix of dissent and approbation. Pareto will never come to explicitly take up “racial” and “eugenic” positions; however, his social anthropology is strongly indebted to the concepts formulated by the founders of the discipline. The concepts of “social heterogeneity,” “social selection,” and “circulation of the elite” to which he has frequent recourse in his work in fact owe much to Ammon and Lapouge, as he himself, in fact, recognized on more than one occasion. Pareto’s theory is widely known; therefore, discussion here will be limited to those aspects that in various ways recall the anthroposociological theories.

The idea of social heterogeneity constitutes one of the pillars of the Paretian concept of social hierarchies (Spengler 1944). After having

formulated his famous “income curve,” Pareto explained the constancy of such curve in time, using a minimum of economic arguments. To understand the reasons underlying the unequal division of wealth, which shows up in a universal form in every type of society, economic theory has to give way to anthropology or to “social physiology,” as the last chapter of the *Cours* calls it. The fact that “intelligence,” “ability,” “aptitude,” or, more generally, “the psychical and physiological” qualities of individuals are distributed in such a way that “some possess . . . in a more eminent way than others,” is due to social heterogeneity. This creates the hierarchies of income and wealth typical of all human societies, which are not due to institutional causes, like “education received” or the “social condition” of the family (Pareto 1896–1897, II: 390).

Pareto expressly declared that he was inspired, in expounding the “doctrine of social heterogeneity,” by the writings of “Ammon, Lapouge and other anthropologists” (Pareto 1896: 443). He, however, distanced himself from the racist implications of those theories. The author of the *Cours* believed that the factual data on which the doctrine of the hierarchies of race was constructed were still insufficient:

Nothing authorises us to consider the form of the cranium or the colour of the hair or eyes as exclusive characteristics, for differentiating the human races. For many anthropologists the existence of a race of blonde dolichocephalics much superior to the darker brachycephalic races, which are qualified as “inferior races,” is an article of faith. Facts which are numerically scant, often badly observed and forced correlations are adduced as proof. (Pareto 1896–1897, II: 396).

The merit attributed to Ammon and Lapouge is that of having banished the “egalitarian” prejudice and of having brought the irreducible diversity of individuals to the center of attention. Their error lay in wishing to reduce that heterogeneity solely to “race” and to having understood the ethnic element as the only factor in historical explanation.<sup>52</sup> The “doctrine of social heterogeneity” was therefore correct when it stated that there are “innate” differences between individuals from which the unequal distribution of wealth arises. But it was in error when it stated that these differences derive from the “race,” “class,” or “caste” the individual belongs to.<sup>53</sup>

The concept of “social selection” was also discussed by Pareto in comparison with Ammon and Lapouge. For Pareto, “selection” had a “double scope”; on the one hand, it places the individual in an appropriate position in the social hierarchy; on the other, it eliminates those inept and incapable subjects that could undermine the survival of the social aggregate (Pareto 1901–1902: 541). As concerns the first goal, Pareto held that it could be reached by allowing the laws of the market and competition to act. Reaching the second goal of selection is more complex: “There are individuals who can be decidedly deleterious and dangerous for society”; selection should impede “their being reproduced in their descendants” (Pareto 1901–1902: 540–542). It would be dangerous if the “human race” were not subject to the law of “selection”; it could not then save itself from “decline” (Pareto 1906: 312). The problem is naturally “how” to eliminate elements that are held to be “inferior.”

Like Ammon and Lapouge, Pareto underlined the contrast between natural selection and social selection. The first operates in a “direct” fashion, eliminating the “inferior elements” and impeding “their being reproduced in their descendants” (Pareto 1901–1902: 542). In human societies, this form of selection is hindered by social institutions that allow individuals destined by nature not to survive to do so. In Pareto’s eyes, reforms of a “social” character inspired by humanitarianism and by sentimentalism stop selection from carrying out its proper function. From this perspective, there is a total communion of opinion with Ammon and Lapouge. The humanitarians and reformers, Pareto writes, “desperately” pursue the aim of “the betterment of individuals of inferior quality,” not realizing that “every hope held in this regard has always been deluded” (Pareto 1896–1897, II: 552). Their error arises from not wanting to

admit that in the human species, as in all the other living species, individuals are not born equal, they have different character, and certain individuals are adapted to the environment in which they live, others no. It is easy to believe what one wants. Humanitarians do not study the real world as it is, they create an imaginary world, one which their sentiments desire.<sup>54</sup>

His condemnation of the institutions that hinder selection does not, however, signify that Pareto was willing to accept the model of society

proposed by Ammon and Lapouge. On the contrary, he expressed his regret that “a distinguished soul like Lapouge” had come to imagine such radical solutions for carrying out the “selection of the race” as the physical elimination of the inferior elements and the imposition of sexual duty and reproduction only on the “eugenics.” This prospect appeared to Pareto to be totally “repugnant” (Pareto 1896–1897, II: 394).

He showed his approval instead for the “indirect” methods of suppression of the “inferior individuals”: the penal system of reclusion and suppression of the perilous individuals; the different mortality rates and birth rates of the different social classes that contribute to suppressing “in a great number the majority of weak and malformed individuals”; the habits of vice that attract degenerate individuals, such as alcoholism, that accelerate their “degeneration” and that of their descendants. These are “means” that are still “very imperfect” but that nonetheless contribute in an indirect fashion to reaching the goal of selection; that is, the suppression of the unfit.

