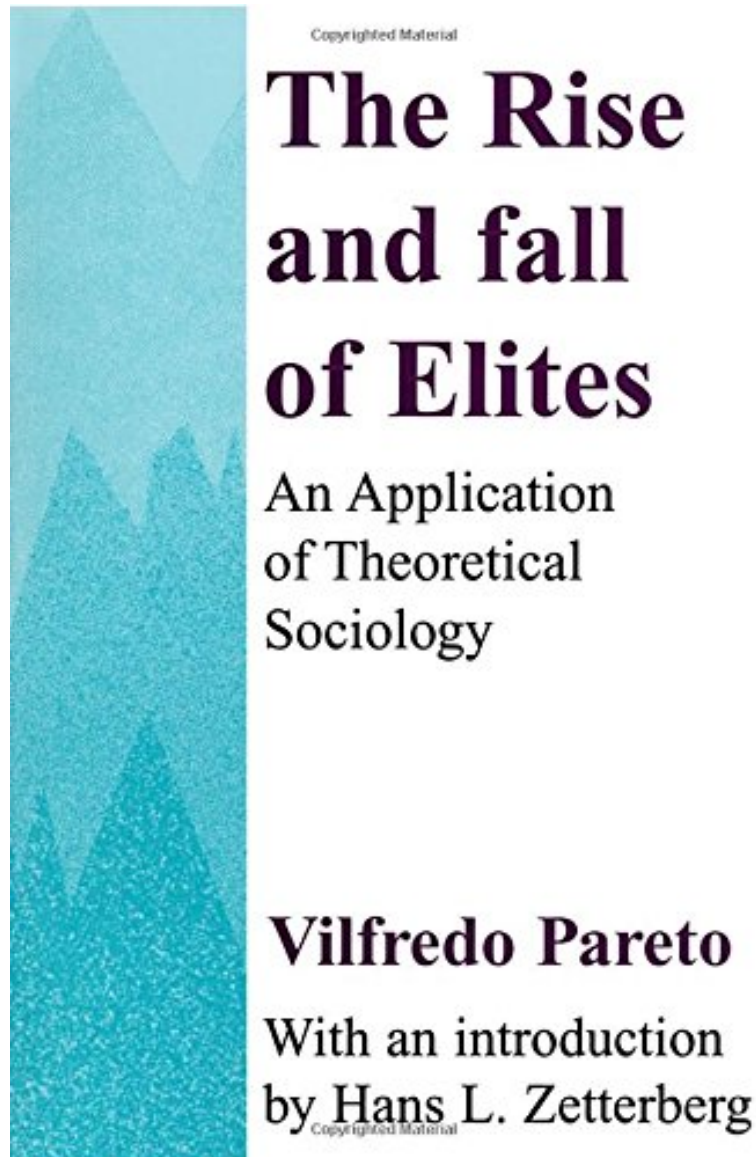


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# The Rise and Fall of Elites: Application of Theoretical Sociology

*Vilfredo Pareto*

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**Vilfredo Pareto : The Rise and Fall of Elites: Application of Theoretical Sociology** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rise and Fall of Elites: Application of Theoretical Sociology:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. It is vital to understand how elite are formed.By ashIt is vital to understand how elite are formed. It is a critical inquiry that should inform debate on politics2 of 2 people found the

following review helpful. Gotta have faithBy Yaakov (James) MosherReview of Vilfredo Pareto's The Rise and Fall of The Elites\*\*\*\*\* -- Gotta have faithBy James Mosher Four score and six years before George Michael sang that you gotta have faith, Vilfredo Pareto said basically the same thing in The Rise and Fall of the Elites. Pareto doesn't mean faith necessarily of the metaphysical church stripe. Faith/religion, as viewed by this sage of the Lausanne School of economics, is simply the ruling class believing in itself and continuing to use force to maintain its prerogatives. Once religion starts to wane with humanitarianism seeping in then the incumbent elite will be infiltrated and/or forced to accept new blood or replaced entirely. Socialism was the religion gaining strength at the time the treatise was published (1901), especially in Italy and France where Pareto had his roots. The bourgeois elite was ripe for the kicking as detailed by Pareto and borne out by events surrounding World War II. In Italy and Germany, where socialism demands sacrifices, the hypocrites stay away. Consider that in reckoning the formation of the vanguard of fascist movements. The turn-of-the-century bourgeois elite has much in common with today's bipartisan elite in Washington. At this hour and by leveraging Pareto, I forecast that the Democratic wing is more likely to remain largely intact thanks to its devotion to political correctness while the Republican wing appears poised to drop to fire-sale prices and be replaced by Mr. Trump's associates. Time will tell. Pareto introduced several novel ideas in his treatise including the realization that most actions are prompted by sentiments with people tying logic to them afterward. Impressive that someone as taken with the objectivity of mathematical economics could give subjectivity its rightful centrality but Pareto had/had tremendous range. For another glimpse of that range note his agreement with Maffeo Pantaleoni on socialism in alternating objective and subjective lenses like an optician. Pareto pioneered the idea that society is an equilibrium system, something which far too many people pay no attention. That's likely a vote for gridlock although our author doesn't explicitly say so. While considering how or whether to split your ticket, realize that The Rise and Fall of the Elites remains a powerful telescope for viewing our rulers and ourselves.

