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GUGLIELMO FERRERO: HISTORY AND MORALITY

City University of New York

PH.D.

1981

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GUGLIELMO FERRERO: HISTORY AND MORALITY

by

FRANK FARAGASSO

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in History in partial fulfillment of the require-
ments for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The
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1981


This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

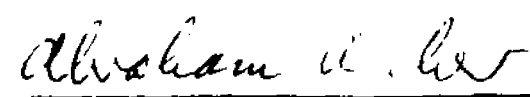
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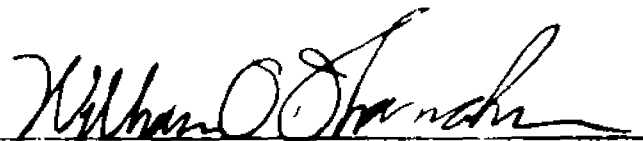
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Abstract

GUGLIELMO FERRERO: HISTORY AND MORALITY

by

Frank Faragasso

Adviser: Professor Gertrude Himmelfarb

Guglielmo Ferrero was an influential Italian intellectual who lived from 1871 to 1942. He experienced and recorded Italy's struggle to become a democratic industrial society, the traumatic changes brought about by World War I, fascist dictatorship, and the decline of Europe as the center of world power. He was an historian, essayist, and novelist commenting on present-day issues.

This dissertation is concerned largely with Ferrero's historical writings and the way in which his historiographical ideas were informed by his moral and political judgments of contemporary ethical events. Skilled at relating historical events to contemporary ethical questions, he was concerned with understanding the nature of modern progress, the loss of aesthetic and cultural values of Europe, dictatorship in all forms, and the nature of government.

Beginning as a positivist under the tutelage of the criminologist Cesare Lombroso, Ferrero tried to reduce social events to scientific principles with the hope of bringing about social change. As a result of his studies of Roman history, he

became more impressed with the impact of individuals on historical events, the importance of the individual will and moral fortitude in the face of opposing values and trends within the larger society. While modifying his pursuit of underlying historical principles, he never completely lost hope of discovering some operational laws for comprehending the complexity of human behavior. With World War I and the success of fascist government in Italy, Ferrero argued more vehemently for the establishment of governmental restraints against what he perceived to be the unchecked and dangerous excesses of industrial and materialist society. Exiled from Italy by the fascists in 1931, he spent his remaining years teaching at the University of Geneva and writing about the principle of legitimacy and the need for a clearer theoretical understanding of sovereignty and the power of the modern state.

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Mrs. Nina Ferrero-Raditsa and her husband, Professor Bogdan Raditsa, have given generously of their time, answering my numerous questions and providing unpublished material. Mrs. Raditsa has trusted me to treat fairly and sensitively the memory of her father, and I hope that I have been able to do so.

Friends have generously contributed editorial suggestions on various chapters. Of special mention must be Mrs. Ann Scher and Mr. Donald Margeson, who read and offered suggestions on portions of the work. Also Mrs. Mary Dyer, who typed and provided editorial changes to several versions.

The Center for European Studies of the City University of New York, then under the leadership of Professor

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I wish to thank most of all my wife, Peggy, who endured more than she had anticipated at the beginning of the work and will be very pleased to see the end of it.

INTRODUCTION

Guglielmo Ferrero was an intellectual and a historian who spent most of his life outside of academia. Although he supported himself largely as a political journalist, he never worked full-time on any newspaper or magazine, nor did he hold an editorial position. Except for his youthful affiliation with the socialists, and a brief participation in the Democratic party in 1925, he was not a member of any political party and had no such attachments when the fascists judged him politically undesirable and expelled him from Italy in 1931.¹ Not unlike many European intellectuals of his time, Ferrero managed to reach a large audience with his books and articles. Despite his apparently uninfluential position, his name was known in Europe and the Americas during the first half of the twentieth century.

This dissertation is concerned largely with Ferrero's historical writings and the way in which his historiographical ideas were informed by his moral and political judgments with respect to contemporary events. Skilled at relating historical events to contemporary ethical questions, he was concerned with understanding the nature of modern progress, the loss of the aesthetic

and cultural values of Europe, dictatorship in all forms, and the nature of government.

The study of Roman history and then modern history provided Ferrero with a perspective on the great problems of his time, and aided him in considering future courses of action. It was a tool of his reform efforts, part of his conscious attempt to concentrate on a few basic problems and to examine them through the lens of history.² He stated many years later that the motivation behind the writing of The Greatness and Decline of Rome (1907-1909), for example, was a concern with "the moral problem of dictatorship studied and animated by one hundred tempestuous years."³ Probably because of the practical and contemporary functions for which history served Ferrero, both the uses to which he put history and his conception of it changed over the years.

Beginning as a positivist and a Darwinist, he believed man's history unfolded in such a way as to allow advances over the previous generation. In his study of the Roman histories and the decline of the empire, he took up the question of political and social decline or as he called it, decadence, and never entirely abandoned it. Ignazio Silone called him "the historian of the transition period"--the transition period being Rome of the third century, and the collapse and possible decline of democracies in our time.⁴ This vision of history as the

cyclical rise and decline came to dominate his work. Losing his attachment to evolutionary Darwinism, he continued to adhere to a biological model of history by viewing all societies within the context of an organic process of birth, growth, maturity, and decline. The organic metaphor became his method of analysis for all societies, and he saw his task as the discovery of the secrets of the decline so that the state of maturity might be prolonged.

Although he adhered to the rise and decline theory, he did not foresee a golden age as part of the growth or maturity cycle of civilization. Rise and decline took place in the confines of reasonably modulated cycles in which humans could intervene to control events and avert the worse disasters. However, he did not specify just what the relationship was between the determined cycles and the intervention of human activity. Perhaps this is just as well because, as an historian, he was more concerned with the actual working out of each event rather than the elaboration of the philosophy of history.

Despite apparent reversals, contradictions, and uncertainties throughout his writings, there exists a continuity of thought in his disparate explanations of historical change. For him there was always an operational law or principle at work in the historical process

to explain the forces of social change and stability. Although he came to reject his earlier infatuation with positivism and the goal of reducing all human behavior to quantifiable laws, he did not abandon the belief that there were some laws in the universe and some general patterns of activity which operated within the human community and which could be observed over a period of time. He conceived of morality, for example, as a set of laws applicable to all human activity which established limits for behavior.⁵ Even his final writings on the theory of legitimacy and his last historical works were influenced by and dependent upon his early search for these general principles of human behavior.

This propensity to seek underlying principles or laws in history makes Ferrero appear to be an historical determinist as well as a reductionist of sorts. Indeed, in many aspects of his work, he was a determinist, especially in the early years. Yet there remained many instances in his writings in which he apparently recognized the alteration of events by the thought and actions of persons acting individually or in concert. As a mature historian, Ferrero was less interested in the theories of history. From a concern with the motivation of an entire society, he became more interested in the ethical struggles

of each individual in confrontation with slightly alterable events. There exists a certain romantic heroicism running through his work whereby individuals through great effort conquered their inner selves and went on to change the course of history. The moral will of the individual became the most important ingredient in the survival of a highly organized civilization, even if the individual will had to be exercised in the context of the "great will." In effect, Ferrero made morality and its exercise the central reality of human history.

It was this other Ferrero, the "Ferrero of free will," who finally emerged as the most essential man. The "inner transformation of personality" was the heart of his moral concern.⁶ The principles of history were the outer shell of historical reality, while the moral struggle of each individual was the essence of history, the very thing that defined man and gave meaning to the course of events.

Though laden with moral messages and dire predictions, Ferrero's historical writings cannot be reduced to a polemic on contemporary problems. Such an attempt would be a misunderstanding of his work. His historical writings are not reformist pamphlets. If Ferrero employed morality in his history, it was not solely to implore people to become immediately more high-minded or to justify a certain course of action, or even primarily to warn of an impending danger, although all of these motives were

present to some degree. It was to understand and explain the ethical, political, and psychological forces of history.

FOOTNOTES

¹Gina Lombroso-Ferrero's introduction to Leo Ferrero's Diario di un privilegiato sotto il fascismo (Torino: Chiantore, 1946), p. 5.

²Guglielmo Ferrero, Colloqui con Guglielmo Ferrero: Seguiti dalle Grandi Pagine, ed. by Bogdan Raditsa (Lugano-Gineve: Nuove Edizioni di Capolago, 1939), p. 63.

³Ibid.

⁴Ignazio Silone, "Ferrero and the Decline of Civilization," Partisan Review, IX (Sept.-Oct. 1942), p. 38

⁵Ferrero, "Machiavelli and Machiavellism," Foreign Affairs, 17 (April, 1939), p. 577.

⁶Aileen Kelly, "A Victorian Heroine," The New York Review of Books, XXIV (Jan. 26, 1978), p. 30.

CHAPTER I

FERRERO: FROM POSITIVISM TO HISTORY

Guglielmo Ferrero was born on July 21, 1871, a decade after Italian unification. He grew up in an Italy that was suffering from the bitter disappointments that followed the euphoria and expectations of the unification. His youth was touched by the unfilled and romantic hopes that political unification would mean a truly new and glorious era for Italy and followed by the realization that the old inequities and divisions of Italian society would not melt away. Ferrero was to learn that neither politics, nor science, nor social analysis could redirect the forces that made Italy and the rest of Europe what it was and what it was to remain.

He was born to a Piedmontese middle class family, the second of five children, who at the time were living in the village of Portici near Naples. His father, Vincenzo, worked for the railroad and had been assigned to work in the South for a short period. The family soon moved to Tuscany, the region Guglielmo came to consider his home.

As a youth his intellectual talents did not go unnoticed. He was sent to a private school under the direc-

tion of the Barnabite fathers with the intention of entering the priesthood, but ran away after three months and could not be persuaded to return.¹ Raised in a devoutly religious household, he eventually rejected the Catholic faith and maintained his secular humanism and anti-clericalism all his life. Because of the moral tone of his later writings, at least one author maintains that Ferrero became more religious in later life.² There is no evidence, however, to indicate that this was the case.

Little is known of Ferrero's life until he entered the University of Bologna. Here he studied under the famous poet, Giosue Carducci, with whom he eventually quarreled. Carducci was actively opposed to scientific positivism while Ferrero found himself attracted by the notion of applying the rules of science to the human disciplines. Carducci was a romantic, a rabid nationalist and militarist, all positions that Ferrero rejected. Most of all, Ferrero openly criticized Carducci for his support of Prime Minister Crispi's imperialist ambitions in Africa.³ Ferrero went on to join the Socialist party and rejected Carducci's conservatism.

He graduated from Bologna with a degree in letters, abandoning an earlier interest in mathematics, and turned to the study of law at the Universities of Pisa and Turin. He did not complete his law degree, but instead was drawn into the intellectual life of Turin politics and work

with the brilliant physician and criminal anthropologist, Cesare Lombroso. The disputatious Lombroso was one of the most famous men of his day and the opportunity to work with such a man was something the eighteen-year-old Ferrero could not resist.⁴

Lombroso and Ferrero met at a banquet in honor of the famous anthropologist. Ferrero was a member of a student delegation from the University of Pisa where he was studying law.⁵ He was chosen from among the student delegation to offer a toast to the great man. Although it is not known what Ferrero said, Lombroso was apparently impressed by him. Ferrero disappeared into the crowd only to be sought out by Lombroso and invited to dinner. In spite of Ferrero's youth and lack of anthropological knowledge, Lombroso offered him friendship and the opportunity to collaborate on a new book concerning female criminality, The Female Offender (1893).⁶ Lombroso was at the height of his career. One can only guess that he saw this brilliant youth as someone who could continue his work. There seems to have been an immediate meeting of minds.

Lombroso, occupied with many projects, was on the verge of giving up his work on the female offender when he met Ferrero. Almost nothing had been written on female criminality and the conceptual problems were mounting. With Ferrero's help, Lombroso decided to push ahead with

the project. They often quarreled over the direction of the work. Ferrero complained that he did not receive enough guidance. Lombroso, who put great value on intuition, could not understand why his intelligent young colleague did not know immediately what had to be done. Chapter one took an entire year to "hammer" out.¹

Lombroso was the most important voice in Italy among those who tried to combine evolution, materialism, and socialism. He was the founder of the Positivist School of Criminology (also known as the Classic or Italian School) and thus, one of the founders of modern criminology.⁸ His interests were numerous and wide-ranging and included criminal anthropology, criminal psychology, the female criminal, insanity, genius, prostitution, alcoholism, anarchy, anti-Semitism, revolution, and even a cure for pellagra. Aside from being a physician, he was, at various points in his life, an anthropologist, professor of forensic medicine, and a psychologist. His underlying assumption was that biology determined all human behavior and that science could provide the explanations. All social pathology was bound by the rules of the human evolutionary process. This led him to the conclusion that some criminals were born, not made, and were subject to inborn physical and mental predilections. Such human types had been arrested in their evolutionary development. They were atavistic, caught in an earlier stage of human

development. To this Lombroso added the theory of degeneration whereby his atavistic type was subject to certain mental and physical pathological conditions, the result of the species having reached the end of its evolutionary possibilities.

Criminal characteristics, Lombroso believed, were visible and subject to diagnosis. Thus, he spent much of his time in the clinical observation of his subjects. The consequence of his work for those who study such matters was to diminish the traditional attention given to the crime and shift the emphasis to the study of the criminal in the context of his environment. The attention the criminal received under Lombroso's approach as a sub-human type beyond redemption, however, presented the possibility of new abuses of innocent people and criminals. Moreover, the racial and cultural implications of such a theory are obvious. Clearly, these were not Lombroso's intentions. As a humane individual, he did not intend that criminals should be abused or that his scale of measurement should be used to incarcerate innocent people for political or racial reasons. Lombroso wanted the legal codes to include what he felt was a realistic and humane treatment of prisoners. The born criminal, he thought, must be removed from society but not blamed for his actions.

Because of Lombroso's application of science to

the study of man and society, the criminal and the origins of his criminality were worthy of study and measurement. No area of study was considered irrelevant, including the measurement of the skull and the cataloging of the various features among criminals, techniques for which Lombroso is most often remembered. Yet when one discards Lombroso's outdated medical materialism, there remain very important observations concerning the relation of the biological man to his natural surroundings and to physical and mental pathology. By means of his studies Lombroso assisted in the establishment of the sociological disciplines of criminology and the study of deviant behavior.

Ferrero accepted much of Lombroso's political and social thought. For example, in the early 1890s Ferrero adhered to the opinion that individualism in modern society was over-emphasized at the expense of society as a whole. As socialists they both believed that energy should be devoted to solving existing social problems and that too much effort was usually wasted on preserving the classical treasures and ideas. Ferrero had not yet shown any real interest in history. He agreed with Lombroso that the world was becoming increasingly and dangerously militaristic and that this situation contributed to the waste of natural resources. By the turn of the century, Ferrero had completely revised his opinion on the

value of ancient studies and their application to the contemporary world. Also he seemed never to have agreed with Lombroso that a parliamentary government was not suited to Italian society.⁹ He was more consistent in his support of democratic and republican institutions. Long before World War I Ferrero abandoned most of Lombroso's ideas, especially those concerning race and the decadence of the Latin peoples.

Still there was a part of Lombroso's outlook that always remained with Ferrero, and it was not simply that he had married his mentor's second daughter, Gina, that made him more than a mere disciple. Lombroso, for example, in spite of his secular and positivist outlook and his refusal to think of himself as a Jew, strongly opposed anti-Semitism. Having been born Jewish he could not help but feel vulnerable to the increase of anti-Jewish sentiments openly expressed in Europe at the turn of the century. Ferrero also deplored anti-Semitism and was concerned about its increase in Germany and Italy. In later years when he was in exile in Geneva, Ferrero and his wife conducted a study group in their home designed to instruct students in the positive contributions of the Jewish people to western society in an effort to counteract the ignorance which gave rise to irrational prejudice.

Lombroso's positivism was another long lasting influence on Ferrero. He retained the strong belief that

nature and human behavior could be reduced to comprehensible and rational patterns. He never entirely gave up the search for scientific principles which would explain the origins of war, the functioning of politics, and the decline of civilizations. More specifically, his intention was to explain the degeneration of western society from ancient times to the present by explaining the problems of social progress and cultural collapse. Yet, in spite of his search for general principles, Ferrero arrived at most of his conclusions by intuition rather than by the use of the scientific method as these were usually based on little empirical evidence other than that elicited by historical research. While Lombroso's research had shown him that human existence could be viewed within a framework of comprehensible laws, Ferrero modified his search for such laws. He continued this modification over the years without ever abandoning the search entirely. The Greatness and Decline of Rome, Ferrero's first large-scale serious historical work, was not based on positivistic assumptions and was, in fact, more in line with traditional humanistic studies.¹⁰ Beginning with his studies of ancient Rome, Ferrero began to emerge as a more original thinker.

When Ferrero entered the intellectual community of positivists, he believed himself to be one of them even though the importance he gave to intuition was not entirely suited to their "scientific" outlook. He was drawn to the

positivists partly because of the emphasis they gave to Darwin's theory of evolution. "Evolutionary positivism," as it came to be called, permeated Ferrero's and Lombroso's intellectual circles.¹¹ For the positivists evolution as found in the writings of Darwin and Lamarck constituted a general theory of reality.¹² The theory seemed to provide a material basis for explaining change and added some weight to the prevailing view of secular progress. The evolutionary interpretation also added a certain flexibility to the older positivist belief in unchanging laws of the universe.

Ferrero continued much of Lombroso's psychological, social, and economic approaches to the interpretation of human events with the goal of uncovering the general principles upon which human society was based. What Ferrero learned and used from Lombroso's thought was the importance of the psychological dimension in life and the value of intuition. The notion of intuition suited Ferrero and helped to lead him away from a strict materialist interpretation. Even in later years when political events became the most important part of his historical interpretation, the notion of intuition was not diminished.

The fact that Ferrero and Lombroso placed great emphasis on the importance of intuition would seem to indicate that they thought there was no inconsistency in combining scientific empiricism and intuitive leaps of the

mind, especially when such leaps were made by men of considerable intellect. It was precisely Lombroso's wide-ranging, speculative, and imaginative thought that captured the allegiance of so many Italians of the younger generation, from Ferrero and the sociologist Enrico Ferri to socialists and Marxists like Filippo Turati and Antonio Labriola, who found congenial the secular materialist and evolutionary interpretations of the positivists.

Many of these evolutionary positivists also considered themselves evolutionary socialists. They lived and worked in the growing industrial city of Turin. Here they could remain close to the university and, at the same time, have direct contact with the political struggle of the workers. The older socialists were comfortable members of the academy. They included Edmondo DeAmicis, art historian associated with l'Accademia; Arturo Greg, a leading Marxist; Corrado Corradino of the Societa de Cultura; Cesare Lombroso; Gustavo Balsamo Crivelli and Giuseppe Giacosa. Their disciples included Felice Momigliano, Francisco Pastonchi, Arturo Foa, Guglielmo Ferrero and Umberto Cosmo.¹³

Ferrero thought of himself as both an evolutionary positivist and a socialist without any apparent qualms about the contradiction between the two positions. He was aware, as was apparent from his debate with Turati, that the Darwinian emphasis on the development of the

individual organism and the notion of the fierce competition for survival were not suited to the socialist emphasis on the group or social harmony. Yet he continued to maintain for some time that the theory of evolution could provide socialism with a basic explanation of how society actually functioned, and that it offered socialists the hope and assurance that man would evolve into a more cooperative being. A scientific understanding through the use of positivism could possibly help man accelerate the evolutionary process. Ferrero, however, did not explain just what part positivism was to play in the evolutionary process towards a more cooperative society.

Ferrero had adopted certain ideas in the hope of bringing about social reform. These ideas were not fully examined by him for some time and in many respects his attachment to socialism and positivism was superficial. He left the Socialist party in 1896 because he could not accept the Marxist economic determinism that was becoming the dominant ideology of the party. He eventually gave up most of his positivist ideas also. But until that time he participated and carried on debates within the party.

The socialism of Ferrero's group was not of a very radical nature. These professors and students were actually reformers, "characteristic of a type of lay mission [ary]," who sympathized with the condition of the working class and were outraged by such conditions as child labor.