A further use of the concept of social selection was made by Pareto in discussing the problem of the form of the income curve. In contrast to Ammon, the author of the *Cours* did not consider that the income curve presents analogies with the normal or error curve. He did not even believe that these could be generated by chance, as Ammon implicitly supposed with his statistic simulation based on the throw of the dice. Pareto thought, on the contrary, that the income curve is much more asymmetric and compressed toward the lower part than the normal one.<sup>55</sup> The experiment simulated by Ammon through the casting of dice needed to be rectified, attributing a lesser probability to the dice face with the higher value, and vice versa. In a letter to Ammon in 1900, Pareto wrote:

In the II volume of my *Cours d'économie politique*... I was able to demonstrate that the distribution of income does not depend solely on chance, but presupposes a certain law of heterogeneity among individuals.

As you will see this leaves your conclusions unchanged. All that is necessary is to substitute a uniform distribution of heterogeneity with a distribution according to a given law. In other words, the dice of which you speak are not simple cubes with faces 1-2-3-4-5-6. They are instead polyhedrons having, for example, three faces marked 1, two faces marked 2, one marked 3 etc, all according to the given law.<sup>56</sup>

According to Pareto, this device would have permitted the formulation of a statistical law that conformed to the real trend of income distribution in a greater degree, in particular to a distribution that was highly asymmetric, flattened in the lower part of the curve. The fact that it did not coincide with the distribution of the abilities, usually normal and symmetric, was due precisely to the action of social selection.

According to Pareto, there was a lower limit beyond which it was not possible to descend that was absent from the upper part of the scale:

Indeed, of two individuals who deviate equally from the mean of the quality, the one who has exceptional aptitudes for making money may have a very high income; but the one who has qualities equally different from the mean but in the negative direction, cannot, without dying, drop below the minimum income sufficient to sustain life. (Pareto 1906: 284)

Under the minimum income for life, the selective process operates, and eliminates the inferior elements. This explains why individuals who possess aptitudes much below the average do not appear in the income statistics—precisely due to their inability to reach subsistence level. To subsist in the lower areas of the social and economic hierarchy in substance, one needs abilities that are at least near average, since those much inferior would activate the mechanisms of selection. Pareto's use of the concept of "selection" to explain the asymmetry of the income curve is therefore in line with Ammon's;<sup>57</sup> there is, however, a fundamental difference concerning the idea that distribution can be considered in the same way as a casual process, that is, subject to the laws of statistical probability.<sup>58</sup>

Further agreement between Pareto and the anthroposociologists regards a concept that mirrors "selection" or, rather, "stability." Both concepts are taken from the work of Lapouge, in part reformulated by Pareto. As we have seen from the summary in the article by Closson, Lapouge identified "conservation and evolution" as opposing forces that hold society up. The discussion among anthroposociologists turned principally on the biological mechanisms of the transmission of the racial stock, while Pareto interpreted this process on the economic and social plane, analyzing the effects of the patrimonial heredity. "Stability," according to Pareto, contributes to "crystallizing" all the



social relations, as happens in societies where there are “rigidly constituted castes”; “selection” lies instead at the origins of social dynamism. The combination of the two principles is what characterizes the “modern societies,” given that here operate both “the element of stability,” guaranteed “by private property and inheritance,” and “the elements of change and selection” from which comes “[t]he opportunity everyone has to rise as far as he can in the social hierarchy.”<sup>59</sup>

The different evaluation of the role of selection and of conservation emerges above all in the celebrated Paretian theory of the circulation of the elite. In this case, too, Pareto drew numerous concepts from anthropological literature, as he himself admitted. To the insinuations that his theory plagiarized ideas of Gaetano Mosca, the author of the *Cours* responded:

I have taken nothing from Mosca. On the other hand I have taken a great deal, as I have clearly stated, . . . from Ammon and a little also from Lapouge. Scholars can see moreover where I dissent from them and what I have added.<sup>60</sup>

The declaration by Pareto is unequivocal: He recognized that he took important notions from the theories of the anthroposociologists while dissenting from them on many decisive questions. For the circulation of the elite, the author of the *Cours* owed much to the “school” of Lapouge, even if the implications that he drew go in a completely different direction.

The first fundamental element of dissent concerns the identification of the “chosen” individuals, a term that echoes the concept of “chosen” race from Gobineau and the anthroposociologists, but that Pareto expunged of its racial significance. Pareto wrote that “by ‘chosen subjects’ we simply intend individuals whose activity in life is more intense” (Pareto 1896–1897, II: 416). Therefore, until there are more reliable data,<sup>61</sup> the idea that the “chosen subjects” possess specific anthropological characteristics must be abandoned:

Ammon and Lapouge specify too much when they wish to give us the anthropological characteristics of this elite, of this eugenic race, identifying it with the blonde dolichocephalics. For now, this point remains obscure, and long study is still necessary, before we can establish if the psychic

capabilities of the elite are matched by exterior, anthropometrical characteristics and for us to know precisely what these characteristics are. (Pareto 1901–1902: 133)

Having denied that it is anthropological characteristics that identify the elite, Pareto specified that recognition cannot but be based on their capabilities and their actions. The operation of market forces, in particular, was considered by the author of the *Cours* to be the least imperfect mechanism that human society had discovered for “selecting” the most capable individuals. This process would certainly be more simple if one wanted to give credit to Lapouge’s theories of the elect race, given that the subjects destined for high positions could easily be identified on the basis of their facial features.<sup>62</sup>

Radically different from the anthroposociological theories is the Paretian concept of social mobility. The idea that individuals coming from the “lower” ranks can contaminate the aristocracies was turned upside down by Pareto. If there were not this “turnover,” society would be destined to perish. It is precisely the subjects coming from the lower classes that allow the social system to continually renew itself. Social selection runs counter to the idea championed by Lapouge, that the “chosen” individuals should be organized into closed castes in order to only breed individuals with the same characteristics of superiority, given that the French anthropologist gives it such importance without drawing the necessary consequences. Selection is in fact an “agent” that permits

the chosen subjects, born in the lower social spheres, to accede to the upper echelons. The formation of castes is contrary to this selection and is therefore a powerful agent for decadence. Some modern authors, in search of novelty, have been taken with a great fancy for the Indian institution of the caste. These authors never explain how it is that an institution that is considered so excellent did not stop India from falling prey to numerous conquerors, all lacking in castes, nor how a few thousand English are enough to maintain British dominion over a country of around two hundred million inhabitants. (Pareto 1896–1897, II: 416–417)