28 of 30 people found the following review helpful. The Eternal Return of the EliteBy Joseph MartinThis monograph first saw the light of day in 1901 and has been understood as a somewhat famous attempt at a non race-based understanding of 'elitism'. The failure of this attempt to be either genuinely explanatory or entirely successful seems, by almost all accounts, to have been historically verified by fascisms repeated descent into racism. But, given the utter failure of the Fascist movements of the post World War II era to gain traction, one wonders if perhaps now Pareto can, at last, be given a fair hearing. One even wonders if Pareto is fairly characterized as a fascist. Be that as it may, Pareto still might have much to teach us about the interactions of elites. According to Pareto, elites rise to power, maintain dominance, and then fall; but only if another elite is struggling to take its place. (One is here reminded of Lenin's remark against Trotsky, I believe, 'that no state ever fell without being pushed'.) History is, according to this text, a circulation of elites; and for Pareto, the ideologies that these elites represent are only of secondary importance. What one must always keep in mind while reading this book is that, for Pareto, Liberals and Socialists (that is, the leaders of these ideological positions) are equally elites. By the 'elite', I should point out, Pareto always means the leadership of a class. Pareto distinguishes between subjective and objective factors; the latter being real objects while the former are psychological states. Thus belief and unbelief are, for Pareto, equally psychological states. In fact, according to our author, belief is often the sign of a rising elite. Note that by 'belief' he doesn't merely mean religious beliefs; according to Pareto socialism is a belief, that is, it is a psychological state. Indeed, for Pareto, perhaps somewhat surprisingly given his right-wing tendency and reputation, nationalism itself is also a belief. Now, he doesn't propose to ignore these beliefs; on the contrary, it is the skepticism of the rulers towards beliefs that weakens them in the face of the rising elite. These 'myths' are a part of history and need to be explained. The 'religious sentiment' (i.e., belief) of the masses is what leads to revolt. This sentiment is exploited by the rising elite in its attempt to overthrow the ruling elite. (In this matter the 'skepticism' of the ruling elite is no small aid to the rising elite.) And what we also need to keep in mind is that logical argument almost always fails in these matters; people believe for non-rational reasons, sentiment must be met with sentiment, i.e. socialism must be countered with nationalism. In fact, in these pages Pareto, over a hundred years ago, by describing the similarity between Christian and Socialist behavior, seems to indicate the possibility of a convergence of Christianity and Socialism vis--vis the ruling bourgeois. This possibility is currently being explored, thanks to the collapse of 'really existing socialism' in the USSR, by the most au courant leftist continental theory. Keep in mind that, for Pareto, it is the 'decadence' (i.e., it is 'less apt to defend its own power') and the unabated rapacity of the old elite that causes it to perish. Indeed, he says of this decadence and rapacity that the old elite "could prosper if one of them were absent." Scientifically, or so Pareto maintains, there really is nothing to choose between. Speaking of some historical examples of some crimes of new elites Pareto says, "The old elite, when it was in power, did even worse, so that one cannot conclude from these facts anything against one or the other regime..." Pareto simultaneously holds that reform is the most dangerous moment for the ruling elite, and that the waning of power is perfectly compatible with a rise in the use of violence. In fact, one comes away from this book feeling that the things that Pareto held in most contempt were inefficiency and incompetence and, indeed, some of his most contemptuous gestures in this matter are reserved for the capitalists. In any case, the problem seems to be that the falling class, no longer believing in itself, can no longer attract the best young people to its cause. The rising class has 'belief' and hope, the falling one only has its privileges. Persecution seems to be no remedy for this. Indeed, thanks to

persecutions, "many people of doubtful loyalty and unsteady character were eliminated and professional politicians kept away." ...Very amusing! But here, in 1901, Pareto sees the best of future generations going to socialism while all persecution does is prune the revolutionary plant. In fact, if one carries away anything from this book it is that old elites must eventually fall. We learn here that socialism is the heir of Christian 'belief'. And since Christianity is dying, all the old elite can do is delay the inevitable 'homecoming' of the common people (and their 'religious sentiment') to socialism. Thus 'belief' replaces 'belief'. Again, there is little rationality in this process; Pareto is at pains to emphasize the 'subjective phenomenon'. This is why nationalism is the best answer to socialism; one counters one irrationality with another. This book is really only a long essay, the hardcover edition before me has 75 pages of text, 18 pages of notes, and a 22 page introduction. The notes are quite good and should not be passed up. For example, while nicely playing off his understanding of socialism as but another belief, Pareto, after discussing some socialist 'sectarians', writes, "One day we will perhaps have the Holy Inquisition of the socialist faith. (Note 18)" The Soviet 'show trials' of the thirties were indeed this Inquisition. This really is a superb book, a worthy companion piece to all the great political realists of history - from Machiavelli to Gramsci.

Combining a thorough introduction to the work of nineteenth-and early twentieth-century Italian social theorist Vilfredo Pareto with a highly readable English translation of Pareto's last monograph "Generalizations," originally published in 1920, this work illustrates how and why democratic forms of government undergo decay and are eventually reinvigorated. More than any other social scientist of his generation, Pareto offers a well-developed, articulate, and compelling theory of change based on a Newtonian vision of science and an engineering model of social equilibrium. This dynamic involves a shifting balance among the countervailing forces of centralization and decentralization of power, economic expansion and contraction, and liberalism versus traditionalism in public sentiment. By 1920, Pareto had developed a scheme for predicting shifts in magnitude of these forces and subsequent change in the character of society. This book will be of interest to students, teachers, or general readers interested in political science, sociology and late-nineteenth/ early-twentieth century social theory.

Language Notes  
Text: English (translation) Original Language: Italian  
About the Author  
Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) was a pioneer in the field of econometrics, but gained fame, most of it posthumous, through his contributions to sociology and political science. Though often claimed by activist-rightist groups and a contributor to fascist thinking, he avoided alignment with any political movement. Hans L. Zetterberg was the founding director of the City University of Stockholm. Before that he was professor of sociology at Columbia University in New York. He is the author of *Social Theory and Social Practice* and is the subject of *Sociological Endeavor*, a festschriften. In addition his work has appeared in numerous publications, including *Minerva*, *Acta Sociologica*, and *Marketing and Research Today*.