This socialism lacked any clear ideology, relying instead on traditional adherence to humanitarian sentiments and concern for equality. Socialism was tied to the traditional morality in which the major institutions of the society were largely accepted as they were. Turin socialists were not opposed to family, private property, and some were not anti-clerical. In the same way positivism was easily and undogmatically mixed with the general humanitarian perspective.¹⁴ The over-all intention was evolutionary and peaceful.

Cesare Lombroso, who was one of the socialists' professors, adhered generally to the minimal socialist program. His daughter, Gina Lombroso-Ferrero, said her father had great hopes for the Socialist party in its early days only to reject it later because he felt the workers, as they gained better living conditions, imitated the corrupt habits of the bourgeoisie.¹⁵ He, not unlike many others, adhered to an idealist position that could never be satisfied and ended in disillusionment. Part of the "old guard" of the party, Lombroso expressed his dissatisfaction with the changing party in moral terms. After waging a campaign against what he perceived to be an increased greediness on the part of the workers, he left the party in 1905.¹⁶ He deplored the increasing tendency towards individualism among the workers and the society as a whole in spite of the fact that he himself had

become individualistic, even eccentric, in his views.

Socialism became more Marxist, more ideological and less of a collection of sentiments about inequality and injustices among classes. Lombroso and Ferrero had been in the conservative wing of the Socialist party, although they remained on cordial terms with Turati, Anna Kulishoff and the other socialist reformers.

In his students days Turati, the founder and leader of the Socialist party, often visited Lombroso at his home and, with Ferrero, discussed the social and political questions of the day. Combining his new interest in the "social question" with what he had learned from Lombroso, Turati began writing. The results were a series of articles entitled The Criminal and Social Question, beginning in December 1882. Here he rejected Lombroso's idea of the born criminal. It was capitalism that created criminals by forcing people into poverty and robbing them of the products of their labor. Indeed bourgeois society needed criminals. Crime would vanish only if capitalism was destroyed and society reformed. The Lombrosian factors such as race, physical type and climate were only of minor significance to Turati.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the emphasis on evolution and positivism, the possibilities for gradual reform and the tendency to compare society to an organism were all among Lombroso's major working assumptions and Turati never escaped them. The influence of positivism

was clearly evident in the socialist publication Critica Sociale.¹⁸ Differences of opinion did not prevent Turati and Lombroso from remaining on good terms. He and Anna Kulishoff, with whom he lived for forty years, exchanged letters with the Lombroso daughters Gina and Paola and with Ferrero. The letters are friendly and affectionate.¹⁹

Ferrero and Turati also remained on friendly terms even after the former left the Socialist party. During the 1920s the two men worked together once again to stem the tide of Fascism.²⁰ Their philosophical and ideological differences had been argued out in the 1890s in the socialist journal. Turati believed himself to be an orthodox Marxist although he did not accept violent revolution. Socialist society would replace bourgeois society even if there was only slow reform. Ferrero agreed with socialist reformist policy but could not accept the economic interpretation of historical events. The two men presented their views in the form of a debate in 1812 in Critica Sociale under the title, "Karl Marx Killed by Charles Darwin."²¹ Ferrero argued that while Marx was a great thinker, his ideas were outdated. The naturalist movement--that is, the marriage of Darwinism and positivism--was coming to dominate the social sciences. Darwin had transformed the social sciences by demonstrating clearly that man was a part of nature and could be studied in the same way as other animals. This theory was more advanced

and less superficial than the Marxist theory. Underlying the economic layer of society there rested the biological and psychological base revealed by Spencer.

Ferrero was well aware that the socialists considered positivism, and more specifically Spencer's philosophy, to be a straightforward justification for bourgeois society. In turn he accused the socialists of being fearful of the positivist findings especially about criminals (a clear reference to the work of Lombroso). He believed their ideology left them less free to discover the truth.

Turati responded that Marx was the Darwin of the social sciences, using the same objectivity as any positivist. He did not reject Darwin, but accepted him into the pantheon of latter-day prophets. Marx was important because he revealed more about the actual workings of the social system. As for the charge that the socialists were reluctant to accept the laws of biology, Turati simply said that Spencer was superficial and reflected the opinion of the bourgeoisie, as did Ferrero.

In the May 16th issue of Critica Sociale Ferrero congratulated Turati for doing the impossible, joining two philosophies that basically could not be joined.²² Marxism could not answer the difficult questions about the differences between countries and those between individuals. Darwinian positivism could account for the differences in

human needs, Ferrero said. Turati had some final questions for Ferrero. Was Marxism outdated and has it been replaced by Darwinism? Was socialism on the defensive as an idea whose time had passed? To these questions Turati answered in the negative. Economics was for Turati the basis of all social change.

The controversy between Ferrero and Turati was only one example of the Darwin-Marx debate fought out in the Critica Sociale. The twenty-one-year-old Ferrero was still considered a socialist in 1892 even if he was in the conservative wing of the party. For Turati the revolutionary branch of the party and anarchists posed a greater threat to unity than members like Ferrero. The party was also having difficulties with the established government. On the one hand, the socialists attempted to challenge bourgeois society; on the other hand, socialist intellectuals maintained connections with the left wing of the democratic party. They had shared with the democrats the belief that honest intellectuals, talking together, could create the necessary atmosphere for the rise of an independent workers' party.²³

Underlying Lombroso's and Ferrero's work on criminals was the aspiration, shared by the socialists, of somehow creating a more just society. They hoped to arrive at it through evolutionary social change and positive law. Ferrero was entertaining the notion of eventually doing a

major study on justice to determine what laws had to be put into practice. Lombroso, who thought in terms of positive law, suggested that Ferrero travel to the other major European countries to study their legal systems as a preparation for this larger work.

In 1893, upon graduation from the University of Bologna, Ferrero left Italy to spend several years in the northern capitals of Berlin, Paris, London, Moscow, and parts of Scandinavia, with the intention of studying industrialization, the various national legal systems, and the corresponding political institutions. The result of these travels was Young Europe, published in 1897 and appropriately dedicated to Cesare Lombroso. The work brought Ferrero public attention at the age of twenty-six and made him a controversial figure. His work raised sensitive questions as to why northern countries were able to advance economically and technically while Italy lagged behind. His principal argument was that the former represented the industrial or young Europe that had made advances over the decadent Latins who were unable to organize properly and instill self-discipline in workers.

Young Europe expressed all the exuberance of its youthful socialist author. The future of Europe rested with those countries which could increase their industrial capacities and at the same time institute a humane and equitable social system for their workers. He was impressed

with the German Social Democratic party, which he thought might be a model for the rest of Europe and especially Italy. At the same time he was disturbed by the increasing authoritarian nature of the Bismarckian regime and the sharp increase in anti-Semitism within Germany. What the Socialist party could do to oppose anti-Semitism was unclear. Leaving Germany, he went to Paris where the workers' response to industrialization and socialist organization seemed to be less enthusiastic. Indeed, he felt that the Latin countries, because of the psychological and cultural make-up of the people, lacked the necessary family cohesiveness and personal will to sacrifice for a larger national cause.

What at first appeared to be a work on comparative politics and economics was in reality concerned with intellectual and moral problems. Ferrero found that beneath economics and class conflict rested the more intangible considerations of will and discipline and the psychology of a people. As a positivist he tried not to rely on any one explanation of social phenomena. His intention was to consider a variety of explanatory factors in an attempt to understand the workings of society, which included economics and politics. Not being entirely true to this approach, Ferrero placed his greatest emphasis on the aspect of national psychology. Ideas, unconscious assumptions, intellectual contradictions, and moral values were of as

great an interest to him as they had been to Lombroso. The moral values--will, discipline, consideration for others--that made up the mentality or psychology of a people were the areas where he placed the greatest emphasis in his studies. Already Ferrero was proving to be a rather poor positivist and would continue to move away from it in time. In fact, much of his early associations would later become burdensome to him and even embarrassing. As one commentator on Ferrero has mentioned, all references to Lombroso had disappeared from his writings after 1910.²⁴

Ferrero argued that the differences among nations could be explained as differences in the intellectual and moral character of a people (something the Marxists were not cognizant of). His propensity to provide explanations along the lines of national character was not without its rewards.

Ferrero made a number of astute observations about the countries and people he visited. It was this framework, the Lombrosian model of race, physical types, and inborn inferiority, that added an unnecessary and burdensome structure to his book.

Most important was his belief that the character of a people was expressed by their political behavior. Ferrero believed that the German Socialist party would save Germany and that political reorganization along

similar lines, if it could be done, would save Italy. Politics reflected the moral character of a people. And yet while he was praising German socialism, he was rejecting the one-dimensional economic interpretation of society and the class struggle as presented by the party.²⁵

Ferrero, like most of the intellectuals of his generation, was faced with the problem of explaining how it was that the great promise of a newly unified and hopeful Italy of the 1870s was bogged down by the 1890s in economic recession, bureaucratic inefficiency, parliamentary mismanagement and social unrest. In contrast to the failures of the new Italy, there was the all too visible success of the recently unified Germany: prosperous, orderly, and with the most advanced socialist party in Europe. Italian intellectuals of his generation admired all things German, which included German philosophy, culture and politics. The British were also greatly admired for their industrial advances and orderly society. In the words of one contemporary, "all the North was the great rage."²⁶ Scientific positivism and social Darwinism were called upon to reinforce the argument for the superiority of the northern peoples over the decadence of the Latins. Such "scientific" evidence was presented to explain the apparent success of one over the failure of the other.²⁷

Ferrero, like Lombroso, shared much of that admiration and he developed his own political, psychological and

moral explanation for the differences between North and South. Unfortunately, in relying on Lombroso's categories, he seemed to be arguing that cultural and national differences were determined by irreversible biological and social laws, that the comparative lack of progress on the part of the Latins was determined by their inherent inferiority. Such a misinterpretation is understandable in light of Ferrero's provocative and incautious statements. Yet his ultimate intention was not to declare Latins inferior; rather he hoped to spur them to new action. He held the German model up not to compound defeatism but as an example of what Italy might also accomplish. At the same time he did not wish to support the nationalism and militarism of his former teacher Giosue Carducci. The poet and intellectual leader attacked Young Europe as unpatriotic. Ferrero may have intended it to stand as a rejection of Carducci and his followers such as Gaetano DeSanctis.²⁸ In a sense this work was written as an attempt to find a middle ground between the ethnic criticism of the Carduccian patriots, who blindly defended Italy, and those critics who could find nothing to praise. Ferrero saw his work as an attempt to explore the problems and offer a socialist solution. Carducci and his allies would continue to criticize his work for many years.

For Ferrero, socialism could be defined as a system of ideas, an instrument of criticism and a religious

force. The party, he believed, had a logical force superior to all other parties. It was able to overcome the absurd contradictions of those who wanted both constitutional monarchy and its opposite, total liberty.²⁹ A similar example from German history was Prussia's establishment of a limited rather than an absolute monarchy in 1845, which had left the question of sovereignty unresolved. The German bourgeoisie wanted a constitutional system similar to that of the British with sovereignty resting in Parliament. The liberals, on the verge of victory over the military budget in 1863, were defeated by Bismarck. This compromise was never accepted by the people. The German Socialist party was able to overcome these contradictions because it was well organized and scientific, that is, it had studied the laws of nature using the scientific method, and had applied positivist principles to contemporary problems. It understood the important portions of Marx on the scientific theory of value and his insight on the formation and development of capitalism. The party drew upon those portions of Marxist and positivist thought that offered, in their minds, the most logical solution to social and economic problems.

Socialism was also a religion, Ferrero believed, because it contained all the basic characteristics of Christianity and religion in general, "in which the religious element prevails over the political and social."³⁰

Most important was faith, either faith in God in the case of the Christians, or faith in the ideas of socialism for the socialists.³¹ Ferrero thought that the German people were suited to socialism because the spirit of individualism was not strong in their culture. Beginning with a strong sense of individualism, the Latin societies developed a culture based on rule by a few, which Ferrero called "cesaristic," a common expression in his day. By this he meant more than dictatorship. He meant rule by a group or class that did not represent the interests of the workers. "Such a society is concerned with pleasing the senses and with intellectual and artistic satisfaction without degrading oneself in arduous work. . . ."³² This "ultimo cesarismo latino," as a stepchild of ancient Roman society, had an expansionist and exploitative tendency. The German people, on the other hand, used their energies in the creation of new industries and of a higher moral life. They were overcoming the problem of industrial society by creating a society based on the worker.³³ Germany was being transformed by the idea of socialism.

Ferrero extended his enthusiasm for the German Social Democratic party to much of German society. He allowed his theorizing to rush ahead of his verifiable information. He would come to regret the excesses of this youthful work. In later years he even refused to have it reissued and this was not done until after his death. As

can be readily understood, the book was controversial in Italy. He was severely criticized for his comments about the racial inferiority of the Latins. Napoleone Colajanni, the Sicilian republican deputy, took him to task in The Inferior Race and the Superior Race: Either the Latins or the Anglo-Saxons (1903), and later Benedetto Croce associated Ferrero with the racial theories of Houston Stewart Chamberlain.

There were certain concepts in Young Europe which reappeared in Ferrero's later works. Particularly evident was his reliance on the historical method and the intuitive approach of historical interpretation. His interest in contemporary political and moral problems was clear from his description of the institutions of each country he visited. Finally, Young Europe employed a comparative historical method that contrasted several European nations in order to demonstrate the superiority of some. This later methodology was continued throughout Ferrero's works contrasting the ancients and moderns and later the Europeans and Americans. Always one was held as an example for the other with the intention of inspiring political and social reform. Ferrero was well aware that his examples were not absolutes and he hoped only to create a new synthesis by a combination of the best qualities in each. His intention was always to find a balance between the two. If it can be said that he failed, it was in

failing to explain adequately how such a balance was to take place.

Young Europe revealed the contradiction in Ferrero's mind between his own reformist tendencies and the determinist organic and racial theories as explanations for social and political differences among peoples. If Germany, or at least German socialism, was presented as a model for Italians to emulate,³⁴ then Italy's failures were not irreversible and did not depend entirely on Latin racial inferiority. Reform depended on the creation of the just society. The motivation for his travels and study of the judicial systems of other countries was based on Lombroso's and Ferrero's assumption that the functioning of the judicial system was the key to understanding the health of any given society, that is, whether the society was progressive or declining into decadence. Once the natural law of societal rise and decline was understood, through its all-important legal system, then further improvements could be made and decadence reversed. Legal, social, and economic reforms were not only possible; they were necessary.

Ferrero sometimes despaired of reforming Italian society and his outbursts of anger only demonstrated his desire to see change take place. A letter to Gaetano Mosca, the political scientist and Senator, of August 28, 1898, serves as an example:

From time to time I question the possibility of assuring an honest and judicious State in Italy. Taken together, the complexities of Italian society elude me. No power can support a State of this type, which is unhinged and tyrannical, liberal and arbitrary.³⁵

Again, some years later, writing to Mosca about the relation of truth to the survival of society, he wrote, "Unfortunately, Italy is reduced to living in a continuum of lies and romantic invention. Can one live on dreams?"³⁶ The occasional note of despair is not surprising. Yet the possibility of reform was always there even if it meant a whole new governmental structure.

Social determinism became less a part of Ferrero's thinking as he moved towards more traditional political history. His instinct for uncovering social principles and laws would be tempered by experience, rooted in years of observation and study.

The political principle with which Ferrero is most closely associated and which first appears in Young Europe is that of legitimacy. He said many times, and he most certainly believed, that he had discovered the principle of legitimacy by reading the memoirs of Talleyrand at the end of World War I. That reading may have opened his eyes to certain political applications of the idea, but it is clear that the idea crossed his mind in several forms long before November 1918.

In Young Europe he had already used the word

"legittimista" in its traditional form as applied to the defenders of Louis Philippe and the monarchists of the July monarchy. That in itself was not surprising. The way in which Ferrero understood the political importance of socialism in the nineteenth century is of more significance. Socialism was intended to overcome the rude contradictions between those who wanted both constitutional monarchy and total liberty, a compromise that Ferrero felt to be essentially impossible. Socialism was to overcome this essential political contradiction, this compromise government that could satisfy no one. The inability to find loyal adherents, the incapacity to create a commonwealth in which all people felt they had some participation in the government, was the major political failure of the nineteenth century. Later in his writings this compromise could come to be called "illegitimate." However, even without the term the content of the theory was present in Young Europe. Socialism was to be the new legitimacy. When he finally gave up socialism, the content of legitimacy had to take on an entirely new shape.

While socialism seemed to constitute the only logical form of government, monarchy seemed to Ferrero to be the least acceptable and least suitable to the needs of modern Europe. Monarchy was one of his principal political targets until the end of World War I when most of the royal houses that had any real power finally collapsed.

Ever since the first French Republic, monarchy, at least in western Europe, Ferrero held, was anachronistic. The constitutional compromises of Louis Philippe, with one foot in the past and the other in the future, could no longer satisfy the demands of people for a real share in the workings of the government. The July monarchy favored the wealthy and ignored the welfare of the rest of the population. It could not make the necessary political reforms. Such a situation engendered revolt and political crimes, and cleared the way for the caesarean-democratic regime of Napoleon III.

Young Europe states that human psychology must be examined for an understanding of the way in which society truly functions and that such observation, in the case of Europe, would reveal the dynamic conflict between the older conservative, caesaristic segment of society and the progressive, scientific, industrialized and more socially organized society. The conflict between the young and the old proved to be a major theme in Ferrero's interpretation of society when he wrote his five-volume Greatness and Decadence of Rome and the numerous other books related to the subject. His concerns about political freedom, viewed in terms of caesarism, militarism, and imperialism, received much consideration in the Roman studies. It was the concern about such "isms" in contemporary political life that seemed to be the compelling force in Ferrero's

Young Europe and then partly in his history of Rome.³⁷ Lombrosian positive anthropology receded into the background as the fascination with politics and history grew. The reforming instinct rose to a crescendo just before World War I.

Ferrero began his intellectual career with a concern for the "social question" and with the future of European society. He turned to history for sustenance and support for his ideas, not realizing that his historical research would, to a large extent, redirect his thinking. He would be captured by history. He emerged from positivism and socialism with a perspective on human nature and society that would be applied to his history. He took from evolutionary positivism the ideas that all societies were born, lived to maturity, decayed, and died. The organic theory of society was an essential model for his political and historical writings. Using the historical and comparative method, that is, studying social change in several societies over many years, he hoped to arrive at some understanding of the way in which societies advanced and declined. Interest in such studies is not difficult to understand when seen through the eyes of Italian intellectuals who saw their own society in serious trouble, and, in their view, falling into a state of decadence. In such a context their academic interests were quite practical and immediate. Young Europe was the work of a hopeful reformer

who wanted to reverse the decline or at least discover its mechanism. It was not the work of a despairing critic.

FOOTNOTES

¹Private correspondence. The above biographical information was derived from conversations between Mrs. Nina Roditsa, daughter of G. Ferrero, and the author on May 8, 1975, and April 9, 1976.

²Josué Jéhovda, Guglielmo Ferrero: Le grande historien liberal (Geneve: Editions Generals, 1954), pp. 14-15.

³Piero Treves, "Ferrero dans son temps et le notre," Guglielmo Ferrero: Histoire et politique au XX^e siecle, eds. Luigi Salvatorelli et al. (Geneve: Librairie Droz, Institute d'Histoire de la Faculte Lettres de Geneve, 1966), pp. 21-22.

⁴Bogdan Raditsa, Colloqui con Guglielmo Ferrero: Seguiti delle Grandi Pagine (Lugano: Nuove edizioni di Capolago, 1939), p. 27.

⁵Treves, "Ferrero," p. 20.

⁶Gina Lombroso-Ferrero, Cesare Lombroso: Storia della vita e della opera (Torino: Fratelli Bocca, Editori, 1915), p. 299. See also E. Gadolin-Langerwell, "Guglielmo Ferrero at Home," The Living Age, 314, no. 4076 (August 19, 1922), p. 465.

⁷Lombroso-Ferrero, Cesare Lombroso, p. 300.

⁸Leonardo D. Savity, "Introduction," in Criminal Man: According to the Classification of Cesare Lombroso, ed. Gina Lombroso-Ferrero (Montclair: Petterson, Smith reprint, 1972), p. vi.

⁹Lombroso-Ferrero, Cesare Lombroso, p. 315.

¹⁰Treves, "Ferrero," p. 23.

¹¹N. Abbagnano, Storia della filosofia: filosofia del romanticismo, filosofia contemporanea, 2 vols. (Torino: Unione Tipografico-editorice, 1950), II, p. 240.