In the Paretian concept, prominence thus is given to the lower levels of society, whose task is to nourish the process of “circulation of the aristocracies.” It is therefore indubitably true that wealth is an index of “superiority” and that the social hierarchy is in a large

measure the reflection of different individual abilities.<sup>63</sup> However, experience shows that there are often individuals among the lower classes who are more gifted than those in the upper ranks: “Anyone who has ever spent some time with working men knows that one often meets individuals among them who are far more intelligent than this or that scientist laden with academic titles.” And as Pareto punctiliously points out, this fact considerably reduces the dependability of the research carried out by Galton and the anthroposociologists on the biological heritability of intellectual gifts (Pareto 1896–1897, II: 396).

This brief summary of Pareto’s distribution theory and his conception of the social hierarchy is intended to show the intellectual debt he owed to Ammon and Lapouge. There were, naturally, notable differences—starting with the fact that he apparently did not accept that innate difference must be racial in origin, nor that the cephalic index could ascertain innate differences—differences that are, however, accompanied by a clearly declared underlying appreciation (in the letter to Ammon quoted above, for example, Pareto concludes with the wish that the theories of the German anthropologist might be “taught in all the universities”). Above all, there is agreement on the idea that individuals are heterogeneous—in contrast with the vision of homogeneity that animated classic economic thought—and that social and economic inequality are consequences of innate intellectual differences.

V

**The Growth of Criticisms: Social Anthropology as a “Pseudoscience”**

PARETO’S CASE is perhaps emblematic of the entire parabola of social anthropology. As we have seen, in his works published at the turn of the century, the thinking of Ammon and Lapouge was repeatedly debated, both in the positive and the negative sense. In his *Trattato di sociologia* (1916), on the other hand, we find no further reference to the anthroposociological literature. The heterogeneous nature of society and the circulation of the elite remain the cardinal points of his social theory, but they are no longer discussed in relation to Ammon and Lapouge, while social selection disappears from the list of questions to be analyzed in the *Trattato*.

It is difficult to give an explanation for this change of attitude on Pareto's part. It is, however, a fact that, after having enjoyed great success in economic literature at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, anthroposociology petered out with the coming of the new century. The debate in the economic reviews at the turn of the century shows the growing idea that anthroposociology was a "pseudo" science.

In a lengthy essay published in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, John Cummings (1900) attacked the primary principle from which the anthroposociologists started, that is, that the "ethnic factor" was decisive for the understanding of social evolution. Cummings held that terms like "race," "ethnic factor," or "cephalic index" were without any scientific foundation, in that Ammon and Lapouge were never able to give plausible definitions of the same (Cummings 1900: 201–202). He, moreover, denied that ability and intellectual qualities solely have a biological basis, judging the correlation with the cephalic index to be indemonstrable: "The association of index with ethical character is a matter of chance, and there is no correlation of cause and effect" (1900: 197). Cummings believed instead that it was necessary to reevaluate the role of social environment, essential to the formation of the human personality, reversing the social and political philosophy of the anthroposociologists: "Environment is the matrix and to conceive man apart from environmental influences is as impossible as to conceive a cast without a mould" (1900: 199). He concluded with the wish that this perverse deviation from Social Darwinism be swept from the horizons of human knowledge and that the social sciences return to their normal path:

Anthropologists do not present any data to justify the assumption that the cephalic index carries any mental attribute or any character with it; nor can any such contention be maintained in the face of modern psychology, which more and more is coming to regard the head-form as irrelevant to mental capacity or character, certainly where the size of the brain is disregarded. Phrenology, like astrology, has had its day; and the sort of racial phrenology with which modern anthropologists are engaged is bound to go to the same limbo. (Cummings 1900: 211)

Closson's reply, aimed at vindicating the empirical and statistical foundations of anthroposociology, was to no avail.<sup>64</sup> After Cummings's intervention "the school of so-called 'anthropo-sociologists'" began to

be so designated in a derogatory sense.<sup>65</sup> The proof of this lies in the comments made by William Z. Ripley, an economist who did not lack in racist convictions, but who resolutely distanced himself from Ammon, Closson, and Lapouge.<sup>66</sup> The classification of the European races as used by Ripley in his works is similar to that used by the anthroposociologists. It is therefore hardly surprising that Closson at first had included him among the potential disciples of the school of Lapouge,<sup>67</sup> albeit an atypical one. Ripley could therefore not have completely supported Cummings's sweeping criticism. This explains his ambivalent attitude, on the one hand aimed at vindicating the legitimacy of the model of classification of the European races that he himself used, and, on the other, in line with the climate of scientific discredit for the "anthropo-sociologists." He held that the accusation launched by Cummings against the school of Lapouge was irreproachable, but that it should not involve the classification of the European races. The existence of three "physical or racial, types into which the population of Europe may be resolved" was no invention, Ripley wrote, "of an anthropo-sociologist." It dated back to the research by Broca and since then had been borne out by authoritative anthropologists (1900: 428). This did not, however, justify the implications that Lapouge, Ammon, and Closson wished to draw from the classification, which were absolutely lacking in any scientific foundation. In substance, Ripley distanced himself from the school of Lapouge, vindicating an approach still based on racial data but far from the extremes desired by anthroposociology:

The "anthropo-sociologists" make the gratuitous assumption that certain mental traits always attach themselves to the same physical ones. I have striven manfully to disprove that any such connection exists, and that a large part of the mental characteristics of the population of Europe are attributable to physical and social environment, and not to race at all. (Ripley 1900: 427)

The distance taken by Ripley from anthroposociological thought is very important. If Closson "only dabbled briefly at the edges of American social science," Ripley, "on the other hand, was much closer to the center of the stream" (Stocking 1968: 61). His disassociation, and the criticism by Cummings, were probably decisive for the epilogue of anthroposociology in economic literature. After 1900,

Ammon, Closson, and Lapouge became total strangers in the economic arena.<sup>68</sup> But how so much of their theories found their way into economics journals at the turn of the century and then suddenly vanished remains puzzling (Darity 1997: 242).

A plausible explanation is that something similar to what had happened in the sociological field occurred. In this context as well, Ammon and Lapouge had a sudden popularity in the last few years of the century, even leading Emile Durkheim to introduce a specific subsection named “Anthropo-sociologie” into his journal *Année sociologique*.<sup>69</sup> After the devastating criticism of their theories by the anthropologist Léon Manouvrier, who qualified social anthropology as a “pseudo-science,” however, Durkheim seized the chance to suppress the column, judging their ideas as “too suspect.” The fortunes of social anthropology in economic literature could therefore have had a parabola not dissimilar to that seen in the sociological field. But it seems unlikely that Cummings’s “intervention” was sufficient by itself to provoke the eclipse of Ammon’s and Lapouge’s theories.

## VI

### **From “Nature” to “Nurture”: Thorstein Veblen**

ANOTHER CENTRAL QUESTION is the role of Thorstein Veblen, who was managing editor of the *Journal of Political Economics* between 1896 and 1906. How is the appearance and subsequent abrupt disappearance of the anthroposociological theories related to his interest in anthropology, evolution, and biology?<sup>70</sup> From the anthropological point of view, the biographies regarding Veblen tend to highlight the ascendancy exercised over him by Franz Boas, with whom Veblen came into contact when he arrived in Chicago, where he also had the opportunity to know Carlos Closson. Only Spindler (2002: 23), however, mentions Closson as one of the authors who may have influenced the anthropological thought of the American institutionalist.

As we know, Veblen was very attracted to biological explanations of social and economic phenomena: His famous “Why Economics Is Not an Evolutionary Science” (1898: 373) begins with an approving quote of Lapouge’s peremptory statement (1897: 54): “Anthropology is

destined to revolutionize the political and the social sciences as radically as bacteriology has revolutionised the science of medicine” (where Lapogue is depicted as an “eminent anthropologist”). In Veblen’s work there is also a recurring use of the concept of race and there are several remarks about the characteristic head shapes of European races. From this point of view, there is little doubt that Lapouge, Ammon, and Closson (as well as other racist physical anthropologists) were the source of Veblen’s anthropological thought. It is, however, difficult to assess the real impact that anthroposociologists had on the founder of American institutionalism, and a full account of Veblen’s debt to Ammon, Closson, and Lapouge has yet to be published.

Their works are quoted in diverse circumstances (see Edgell 2001: 60), and the idea that the cephalic index was fundamental in the identification of the racial types appears to be substantially agreed upon. One of the most explicit citations is to be found in the *Theory of Business Enterprise*, where Veblen states that races possess not only physical differences but also specific intellectual, psychological, and even religious characteristics. The American institutionalist writes:

If the researches of such students as Ammon, Ripley, Lapouge, Closson, and others that might be named are taken at their face value, it appears that the towns differ perceptibly from the open country in point of race; and that the migration from the country into the industrial towns has a selective effect of such a kind that a larger proportion of one racial stock than of another resorts to the towns. The towns, in those countries where data are available, show a larger admixture of the dolicho-blond stock than the open country. This seems to argue that the dolicho-blond stock, or the racial mixture of the towns in which there is a relatively large admixture of the dolichoblond, is perceptibly more efficient in the machine industries, more readily inclined to think in materialistic terms, more given to radical innovation, less bound by convention and prescription. This generalization is strengthened by the fact that the more dolicho-blond regions are also, on the whole, more socialistic than those in which this element is less in evidence. At the same time they are industrially in advance of the latter in the matter of machine industry; and they are also Protestant (irreligious) rather than Catholic. (Veblen 1904: 350, n. 24)

These sentences demonstrate the undoubtedly strong influence exercised by the anthroposociologists, which was reinforced by the fact that Veblen believed in the hereditary nature of cultural attitudes

and inclinations that characterized diverse ethnic and racial groups. It is in this sense that Tilman (1996: 57) defines Veblen as “a racialist.” Some scholars see this cultural ascendancy as one of the major limits of Veblen’s thought. Abram L. Harris, for instance, in his extensive investigation of Veblen’s work, wrote that “the anthropology from which Veblen derived his theory of three European racial types—that differ in both physical and mental characteristics—has long been discarded” (Harris 1951: 66).