¹²Ibid., p. 287.

¹³Paolo Spriano, Socialismo e classe operaia a Torino de 1892 al 1913 (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1958), pp. 57-58.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 60-61.

¹⁵Lombroso-Ferrero, Cesare Lombroso, p. 325. Also Luigi Bulferetti, Le ideologie, p. 251. Bulferetti says Lombroso's socialism was aristocratic. "Lombroso's work on the male criminal and the female prostitute . . . contains a deep aristocratic element because he defined man principally by his individual physical characteristics. Thus one finds a position only ostensibly socialist (the influence of the environment and the society) and progressive, but in substance conservative, beneficial in limited cases and harmful in others."

¹⁶Spriano, Socialismo, p. 142.

¹⁷Spencer Michael DiScala, Filippo Turati and the Factional Strife in the Italian Socialist Party 1892-1912 (unpublished dissertation at Columbia University, 1969), p. 22.

¹⁸Giuseppe Petronio, "Problemi della culture," Critica Sociale, eds. Mario Spinella et al. (Milano: Giangiacome Feltrinelli Editore, 1959), pp. cxxix-clxvii. "When the Critica Sociale began publishing in 1891, positivist culture prevailed in Italy to which collaborators of the magazine gave their adherence. On page 33 of the first issue Enrico Monselli was praised for his work on the diffusion of the positivist idea. Again on page 105 it was asserted that 'the moral principle of socialism is the same as that of positivism.'" P. cxxix.

¹⁹Filippo Turati and Anna Kulishoff, Corteggio, 6 vols. (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1949), I, p. 107.

²⁰Filippo Turati to Guglielmo Ferrero, 1924, Columbia University, Archives, Ferrero Manuscripts. Also Turati and Kulishoff, Carteggio, I (November 6, 1898), p. 87; (December 20, 1898), p. 107.

²¹Guglielmo Ferrero and Filippo Turati, "Carlo Marx ucciso da Carlo Darwin: secondo l'opione di un nostre Darwiniano," Critica Sociale, Anno II, no. 9 (May 1, 1892), pp. 133-138.

²²Guglielmo Ferrero, "L'Omicidio de Darwin," Critica Sociale, Anno II, no. 10 (May 16, 1892), pp. 151-153.

²³Ruggero Amaduzzi, "Problemi dell'economia e del lavoro," Critica Sociale, 1891-1926, ed. Giuliano Pisichel

(Milano: Editore Gentile, 1945), pp. ci-cii.

²⁴Treves, "Ferrero," p. 19.

²⁵Guglielmo Ferrero, L'Europa giovane: Studi e viaggi nei passi del nord (Milano: Fratelli Treves, 1897), p. 40.

²⁶Mario Borsa, Memorie di un redivivo (Roma: Rizzoli Milano, 1945), p. 124.

²⁷Emiliana P. Noether, "Italian Intellectuals," in Modern Italy, eds. Edward R. Tannenbaum and Emiliana P. Noether (New York: New York University, 1974), p. 278.

²⁸Treves, "Ferrero," pp. 24-25.

²⁹Ferrero, L'Europa giovane, pp. 61-62.

³⁰Ibid., p. 90.

³¹Ibid., p. 93.

³²Ibid., p. 418.

³³Ibid., p. 420.

³⁴Ibid., p. 64.

³⁵Guglielmo Ferrero to Gaetano Mosca, August 28, 1898, Columbia University, Archives, Ferrero Manuscripts.

³⁶Ferrero to Mosca, September 3, 1913, Ferrero Manuscripts.

³⁷Francesco Natale, "Contributo alla storia della storiografia Italiana sul mondo antico," Nuova rivista storica, XLII (1958), p. 266.

CHAPTER II

THE ROMAN HISTORIES: THE MORAL PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION

It was in the writing of the Roman histories that Ferrero first presented his major historical assumptions. The themes of progress and decadence were singled out for special attention in the hope that if the principles of decadence could be understood, progress could be insured. Civilizations seemed to him to advance and decay in an endless and organically determined pattern. But almost from the beginning, he was caught in the contradiction of viewing societies as subject to an inevitable cyclical rise and fall while ardently desiring social and intellectual progress. It is nowhere clear that he ever saw his way through this contradiction. He was certain that Rome's fall completed the process that had begun with the decline of the values and authority of the Roman Republic. In his scheme of things, such decline was inevitable. Yet he seemed to imply that civilization could postpone the decline almost indefinitely.

Ferrero came to concern himself more with the moral than the physical dimensions of the decline. The final collapse, he thought, resulted from the undermining of the

moral principle of authority that he called legitimacy, a principle that had been shaken by the Caesars and finally destroyed by the barbarian invasions. But even before that, Rome had been weakened by vanity, greed, luxury, the corruption of republican values, the seductions of Asia, and other threats to the pristine moral structure of the republic. Ferrero came to believe that the nature of moral progress and decadence had to be understood if peace and stability were ever to be achieved by mankind. The problem of moral corruption would inform the political, social and psychological content of his historical work.

The events that shaped Ferrero as a mature historian were the writing of his Roman histories, his trips to North and South America, and the upheaval of war and dictatorship after 1914. It was with the writing of The Greatness and Decline of Rome that he made a break with much of the rigidity of positivism and the influence of Lombroso. Perhaps more important, his long study of the ancient Romans gave him a new understanding of the political and moral contribution of the Latin peoples and opened the way to his critique of modern civilization. Ferrero, previously committed to the notion that technology and industry would solve man's problems, was finally awakened to the ancient past and to the possibilities of the Roman tradition. Only after many years of study, and his trip

to the Americas, could he reflect on the failures of modern society.

Ferrero decided on a career as an historian subsequent to his studies of the burgeoning industrial societies, militarism, and the vicissitudes of justice and criminality. His work on ancient Rome occupied him from about 1897 to 1906. This urge to look backward instead of forward was neither as sudden nor as odd as one might think. Although he devoted much of his energies to contemporary life and politics, he had also done a good deal of research in Roman history and law in preparation for his proposed study of justice. During his travels in northern Europe, he continued to collect information on ancient Roman law. Lombroso encouraged him to use the decline of Rome as a model for the study of why and how a decadent society crumbles. No doubt Lombroso thought that the collapse had something to do with the decline of the judicial system and of law in general. Ferrero soon discovered that he could not even begin to understand the process until he studied the republic, the civil war, and even the origins of Roman society.

Given the quality of the existing scholarship in Roman history, it is surprising that Ferrero would undertake such an ambitious task as a full-scale history of Rome from the rebellion of the Gracchi to the death of Augustus. The study of Rome had been distinguished by the work of

eminent scholars with unparalleled literary skills. Edward Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776) was not only a great feat of scholarship but also remains a literary classic. Only Theodore Mommsen in the late nineteenth century with his five volume work, The History of Rome, rivaled Gibbon as a scholar and literary stylist. Although a writer of considerable strength, Ferrero could not be expected to compete with Gibbon and Mommsen. However, he was not modest in his ambitions and did not hesitate to venture into a field that had spawned great works, to say nothing of the numerous scholars who had labored over the fine points of Roman history with such painstaking attention, especially to the Roman law. Ferrero thought that his idea of writing a full scale history emphasizing social and economic aspects of the republic and empire would provide a fresh perspective and sufficient originality to make such a monumental task worth the investment of ten years.

The five volumes published between 1902 and 1906 focused on the last ten years of the Roman republic and the beginning of the empire, thus bringing him nowhere near the actual collapse. In this sense he always considered the work unfinished. Still, he raised important questions about the causes of the decline, the analogy of contemporary society to the ancient world, and finally about the study of history.

The Greatness and Decline of Rome was an almost immediate success, widely read, and translated into many languages. It seems probable, however, that Ferrero's readers and critics did not fully understand his interpretation of history. Many years later, historians were able to recognize more fully his contribution and his intentions. The British historian G. P. Gooch said that Ferrero's work had been the most exciting since Mommsen. Gooch praised the work while pointing out that it had not been appreciated by scholars.¹ More important than the initial excitement over the work was its contribution to the debate on historiography. Corrado Barbagallo, Ferrero's colleague and collaborator, said it was "the greatest and most abused of such heretical books." He added further that it was "real history, enjoyed by the public and neglected by experts . . . an attack on older forms of history."² By "heresy" Barbagallo meant that Ferrero rejected contemporary standards of philology, made comparisons between ancient and contemporary events, and rejected Theodore Mommsen's portrait of Julius Caesar as a great leader.³ "Real" history was narrative, that which the average literate person could read and understand.

As the writing proceeded, however, it proved to be less original than anticipated and Ferrero must have recognized this fact when he decided to end his history with the death of Augustus long before the actual fall of

Rome. In light of more recent scholarship Ferrero's attempt to write a history emphasizing the social and economic realities of Roman life was worthy but premature. The body of knowledge concerning these aspects of ancient history was not well advanced and he lacked sufficient solid historical evidence. The result was a fairly conventional narrative laced with conjecture and some astute guesses concerning the condition of the Roman class structure, the financial, agricultural, and industrial state of the empire and the motivation of the Roman leaders and electorate. Consequently, his attempts at originality jeopardized the credibility of his narrative.⁴ For example, in relating the story of the marriage and divorce of Augustus' daughter, Julia, and the general Tiberius, Ferrero divided the Roman ruling aristocracy into two parties; the Puritan party, following Tiberius, and the Liberal party, following the lead of Julia.⁵ Such party divisions and the characteristics attributed to them are heuristic models easily understood by modern readers but having no basis in historical evidence and a product of his creative imagination.

Ferrero's goal, however, was not simply originality and readability. To some extent he intentionally set out to dispute Mommsen whose subject was the formation of the Roman empire rather than its decline. The defects of the empire, as they appeared up to Julius Caesar's death,

were, in Mommsen's view, basically political and not due to internal moral corruption. Rome, he believed, even after it had become the center of the empire, remained largely an urban-based, highly centralized core which focused on the political realities of the capital without developing proper institutions to enable participation by the rest of the empire.⁶

Ferrero, on the other hand, viewed the centralist policies of Rome as a point of strength and an important ingredient in Rome's success. He saw centralization as an outward sign of Rome's achievement which rested on the discipline of its inhabitants:

The cause of her success lay in the vigorous discipline of her Constitution, which was strong enough to control that spirit of self-indulgence which is the most powerful solvent of national life. It was this that maintained a pure and simple morality among her rich and powerful class which would have been the first to succumb to the vanity and vice that too frequently attend on the pride of conquest.⁷

This rigid discipline enabled the parents to control the propensity of the next generation toward innovation, change, and excess. Excess and innovation came, Ferrero claims, "in response to the law of constant change-- a law which seems to be the only constant element in human society and history--."⁸ This slow decline began in the middle of the third century as a response to success in the military field and the influx of new wealth.

Ferrero's interpretation of Roman history did not

differ greatly from Mommsen's in most respects although he attempted to emphasize the points of difference.⁹ Ferrero was influenced by Mommsen's interpretation of Roman politics and his tendency to divide competing groups into the aristocratics and the democratics. Contemporary historians object to Mommsen's division on the grounds that a true democratic party did not exist in Roman times. Ferrero compounded the anachronism by discussing the rise of the Roman middle class as if it were to be understood in the same terms as the European bourgeoisie in modern times.

One point with which Ferrero took strong issue with Mommsen concerned the importance and character of Julius Caesar and the meaning of Caesar for the modern world.¹⁰ Mommsen admired Julius Caesar as the strong leader who pulled Rome out of its political chaos. His interpretation was based on his estimation of the role of the individual and the latter's ability to alter the course of human events. Ferrero also admired Caesar for his military talents, his intellectual gifts and his ability to apply sound and prudent judgment to practical problems. However, he believed that Caesar was also extraordinarily fortunate and much of what he accomplished was due to conditions beyond his control. In fact, he believed that Caesar failed to recognize his greatest achievement as the conquest of Gaul, to which he gave meaning only as a step-

ping stone toward attaining political power in Rome. Almost everything that Caesar achieved as dictator of Rome was destroyed shortly after his assassination.

Mommsen is well known for his defense of democratic principles and as an activist in the political life of his beloved Prussia. He sat in the Imperial Reichstag in its early years as a National Liberal, defending democratic causes and opposing Bismarck's policies. His passionate political views found their way into his writings. Strangely enough, the views that were expressed in The History of Rome were not those expected of a man who defended liberty and opposed the dictatorial tendencies of Bismarck. Unlike the writings of Croce, there was no clear defense of liberty in Mommsen's Roman histories. Instead there appeared an unqualified defense of Caesar's dictatorship. Mommsen excused this by stating that Caesar's coup d'etat was unique and necessary, but not to be emulated in modern times.¹¹

Mommsen's major contribution to historical research in The History of Rome rests on his illumination of Rome's beginnings; the confused legends and uncertain sequence of events in the time of the rule of kings and early development of the republic. Caesar did not enter the story until volume five (the last volume), after Mommsen had already written over 2000 pages. Yet it is this volume that has left the greatest impact. Ferrero, on the other hand,

began his Roman histories at the decline of the republic and the two authors overlapped on the career of Caesar.

Given Ferrero's great disdain for militarism and Caesarism, he could not help but be incensed by what he perceived in Mommsen's work to be an especially "germanic" defense of brute force and dictatorship. Ferrero wished not only to demonstrate his originality in relation to Mommsen, but, more important, to attack what he considered Mommsen's defense of Caesarism. Mommsen had been interpreted by some as encouraging the King of Prussia to emulate Caesar. Non-German readers, including Ferrero, sensed in Mommsen a strong prejudice in the Roman histories against peoples of Celtic and Latin origin,¹² just as the contemporary readers will note his bias against the emancipation of women, which he saw as synonymous with debauchery.¹³

The origin of Ferrero's hostility towards Mommsen was less over Caesar than Caesarism, that is, the role of the dictator in the modern state. They differed on the individual's ability to influence historical events, especially the role of the powerful individual. Mommsen had witnessed Prussia's rise as a significant force in European affairs and he knew the importance of strong leadership. He had also seen his own National Liberal party languish for lack of it. For Ferrero at this time, the role of individual action was secondary. He placed more emphasis on political, social, economic, and psychological forces.

In this regard Ferrero's interpretation was more in agreement with those who wrote a generation after his death.

In writing his Roman histories, Ferrero, to some extent, was competing with German scholarship, which was quite advanced in the area of Roman history. In the preface to A Short History of Rome, written in 1917 by Ferrero and Corrado Barbagallo as a general university-level introduction to the subject, Ferrero attempted to explain part of their overall approach to history. He contended that they were really traditionalists who rejected the methods of historical criticism developed in Germany. They rejected what they perceived to be methodology which placed emphasis upon hypothesis and theoretical speculation rather than upon evidence. Ferrero asserted that this nineteenth century Germanic "critical" school attempted to recapture what was no longer recoverable, questioning all things but its own methodology.¹⁴ But what Ferrero and Barbagallo objected to most was the dominance of Germanic scholarship over Italian historiography and what they believed was the moral relativism of that scholarship. By that time Ferrero objected to all forms of moral relativism, which for him was synonymous with destructive skepticism. The German scholars, with their "higher criticism," seemed willing to question all and to disregard moral values.

In his positivist days Ferrero had accepted the idea of absolute law. True, he and Lombroso were relativistic

in terms of ethics; crime was not an absolute wrong. They believed that the legal system had to take into consideration not only the individual crime but also the environment in which it was committed. As he grew older Ferrero became more opposed to such relativistic thinking. Ferrero's attack upon Germanic scholarship was, no doubt, an attack upon a straw man, perhaps intended to counter the propensity of Italian scholars to consider German research superior to their own. Ferrero preferred to question those things that were either illogical or metaphysical, a position he considered to be in harmony with the French Enlightenment.

Ferrero and Mommsen agreed that the fall of Rome was due at least partially to the failure of political institutions and the decline in leadership. Mommsen, however, placed much more emphasis upon the political and constitutional failures of the republic, whereas Ferrero's discussions of such were concentrated in the third century A.D. At the time he wrote The Greatness and Decline of Rome, Ferrero found much to agree with in Mommsen although the spirit of his work was closer to that of the other famous historian of Rome, Edward Gibbon.

Ferrero and Gibbon were both very much concerned with the question of Rome's decline, although the time periods about which they wrote were quite different. Ferrero ended his history with the death of Augustus

while Gibbon did not commence his until the age of Antonians in the second century A.D., although he did make reference to Augustus whom he saw as the source of greatness and a root of Rome's corruption through the over-concentration of authority.

Contrary to popular belief, Gibbon had no single thesis concerning Rome's fall, although he frequently stated that Rome collapsed from internal corruption.¹⁵ Gibbon's original thesis, the rise of Christianity, was abandoned as his subject appeared more complex in the course of his massive study. He came to the conclusion that Christianity may have exacerbated the decline but was not its original cause.¹⁶ In the words of Peter Gay, "Gibbon explained the readiness of the Empire for the Christian message and its defenselessness against barbarian incursions by the torpor of long peace, the decline of old families, and the disappearance of the traditional public spirit."¹⁷

Ferrero did not expend much effort either refuting or defending Gibbon's work as it covered a different time period and no doubt he accepted the prevailing assumption that Gibbon assigned the blame for the fall of Rome to the rise of Christianity. Actually, Ferrero and Gibbon shared a very similar viewpoint that had its origins in early humanist and Enlightenment traditions. They believed that vice, the spread of luxury, and the decline of civic

virtue were the underlying flaws which brought about the decline. The early discipline and sense of proportion were lost to the later generation of Romans. Decadence and hedonism prevailed.

Ferrero's study of Rome was an attempt to understand the transformation of modern society from its traditional political, moral and legal bounds to a society that seemed to defy all boundaries. How did the change in customs and ethical values affect political and social structure? How was one to understand progress and its opposite, decline? If modern society is still based on many of the ancient Greek and Roman standards of legality, what could the challenges of the uncontrolled society mean to such legal and traditional structures? What was the threat to liberty mounted by a dictator like Julius Caesar? Could a tyranny be imposed by majority rule? These political questions actively motivated Ferrero's interest in ancient Rome.

Combining his writing skills with the psychological and sociological research techniques he had learned under Lombroso, Ferrero studied the aristocratic, military, and agricultural bases of Roman society. He discovered what he believed to be the explanation for social change in Roman history, indeed in all history. It was a universal motivational principle which he called "generational ambition." It was Ferrero's thesis that each new

generation attempted to advance itself over the previous one and that the increase in needs and wealth transformed the customs and even the entire society. For example, as Rome was more successful on the field of battle, grew rich and expanded her empire, an increase in Roman wealth led to an increased demand for more "goods and services" on the part of each new generation. The generation of Romans that came to maturity after the major imperial conquests experienced what he called an "automatic increase of ambitions and desires." This generational demand compelled a change in the material, intellectual and moral life of Roman society.¹⁸

Ferrero believed that Rome's problems began with the defeat of Carthage and the expansion that followed. The influx of new ideas, the mysticism of the eastern religions, feminism and luxury destroyed the old values, military preparedness and loyalties of the republic. The greatness of Rome was in its ability to create a political center of gravity, one empire living in peace and, at the same time, absorbing many different influences from its many provinces. It was this greatness that led to its downfall. In making itself the cosmopolitan center of the world, Rome lost its attachment to simpler virtues. It was inevitable that even without the Asiatic influence, Roman mores were bound to change as each new generation faced greater opportunities, luxuries, and power.

The classic great Roman authors, Cicero, Livy, Horace, and Virgil, lamented what they considered the corruption of Rome that occurred after the Second Punic War. These lamentations from the leading intellectuals had come at a time when Rome seemed to be attaining great success. Ferrero hoped to understand this contradiction in Roman history by looking for similar occurrences in modern times. The so-called Roman orgies and splendor were, of course, quite modest in comparison to the standards of the modern world. And Rome was replete with sumptuary laws and political discussion on the moral questions. The Roman intellectuals understood the generational problems that resulted from the increase in material wealth and its effects on mores and morals, and finally the alteration, if not the disruption, of the entire society.¹⁹ They understood that corruption was not simply luxurious living and pleasure-seeking but also the alteration of the morals and mores with each generation. This process was exacerbated by the conquests in the East, first in Pergamus, then in Pontus and Syria, and finally in Egypt. Following these conquests the Romans fought over the spoils in terrible civil war.

In the modern world, Ferrero saw similar generational conflict and the propensity to accumulate wealth and increase leisure.

In other words, every new generation must, in order to satisfy that part of its aspirations

which is peculiarly and entirely its own, alter, whether little or much, in one way or another, the condition of the world it entered at birth.²⁰

Ferrero considered this to be a universal law for which evidence could be found throughout history and in personal experience.

The central elements in Ferrero's theory of historical change--generational ambition--were provided by psychological and sociological factors.²¹ Generational ambition had first appeared as early as 1894 in The Crispi Phenomenon (Il fenomeno Crispi), in a slightly more political form. At that time he explained generational ambition as developing out of the conservative tendencies of the older generation who had lost the ability to change their ideas as the society changed. The young, finding themselves faced with the intransigency of their elders, were naturally encouraged to rebel. The fact that Ferrero blamed this situation on the older generation may have had something to do with his own youth. Prime Minister Crispi was described by Ferrero as one who, having achieved political power, could not give up the conspiratorial attitudes of his youth when he had fought alongside Garibaldi for Italian unification and when such attitudes had been appropriate. Crispi was an example of the "fenomeno morale,"²² one whose moral values were rooted in an age that had passed and who could not adjust to the new demands of political life. Ten years

later in the Roman histories generational ambition appeared again in a more psychological form. Ferrero then theorized that the young were compelled by uncontrollable and natural urges to surpass their elders. Generational conflict led to decadence and collapse of the society.

In the Lowell lectures presented on Ferrero's first visit to the United States in 1908, he attempted to explain the intention behind his Greatness and Decline of Rome, which by that time had been partially translated into English. All social change, he said, could be explained by increased generational ambition, and such an explanation was based on mass psychology and constituted a universal law of history. He noted that in looking for the patterns of social change, he found the individuals to have little control and generally to be swept along by events. History was a clash of social institutions, classes, and groups. Political leaders only appeared to direct great events when, in fact, they had little control over a much larger and more complex pattern. "The essential phenomenon upon which all the political, social, and moral crises of Rome depend is the transformation of customs produced by the augmentation of wealth, of expenditure, and needs."²³ That augmentation came with each new generation.

Ferrero saw social change as taking place in the

context of a larger evolutionary process. Each change was part of an intricate series of complex and closely connected institutional, social and political relationships. One author has said Ferrero's Roman histories were written from "the genetic point of view," implying Ferrero's debt to Darwinism in his adherence to universal mechanistic principles such as generational ambition.²⁴ Perhaps Ferrero thought, at least for a while, that he had provided for the human sciences what Darwin had achieved for the natural sciences, a seemingly scientific explanation for evolutionary social change. Darwin had offered natural selection as a plausible explanation for the mechanism of evolutionary change. For Ferrero generational ambition was a mechanism that explained social change within the context of social evolution. It was for him the mechanism that explained his larger subject--decadence. The use of generational ambition did not last beyond Ferrero's first trip to South America in 1907, when he was inspired to seek new explanations for decadence, or, as he sometimes called it, corruption.

Ferrero's philosophy of history was based on his understanding of the ancient doctrine of corruption or decadence, the opposite of progress. The concept of progress, which is used by moderns to demonstrate that civilization is advancing, was the same concept used by the Romans to demonstrate that the world was becoming more corrupt.

In other words, luxury, ambition, and social change, once considered by the ancients to be corruption, had come to be viewed as progress. Additionally, the Romans thought of pessimism as a form of corruption that had implications far beyond the mind.²⁵ While the "corruption of customs"²⁶ was considered a deplorable calamity, Ferrero saw in contemporary society such change coming under the heading of progress. Progress, after all, required change in all ideas, the more innovative the better. An identification of the ancient doctrine of corruption and the modern idea of progress was considered by Ferrero to be his most important and original contribution to the dialogue between ancients and moderns. He used the contradiction in later writings to demonstrate that the modern terms, progress and decadence, were so vague and empty of meaning as to stand for almost anything. He was quick to point out that progress usually meant scientific and material advancement and nothing else. His intention was to restore its moral and spiritual implications so that the inevitable material progress, which he foresaw, would not signify the end of European society.

By 1910 Ferrero had given the doctrine of corruption a slightly different interpretation from the one-dimensional generational ambition theory. In the essay, "The Life After This," he concluded that the increased desire of each new generation was due not to an automatic

mechanism determined by biology, but rather to a failure of will and imagination. Modern man, he concluded, no longer controlled his passions because he could not perceive of a goal beyond his immediate material gain. "The main cause of this decadence is always the same; incapacity to will and to long for something beyond personal pleasure."²⁷ Decadence, he argued in this essay, was a consequence of human cupidity and immorality. Social advancement came to be associated in his mind with the spiritual goals that must be established beyond and outside of man's daily and tangible life. Once again he reduced this to a law.

All civilizations decay from an excess of egoism, the product of wealth and power; are not these phenomena that we witness a proof that our boasted civilization also begins to suffer from this moral disease? With the growing indifference to the unseen world and the problems of the future life, is there not also diffused a dangerous indifference to the interests of species?²⁸

To most men in the contemporary world the continuous increase in wealth seemed to be advantageous because it was, at least to some extent, available to all classes. Ferrero thought there was a middle ground between the ancient condemnation of wealth and the excessive approval placed upon it today. He believed there were certain times in history in which such luxuries were especially destructive--the time of the first Caesar and his own lifetime. The demands of the individual, in ancient times and modern, far exceeded any positive benefits to society as a

whole. Ferrero listed the defects this "egoism" visited upon the social unity: "intellectual agitation, the weakening of the spirit of tradition, the general relaxation of discipline, the loss of authority, ethical confusion and disorder."²⁹ Overall, he saw government becoming less the domain of an organized and determined elite, family control decreasing, and the past disregarded by the new generations as men inclined to do that which was useful and profitable rather than that which was right. Men were losing the civic calling to sacrifice for the common good or for future generations; children were less desirable; men were inclined to accept the corruption of public figures.

His sentiments on "egoism" and individualism were expressed most clearly in his writings on women and marriage in antiquity. Aristocratic women of the late republic enjoyed great economic and social liberty, but at no time were men or women allowed to choose their own marriage partners. Marriage was a political, social, and economic union of two families. At all times personal sentiments were to be put aside for the good of the family and, thus, the state and the people. Ferrero outlined the benefits and defects of such a system in his work The Women of the Caesars (1911). He concluded that woman, once given liberty, tended to excess more easily than men, "because she exercises a greater power over man than he over her"; and

because she, as the aristocratic woman, once free of family, had less economic, social, and political responsibility than were placed on a man from all sides.³⁰

Women, Ferrero believed, exercised a greater influence than men on the adhesiveness of the society. If a woman worked and was self-sacrificing, the benefits to all were great. If she was remiss in her duties the consequences were also great. Ferrero said he hoped there could be a balance between the suppression of one's personal desires and personal liberty. There is no doubt, however, that he considered his contemporaries to be pleasure seekers and in pursuit of riches and power. "It is the Saturnalia of the world's history," he proclaimed.³¹

Certainly it was the self-sacrificing, disciplined times of the ancient republic rather than the greatness of the empire that appealed to Ferrero. He disliked the expanded selfish individualism and egoism that he thought abounded in the modern world. At the same time, he knew that there was no returning to the age of the Roman republic. There was no golden age in the past nor was there likely to be one in the future. There was only compromise and mediation between the cyclical swing of expansion and decline, of luxury and frugality, of unbounded ego and self-sacrifice.

The ancients had good reason to be frugal and to institute sumptuary laws in a world of severely limited

resources and manpower. In contrast, Ferrero saw modern man as unlimited in all these things with resources against both nature and the human forces that might attempt to destroy civilization. "Indeed modern civilization has made it a duty for each one to spend, to enjoy, to waste as much as he can, without any disturbing thought as to the ultimate consequences of what he does."³² Ferrero could not accept what he saw as the unchecked waste and the constant change in moral values. He believed this condition could not continue forever, although the collapse of western civilization would not take place until the distant future. "But who knows?," he said at the end of the first Lowell lecture. "Perhaps this felicitous moment will not last forever: perhaps one day will see man, grown more numerous, feel the need of ancient wisdom and prudence."³³ No doubt he believed man would one day return to such an idea.

When Ferrero began to write, history was being transformed by the natural sciences. In the nineteenth century T. E. Buckle and Hippolyte Taine had attempted to develop nothing less than a science of man based on the principles of the natural sciences. They incorporated a mechanistic conception of man with Darwinian theory, assuming a connection between the laws of human nature and human behavior, between the study of biology and the study of society.³⁴ Historiography and the philosophy of

history were deeply affected by this movement. Originally Ferrero too responded to the influence of science and attempted to uncover the underlying science of man. Men like himself directed attention to what they believed to be an in-depth study of natural causation. Taine, some time earlier, had even gone as far as to say that all morality could be explained by the theory of natural causation.³⁵

Research into antiquity and the writing of the Roman histories, however, led Ferrero to modify his ideas about natural causation and scientific history. In this sense he broke with his positivist training. But he continued to search for the universal principles of history based on the observation and description of social institutions and psychological human characteristics. His youthful and naive search for such principles began in Young Europe and The Symbols, and were refined in the more ambitious Greatness and Decline of Rome and Characters and Events of Roman History. As his studies of antiquity deepened, the Lombrosian influence diminished. One could not, by reading the Greatness and Decline of Rome, easily discern such attempts at defining either the principles of history or the motivational principles of society. At least the reader who was not familiar with his previous work could not discern them. Only after the initial five volumes and ten years of research and writing did he begin, in subse-

quent works, to explain what those principles might be. By that time he had given up all notions of history as a science and had become more concerned with the application of ancient ethics to a contemporary Europe that he perceived to be loosed from its old moral moorings.

With his wider application of historical knowledge, he hoped to escape the increasingly myopic vision of the practicing historians of his day. In the last third of the nineteenth century, Italian historians limited their vision by increased technical specialization, concentration on documentation, and the application of the scientific method. Their works were meant chiefly for other historians and constituted a departure from the older literary tradition of writing history for the general public. There were still men, however, outside the professional university historians, who attempted to revive the older, more classical style.

Ferrero was one of those men. For him literary style counted a great deal in the writing of history. He was, after all, a talented writer with a gift for presenting historical material clearly and persuasively, unlike most other historians of his time who were not concerned with matters of style. It was as a journalist, writing for newspapers and magazines, that he had made his living long before his association with the politically democratic magazine Secolo. He wrote for Secolo while he worked on

the Roman histories and continued to do so until the magazine was banned by the fascist government in 1923.³⁶ In many respects his writing style was more akin to the French emphasis on clarity and logical argument,³⁷ rather than the Italian penchant for the ornate.

Ferrero's opinions as to what constituted the underlying principles of history and society changed over the years. By the time he completed his voyage to North and South America and had written his seminal work, Between the Old World and the New (1914), he had stopped writing about generational ambition or at least had adapted it into a struggle between the old conservative and the new rebellious cultures. He still maintained an interest in cross-cultural influences and the spread of ideas, this time between Europe and America. He became more convinced than ever that the political arena was the area in which the crucial problems for western civilization had to be confronted.

The outbreak of World War I and fascism reinforced his conviction about the central place of politics. The concept of decadence began to take on an increasingly political rather than a cultural interpretation; decadence had less to do with the influence of new ideas on culture and more to do with the decline of political life. After his studies of ancient Rome were completed, he began to focus more on the role of the individual in history and

the ethical and political choices individuals had to make, often at great peril to their own safety. He himself had to make precisely those kinds of choices when confronting war and fascism.

The question of Roman decadence was still on his mind sixteen years later when he wrote The Ruin of Ancient Civilization (1925). Here he argued that the Roman empire did not collapse slowly over a long period, but rather occurred all at once. The crisis of the third century resulted in the sudden collapse of Greco-Roman civilization and the formation of the universal Christian culture. The position of emperor, traditionally chosen by the senate, became absolutist and hereditary. Marcus Aurelius broke the tradition of allowing the senate to appoint the emperor. He chose his own son Commodus, thereby beginning a dynasty. A political crisis was created by thus placing the emperor and the senate at odds.³⁸ Civil war and the military dictatorship of Septimius Severus followed, creating the first absolute monarchy, overthrowing the aristocracy and destroying the old legitimacy. Traditionally, the collapse of ancient civilization had been blamed on the invasion of the barbarians, the weakness of the emperor, the rise of Christianity, the inferior aristocracy, fiscal disaster, absolutism and a barbarous population. These explanations, Ferrero said, did not, in themselves, account for the precise moment of collapse.

The causa prima was the political disruption resulting from the civil war after the death of Alessander Severus. The senate and the leading aristocratic families were destroyed by the barbarian legions who saw no use for such an institution or group in the creation of the absolute monarchy. Once the senate was destroyed the emperorship was in an uncertain state. In short, a principle of legitimacy had been destroyed and was in the process of being replaced by a new one. There was endless civil war among various legions attempting, by force, to place their own choice on the throne.³⁹

Rome had been founded on the spirit of local tradition and was converted into a cosmopolitan empire. Christianity suited this cosmopolitanism. The aristocracy grew weaker as it became more open. Increased humanitarianism and egalitarianism created weakness in the senate, in religion and customs. None of this would have destroyed the empire if the authority of the senate had not been undermined by Septimius Severus.

The collapse of ancient civilization is the result of a slow decadence that must be an organic illness and then a terrible accident that destroyed with a vigorous shock all of the legal authority of the already weakened civilization of revolutionary despotism.⁴⁰

The collapse had a long-term cause of "slow decadence" followed by the immediate cause in the third century of the overthrow of the senate and the loss of legitimate authority in general. Decadence by itself could no longer

suffice as an explanation for the decline of Rome.

Ferrero modified his earlier emphasis on decadence caused by luxury and the influx of new ideas in favor of the political crisis of legitimacy. Commenting on the modern world, he stated that for the past twenty-five years modern society had been confused about beliefs and customs, class and people. There had been "intellectual and moral anarchy" that had touched everything. There had been continuous exhausting work, great social mobility, the debasing of all spiritual activity and human production by a form of "universal fever" that had destroyed will and intelligence. Finally, the catastrophe of world war had weakened all authority. The modern world had been divided between two principles of authority--monarchy in central and northern Europe and democracy in western Europe.

Ferrero wrote that "the struggle between monarchy and republic" was the key that unlocked two hundred years of Roman history after Julius Caesar.⁴¹ It was the same political struggle that ensued in nineteenth and twentieth century Europe. The moderns put aside the older Latin principle of the indivisible state. For them the state belonged, at least in some respect, to everyone, while for the ancients the state belonged to one family or dynasty. This ancient concept was defeated in the western world, and after World War I Ferrero came to the

conclusion that monarchy in any form was finished. There was only one viable political authority; that was democracy.

Such a conclusion was not an easy one for him to accept even though he had always been a vigorous enemy of monarchy. Democracy also had its dangers. Ferrero, like de Tocqueville, maintained a certain ambivalence about what he considered the inevitable increase of democracy in the world and the concomitant leveling effect of egalitarian society. There was never any doubt in his mind that some form of elite was necessary in any society.

As for the idea of the indivisible republic, he felt that North America had come closest to reviving the spirit of the Romans. In their politics the Americans most resembled Romans. America offered the greatest hope for the political advance of the world and perhaps was in a better position than Europe to understand the ancients. Rome had been a young, expanding and developing society, at least in comparison to the Orient, during the last years of the republic, just as America was young and full of promise when Ferrero made his first visit. Even in his last days, he felt that America was uniquely situated to hear his message. He directed a number of his writings specifically to America.

But even in America the lessons of Roman civilization could at best reach only a small, although perhaps

influential, elite. He hoped the study of Roman history would not diminish in the modern world.

To hinder the extinction of the great light of Rome in the world, to prolong indefinitely this material Empire, destroyed centuries ago, there is but one way--to renew historical studies of Rome, and to maintain intact their universal value which forms part of common culture. This is what I have tried to do, seeking to lead back to Roman history the many minds estranged from it, distracted by so many cares and anxieties and present questionings, and to fulfill a solemn duty to my fatherland and the grand tradition of Latin culture.⁴²

Writing shortly after his Roman histories were completed, he presented his agenda as a working historian--to restore the universal character of Roman society for use by the present-day political and social elite who could benefit from its lessons, to reveal the progressive and decadent aspects of modern society which have clear parallels in the ancient world, and to fulfill a responsibility to Italy. That was not all. He intended to write history that was not limited to kings and battles and was not exclusively based on written documents. He believed all facts of human society to be interrelated and of some importance.

I believe that if someday I deserve praise, it will be because I have tried to show that everything has value and importance; that all phenomena interweave, act, and react upon each other--economic change and political revolutions, customs, ideas, the family and the state, land-holding and cultivating.⁴³

As a working historian Ferrero came to the conclusion that history had more to do with art and moral commit-

ment than with science. Intellectual and moral relativity became repugnant to him. He abandoned relativism because he believed that the conditions of western society demanded the moral involvement of the intellectual. One could not avoid responsibility by falling back on the defense of "value-free" science. His historical writings were a clear warning against the excesses of luxury, greed, ambition, inflated egoism, generational conflict and rapid social change. His major work, The Greatness and Decline of Rome, was a study of the moral implications of change, progress and decline.⁴⁴

History became Ferrero's major literary genre. It was particularly suited to his narrative talents, to comparisons between similar and congruent events, and was concrete enough to be grasped by the literate lay public. His discussion of actual historical events also offered him the opportunity to remain within secular and concrete boundaries in his discussion of ethical questions, without appealing directly to either theology or philosophy. In other words, while history was not scientific, it was at least sufficiently vigorous and empirical to suit the demands of the modern secular world.

History for Ferrero was not just a guise for the discussion of morality. He did not start out with the intention of preaching, although the ethical dimension of his work grew as he began to write. He was unable to

separate history and morality since both seemed so incredibly important to the survival of western civilization. The ten years he spent writing the history of the decline of the Roman republic proved to be a time in which the marriage of history and morality took place.

In this way Ferrero prepared his own thought for the further development of the idea of legitimacy, which was to become the dominant concept of his thinking after World War I and a major analytical weapon in his criticism of fascism. The writing of the Roman histories helped him think through the relationship of the individual to society and the state and the importance of a legitimizing principle as a force for maintaining political and social cohesion.

FOOTNOTES

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³Charles E. Nowell, "Twentieth Century Trends in Italian, Spanish and Portuguese Historiography," The Development of Historiography, ed. Mathew Fitzsimons (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1954), p. 369.

⁴F. Haverfield, "Roman History Since Mommsen," The Quarterly Review, no. 433 (October 1912), pp. 331, 334.

⁵G. Ferrero, The Greatness and Decline: The Republic of Augustus, vol. V, trans. Rev. H. J. Chaytor (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), p. 238.

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⁷Ferrero, The Greatness and Decline, I, pp. 5-6.

⁸Ibid., p. 15.

⁹Santo Mazzarino, Storia Romana e storiografia moderna (Napoli: Conte editore, 1954), p. 56.

¹⁰Mommsen, History of Rome, I, pp. 5-6; Ferrero, Greatness and Decline, II, p. 355.

¹¹Antoine Guillard, Modern Germany and Her Historians (Westport: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1970), pp. 137-38.

¹²Ibid., p. 149.

¹³Mommsen, History of Rome, V, pp. 391-92.

¹⁴Ferrero and Corrado Barbagallo, A Short History of Rome, 2 vols., trans. George Crystal (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918-1919), pp. iii-v.

¹⁵David Jordan, Gibbon and His Roman Empire (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p. 219.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 221.

¹⁷Peter Gay, The Enlightenment: An Introduction, The Rise of Modern Paganism, vol. I (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 119.

¹⁸Guglielmo Ferrero, Characters and Events of Roman History: From Caesar to Nero, trans. Frances Lance Ferrero (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902), pp. 21-22.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 11.

²⁰Ibid., p. 22.

²¹A similar generational mechanism may be found in August Comte's The Positive Philosophy. See Henry Gouhier, "August Comte's Philosophy of History," The Nineteenth Century World, eds. Guy S. Metraux and Francois Crouzet (New York: Mentor Books, 1963), p. 476.

²²Ferrero, Il fenomeno Crispi e la crisi italiana, 2nd ed. (Torino: Camillo Olivetti, Editore, 1894), pp. 20-21.

²³Ferrero, Characters and Events, pp. iv-v.