On the other hand, it is equally certain that Veblen largely attenuated the biological and racial determinism of the anthroposociologists. He expressed notable skepticism about the possibility of identifying pure races<sup>71</sup> and, more generally, about the fact that a certain type of race might be genetically superior. For Veblen, the diverse attitudes or spiritual characteristics were to be attributed to the diverse social and cultural contexts rather than to racial differences. In 1914, in fact, he wrote:

It is perhaps as needless to insist on this spiritual difference between the various racial stocks as it would be difficult to determine the specific differences that are known to exist, or to exhibit them convincingly in detail. To some such ground much of the distinctive character of different peoples is no doubt to be assigned, though much also may as well be traceable to local peculiarities of environment and of institutional circumstances. (Veblen [1914] 1922: 111)

A further element that differentiates him from the anthroposociologists is his insistence on the hybrid nature of the races—in particular the European and Japanese ones—an aspect that further weakened the theory of the preeminence of one race over another:

It should be noted in the same connection that hybrid peoples, such as those of Europe or of Japan, where somewhat widely distinct racial stocks are mingled, should afford a great variety and wide individual variation of native gifts, in workmanship as in other respects. Hybrid stocks, indeed, have a wider range of usual variability than the combined extreme limits of the racial types that enter into the composition of the hybrid.<sup>72</sup>

It is certain, therefore, that Veblen was fascinated by the work of Ammon, Closson, and Lapouge. But, like Ripley, he abandoned the biological determinism typical of the anthroposociologists, shifting his attention to institutional conditioning (i.e., nurture) and realizing the



substantially hybrid nature of the European races, all of which makes it difficult for us to say whether he was more or less decisive in anthroposociology's fate.

## VII

### **Conclusion: The Epilogue of Social Anthropology**

THE REASONS BEHIND the incredible rise of anthroposociology in economic literature are probably to be sought in the general cultural context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Jennifer M. Hecht (2000: 304) wrote, "we have little idea today of how utterly convinced many people were that the European races were physiologically measurable and socially irreconcilable." The fact that, with the beginning of the new century, both economics and sociology rejected the anthroposociology of Ammon and Lapouge appears rather due to the excessive radicalism of their theories than to their racism. It would be wrong, therefore, "to conclude that . . . that race had ceased to be an explanatory variable" (Llobera 2003: 118). Race-based (and eugenic) social science more generally was pervasive outside the boundaries of anthroposociology, and survived it. The economic arena probably ceased to be a sounding board for Ammon's and Lapouge's theories because "they were too extreme, and more palatable (but still racist) alternatives won out."<sup>73</sup> At least until the 1920s, racist ideas continued to be promulgated (above all, in the debate on immigration) and some economists maintained a "genetic racial position," but this does not seem to be directly linked to the anthroposociological theories we have discussed.<sup>74</sup>

This does not mean, however, that anthroposociology failed to reach its goal. By that point, the way had been opened. Even without the showplace of the French- and English-speaking socioeconomic journals, anthroposociology was able to consolidate its position due mainly to the *Politisch-Anthropologische Revue*, under the editorship of Ammon and Ludwing Woltmann. In 1909, Lapouge himself admitted that anthroposociology had become a science that was exclusively "German"; the eugenic National Socialist project was beginning to materialize, with Ammon and Lapouge as its household gods.

## Notes

1. See, for example, *Social Anthropology*, the journal of the European Association of Social Anthropology, founded in 1989.
2. See Cherry (1976); Levy and Peart (2004); Peart and Levy (2003); Colander, Prash, and Sheth (2004); and the recent symposiums of *History of Political Economy* ("Prejudice and the History of Economics: A Minisymposium") and *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* ("Symposium on Eugenics During the American Progressive Era"), with essays by Weintraub (2003), Leonard (2003), Bateman (2003), Levy and Peart (2003), Coleman (2003), Leonard (2005c), Cot (2005), Dimand (2005), Peart and Levy (2005b), Rutherford (2005), and Smith (2005).
3. Mucchielli (1997); Hecht (1999); Llobera (2003).
4. A brief mention of the thought of the anthroposociologists—in particular, their concept of "social selection"—can be found in the book by G. Hodgson (2004), *The Evolution of Institutional Economics*.
5. "This new school, or new science . . . , has been called by its creators Anthro-po-sociology, or Social Anthropology, and it is already promulgated by numerous champions, among whom Lapouge in France and Ammon in Germany occupy positions of special prominence" (Loria 1899: 283).
6. For biographical detail on Lapouge, I have drawn upon Ackerknecht (1950: 287–289); Hecht (2000: 293–294); Llobera (2003: 120–121); Quinlan (1998: 394–395); Weiss (1987: 93–94).
7. Ammon to Lapouge, February 4, 1893, cited in Hecht (2000: 295).
8. For Ammon, as for Lapouge, "the laws of nature formulated by Darwin are absolute in the most stringent meaning of the term" (Stark 1961: 50).
9. On the "Social Darwinism" of the two founders of anthroposociology, see Stark (1961). On Lapouge in particular, see Hecht (1999), Bèjjiin (1982), Boissel (1982), and Clark (1981); on Ammon, see Gasman (1971) and Stein (1988).
10. What distinguishes the authors quoted is their judgment on the outcome of such a process, that is, whether the creation of inequality has been a positive factor for civilization, but not the original concept of the equality of the human being.
11. Harris (1968: 109). The question concerns all the social sciences in general, not only anthropology. As far as political economy is concerned, in particular, see Levy and Peart (2003, 2004, 2005a). The two scholars have drawn attention precisely to the shift that is recorded in the economic field from the paradigm of social homogeneity, which characterized the classical tradition, to a concept "involving racial differences." "In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, theories of racial heterogeneity were much discussed in British anthropological circles, and attacks on equal competence emerged from within economics itself" (2004: 125).

12. Gobineau would not seem to have had a decisive influence on the initial formation of Lapouge. According to Ammon, the *Essay sur l'inegalité des races humaines* was not known to Lapouge until 1894, if not through Paul Broca (Ammon 1898). Later, Gobineau would be regarded as a spiritual father by anthroposociology. See Lapouge (1897: 56): "At the origin of every discovery there is usually one man of genius. The originating genius of anthropo-sociology was the Count de Gobineau. . . . Gobineau was no scientist, but a wide traveller and a man of erudition and reflection. His fundamental idea was the superiority of the blond race. . . . Anthropo-sociology dates from the *Essay sur l'inegalité*."

13. "Gobineau's *Essai*, which was published before Darwin's *Origin of Species*, rested primarily on second-hand historical and linguistic 'evidence'; the French aristocrat never attempted to incorporate biological or anthropological theories into his philosophy of history" (Weiss 1987: 93–94).

14. Calculated comparing the width and length of the head. The notion of "cephalic index" was connected to Lavater and Gall's "phrenology," even if its introduction around 1845 by the Swedish scientist André Retzius was initially critical of phrenology (see Poliakov 1971: 299).

15. There is instead no precise psychological characterization of *Homo Mediterraneus*.

16. As Closson wrote (1900a: 399), "Lapouge has measured some 12,000 subjects and Ammon 22,962, subsequently analysing from various points of view the data thus obtained."

17. "Measurement was essential to racial science; measurement offered a tool for determining racial differences and a potential means for ranking the separate races. Before the advent of intelligence testing . . . racial scientists relied on anthropometric measurement, especially skull measurement, or craniometry" (Leonard 2003: 689).

18. "Nature is all that a man brings with himself into the world; nurture is every influence from without that effects him after his birth" (qtd. in Field 1911: 14). The fundamental idea of eugenics, a discipline founded by Galton, is that the mental qualities, no less than the physical ones, are subject to the principles of biological heredity (Field 1911: 5–6). The theory was formulated by Galton for the first time in some writings around the mid-1860s and then presented in systematic form in the volume *Hereditary Genius* (1869), in which abundant genealogical material concerning the history of the families of men of genius is collected (on Galton, see Cowan 1972).

19. According to Lapouge, the Enlightenment's triad of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" should have been replaced with a motto that paid homage to the Darwinian revolution: "Determinism, Inequality, and Selection."

20. Lapouge (1896: 198). In 1909, Lapouge would define anthroposociology as the science "which has as its object the study of the reciprocal action of race and environment" (1909: vii).

21. On this question, Stark has identified a partial difference between Ammon and Lapouge. In the former, an optimistic vision of social selection seems to prevail, generally holding it to be capable of generating a progressive process. Lapouge, on the contrary, for motives that we will return to later, appears much more obsessed with the idea of an involutive movement, in which social selection operates to the detriment of the race (see Stark 1961: 49–55).

22. As, for example, racial contamination, to which we owe the reduction in fertility in the pure dolichocephalics; or celibacy, a strategy widespread among the members of the upper classes in order to maintain a high socioeconomic status.

23. Battini (1995: 199). An example of a historical type was offered by the French Revolution: “The failure of the Revolution was a clamorous one . . . this was above all the substitution of the brachycephalic in place of the blonde dolicho in holding power. . . . Through the Revolution the brachycephalic conquered power, and with democratic evolution this power tends to be concentrated in the hands of the lower classes, the most brachycephalic. The Aryan as I have defined him is quite another thing, he is the *Homo Europaeus*, a race which made France great and which is today almost extinct here” (Lapouge 1899a: VII; 22 and 464).

24. Giove (2001: 127). Among the means for such an objective there was also artificial insemination, to be imposed only on eugenic individuals.

25. Lapouge (1896: 471); Battini (1995: 201).

26. Lapouge (1896: 480ff); Battini (1995: 202).

27. Hecht (1999: 3). See also Stein (1988: 57–58): “Whether or not physical anthropology is considered a true science, there is little doubt that the anthropologists who discovered all the measurable divergent physical, psychological and mental characteristics of the various races thought they were scientific. And so did the general public.”

28. From the mid-1890s, Lapouge began to publish “in new social science journals, such as René Worms’ *Revue internationale de sociologie*, Charles Gide’s *Revue d’économie politique* and Emile Durkheim’s *Année sociologique*” (Schneider 1990: 62).

29. “During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the pages of the *Journal of Political Economy* and the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* were filled with studies by anthropometrics ranking the relative qualities of racial groups on both physical and mental dimensions. The distinctive nineteenth-century concept of race blended nationality, culture and genetics to distinguish human groups. Craniometry was a popular subject matter in *economics journal of the day*” (Darity 1997: 242).

30. A brief reference to Closson’s university years may be found in the autobiography by Robert Morss Lovett, who attended Harvard at the same time and himself taught English literature at Chicago. See Lovett (1948: 39–42).

31. In the Annual Register of University of Chicago, Closson is listed as faculty for the school years 1894–1895 and 1895–1896 only (p. 19). At this time, Thorstein Veblen is listed as “Tutor in Political Economy.” I would like to thank David Pavelich, Reference and Instruction Librarian of the University of Chicago, for this information.

32. See Stocking (1968: 60): “From 1895 to 1900 anthroposociological doctrines were summarized and explicated for American social scientists by Closson, who in the interval between his undergraduate years at Harvard and his later life as a real estate broker on the West Coast was an instructor of economics at the University of Chicago.”

33. Closson also speaks at times of “statistical anthropology” to underline the quantitative approach that marks the new discipline. The essential aspect remains, however, the overcoming of the traditional boundaries between disciplines produced in the field of social sciences by the advent of the new “school”: “The work of Ammon himself, together with that of De Lapouge, has not only brought statistical anthropology into close relation with politics, economics, ethics, psychology, the interpretation of history and especially sociology; but conversely it has also transformed the methods of anthropological investigation itself, enriching that science with new categories and distinctions, and with a multitude of new problems” (Closson 1896c: 411–412).