²⁴Henry Elmer Barnes, A History of Historical Writing, 2nd ed. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963), p. 305.

²⁵Ferrero, "Storia e filosofia della storia," Colloqui con Guglielmo Ferrero: Seguiti delle Grani Pagine, ed. Bogdan Raditsa (Lugano-Gineve: Nuove Edizioni di Capolago, 1939), pp. 88-89.

²⁶Ferrero, Characters and Events, p. 22.

²⁷Ferrero, "The Life After This," in After Days: Thoughts on the Future Life, ed. W. D. Howells (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1910), p. 192.

²⁸Ibid., p. 194.

²⁹Ferrero, Characters and Events, p. 27.

³⁰Ferrero, The Women of the Caesars (New York: The Century Co., 1911), p. 42.

- ³¹Ibid., p. 45.
- ³²Ferrero, Characters and Events, p. 34.
- ³³Ibid., p. 35.
- ³⁴Barnes, A History of Historical Writing, pp. 305-321.
- ³⁵Francis Herbert Bradley, The Presuppositions of Critical History, intro. and ed. by Lionel Rubinoff (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), p. 19.
- ³⁶Ferrero, L'Europa giovane, intro. by Mario Borsa (Milano: Fratelli Treves, 1897), pp. xii-xvii.
- ³⁷Ferrero could write in French as well as Italian and a number of his works, especially the later ones, were first written in French and then translated into his native tongue.
- ³⁸Ferrero, La rovina della civiltà antica, trans. from the original French by Leo Ferrero (Milano: Edizioni Athena, 1925), pp. 23-24.
- ³⁹Ibid., p. 35.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 37-38.
- ⁴¹Ferrero, Characters and Events, p. 243.
- ⁴²Ibid., p. 259.
- ⁴³Ibid., p. 181.
- ⁴⁴Ferrero, Colloqui con Guglielmo Ferrero, pp. 63-64.

CHAPTER III

FERRERO AND CROCE

History had reached a considerable intellectual status in the nineteenth century and had been impressed into the service of other academic disciplines such as philosophy. One need only recall the use to which Hegel and Marx put history. Benedetto Croce, the philosopher, believed history to be at the base of his own philosophic thought. In later years he recalled that his life as a scholar had begun with the study of history and had then moved on to philosophy, "only to return again to history as the only concrete mode of philosophizing." His historical writings include A History of Italy 1871-1915, History as a Story of Liberty, History of the Kingdom of Naples, and others. Commenting on Croce one historian has said, "At the beginning and at the end stands history."¹

Ferrero also took up the study of history as a means of explicating truths, both philosophic and mundane, as he saw them. It is certain that its influence on him was as pervasive and important as it was for Croce. It was the only discipline that could match the expanse of their wide-ranging concerns about ethics, politics,

esthetics and society. Of equal importance was the fact that the study of history provided a framework within which they could pursue their own particular interests. Croce, of course, gave more attention to philosophy, while Ferrero was more concerned with politics.

Neither man considered himself primarily an historian. Ferrero asserted that he was concerned with writing about human problems.² But he was an historian in spite of himself. Certainly Croce would have agreed with Ferrero's contention that the writing of history must begin with a problem which gives history focus and form, and although history presented its own demands, it was not independent of the requirement to deal with questions and seek solutions.

Ferrero and Croce disagreed about how history was to be written and the conclusions that were to be drawn from the subject. Ferrero was much criticized by Croce for his approach to history. Croce, who at first seemed to favor the New History, that is, the emphasis on the economic and social over the political and military, objected to The Greatness and Decline of Rome on the grounds that it was materialist history founded on imagination and romance. By this he meant that Ferrero took a few facts about the Roman economic or social structure and then proceeded to induce generalizations that were unwarranted by the amount of evidence presented. This

Roman history was "a typical example of sociology," Croce wrote, claiming that its superficial sociological quality accounted for its popularity, especially among politicians and journalists.³ Ferrero responded that his history was more psychologically oriented. He believed it was necessary to study the Romans and their mental attitudes in order to provide a comparison with the modern age and help reveal much that was hidden from view.⁴

Croce was considered Italy's leading idealist and Ferrero had become known as a positivist, hence preventing any possible agreement between them from the beginning. There were actually many points in history and politics on which the two men could have agreed had they not been blinded by labels and emotions. Croce had the tendency to lump many of his philosophic dislikes under the heading of positivism.⁵ He was unyielding in his opposition to the positivist tradition in spite of the fact that he had, in his youth, been a materialist and had argued that history was a science. After his materialist phase Croce proposed "ethico-political history" as an alternative to history based on natural process, evolution and everything else that he called "positivism." Natural man invoked by positivists was for him an inferior human being who lived in a perpetual state of alienation. He interpreted alienation as a condition in which man had little or no control over the forces around him. He believed, as Hegel had,

that without the liberty to choose, man was removed from the highest level of liberty, the "moral drama." The heart of history, for Croce, was this moral drama, not a record of natural process and change. He felt that the human spirit, struggling in the context of liberty and morality, constituted the true subject matter of history.⁶

The intellectual life for Croce was a combative one. As far back as 1902, with the founding of his famous journal, La Critica, he took on the gigantic task of re-directing the intellectual life of Italy. In the first issue of the journal he announced: "We intend to fight for a determinate order of ideas," combat "indifference and skepticism" and work for "a general reawakening of the philosophic spirit . . . , a well-weighed return to traditions of thought which were unhappily interrupted after the Italian Revolution in 1860." Among the numerous targets of the journal were the "pseudo-naturalistic contempters of philosophic thought."⁷ Without doubt, he considered Ferrero in the group of naturalists who were polluting Italian philosophy. Very few notables were spared, including the popular authors of the day such as Gabriele D'Annunzio, Giovanni Pascoli, and Antonio Fagazzaro.⁸

Positivist history, Croce contended, as originally expounded by Ranke, was concerned only with facts and not ideas. Oddly enough, Croce did support the positivist

journal entitled Nuova Rivista Storica begun in 1917 by Ferrero's ally and fellow historian Corrado Barbagallo.⁹ Croce was inclined to the proposition that facts about society were a part of history and constitute parts of a collective whole. Nevertheless, he believed that the moving force in history was ethics and not economics or science or politics or, as in Ferrero's case, psychosocial activity.¹⁰ He maintained that ethics could not be separated from history any more than it could be separated from politics. After the initial formation of the state, the world was "no longer the simple utilitarian relation, a synthesis of force and conscience, of authority and liberty, but rather the incarnation of the human ethos and the ethical state or the state of culture as one calls it." There followed new meaning for the words "authority," "sovereignty," "liberty," and "equality." Such a state, Croce believed, was synonymous with government. Law and morality were synonymous.¹¹

As a Hegelian, Croce argued not only that ethics was the motivating force in human history but that the state was the center of human activity. The human conscience came to hold the central place in his holistic ethical outlook; it was an ethical force that was "metapolitical." This meant that above politics was the "ethical formula" that corresponded to the larger world conscience.¹²

Barbagallo, commenting on Croce, argued that Croce's historical writings did not actually emphasize ethics as much as his philosophic pronouncements might lead one to expect. According to Barbagallo, Croce saw ethics in history as an influence on historical events rather than as the center of historical development.¹³ Despite Croce's contention that "history is philosophy" or that philosophy is the methodology of history, his work was not so terribly different from that of other historians.

In many respects Ferrero's work and intellectual development were similar to Croce's. Ferrero first claimed that he wrote "scientific history" and later, intuitive history. If Croce began by thinking that history was science, he revised his conception of it as "the general concept of art," and finally as philosophy.¹⁴ Ferrero's attempt to write scientific or psychological history was abandoned just as Croce's effort at writing philosophic history was modified in the final product.

Both men were deeply concerned with the contemporary moral and ethical state of European society and with liberty. The concept of decadence haunted them as it did almost all Italian intellectuals--Ferrero in his hope of finding the laws governing decadence and isolating the phenomena, and Croce in his attempt to separate the living from the dead past.¹⁵ Croce concentrated on

ethics, mores and ideas in the context of the developing and ever-changing state. Ferrero emphasized the generational pressures that were placed on society and the consequent change in mores, ideas and psychological perspective. For these two intellectuals, all history was contemporary history. They were concerned with the fate of Italy and Europe as a whole. Ferrero viewed fear as the greatest danger to society while Croce believed that pessimism was the most destructive force.

Ferrero and Croce reflected their political orientation in their historical writings. They gave their allegiance to the liberal parliamentary government established by the Risorgimento even if they had reservations about democracy. Their criticisms were offered in the hope that the state could reverse the political deterioration after the 1870s. Parliamentary government was under attack from all sides. Croce attempted to return "to the tradition of our Risorgimento politics," confirming the belief in liberty and political action.¹⁶ Although Croce placed importance on law and economics, he valued liberty of conscience above all else. Such a view is in agreement with the liberal tradition in which liberty must reign supreme.¹⁷

On the whole the ideas of Croce and Ferrero affirmed the liberal tradition of the Italian Risorgimento and reinforced the sagging ramparts of liberalism

after that tradition had suffered serious attack from the left and the right. Both emphasized the importance of understanding law in its historical and contemporary application to society. Both believed that the history of law was political and social history itself. Yet Croce was essentially a philosopher who sporadically commented on political theory and politics, while Ferrero was a political commentator who occasionally ventured into matters of philosophy.

Croce's involvement with Marxism was deep but not permanent. Once he went beyond this step in his intellectual development, he was not tolerant of what he perceived as Ferrero's adherence to the materialist position. Although many of Croce's comments about Ferrero characterized him as a narrow materialist, there appears to have been other motivations at work. Croce no doubt disapproved of Ferrero's forays into philosophy. As a philosopher, he found it difficult to consider seriously anyone who treated philosophy as a tool for political argumentation; meanwhile Ferrero was temperamentally unsuited to understanding someone who seemed to put philosophic speculation before contemporary social and political problems.

Croce was so adamantly opposed to positivism and any notion of scientific history or laws of history¹⁸ that he was blind to the fact that Ferrero had modified his views over the years. He labeled Ferrero's work

"agnostic history," by which he meant a history that did not recognize the relationship between philosophy and history. Agnostic history was "a history that is not philosophical but does not deny philosophy, that is not theological but is not anti-theological, limiting itself to notions and their reciprocal influence upon one another . . ."¹⁹ The use of sociological and psychological methodology in history was considered by Croce to be a form of popularization. In History: Its Theory and Practice, Croce outlined his views on positive history and sociology. He rejected the attempt to create "a mechanic of history, a social physics." Sociology, he believed, was a naturalist science that rejected the philosophy of history, collected facts, and attempted to formulate theories which were often adopted by historians to explain events. Historians in turn collected more facts for the sociologists to organize. Both utilized biological terminology such as "race, heredity, degeneration, imitation, influence, climate" and others.²⁰ Positivist historians alone felt that they could discover the origin of all events through the inductive method in the naturalistic framework of sociology, psychology, and pathology. They all, Croce said, missed the wholeness of history and its relation to philosophy.²¹ But the positivist attempt to remove philosophy from history proved to be impossible.

Hence we have the fact of positivism leading to philosophies of history, as exemplified in the Apocalypses and the Gospels of Comte, of Buckle, and of others of the like sort: they are all most reverent theologians, but chaotic, falling back into those fallacious conceptions which had been refuted by romantic historiography.²²

Croce did admit that positivism influenced historians in some beneficial way by making them more factual and less naive, adding to their understanding of natural process, the importance of psychological problems and, in general, the material forces of history.²³ He had some praise for Lombroso and especially the research on the treatment of criminals and the need to arrive at a better knowledge of the criminal condition.²⁴

Although Ferrero and Croce agreed that the term decadence was applicable to their own society, they disagreed as to what constituted that decadence and what was to be done about it. Croce attempted to separate out the positive aspects of the age on the grounds that history, by its very nature, must be positive.²⁵ Ferrero, on the other hand, attempted to analyze the concept of decadence in order to understand its history, isolate and finally control it. In other words, Ferrero was not satisfied with understanding decadence, he hoped to use the understanding of the universal principle of decadence to benefit all of mankind. Both agreed that decadence occurred at those times in history when the collective ethical will of the society was at its low point. But

while Croce believed that such low points were part of the cyclical movement of the universal spirit that was beyond the influence of man,²⁶ Ferrero believed the loss of will during any age was within man's control and his responsibility. Hence he was more willing to place moral responsibility on the individual.

Both men disagreed further on the issue of political activism. Croce hoped to invigorate Italian culture with his attention to tradition and by so doing instill a willingness to sacrifice on the part of the people.²⁷ Ferrero believed much the same thing, only, unlike Croce, he thought the intellectual should use his talents to argue and persuade on political matters. Croce rejected political activism.²⁸ History must operate on a higher plane, "a moral drama" . . . the method of ethico-political history.²⁹ He believed that historical studies advanced the spirit of history. Ferrero was less concerned with the spirit of history than with the actual working out of mundane political events.

Political liberty was of the greatest importance to both men, although their conceptions of it were quite different. For Croce, liberty "is simply the spiritual nature of man: it is identical with activity, which is the essence of humanity."³⁰ Liberty was the highest virtue, his "religion of liberty, the intimate religion of conscience."³¹ The religion of liberty did not, however,

alter Croce's deep-seated elitism, remoteness from the affairs of common men and, at least in prewar days, his blatant anti-democratic sentiments. Indeed democracy replaced his much favored qualitative society with a quantitative one. The problem, as he perceived it, was that outward display would come to replace the reality of freedom and that authoritarian control would then become easier.³² He did not feel that the people had the collective acumen to choose proper leaders. In the increasingly dictatorial post-war Italy, Croce began grudgingly to accept democracy,³³ as did Gaetano Mosca and other conservative intellectuals. Croce clearly disassociated himself from authoritarianism with his anti-Fascist Manifesto of 1925.

Ferrero spoke of liberty in more concrete terms and always in relation to other political ideas and events. For example, he noted that liberty had been advanced by the efforts of the Congress of Vienna to establish sound government after the French Revolution. Furthermore, he believed that such political advances in the early nineteenth century were soon undermined by the social dislocations of the Industrial Revolution, including the increase in consumptive desires and the repressiveness of the nation-state. By the twentieth century, he believed, the nation-state was entirely too powerful, liberalism virtually dead and the individual too controlled either

directly by the state or manipulated by the consumer society.³⁴ Socialism and communism were only variations of the materialist society. What men in the last two centuries sought was power and control, not liberty. The solution to the problem was for Ferrero a moral one. Men, he said, must choose restraint, justice and good sense over power and wealth. Such an act of the will opened up an expanded area of action for the individual in Ferrero's thought and brought him closer to Croce's understanding of liberalism.

Liberalism, for Ferrero, was both an ethical and political question. Again, however, Croce's conception was more ethereal, more closely bound to the Kantian ethical imperative and his ethics were generally separated from real political activity until World War I. Ferrero was always more concerned about the political and he turned more readily to democracy as the only remaining viable form of legitimate government, thereby moving further away from the liberalism of the political scientist Gaetano Mosca, the economist Luigi Einaudi and "crociana liberta di religione e etico-politica."³⁵

Although fearing that more political equality would enhance the onslaught of the quantitative, consumer society, Ferrero was willing to modify his objections to democracy and hope that his conception of the qualitative society could be sustained. There were, however, critics

who did not appreciate the balance that Ferrero attempted to maintain between the excesses of an elitist society and the diminution of high cultural standards. Antonio Gramsci, the founder of the Communist party and a leading intellectual, objected to what he perceived as Ferrero's defense of a society of luxury goods for the few at the expense of the common worker.³⁶ Gramsci believed that the separation of quality and quantity was a false distinction besides being a rather clear statement about one's hierarchy of political values. He suggested that since quality and quantity could not be separated, Ferrero would do better to improve the quality of all society by giving more attention to the more manageable, quantitative and measurable aspects of reality.³⁷ In other words, he was suggesting that Ferrero pay more attention to labor problems and the workers.

So while Ferrero was attacked by Gramsci for being abstract and idealistic, he was accused by Croce of being a materialist. Giovanni Gentile, the philosopher and disciple of Croce and future Fascist collaborator, also commented on Ferrero's use of quality and quantity. His criticism, in substance, was the same as Gramsci's. The separation of the concepts of quality and quantity was what he called "a typical abstraction of society," an unrealistic and unnecessary distinction. He compared Ferrero to St. Augustine with his division of

the world into two cities. Gentile accused Ferrero of rejecting "all the earthly cities, all of human history, and each product of liberty and reason."³⁸ Gentile's criticisms were certainly excessive. Ferrero was a moralist but not one who rejected the real world of human history, liberty, and reason. He used such terms as progress and corruption, as Gentile said, but not God and the devil.³⁹

It is true that in comparison to Gramsci, Ferrero was an old-style liberal humanist who was more concerned with the general level of political freedom than with the conditions of the working class. Like Tocqueville, Croce and Ferrero feared the general leveling of society. Ferrero stated that he had no illusions about the perfectibility of man.⁴⁰ Still, by the end of World War I, Ferrero had moved from a position of socialist to skeptic, then back to liberal democrat. In his view there was no legitimate alternative in the twentieth century to the parliamentary democratic state. The necessity of creating a legitimate government, one in which all citizens felt some commitment and sense of participation, forced him to clarify his own position. He believed that neither constitutional monarchy, nor socialism, nor communism could hold the allegiance of a free people in contemporary society; only parliamentary democracy could do this. In Croce's eyes Ferrero was a popularist and a publicist not

worthy of serious consideration, while Gramsci saw him as not sufficiently concerned with the lower economic groups. Actually Ferrero tried to concern himself with the society as a whole, with its needs for both economic abundance and higher ideals.

Croce was familiar with Ferrero's early work and had voiced disapproval of Young Europe. When The Greatness and Decline of Rome appeared, he labeled it historical materialism although it certainly was not that. He began to oppose Ferrero in earnest when it was learned that a bill was in parliament to give Ferrero a university chair. Ferrero had always wanted to teach and he had hoped that the Roman histories would earn him a position teaching either the history of Rome or the philosophy of history. He never did receive the appointment, largely due to the opposition of Croce and Senator Tommasini.⁴¹

In November 1910, while the bill concerning Ferrero's chair was under consideration, he delivered a clarification and defense of his historical method before a convocation of the Popular University in Florence. If offered such a position, he would refuse to continue the "spooning out" of German thought and Protestant culture in the Italian universities.⁴² He argued patriotically that the Italian intellectual tradition had been weakened by the invasion of Germanic and English ideas. The Italian genius--clarity of thought, sense of proportion and harmony--

as he called it, had given way to the obsession with power.⁴³ Such a strong rejection of Protestant culture and German ideas in particular was necessary to remove any doubt about Ferrero's loyalty to Italy in light of his earlier comments about the decadent Latins in Young Europe and Militarism.

Ferrero stated further that he would not divide history into its traditional categories of ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary. Instead he would organize his philosophy of history according to the thematic categories of war, revolution, republic, bureaucracy, and even such topics as national religion and mysticism. Most important, he proposed to trace these themes through time in relation to the principle of decadence or corruption, which was for him at this point the heart of all philosophy of history. "It [the doctrine of corruption] is the ultimate motivating force of each event, namely the passions, ideas and immediate intuitive insight into each human spirit. It is the infinite basic analysis of the community [and] the individual . . ." ⁴⁴ Decadence and progress were still at the root of his concerns. He had hoped to arrive at an analysis of them by overcoming what he called the abyss of time and chronology. He thought he had found the solution with these general principles.

No doubt Ferrero's discussion of the excessive influence of Germanic philosophy in Italian life was

especially irritating to Croce, who was, to a large extent, a product of that influence. Beyond that, there were all of Croce's earlier objections to Ferrero. Responding to the inaugural lecture, Croce argued that hardly anyone had any notion of what the philosophy of history was about, least of all Ferrero, who was not familiar with the Germanic books he was criticizing. If he were, he would see the "spirit of history at work," and not rely on incorrect methodology.⁴⁵ Croce agreed that the philosophy of history should no longer be studied under the old categories, the old ideas that were obsolete. He claimed to have always opposed the creation of a new chair for the philosophy of history if the study was to be approached in the traditional way.⁴⁶ But he replied that Ferrero had nothing new to say on the subject and that once given the chair he would only continue to teach his own ideas and not the philosophy of history. The "science of uniformity," as he called it, was not new, having been introduced by Vico. Ferrero, Croce held, would only continue to treat his subject from the point of view of the positivist and that other discipline Croce detested, sociology. To make what Croce called a special study of uniformity was dangerous. Ferrero had fallen into this danger when he claimed to understand the cause of victory and defeat in war through the use of the principle of decadence.⁴⁷

Croce admitted that Ferrero was more talented than many scholars already holding chairs in the university, but argued that Ferrero was not a careful scholar, which was a requisite for such a position. He also conceded that Ferrero was an ingenious and skilled writer who made history come alive.⁴⁸ However, in 1921 Croce declared, in harsher tones than ever before, that The Greatness and Decline of Rome was a disgrace to Italian historiography because it was materialist history. Ferrero had committed the gravest error, in Croce's eyes, of not properly combining history and philosophy. This, he said, was not due to any lack of talent, but rather to Ferrero's strange concept of history. He combined facts with imagination and conjecture, and rejected political history and erudition. "One finds Ferrero often sailing in the sparkling water of romantic history," Croce said.⁴⁹ Croce made these final comments in the early 1920s, long after Ferrero had given up materialistic history and had turned his attention to political events.

In response to Croce's attack, Ferrero wrote "What is History?", published first in Ronda magazine and repeated as an appendix to The Palingenesis of Rome in 1924. He began by defining some of his terms such as history and intuition.

History is the literary application of a faculty of the human spirit--intuition--little studied until now except by the psychologist and . . .

It is with this faculty that we imagine the state of mind of our fellow creatures, their thoughts, sentiments, inclinations, dispositions, intentions, virtues and their vices.⁵⁰

The concept of intuition as an innate human characteristic, a mysterious mixture of reason, memory, and much more, was essential to his definition of history. "History, in sum, is a work of art and intellect, a psychology in action, the internal cinematography--if one can use the image--of the individual and the group: . . ." ⁵¹

The question of intuition was at the heart of both Croce's and Ferrero's theories of historical knowledge. Croce believed that history was a combination of the intuitive and the conceptual.⁵² By intuition Croce meant the human mind's expression of images rather than concepts. Intuition is more than a type of knowledge; it creates new objects or images. Since each individual mind or spirit is part of the absolute spirit, the individual shares some spiritual portion of the intuitive knowledge of the past.⁵³

At the same time, Croce held his well-known, though seemingly contradictory, opinion that all history was "contemporary history." How could there be a universal "memory of the past" and yet all history be "contemporary history?"⁵⁴ By "contemporary history" he meant that all history could be written only within the frame of reference and under the influence of events surrounding the life of the historian.

Ferrero knew it was not possible for history to be always contemporary and at the same time relate what actually happened in the past. Intuiting images of the past in the present is not synonymous with becoming one with the past.⁵⁵ Realizing that Croce's position undermined the uniqueness of each historical event, Ferrero proposed that the great philosopher had denied the possibility of real historical knowledge. If all knowledge was only relative to the perspective of the historian, then a true history could never be written.

Although Ferrero himself had made comparisons between contemporary life and historical events, he denied the relativity of historical knowledge. It was precisely psychological intuition, he believed, that could serve to arrive at an accurate understanding of human thoughts and feelings in the past. By taking all the given facts about an historical event and combining that with what the historian knows about human behavior and his own feelings, he might intuit what actually happened in the past. Intuition could be called upon to provide answers to the difficult questions, such as the history of human consciousness, that empirical documentation could not approach. Ferrero went as far as to say, "history is intuition of states of consciousness."⁵⁶

Ferrero had not really overcome Croce's problem by the use of a psychological methodology. After all, the

intuitive process could only be known by further induction. Furthermore, Ferrero's "psychology in action" assumed that all people everywhere experienced the same feelings and reactions as those who have lived in previous ages, and that these would be the same feelings and reactions today. The historian had to understand those feelings, not an easy task in itself. In such a way Ferrero might have overcome the metaphysical implications of Croce's universal memory rooted in absolute spirit. But one cannot assume that even if there were universal human responses, the historian would interpret them properly. There was no guarantee that psychology, at least as Ferrero envisioned it, would prove any more trustworthy in regard to the past than Croce's methods. By adding psychology, Ferrero did not clarify the usefulness of intuition in history. That problem would have to be dealt with again by Max Weber as it had previously been done by Wilhelm Dilthey.

Ironically, in his use of intuition and his attempt to join history with the study of consciousness, Ferrero came perilously close to a Hegelian position. While Croce would be the last to deny the importance of intuition, he would argue that it must always be converted into rational thought.⁵⁷ The study of consciousness was at the heart of Hegel's philosophy. It is not certain that Ferrero was fully aware of the delicate line he walked or how often

he seemed to reverse his position. In any case, he denied that there was any duality between poetic and philosophic history or any other dialectic distinction that Croce had made about the nature of history. For him there was only history.

The psychological and ethical intentions of Ferrero's work on antiquity could easily be misunderstood. His work could easily be seen as a product of the materialist outlook. Clearly, he was more materially oriented in the early years of the twentieth century, but he moved steadily away from that position. Also the confusion over his real intentions was due to the lack of clarity in The Greatness and Decline of Rome. There was, however, good reason for the confusion since Ferrero had emphasized the negative impact of the new luxuries--gold, silver, exotic food--on the Roman republic and the contribution of the unequal distribution of wealth to the undermining of the social fabric and the destruction of the old aristocracy. Ultimately it was the new ideas from Greece and the East, including Christianity, and the conflict of generations that destroyed the virtue of the republic. It was not, in his eyes, the result of materialism.⁵⁸

As a further example of the confusion, he wrote in the preface to the Lowell Lectures of 1908: "The essential phenomenon upon which all the political, social, and moral crises of Rome depend is the transformation of customs

produced by the augmentation of wealth, of expenditure, and needs, . . ." ⁵⁹ Is the reader to emphasize the "transformation of customs" or the "augmentation of wealth"? Ferrero presented the lectures precisely to clarify the intention of his five-volume history. At one point in the lectures he denied that his work was based on an economic materialist interpretation of history, "for I hold that the fundamental force in history is psychological and not economic." ⁶⁰ He rejected the Marxist approach and materialism in general. ⁶¹ Still, readers persisted in associating him with materialism.

If history was not materialism, it was not a science either. It was Ferrero's belief that stylistically, historical works must be read as works of literature. The reader must decide whether the work is comprehensible, whether it is correct in its assumptions and conclusions, and, most of all, whether the intuitive process is properly applied. ⁶² Art in general, he said, has been neglected in the modern age and this trend must be halted.

Ferrero's talent lay in his ability to engage the reader and to ask contemporary ethical questions through the use of history. ⁶³ His career as a journalist, his political interests, and his early pretensions to scientific history made him unacceptable to academic scholars. It is in terms of politics and ethics that his work must be understood. He was also able to make rational sense when com-

binning what he had learned about society and politics and presenting the material in a clear and suggestive style.⁶⁴

Ferrero's critics, however, especially Croce, seemed to judge his work in terms of historiography and not in terms of the substantiveness of his arguments about human values and political freedom. In reality he was attempting to find a path between materialist history and the idealism of Croce, between scientific and artistic history, objective history and the intuitive process, the concrete and the abstract, and finally between democracy and aristocracy.⁶⁵ The direction he took was determined by the contemporary problems facing him as an active intellectual concerned with the concepts of liberty and authority, law and justice. The critics held that the useful portions of his work could be found elsewhere and that his major ideas were not original.⁶⁶ What was truly useful in his work was the internal dialogue, often contradictory, on the nature of power and virtue in the contemporary democratic state.

There still remains a question about Ferrero's methodological position, that is, his position relative to positivists and idealists. By the time he finished his Roman histories, he no longer adhered to positivism as it had been understood by Lombroso and his generation. How could he be a positivist when he no longer believed that history was a science or was materially based? He had

moved to a position not unlike that of Karl Popper and the neo-positivists who had given up the idea of history as a science but were still concerned with identifying general principles. There were historians of ancient history, such as Adriano Tilgher, who claimed that Ferrero had actually reversed himself and become an idealist. This was not an unreasonable statement, since the Roman histories contained a dialectical struggle between the forces of tradition and change, decadence and progress, morality and greed. Furthermore, it could not be denied that Ferrero's principles of history, progress and decadence, resembled the idealist spiritual forces; that generational ambition was dialectical and even an invisible force instead of being rooted in biology and material social reality.⁶⁷ Finally, there was Ferrero's own definition of history as the "intuition of the states of consciousness."

He did not, however, make consciousness the focus of study. The concerns of the concrete world pulled him back. He did not place the concept of spirit at the center of his work but instead drew attention to the ethical and political questions of dictatorship, liberty, war, and peace. The dialectic for him was not a dominant idea. He applied it at various times to explain certain operational forces in history, not as the motor that drove history. If Ferrero seemed to find synthesis everywhere it was

because he was a moderate who wished to combine the best from all sides in the hope of creating a better world, and not because of any commitment to Hegelianism. The world, for him, had to be created and shaped by men and not the uncontrollable progressive spirit of history. Man could make a better world if he willed to do so, if he wished to combine the best from the old and the new and not to create a unified system.

Methodologically, Ferrero tried to combine the positive scientific method of historical study with an intuitive psychological method, somewhat similar to what Wilhelm Dilthey and Heinrich Rickert called the "outside" and the "inside" approach to reality.⁶⁸ His solution to the problem of combining these two approaches to reality, if it can be said that he ever had one, had to be found in the individual facts and events of history, in the continuous unfolding of new facts and the interplay between man's will and his environment and not in the movement of spirit in history or in unity.

Finally, the concept of ethico-political history, so often associated with Croce, can be applied to Ferrero as well. Croce viewed history as the struggle of the spirit, the moral drama of triumph and tragedy in the context of political activity.⁶⁹ Ferrero gave more attention to politics and contemporary problems. His attempts to put psychology at the core of his work failed to alter the

political and ethical thrust of his histories. He was as concerned as Croce about the moral condition of modern man and the fate of western civilization. They were equally concerned about the decline of freedom as a value and the excesses of materialism, the supposed loss of high standards of quality in all areas of life, the potential for governmental manipulation of a passive electorate and the dangers of modern warfare. They longed for the values of a world that would be destroyed by the Great War and fascism.

As opponents of fascism in the 1920s Ferrero and Croce became allies, although many of their differences were never reconciled and the misconceptions about one another never corrected. Ferrero signed Croce's anti-Fascist Manifesto in 1925 opposing fascism's claim to intellectual respectability. Croce was slow to admit that the Italian politicians and people had made such a grave error in accepting Mussolini and his party. Once having perceived the danger, he would admit only that fascism was a temporary lapse in the ordinarily healthy body politic. Furthermore, he described fascism as a temporary aberration resulting from the tendency to overemphasize certain negative aspects of the culture. Nazism and fascism were the extreme form of the "denial of spiritual values."⁷⁰ By this he meant that the fascists had treated values as subordinate to considerations of politics and

race. For him it was the extreme form of the materialist tendencies begun in the nineteenth century and carried to extreme in the twentieth. Ferrero was more straightforward in viewing fascism as political dictatorship, an illegitimate government that relied on force and revolutionary upheaval. He was also more willing to take a longer historical perspective and view fascism as rooted in the endemic political problems of establishing and then maintaining an Italian independent democratic republic. Fascism was also rooted in the monarchical structure of European politics from which Italy had struggled unsuccessfully to free herself. The struggle had been lost for many reasons. Ferrero and Croce could agree finally that individual statesmen and the people had failed to make the necessary sacrifices for the cause of liberty and were too easily led by the most extreme elements with the loudest voices.

FOOTNOTES

¹Robert A. Caponigri, History and Liberty: The Historical Writings of Benedetto Croce (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), p. 3.

²Guglielmo Ferrero, Colloqui con Guglielmo Ferrero: Seguiti delle grandi pagine, ed. Bogadn Raditsa (Lugano-Geneve: Nuove Edizioni di Capolago, 1939), p. 63.

³Mario Borsa, in preface to Ferrero's L'Europa giovane (Milano: Garzanti, 1946), p. xiv.

⁴Ibid., pp. xiv-xv.

⁵H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930 (New York: Vintage Books, 1958), p. 37.

⁶Caponigri, History and Liberty, pp. 4-5.

⁷Cecil Sprigge, in introduction to Croce's Philosophy, Poetry, History (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. xviii.

⁸Ibid., p. xix.

⁹Harry Elmer Barnes, A History of Historical Writing, 2nd ed. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963), p. 378.

¹⁰Corrado Barbagallo, "The Conditions and Tendencies of Historical Writing in Italy Today," The Journal of Modern History, I (June, 1929), 243.

¹¹Benedetto Croce, Elementi di politica, 2nd ed. (Bari: G. Laterza, 1946), pp. 31-32.

¹²Bruno Brunello, Il pensiero politico italiano del Romagnosi al Croce (Bologna: Cesare Zuffi, 1949), p. 254.

¹³Ibid., p. 244.

¹⁴Allen Rogers Benham, Clio and Mr. Croce (Seattle: University of Washington Book Store, 1928), pp. 9-10.

¹⁵For Ferrero decadence was derived from the positivist notion of physiological degeneration. Croce

associated decadence with the loss of spiritual values. Adriano Tilgher tried to argue that Ferrero reversed himself to become spiritual and Hegelian in outlook and that he did not differ essentially from Croce on this matter.

¹⁶Brunello, Il pensiero, p. 251.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 254.

¹⁸Sprigge, Benedetto Croce: Man and Thinker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 34.

¹⁹Croce, History: Its Theory and Practice, trans. Douglas Ainslie (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), p. 299.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 296-97.

²¹Ibid., p. 208.

²²Ibid., p. 305.

²³Ibid., p. 306.

²⁴Croce, A History of Italy 1871-1915, trans. Cecilia M. Ady (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), pp. 141-42.

²⁵Caponigri, History and Liberty, pp. 101-02.

²⁶Ibid., p. 107.

²⁷Emiliana P. Noether, "Italian Intellectuals," in Modern Italy: A Topical History Since 1861, eds. Edward Tannenbaum and Emiliana P. Noether (New York: New York University, 1974), p. 279.

²⁸Ibid., p. 280.

²⁹Caponigri, History and Liberty, p. 4.

³⁰Croce, My Philosophy: And Other Essays on the Moral and Political Problems of Our Times, selected by R. Klibansky, trans. E. F. Carritt (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1949), p. 97.

³¹Fulvio Tessitore, "Croce and Ferrero," Rivista di studi crociani, Anno I (gennaio-marzo, 1964), p. 150.

³²Croce, My Philosophy, p. 95.

- ³³Hughes, Consciousness and Society, pp. 215-16.
- ³⁴Ferrero, The Unity of the World, trans. Howard Coxe (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1930), pp. 67-70.
- ³⁵Tessitore, "Croce and Ferrero," p. 150.
- ³⁶Antonio Gramsci, Quaderni del carcere, 3 vols. (Torino: Einaudi editore, 1975), III, p. 37.
- ³⁷Gramsci, Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di B. Croce (Torino: Einaudi editore, 1948), p. 37.
- ³⁸Giovanni Gentile, Gentile guerre e fede: frammenti politici (Napoli: Riccardo Ricciardi editore, 1919), pp. 255-56.
- ³⁹Ibid., p. 255.
- ⁴⁰Ferrero, La democrazia in Italia: studi e precisioni (Milano: Rassegna Internazionale, 1925), p. 131.
- ⁴¹La Voce, June 5, 1915.
- ⁴²Ferrero, "Storia e filosofia della storia," Nuova Antologia, CL (dicembre, 1910), 88.
- ⁴³Ibid., p. 96.
- ⁴⁴Ibid., p. 91.
- ⁴⁵Croce, "La filosofia della storia e Guglielmo Ferrero," Conversazioni critiche, p. 180.
- ⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 181-82.
- ⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 185-86.
- ⁴⁸Ibid., p. 187.
- ⁴⁹Croce, Storia della storiografia italiana nel secolo Decimonono (Bari: Gius Laterza e Figi, 1921), p. 246.
- ⁵⁰Ferrero, La palingenesi di Roma: da Libio a Machiavelli (Milano: Edizioni "Corbaccio," 1924), p. 138.
- ⁵¹Ibid., p. 140.

⁵² Maurice Mandelbaum, The Problem of Historical Knowledge: An Answer to Relativism (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1938), p. 43.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 47.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 51.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ferrero, La palingenesi, p. 141.

⁵⁷ Hughes, Consciousness and Society, p. 226.

⁵⁸ Ferrero, La palingenesi, pp. 188-89.

⁵⁹ Ferrero, Characters and Events of Roman History: From Caesar to Nero, trans. Frances Lane Ferrero (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), pp. iv-v.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. v.

⁶¹ Ferrero, La palingenesi, pp. 151-53.

⁶² Ibid., p. 145.

⁶³ Piero Treves, "Ferrero dans temps et la notre," Guglielmo Ferrero: Histoire et politique au XX^e siècle, eds. L. Salvatorelli et al. (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1966), p. 27.

⁶⁴ Francesco Natale, "Contributo alla storia della storiografia italiana sul mondo antico," Nuova rivista storica, XLII (1958), p. 260.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 266.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 267-68.

⁶⁷ Adriano Gilgher, Voici del tempo (Roma: Libreria di scienze e lettere, 1923), p. 14.

⁶⁸ Ronald Nash, ed., Ideas in History (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1969), p. 5.

⁶⁹ Caponigri, History and Liberty, p. 84.

⁷⁰ Croce, My Philosophy, p. 25.

CHAPTER IV

TWO CONCEPTS OF PROGRESS

If Ferrero "discovered America," as someone once said, it was in the sense that he had discovered something new about the intellectual and moral relationship between Europe and America, about the distinctive meaning of progress on each continent, and about the benefits both societies could expect from the continual exchange of ideas and values.¹

It was his visits to South and then North America in 1907 and 1908 that stimulated his thinking about these offspring of European society and the implications of their relationship to their parent culture. Primarily Ferrero was struck by the moral revolution he saw taking place in the New World. Institutions such as the churches and the family seemed not to have the dominating influence that they exercised in Europe. Men were busy harnessing the forces of nature and taming the land with machine power. In these new societies, which seemed to be expanding on all frontiers, the old social and moral controlling mechanisms no longer seemed to apply. Ferrero saw that in this upheaval American intellectual, moral, and cultural life was unlikely to find its equilibrium for

some time.

Traveling through the Americas lecturing on antiquity, Ferrero began to consider the resemblances in culture between the New World and ancient civilization. He was not the first one by any means to draw such comparisons; others, especially among the clergy, had accused modern men of indulging in corruption and orgies similar to those that were imagined to have taken place at the height of the Roman empire. The originality of Ferrero's comments rested not on a simple comparison with ancient corruption, but rather in his analysis of modern institutional structure through the perspective of classical civilization. He was immediately struck by the expanding energy and optimism of America, noting that Rome, in the first two centuries B.C., was also an expanding society. He believed that the cross-fertilization of cultures that stimulated the development of Roman society operated similarly in the New World. The rapid and easy accumulation of wealth and the extensive use of philanthropy on the part of the American millionaire was not unlike the important philanthropic activities of the Roman aristocracy in the imperial government.

The ancient world, like America, was much less bureaucratic than contemporary Europe. True, in ancient times, there was less need for technical expertise, and even generals were elected from among the general popula-

tion, unlike in America.² But the American legal system resembled the Roman in its reliance on magisterial authority to act where the law was not sufficient. Indeed, he believed the New World was new precisely because it defied the conventions of traditional Europe and duplicated the characteristics of antiquity.³ In time, he predicted, America would grow old, more bureaucratic, and its millionaires less public-spirited. As for corruption, Ferrero did not simply repeat the banal comparisons between contemporary and ancient orgies. Instead he compared the political structure and methods of New York's Tammany Hall to the institutions of Caesar's and Claudius' Rome.⁴ Many Americans were intrigued by what they considered his novel approach to the political life of the Americas. His travels gained for him a large audience and provided the basis for the recognition he was to receive, a recognition he was never to equal in his native country.

The concept of progress, in the context of America and Europe, directed Ferrero into new inquiries about modern society with its moral, intellectual, and political problems. As he saw it, there were two definitions of progress: the material improvement of mankind in terms of such indicators as the number of industries, the amount of accumulated wealth, the number of consumer products available and the like; or the advancement of morality, the arts and science. The adherents of each definition claimed

superior wisdom over the other. Ferrero intended to clarify the confusion between these two views and become one of the first to decry the modern idea of progress, which he believed had risen to the status of nothing less than a secular faith in modern society.