34. Closson (1896b: 93–94). This is the so-called Law of Social Stratification, to which we will return.

35. “Law of Displacement. The dolichocephalic type, being more enterprising and restless, is more largely represented among the migrants to the cities and the foreign countries. The law affirms the greater mobility of *Homo Europaeus*” (Closson 1896b: 94). In Lapouge (1897: 416–418), the “Law of Displacement” is articulated into diverse subspecies: (a) Law of Altitudes: The European man settles chiefly in the plains; (b) Law of Distribution of the cities: The most important cities are all located where there is a prevalence of dolichocephalics; (c) Law of urban Indexes: The cephalic index of the urban populations is lower than that of the rural populations; (d) Law of Mobility (or Ammon’s Law, to whom the discovery that the urban populations are largely dolichocephalic is attributed): The dolichocephalic populations are characterized by greater mobility.

36. The spread of the theories of anthroposociology in the English-speaking press, as ever through the work of Closson, extended to the *American Journal of Sociology*. Besides publishing his own writings on the hierarchy of the European races (Closson 1897), the economist translated the introduction to one of Lapouge’s main books, *L’aryen*, in which the French anthropologist gives his reasons for the choice of the term to define the “elect” dolichocephalic race (see Lapouge 1899a, 1899b).

37. Closson discloses in the initial notes that he has the translation of the entire book underway, but we have no news that this translation was ever published.

38. "Known at the time as the 'law of error,' the formulation derived from the analysis by the German mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss of errors made in the measurement of 'true' physical quantities—for example, planetary position in astronomy. Portrayed graphically, the Gaussian distribution formed the now familiar bell curve" (Kevles 1995: 13).

39. The formula concerned is  $y = Ye^{-bx^2}$ . "In the formula  $x$  signifies the degree of variation from the mean,  $y$  the relative frequency of the appearance of this variation (that is its 'probability'),  $Y$  the frequency of the mean,  $e$  the basis of the hyperbolic logarithms,  $b$  the so-called coefficient of precision which determines whether the frequency of occurrence shall diminish more or less rapidly with the increasing degree of variation from the mean. The quantity  $e$  is a constant, fixed once and for all;  $Y$  and  $b$  are constants which may be altered according as the formula is differently utilized" (Ammon 1896: 214).

40. The English scientist, in his studies on genius, had tried to demonstrate the convergence between the distribution of aptitude and social status. His reasoning, however, stopped at the idea of a correspondence between what he called "reputation" and "ability": High reputation, Galton wrote, "is a pretty accurate test of high ability" (Galton 1869: 2).

41. "The highest possible throw is that in which the sum of the spot is equal to 24, and this can occur only in a single way, namely, that every die shows six spots. In our parable this suggests that among 1296 individuals will be found only a single one in whom the mental, moral economic, and bodily traits all attain the highest grade" (Ammon 1896: 207).

42. The "throw showing 1 spot on each of the four dice, signifies in our comparison a man exceptionally poor in all four groups of traits, weak-winded and sickly" (1896: 208–209).

43. The imperfect correspondence between the two curves is due to the fact that Ammon's experiment is conducted imagining "the combination of only a few elements or traits; the more elements co-operate the more traits must meet in a genius, the broader is the curve in the centre, and the more tapering is its attenuation both above and below" (1896: 218).

44. These individuals "are so poorly endowed that they can only with difficulty and in an incomplete way take part in the life of society. In this category belong not only those who are not able to accomplish work which requires intelligence and skill, but also those of insufficient moral character" (Ammon 1896: 218).

45. Ammon took "the distribution of incomes from the income-tax statistics of Saxony for the year 1890" (Staehle 1943: 77).

46. "Laws of the distribution of wealth: In a country jointly inhabited by *Homo Europeanus*, the former element possesses more than its proportionate share of wealth" (Lapouge 1897: 61).

47. "The cephalic index is lower and the proportion of dolichocephalic greater among the higher classes than among the lower classes in each community" (Lapouge 1897: 87). See also Closson's formulation: "Law of Social Stratification. The dolichocephalic type, being psychologically more domineering and ambitious, is more generally represented among the higher and ruling classes; the brachycephalic type is found generally in a subordinate social position. The law, then, affirms the social superiority of *Homo Europaeus*" (Closson 1896b: 93–94).

48. For Lapouge, "the 'Aryan race' is the only race capable of high social, intellectual, and cultural achievements, and is in fact the true biological underpinning of Western civilization" (Weiss 1987: 93–94).

49. "*Among intellectual workers the absolute dimension of the head and particularly the breadth, are greater than the average*" (Lapouge 1897: 90, original emphasis; in the following, the emphasis, if not otherwise stated, is in the original text). The French anthropologist clarifies that the law of the intellectual classes is different from the law of distribution and stratification, and can at times be in conflict with them: "The intellectual worker tends to possess *an exceptional breadth of head more marked than the exceptional length*. He is likely then to be *less dolichocephalic* than the average of his social compeers; he is likely to possess a degree of eurycephaly which may be easily confused with brachycephaly" (1897: 91).

50. "What is lacking here is . . . insufficient strength in the intellectual, moral, and economic traits to advance the individual to a higher position" (Ammon 1896: 230).

51. The democratic and egalitarian aspiration is in Lapouge's opinion an intellectual perversion inspired "by the dreams of that most visionary of all centuries, the eighteenth" (Lapouge 1896: 259).

52. In fact, Pareto observes that for some "authors, like Lapouge, the zoological race of men explains everything. This is one of the reasons why he was overlooked. It is his merit to have placed it well in evidence, even if he exaggerated its action, but considering it as unique it is nothing less than pure fiction" (Pareto 1898: 158).

53. "To say that there are in society men who have certain qualities in a more eminent measure than others and to say that there exists a class of men who are in the absolute sense *better* is already not the same thing" (Pareto 1896–1897, II: 392).

54. Pareto (1901–1902: 554). See also Pareto (1906: 312–313): "The *humanitarians* can close their eyes and deliberately ignore this truth, but that in no way changes the fact. Some degenerate elements which have to be eliminated by selection are born in every species. The unhappiness caused by

this destruction is the price paid for perfecting the race, it is one of those many cases where the good of the individual is at variance with the good of the species.”