If Ferrero's voyage stimulated his thinking about progress, it was his years of study of antiquity that gave him the background upon which to reflect. His intention, after writing the Roman histories, was to teach ancient history, which he did in a series of lectures at the Sorbonne on Augustus, based on the last two volumes of The Greatness and Decline of Rome. He was consequently asked by Emilio Mitre, owner of the Argentine newspaper Nacion, to give similar lectures in Argentina. On June 7, 1907, he, his wife, and son sailed from Genoa for Buenos Aires. On route he received another invitation to lecture at the Brazilian Academy in Rio de Janeiro.⁵

Once in South America he was struck by the vast uninhabited spaces and the beauty of the land. Most of all he was impressed by the material and technological advances that were taking place. The entire society seemed to be concerned with the accumulation of wealth, which seemed associated, in the minds of Americans, with progress. It was then that the contrast between the modern theory of progress and the concept of the ancients became evident. Everywhere he went people spoke about the great

progress of their nation as opposed to what they perceived to be the stagnation of Europe. It was assumed by his hosts that progress was synonymous with industry, banking, and railroad construction. He was appalled by this line of reasoning and argued that if progress was associated only with material advancement the result would be a form of "opulent barbarism," wealth without breeding.⁶ It distressed him to think that those to whom he lectured were unwilling to question the material definition of progress as though it were religious dogma.

He returned to Italy in November 1907 still thinking about the concept of progress. Confronted by the material interpretation represented by America, he feared for the hegemony of European culture. More than ever, he believed that human progress took place in the development of the arts and spiritual values through the spread of justice, liberty, and the virtue of self-sacrifice.

It may be recalled that the view of progress as spiritual and esthetic was a reversal of his earlier opinions in Young Europe, in which he had praised the material progress of the northern European nations and had condemned Italy for its failure to industrialize successfully. The study of ancient Rome which followed had demonstrated to his satisfaction the genius of the Latin people for harmony, proportion, and moderation. By

1907 he had already come to see much of the modern world through the eyes of the ancients, so to speak, and had modified his earlier materialistic views.

At first, Ferrero was very excited about these ideas and the prospect of writing a new book. However, once back in Italy he found that his subject appeared lifeless and seemed to elude him until he began to doubt that there ever was any reality at all in his earlier observations.⁷ He was about to put the project aside when, in February 1908, he received an indirect invitation to visit President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House. Roosevelt had expressed enthusiasm for The Greatness and Decline of Rome. Plans were made (with the aid of the American author, William Dean Howells) for a three-month lecture tour of North America with engagements to speak at the Lowell Institute and at Harvard, Chicago, and Columbia Universities. On November 1, 1908, he sailed for New York and began the search for the inspiration necessary for his dialogue on progress.

Inspiration was found in, of all places, a comparison of the standard of living among middle class Europeans and Americans. The American middle class, he observed, did not live at a standard equal to Europeans of the same status. This seemed strange since American national production and wealth was so much greater than Europe's. It appeared that the wealth of America was not

at the disposal of the middle class, despite the ostensibly materialistic goals of American society and the greater voice its people had in government. He offered several reasons for this condition: American cities were overcrowded and had grown too quickly; agricultural areas had declined accordingly; the imbalance between city and countryside had been exacerbated by rapid industrialization.

Some Americans had added to the already overcrowded urban conditions by developing a taste for luxuries that further diminished their standard of living. Although he did not say what these luxuries were, one might guess from previous writings that he was referring to alcohol consumption. Most importantly, he believed, Americans sacrificed their personal enjoyment and standard of living for the national project of "the conquest of the continent."⁸ The American concept of progress was not as he had at first incorrectly assumed, simply a utilitarian concept.

By providing an explanation for the American middle class's living below their economic potential, he thought that he had also uncovered the seemingly incongruous reason for the American attachment to material progress. Financial profits were returned to industry and some philanthropic endeavors, thereby advancing the industrial growth as a national goal. Much of this

reinvestment and giving was part of the American ideal of improving the world and eradicating poverty. He viewed Americans as idealists and reformers,⁹ who sacrificed comfort, esthetic beauty and tradition to the material advancement of society. "American progress is then a transcendent and mystical idea which inflames America with passion and impels it to accomplish the new and rapid conquest of its own territory."¹⁰

The collective wills of Americans had determined the national goals in allowing the quality of life to deteriorate while industry churned out goods in great quantity. Americans accepted mediocrity as a natural consequence of large scale production. Ferrero feared that the American concept of progress, without the idealism indigenous to American life, would spread to Europe where vast natural resources did not exist, and that the European tradition, lacking such idealism, would be compromised. The American concept of progress was not a new form of decadence, but rather a product of the industrial process itself and hence suitable to its own environment. The Americanization of Europe and the Europeanization of America could have beneficial results only if both took place in careful moderation.

The literary fruit of his voyage was Between the Old World and the New: A Moral and Philosophic Contrast, published in Italy in 1913, followed by Ancient Rome and

Modern America: A Comparative Study of Morals and Manners, published the same year, which was intended as a clarification of the first work and was released first in translation to the English-speaking world. It is fair to say that Between the Old World and the New is Ferrero's major literary achievement. Certainly he thought that to be the case, not only because it was the explication of his major ideas, but also because of its prophetic appearance just before the outbreak of the First World War. The war seemed to confirm his estimation that contemporary society was on the verge of chaos. He portrayed contemporary society as accelerating out of control, an industrial labyrinth geared to production without a precise idea of either its direction or standards and possibly headed for demise. He admitted, though, that he had had no idea war was impending in August 1914 nor that it would last so long. Only half-way through 1915 did he see the connection between unchecked industrial expansion and the war. He had believed that the potential moral and intellectual collapse of Europe that he predicted in the book would come one hundred years in the future.¹¹

His intuition of eventual disaster grew out of his observation of the course of Italian history since the Risorgimento and the pain that he felt over Italy's inability to provide efficient, honest government and to meet the basic needs of the Italian people. Rather

dramatically Ferrero stated that he had suffered twenty years of unhappiness during his youth trying to discover why Italy could not deal successfully with the same problems that Great Britain and Germany seemed capable of resolving. Some years later he felt that he had solved what he called the "enigma" of Italy's decline, but in the years immediately after his trips to the Americas the writing of this book provided him with the vehicle for working out what he believed to be the source of his unhappiness.

In order to resolve the enigma and appease the torment, to understand further and to suffer less, from 1909-1913 I had retired into seclusion, cut off from the world, from my family, and from my past, so as to devote myself to the tremendous labor out of which came Between the Old World and the New.¹²

This effort brought him to the threshold of a solution which came in post-war discovery of the concept of legitimacy, which he continued to elaborate on until his death.

Between the Old World and the New was less a work of history than a philosophic and moral dialogue on contemporary problems. In order to explain these problems, he believed there was a useful analogy to be made between ancients and moderns. In terms of historical methodology his critique was a continuation of his attempt, begun in The Greatness and Decline of Rome, to breathe life into historical events and ideas.¹³ He wished to demonstrate how he had modified his own attachment to the concept of

progress, one of the dominant ideas of historical thinking. One purpose of Between the Old World and the New was to narrow and define the concept of progress and demonstrate the limits of its usefulness.

Between the Old World and the New was also an elaboration of Ferrero's earlier theme of the struggle between the quality of life of traditional European culture and the emphasis on quantitative productivity of the new industrial societies. Aside from his theory of limits, explicated in the conclusion of the book, and his all-important theory of progress, the quality and quantity formula was central to this work. He believed that quality and quantity were not simply abstractions, but affected the course of men's lives and were locked in a real struggle with one another. At the same time they were also psychological concepts, functions of the moral will, which motivated men's behavior and helped change the course of political events and history. But above all, the quality-quantity formula was a moral problem.

It is the continual confusion between quantitative and qualitative standards which prevents the modern world from steering a true course amid the gravest moral questions.¹⁴

As an intellectual, he thought that the clarification of abstract ideas was of great importance, although his own writings on the subject were often not very precise. He spoke vaguely about man's natural propensity to

change quantity into quality as though such a procedure were part of human nature. In the same vein he wrote about both Europe and America as being quantitative societies struggling to become qualitative as though there were forces within nations that drove them to do so.

While he believed quality and quantity had real political implications, he chose to discuss them on a theoretical level. Also, he personally did not believe that the solutions he proposed would be heeded. A "movement of public opinion through religious, political, or moral means" must place sensible limits on human passions.¹⁵ This was impossible, he said, in a world that preferred to produce and consume in large amounts.

As was mentioned previously, Gramsci held that the question of quality was not a philosophical but rather a political problem, and he attempted to confront the question accordingly. He chided Ferrero for dealing in abstractions and wrongly attempting to separate quality from quantity.

Because it is not possible for quantity to exist without quality and quality without quantity (economic without culture, practical activity without intelligence and vice-versa), the counterposition of the two terms is nonsense rationally. It is when one counterposes quality to quantity, with all such variations of Guglielmo Ferrero and Company, that, in reality, one counterposes a certain quality to another quality, a certain quantity to another quantity. Thus one makes a certain political and not a philosophical statement. If the connection between quantity and quality is unseverable, one asks these questions.

Should one spend his efforts developing quantity or quality? Which is more easily measurable? On which can one forecast future working conditions? The answer is clear--on the quantitative. Therefore, as one wishes to develop quantity, as one wishes to develop the "body" aspect of reality, without negating "quality," then one will want to place the qualitative problem in more concrete realistic terms. Quality must be developed in the mode in which it is controllable and measurable.¹⁶

Ferrero and Gramsci were, however, using the same terms to discuss different problems. Gramsci was concerned with the quality of the worker's life. Ferrero was discussing the fate of a civilization, the moral quality of life, the decline of artistic standards. His concerns were closer to those of someone like Croce, and thus more abstract than the concerns of the materialist who looked to a continuous expansion in society's goods and services. Ferrero, wary of continuous expansion for fear that it would be made at the expense of moral and artistic considerations, elaborated his concerns in his theory of limits, a natural complement to the quality-quantity formula.

The theory of limits started with the proposition that men's minds in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were dominated by the concepts of progress, production, consumption, industrialization, power, and speed. These concepts, Ferrero believed, were in contradiction to the basic tenets of western civilization and threatened to upset that civilization. The economic, social, moral, and

intellectual limits of the old European societies were being transgressed by the modern tendency to break down all the other barriers. Men seemed to be traveling at a faster pace than ever before with little chance of slowing down. The danger was that the lack of controls or limits, as Ferrero saw them, would lead men into a state of barbarism. Society had to establish certain priorities and controls. Without these priorities no real progress could be made. Only within firm limits could society decide on whether to emulate quality or quantity or, preferably, to attempt to balance the two.

In order to set down these views on Europe and America, quality versus quantity and the theory of limits, Ferrero chose the dialogue form for Between the Old World and the New. Rather than write another book about a European's travels in the New World, he decided to concentrate on the relationship and interaction of Europe and America. The dialogue took place aboard an ocean liner traveling from Buenos Aires to Genoa. The choice of a ship as the setting for the dialogue symbolized Ferrero's vision of modern man stripped of the opportunity to perform any meaningful activities except speech.¹⁷ This did not mean that most men were not usually busy or active. On the contrary, most people were usually too busy. But many of these activities, which usually concerned making money, Ferrero considered unnecessary and, ultimately,

meaningless. Aboard an ocean liner the passengers were confined to performing basic activities such as eating, sleeping, and talking, while the ship carried them between two worlds. Aboard ship Europeans confronted Americans and the ancient world confronted the modern.

Ferrero decided that the dialogue, a literary form that he mistakenly believed had fallen into almost complete disuse since ancient times, should be revived.¹⁸ Unfortunately, in Ferrero's hands the style proved not to be congenial. While his dialogue was imaginative and intelligent, some reviewers argued that it was tedious, marred by unnecessarily long discussions and digressions, and completely lacking in humor to carry the reader along. The philosophic nature of the work weighed heavily on its pages. "It is precisely artistic vision that is lacking in this work to which he has dedicated seven years," one reviewer commented.¹⁹

The dialogue method itself was meant to add variety and entertainment to Ferrero's philosophic discussion. The chaotic nature of the discussion in the beginning of the work was intended to convey the confusion of opinions among the passengers, a confusion of thought meant to represent the mentality of modern society. Unfortunately the dialogue method achieved just the opposite effect. It did not entertain and only distracted from the author's simple message.²⁰

In an attempt to relieve the long discussions among the passengers aboard ship, Ferrero interjected a subplot about a mysterious millionairess whose identity was unknown to all but one passenger. The French-born Mrs. Feldmann, married to an American financier and art collector, was being divorced from her husband. Compounding the mystery, she claimed not to know the reason for the divorce. Through her discussion with Ferrero much is revealed not only about her but also about the life of wealthy New Yorkers, a subject which seemed to have a special appeal for Ferrero. The decision to make Mrs. Feldmann Jewish may have a special significance in that she fulfilled a Jewish stereotype as one who was fabulously wealthy, cosmopolitan, and confused about her place in the world. Ferrero was rather sympathetic to Mrs. Feldmann, as he was to the Jewish faith, especially in later years. His association with Lombroso and marriage to Gina made him sensitive to the problems of Jews. As the wandering Jew between two continents, she had traded her faith for the values of the gentile world and was the most in need of guidance. Ferrero did not attempt to find a solution for her difficulties and she left the story almost as much of a mystery as she entered it.

Mrs. Feldmann's story and the mystery behind her divorce was Ferrero's symbolic representation of what he believed to be the empty life of money-making and of

wealthy Americans, lost in a world of material progress and spiritual poverty. The theme of material and spiritual progress connects her to the rest of the dialogue. In a sense she and her discontented husband symbolized the American upper classes and New York City, the disorderly capital of high finance. Unfortunately, the Feldmanns, as fictional characters, remain only symbols. Ferrero failed to develop a depth of feeling and to evoke a sense of empathy for any of his characters from the reader. Much attention is given to character descriptions at the expense of personality development.

Among the chief characters in the dialogue is Arnaldo Alverighi, an Italian-born lawyer who left his native land and achieved great wealth in Argentina. Naturally, he defended his new home. He is opposed in debate by Emilio Rosetti, an engineer born in Milan who had settled in Brazil. Rosetti apparently was a real person, whose words Ferrero claimed to have committed to memory. Nevertheless, Rosetti seemed to have all of Ferrero's ideas, and it was through Rosetti that Ferrero presents his arguments including the theory of limits.

Ferrero portrayed himself in the dialogue as the narrator and not one of the principal debaters. He is the moderator who introduces the characters to one another aboard ship. He raises questions but allows Rosetti to supply most of the answers and to deliver a monologue at

the end of the book on the theory of limits. Gina Lombroso-Ferrero, his wife, also plays an important part in the debate when she presents her criticism of industrial society based on research she did in real life. There are numerous other characters with minor parts in the debate, such as Cavalcanti, the Brazilian diplomat, and Admiral Jose Maria Guimaraes, the only passenger who knows the mysterious Mrs. Feldmann.

The dialogue commences with a discussion among several passengers concerning esthetics. Ferrero began with esthetics because he saw it as the center of the conflict between the values of the ancients and the moderns and between Europe and America. The controversy over what was beautiful (or as stated in the dialogue, whether New York City was beautiful) captured the distinction between the differing esthetic and moral standards of Europe and America. It was obvious from the variety of opinions expressed among the passengers of the Cordova that there was no consensus on an esthetic standard. Ferrero hoped to convey what he believed to be the deplorable confusion on such essential matters among his contemporaries. He assumed in 1914 that esthetic agreement was so fundamental to the well-being of a society that without it other forms of agreement were impossible. More than thirty years after the completion of the dialogue, broadening his list to include other forms of agreement, he was quoted as

saying: "Without a minimum of moral, esthetic and intellectual certainty, social life is not possible. It is not possible for men to live together if they do not at least agree on some basic questions--beauty and ugliness, good and bad, truth and falsehood."21

Decadence began, Ferrero believed, when the traditional limitations imposed by members of society were no longer accepted, that is, when the esthetic consensus began to break up. The loss of such standards, esthetic and moral, constituted a loss of will on the part of the members of society. A society could only advance when it held common standards and goals. If members of a society could not agree upon a model for beauty, they would not agree upon one for truth and justice which was necessary for that society's survival.

As a form of pure quality, art had to be based on tradition and discipline in order to progress. A society had to limit its vision in some way in order to achieve any measure of esthetic quality. Older societies had attained cultural greatness because they had established criteria for what constituted beauty and goodness and generally maintained these standards over long periods. In ancient times restraint, moderation, and simplicity were highly valued. The pursuit of wealth and power were considered vice. Since the French Revolution the reverse had become true. Progress, in terms of modern society,

required man to produce more, consume more, and partake in the continuous pursuit of wealth. Ferrero viewed industrialization as the cause of this reversal in values, the increased production of goods creating increased demand and resulting in more production and greed.

Ferrero argued that value must be imparted by man through an act of individual will. Individuals acting and agreeing constituted a form of "general will," or as he called it, the "great will." When the great will broke down, society crumbled with it. The great will, once arrived at, served as an intellectual boundary and provided the society with a certain strength. A decision about what constituted beauty was itself another boundary, or, as Ferrero called it, a limit. Once the great will was in formation, a society could accept all sorts of limits such as what constituted justice, loyalty, and truth.

As the shipboard dialogue unfolds, the discussion comes to focus on an individual standard of beauty as a source of pleasure. "But what is this pleasure?", Alverighi asks. "Art is pleasure without need . . ." ²² Pleasure without need meant pleasure that did not respond to or have any responsibility for the larger society around it or anything outside of the individual experience. Such a pleasure standard allowed one to say anything one wished about works of art and not be disputed. There was no

"golden key" to the disputation over beauty and ugliness. Rosetti countered that "personal interest" was "the criterion for establishing the value of a work of art-- natural interest for certain artists, political, economic, even vanity."²³ The protagonists agreed that esthetic standards were transient and culture-bound. America should not be judged by the esthetic criteria of Europe nor American standards imposed upon Europe. Alverighi adds that the old criteria for art began to break down with the discovery of the New World as the spirit of conquest, augmented by science and technology, began to dominate esthetic concerns. Industry and geographic expansion changed man's priorities. It was, after all, industrialization that had made possible the conquest of the earth. Who, Alverighi asked, was willing to give up even one of his modern conveniences for the birth of another great poet such as Dante? People, he argued, wanted the blessings that industrialization brought, not great poetry, art and beauty.

There had been little disagreement until Ferrero's wife entered the discussion. Gina Lombroso-Ferrero confronted Alverighi's unbounded optimism by arguing that industrialization had created a situation of unprecedented waste and destruction. She feared that industrialization, rather than being synonymous with human advancement, meant the possible return to an age of "barbarism." Machines,

she held, were running man instead of the other way around. Industrialization had done injury to tradition, increased vice, and destroyed family life.²⁴

Ferrero explained that his wife had once done research on the effects of industrialization on working families and her conclusions were not encouraging. She concluded that industrialization not only produced a lower standard of living for the working class but also destroyed the family and social structure of the pre-industrial Italy. She did not deny that there were many positive benefits to be derived from industrialization. This same mechanical process, however, could not produce objects of beauty such as those made by hand. Industrialization had also made possible the exploitation of the less developed nations by the industrialized ones. In order to meet the new demands created by industrialization, resources had to be exploited which resulted in much waste. She argued that the national resources of America were "sacked." Alverighi, defending the advances made by America, gladly admitted that industry had created America.

Rosetti pointed out that the argument about industrialization became confused and, in actuality, was a discussion about progress. Signora Ferrero, Rosetti said, used a moral criterion when she contended that progress discouraged virtue and increased vices such as drunkenness, waste, and egoism. Cavalcanti, a Brazilian diplomat, was

discussing esthetics when he said progress should increase the world's beauty. Alverighi associated progress with economics, the increase in power and wealth or, as Alverighi put it, "Progress is the conquest of the earth."²⁵ Rosetti attempted to qualify such a materialist definition of progress by arguing that progress must fulfill some need beyond mere accumulation for its own sake. He embellished Alverighi's definition by adding that "Progress is then to increase riches, and to conquer the earth, as riches and conquest serve to satisfy legitimate needs."²⁶ The question was how to distinguish "legitimate" from "illegitimate" needs.