55. At the beginning, Pareto had criticized the representation proposed by Ammon, which is, however, reevaluated in the work following the *Cours*. Pareto wrote “that which is called social pyramid is in reality a kind of spinning top,” that “which is indicated by Otto Ammon, which seems quite plausible” (Pareto 1901–1902: 19).

56. Vilfredo Pareto to Otto Ammon, November 30, 1900, Banca Popolare di Sondrio, Fondo Vilfredo Pareto (IT PopSo FP R11C023). I am grateful to Pier Carlo Della Ferrera and the Banca Popolare di Sondrio for permission to cite this unpublished letter of Pareto.

57. Pareto and Ammon are frequently associated for having first highlighted “that the distribution of incomes is strongly skewed” (Staehle 1943: 77; Lebergott 1959: 328).

58. “When Pareto said that his results did not depend on mere chance, he really meant that the distribution of incomes had nothing whatsoever to do with either the normal curve or any of its skewed variants” (Staehle 1943: 78).

59. Pareto (1906: 304). Despite the several implications that Pareto draws from these principles, he underlines how Closson (1896d), in the article in which he discusses the concepts of selection and stability, “has made an important contribution to this line of study” (Pareto 1897: 502).

60. V. Pareto to G. Prezzolini, December 17, 1903, in Pareto (1973, I: 507) see also Pareto (1906: 312, 1901–1902: 131) where the research of Ammon and Lapouge is mentioned as “scientific confirmation” of the fact that “the history of human society is, in the greater part, the history of the alternation of aristocracies.”

61. This suspension of judgment on the theories of social anthropology, to be left until the facts are verified, recurs in diverse instances in the works of Pareto. A propos of the thesis sustained by Lapouge, for example, that in ancient Rome, the elite had declined because of “the exhaustion of eugenics, of men of the superior race,” Pareto comments that “we lack facts to allow for the absolute acceptance or rejection of this opinion” (Pareto 1901–1902: 157).

62. “If, in fact, from some exterior signs, such as the shape of the skull, the colour of the hair, of the eyes etc, it were possible to recognise the character and habits of men, the problem of the best social organisation would be easily resolved. Unfortunately, these theories have still an uncertain link with reality, and for the moment we know of no other means of choosing men except that of finding out what they know how to do, placing them in competition one with the other. This takes place, even if in a most imperfect mode, in our societies, and history demonstrates that their progress has been intimately linked to the extension of this custom” (Pareto 1901–1902: 342). Pareto proposes an



interesting parallel between Lapouge's theory and that of Plato, whose "golden race" in a version by the French anthropologist "would be that of the blonde dolichocephalics."

63. "The so-called superior classes are also generally also the richest. These classes constitute an *elite*, an *aristocracy* (in the etymological sense: *αριστος* = the best)" (Pareto 1901–1902: 131).

64. "While the economist and the worker in many branches of social science can draw without labour and without price upon a vast mass of official statistics, the anthro-sociologists have had to collect their own data by the slow process of measuring individuals and by the vastly slower process of persuading them one by one to allow themselves to be measured" (Closson 1900a: 398).

65. Although it appeared in an anthropological journal, the position taken by the Italian economist Achille Loria is also significant. Loria's interest is in Ammon's theory of the social hierarchy, and in particular in his attempt to prove the coincidence between the ability curve and the income curve. The Italian economist holds that Ammon does not prove anything from this point of view, and that no coincidence is possible "in regard to the question under discussion" (1899: 293). Loria concludes with a comprehensive negative judgment of the scientific project of the anthroposociologists, held to be deleterious to the development of the social sciences. The theory of Ammon, "with its errors, its paradoxes, and the absurdity of the practical conclusions to which it leads, constitutes a direct proof, drawn from anthropologic and biologic studies themselves, of the fallacy of a scientific tendency which pretends to turn social science into an appendage of anthropology" (Loria 1899: 296).

66. "Although Ripley made a special point of dissociating himself from the anthroposociologists," both Closson and Cummings "insisted on the linkage" (Stocking 1968: 323, n. 42).

67. "The anthro-sociological school may well be content to welcome Professor Ripley . . . as on the whole an adherent, if indeed a somewhat eclectic one" (Closson 1899: 241).

68. To our knowledge, echoes of the anthroposociological theories are to be found only in the works of Veblen, which we will discuss later, in Sorokin (1927) and in von Mises (see his *Socialism* [1922] 1951: 314–327).

69. The French sociologist did not like anthroposociology, "but as long as Lapouge appeared to be a good scientist, Durkheim felt obliged to permit extremely positive reviews of his work to be printed in the journal" (Hecht 1999: 8). On the relations between the Durkheimiens and the anthroposociologists, see also Mucchielli (1997) and Llobera (2003: 110–115).

70. This is underlined by Darity (1997: 242), according to whom a partial explanation, with respect to the *Journal of Political Economics*, of the spread of anthroposociological theory may be the interest of Thorstein Veblen in such theories.

71. "There neither is nor ever has been a pure-bred dolicho-blond individual" (Veblen 1913b: 469; Edgell 2001: 60; see also Veblen 1913a).

72. Veblen ([1914] 1922: 111–112). According to Edell, Veblen showed himself to be quite cautious in the use of the actual term "race," preferring expressions like "social groups" or "ethnic types." "Veblen's choice of terminology reflects his view that culture rather than nature was more important in the social scientific analysis of change" (Edgell 2001: 60).

73. I'm grateful to an anonymous referee for underscoring this point.

74. On the persistence of race-thinking in economics at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see, among others, Cherry (1976), Leonard (2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c), Cot (2005), and Dimand (2005).

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