Compounding the semantic confusion, Rosetti argued that progress was what he chose to call a "reversible idea." What appeared to be progress to one man is considered decadence by another. Just as the concept of beauty may be defined as pleasure or interest, so progress may be viewed by men as that which satisfies their desires or interests. The pleasure or interest of one man will be the opposite of another. One may demonstrate that it is better for nations to be young and maintain at the same time that older nations are superior. Hence Rosetti concluded that the concept of progress could not be defined because progress could be shown to be decadent.

By this time Ferrero had brought Rosetti to the point of complete uncertainty in which one idea, such as

progress, may be easily interchanged for another, such as decadence, depending upon the meaning men wish to give these terms. The conversation had reached its nadir as the Cordova crossed the equator, after which Ferrero attempted to move his characters beyond this intellectual relativism. Ferrero thought to himself:

The whole world seemed to me to sink back into the twilight of a dream . . . What was the Equator for which we had longed the livelong day? An imaginary line. To trace in one's mind an imaginary line, to yearn for it, to struggle to reach it, to rejoice at having crossed it, when the universe has changed not a whit. . . . What else are glory, power, happiness and wisdom? What is life but an eternal crossing of the Equator, a continual struggle to reach some imaginary line? Beauty is imaginary, truth imaginary, progress imaginary, everything is imaginary. . . . Must love, too, be an illusion? A mingled feeling of oppression and happiness, sadness and joy filled my mind.²⁷

Ferrero continued to raise doubts about all of existence and about what man could and could not know, and he followed the earlier line of reasoning concerning the inability to arrive at a clear definition of progress. He then took up the attack on science. He had reserved this argument until late in the dialogue because science was believed to be the most deeply held of modern values. An attack upon science was much more difficult than a criticism of esthetics; yet it was necessary in light of the foregoing comments on progress. Rosetti calls himself a Vedantist, the Oriental Sage, and has taken the cynical position that there is no order in the universe,

only "Maya" (illusion). He argues that science's categorizing and simplifying of natural phenomena results in hiding reality from man instead of revealing it. Science, Rosetti says, tried to present a simplicity in nature which did not exist. Truth in science was simply what one chooses to believe. For example, in esthetics beauty was that which is to our advantage to believe. In the same way scientific laws are true according to one's interests in believing them. "Interest," he says, "is the reason of the true also."²⁸ Like esthetic and ethical concepts, such as progress, the laws of science are "reversible." One man would say progress was characterized by the advance of liberty, peace, knowledge, and simplicity. Another would say that authority was preferable to freedom, and wealth superior to the simple life. Some would say progress was characterized by more advanced technology. Rosetti and Gina Ferrero introduce the notion that machines, by doing man's work, make men ignorant and decadent. Men, with their science and machines, thought they were advancing when, in fact, they were right back where they had begun, trapped in their illusions.

Similarly modern man tramps along in the wheel of progress in which the mania for luxury, and the pride of reason, emboldened by a tiny success or two, have imprisoned him, and fancies that he is traveling towards a distant goal, while he is all the time in the same place.²⁹

According to Rosetti all modern men in technological and industrial society were really Vedantists because all decisions men make about beauty or ugliness, good or bad were individual, reversible, and dependent upon self-interest, with no fixed or permanent decisions in modern life, leaving men free to choose their own standards. When men finally see that all is illusion, they will become uninterested in art, science, and wealth, and will find Nirvana. "The empire of capital will not fall to pieces until the day comes when the people look with horror at the luxuries, the extravagances, the pleasures, and vices, which the upper classes instill in them . . ." ³⁰

Alverighi rejected Rosetti's talk about illusions by noting that men would continue to pursue wealth and luxury and would leave Europe for America regardless of whether these things were illusions or reality. Rosetti countered that wealth alone was not sufficient to make men happy. The increase in quantity would result in diminished returns of pleasure, and men would begin to desire true quality. Modern industry could not and would not produce the quality once available to the aristocracy, but would rather continue to glut the world with large quantities of lesser goods.

For either our civilization will succeed in checking the mad hurry of machines, or what is now usually called progress will flood the world with an ever-increasing abundance of ever-deteriorating things: machines will obliterate all the differences and qualities of things . . . In other

words, a civilization whose every effort is directed to the increase of quantity must end in a vast and frantic orgy.³¹

Rosetti further argued that it was not industrialization in itself that increased man's greed, or that men consumed so much more today than before. The difficulty arose because the proliferation of goods of poor quality induced men to lower their standards and removed from them the knowledge and yearning for higher quality goods. Quantity then was no longer checked by even the presence of quality. This was "the secret and deadly vice of modern civilization."³²

Without quality a society declines; with it a society could progress. Quality, then, "is the first principle of progress and of civilization, the root of happiness, the reason of life and of action, the world's divine smile."³³ One could know quality by its outward signs: "art is pure quality"; so is "beauty, justice, goodness, glory, sanctity, nobility, greatness."³⁴

Rosetti claimed that quality was the goal and measure of society. His world of illusion took on a new meaning as he essentially reversed himself. He argued that the world was an illusion only if men are allowed to choose their own standard of beauty based on pleasure. Such anarchic choosing could only lead to disaster. Instead there must be an agreement of wills among the members of society as to how beauty and truth were to be defined.

All values were assigned through the great will.

But how was will to establish these standards for beauty? The answer was by setting limits. Beauty itself was infinite in scope and an infinite number of laws could be formulated about it. If all formulas were mere convention and if there were infinite forms, then why must a people decide on one? It was personal interest that motivated the great will to decide on one model rather than another. Laws and traditions did not restrict the development of art, they enhance it.

. . . to the mind as to the body, every resistance, and therefore every limit, is a support, and every support is a resistance and therefore a limit. . . . Men can only create what is new by overcoming the friction of a tradition, can only acquire liberty by shattering the bonds of a rule. Banish rules and traditions, and you can no longer have liberty or novelty.³⁵

The difficulty with contemporary art is the lack of accepted rules and limits.

Rosetti theorized that beauty is by its very nature limiting, or, in other words, synonymous with quality. The arts approach perfection concomitantly with an increase in the degree of quality; they give less pleasure as qualitative characteristics decrease. Ferrero did not have Rosetti explain this perfection or how one was to recognize it. Aside from being rare and beautiful, one does not know the nature of quality. In spite of its elusiveness, Ferrero treated quality as an

objective criterion for measuring the heights to which a civilization could climb. He allowed only that different societies might emphasize different, though partial, aspects of the perfect quality which existed somewhere else in the ideal form.

In the context of the dialogue, Ferrero raised several questions concerning the relationship of will to beauty. Did objects become beautiful because one wished them to do so or did one wish them to do so because they were truly beautiful? If the great will changed from time to time, could it always be correct? Furthermore, if all models or laws of beauty were merely conventions, how could one expect men to treat them as true?

Rosetti responded that beauty, truth, and morality were infinite while the human mind was limited. One epoch or school could only understand one portion of the truth or beauty. The limits that were placed on beauty were necessary for men to understand any portion of the whole. "Beauty, truth, and virtue are absolute, eternal, divine, infinite, imperishable."³⁶ Different men chose different conventions of truth, beauty and morality believing their view to be the entire truth and opposed all others; from time to time men have had to revise such conventions. It was "the critical spirit" of this revision and renewal that constituted the origins of progress. Progress was seen as the ability to incorporate new aspects of beauty and truth

without discarding the older ones. In such a way progress was the synthesis of quality and quantity as well as a synthesis of the best from the past with the best of the new, maintaining the ideal forms of the past, while creating new ones. Part of the historians's task was to help create the synthesis. The limits that man imposes on himself by an act of will must constantly be expanded without breaking the restraints. New models must not be created too quickly. Art and morality had limits and too many forms would lead to confusion and the inability to distinguish one from another.

One sees finally that Rosetti was not a Vedantist, but had been playing devil's advocate. Ferrero did not believe that the world was a meaningless jumble. In fact, his idea, expressed by Rosetti, that each society knew only a small portion of some ultimate beauty, was similar to Plato's ideal forms. Moving beyond relativism in moral values, men had to choose quality over quantity, thereby choosing beauty and morality, for "beauty is pure quality."

Unfortunately, Ferrero did not explain why beauty and truth were pure quality except to say that they were infinite, and above the utilitarian pleasure principle. He did not explain why and how the great will was to select quality over quantity, only that it was motivated by self-interest. In fact the workings of the great will

were not explained at all. Perhaps most important, Ferrero did not overcome skepticism and uncertainty, as he had hoped, by asserting that societies give meaning to the partial truth they could know by assigning limits with an act of the great will. An act of will did not overcome existential relativism and skepticism; it only suspends it for a while. While he believed that the great will only selected out portions of a greater truth and made those portions true for one society as opposed to another, he gave no assurance that truth, beauty, justice, and goodness were any more qualitative or certain than one had already suspected. And this was also true for all definitions of progress. Each nation would have to define progress for itself and hold true to that definition. Similarly each nation would have to come to an understanding about the proportions of quality and quantity it would allow. What America and Europe would do in the future remained an unknown. As man crossed all limits, he placed himself in danger. Men were becoming aware of this danger, although they did not yet know how to prevent it or what form it would take.

The world, Rosetti said, had been led into a Babel of formulas, styles, and choices. Men pursued riches and chose to call that progress. They consumed everything at great speed and as a result the quality of everything declined. The world was flooded with unprecedented "medioc-

rity." Men had chosen this course and no amount of words or insight into the concept of progress was going to change the course of events. On this note the dialogue ends.

Ferrero did not seem to have had his book reviewed by many people or by any prominent European intellectuals. The European reviews tended to be negative while the ones in the United States were more positive. One reviewer complained that the dialogue was disorderly, unbalanced and, in general, too long for the delivery of a rather simple message.³⁸ Ferrero's philosophic passages were weighted down by narrative and the description of the millionairess Mrs. Feldmann long-winded. All of his characters represented ideas instead of sounding like real people. As for the ideas themselves, reviewers found them oversimplified. The most important criticism was that Ferrero, in discussing his central idea of limits, did not sufficiently explain what those limits were except to say that they somehow were to incorporate discipline and restraint. Furthermore, he did not offer any suggestions as to how those limits were to be restored.³⁹

While some reviewers doubted his argument that Europe was on the decline, none of them seriously questioned his assumption that there was a revolution in moral values under way in America and that it was influencing Europe. The reviewers did not consider the themes of his

work with the same gravity as he did. This was perhaps due to the lack of coherence and clarity as to the nature of the intellectual, esthetic, and moral upheaval that he attempted to identify. Also the reviewers did not share his deep sense of foreboding and his vision of Europe in danger from internal collapse. His private vision became more acceptable after World War I.

Ferrero considered Between the Old World and the New not to be concerned with politics. Yet there were several implications for the modern state. Modern society, Rosetti argued, gave men more freedom. If this were not the case the state could not exact so much work and so many duties from its people. This liberty gave men many new advantages, not the least of which was the ability to cross the ocean quickly and safely by ocean liner.

Ferrero was not opposed to the advancement of liberty which had occurred in the aftermath of the French Revolution. "And among the blessings which modern times shower upon us, perhaps the most precious--more precious than wealth, power, and knowledge--is liberty."⁴⁰ It was the marriage of liberty to the awesome industrial process which he foresaw as a great danger. The traditional restraints on luxury and wealth had been removed so that men produced and consumed as though it were their entire existence. Too much liberty, he feared, could end in barbarism.

The problem then for Ferrero was to decide how much

liberty a civilization could safely be permitted, the limits of "legitimate" liberty. Although, in the broadest sense, the question concerned all aspects of human life, it was in the area of political liberty that Ferrero saw it played out. The people, through the great will, made their choices known, which in turn were carried out in the political life of the nation. As for the limits of liberty, Ferrero did not say plainly what they should be. The amount of liberty depended upon the circumstances in any given nation. What was excessive for one people might be insufficient for another.

The drama of liberty, he claimed, would be worked out in Europe and America in different ways. In the end, it seemed that the differences between the two continents were not so great, at least not as great as the beginning of the dialogue would have led one to expect. Both cultures were equally pursuant of wealth and quantity. It was useless to attempt an answer to the first question of the dialogue, "Which is superior, Europe or America?". In fact, they were becoming more alike each day.

The state, Rosetti further noted, also depends on a limit in the form of the loyalty of its people. At one time that loyalty rested on tradition, while today the authority of the state emanated from the consent of the very people who must be ruled. Because of this condition, government could be overthrown easily and thus was more

dependent upon a loyal citizenry. Such loyalty acted as a reasonable limit on the ambitions and vanities of each individual in the state and thus provided some measure of security to society.

Ferrero lamented what he saw as the decline of loyalty to the state, which no doubt he associated with the decline of the great will. Loyalty to the state was important as an index of legitimacy since the majority of individuals in any society must see their government as legitimate and worthy of allegiance to maintain the stability of that government and of society.

Here, the outline of Ferrero's important concept of legitimacy can be seen, despite his claim that he first formulated the idea after the Great War. Throughout the dialogue he noted that men were in constant search for intellectual, moral, and esthetic certainty and that the consequent psychological security was essential to the well-being of any society. Political security was of equal importance and, although he did not say it at the time, legitimacy or stability was the form of that political security.

Since legitimate authority was the basis of political and social security, it must, of necessity, rest on intellectual, moral, and esthetic certainty. His concept of quality, so much emphasized in this work, became synonymous with legitimacy.⁴¹ Ferrero believed that legitimacy

was bestowed on those governments which maintained high goals and noble purpose, which he called qualitative goals, thereby retaining the respect of most of their citizenry. Even though Ferrero did not use the word "legitimacy" in this discussion, the concept was clearly outlined in his ideas of quality and loyalty. The state's dependence on the limit called loyalty bestows upon it legitimacy in all but name.

Throughout these discussions of progress and the future of civilization, Ferrero wished to impress the reader with what he considered to be the most seminal idea, that "man is a being of limits."⁴² The message of the book was clearly summed up by Rosetti:

Everything I have said can be compressed into one extremely simple formula: We must not wish for everything, not for every beauty, every truth, or every good. We must know how to limit ourselves, because we are limited beings.⁴³

Contemporary society, at least since the French Revolution, had erred by removing limits, and limits, in some way and in some extent, must be restored.

Ferrero attempted to uncover the "living unity" in his confusing contemporary world and the link connecting Europe and America. He did not intend to decide which society was better or superior. Nor did he intend to say that the increase in liberty had led to decadence, even though there can be little doubt that he believed the world to be growing more decadent. Since men were unable

to agree on the definition of such basic concepts which were necessary for social cohesion, Ferrero perceived that contemporary society would find it difficult to remain intact.

Any definition could be, as Rosetti said, easily reversed. The importance of Ferrero's work was to explain the nature of the confusion over progress. Ferrero himself, offering to shed light on the concept of progress, never provided his own precise definition, perhaps for fear that it too would be reversed. It is certain, however, that for Ferrero any definition of progress would have to include moral and spiritual development and that material progress, although essential and inevitable, would have to be seriously modified. Progress itself, what there was of it in the course of the rise and decline of civilizations, was a moral force. European and American societies could be considered in relation to their contribution to the moral development of mankind--the advancement of justice, truthfulness and beauty--the three necessities of civilized life. Justice, truth, and beauty were also limits, self-imposed on any society. Ferrero never fully defined limits nor the way in which they were to be imposed.

As a Platonist he accepted ideal forms of beauty, truth and justice. At the same time he believed that all human truth was partial and imperfect and that individuals,

indeed entire societies, only experienced part of the greater truth and that men came to know their share of truth through a process of choosing one aspect over another. Although the act of choosing resembled the existentialist approach, the resemblance ceased with the act of choosing. Ferrero did not believe values resided only in men and that men confronted an empty universe. For him there were universal truths for all time and a consistent, unchanging human nature that could ultimately be comprehended. The idea of individuals selecting their own values and accepting portions of the truth could never lead to anything resembling the whole truth, the true laws of the universe. He did not explain how the process of individual or collective selection was to take place other than to say that men would choose quality and that they would know quality when they saw it. The great will would choose spiritual over material progress.

With this method of value selection, Ferrero was coming to terms with the rapid change of values in his own lifetime and the growing relativity in values and apparent truth. He tried to understand why truth did not appear to be the same everywhere. Between the Old World and the New was to bring attention to what he believed to be the essential crisis of modern society, the confusion of values and morals and the urgency with which that problem had to be confronted if Europe was to avoid further decline. The

transition from the pre-industrial to industrial life and the new influences from America had to be absorbed with judiciousness. Little did he know that the year after the publication of the book European life and culture would be rapidly altered by world war.

FOOTNOTES

¹Andre Maurel, "Entre les deux mondes," L'homme libre, May 8, 1913, Ferrero Manuscripts, Columbia University.

²Guglielmo Ferrero, Ancient Rome and Modern America: A Comparative Study of Morals and Manners (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), p. 31.

³Ibid., p. 38.

⁴World (New York), November 15, 1908. Ferrero Manuscripts.

⁵Ferrero, Ancient Rome, p. 116.

⁶Ibid., p. 129.

⁷Ibid., p. 133.

⁸Ibid., p. 144.

⁹Ibid., p. 145.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 156.

¹¹Ferrero, Colloqui con Guglielmo Ferrero: Seguiti delle grande pagine, ed. Bogdan Raditsa (Lugano-Geneve: Nuove Edizioni di Capolago, 1939), pp. 52-53, 56.

¹²Ferrero, The Principles of Power: The Great Political Crisis of History, trans. Theodore J. Jeackel (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), p. 18.

¹³"Il filosofo dei due mondi," review of Between the Old World and the New, in La Sera, March 28, 1913, Ferrero Manuscripts.

¹⁴Ferrero, Ancient Rome, p. 236.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 244.

¹⁶Antonio Gramsci, Il materialismo storica el la filosofia di B. Croce, 3rd ed. (Torino: Einaudi, 1948), p. 37.

¹⁷Ferrero, Colloqui, p. 49.

¹⁸World (New York), November, 1908. Ferrero Manuscripts.

¹⁹Enrico Thorez, "Il conflitto di due mondi," La Stampa, April 3, 1918, Ferrero Manuscripts.

²⁰"Il filosofo dei due mondi," La Sera; Thorez, "Il conflitto." Ferrero Manuscripts.

²¹Ferrero, Colloqui, p. 48.

²²Ferrero, Between the Old World and the New, trans. A. Cecil Curtis (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), p. 55.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 73.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 112.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 128.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 156.

²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 165-66.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 214.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 234.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 236.

³¹*Ibid.*, pp. 274-75.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 77.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 277.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 296.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 312.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 299.

³⁸"Fra i due mondi," review of Between the Old World and the New, in Patria degli Italiani, April 17, 1913, Ferrero Manuscripts; also "Il filosofo dei due mondi," La Sera.

³⁹Thorez, "Il conflitto," also New York Times review of Between the Old World and the New, Sunday, September 13, 1914, Ferrero Manuscripts, p. 381.

⁴⁰Ferrero, Ancient Rome, p. 207.

⁴¹Ferrero, Colloqui, p. 48.

⁴²Ferrero, Ancient Rome, p. 222.

⁴³Ferrero, Between the Old, p. 378.

CHAPTER V

FERRERO AND MOSCA

Gaetano Mosca, the political scientist, and Ferrero were, for most of their adult lives, close friends and intellectual combatants who argued about the subjects that interested them the most--politics and morality. Ferrero insisted that Mosca gave insufficient attention to moral and legal restraints as real and important entities in national life. Unlike Mosca, Ferrero considered the principles of legitimacy to be the most necessary and yet frequently overlooked aspect of government. Ferrero's political thought focused on these principles while Mosca emphasized the nature of political power. Nevertheless, Mosca had a profound impact on Ferrero by offering new ideas and the intellectual dialogue he needed to shape his own thoughts. Next to Lombroso and his own wife, Gina, Mosca probably had the greatest influence on Ferrero's thought.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, democracy came under fire from both the intellectual left and right in Europe. Foremost among the rightist critics was a group called, by one author, the "minor

patriarchs of political sociology,"--Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto, Robert Michels and Georges Sorel.¹

These four shared similar perspectives in the development of the theory of ruling elites. Their significance lies less in demonstrating the existence of elites or oligarchies in one form or another in every society, as in their argument that, as a consequence, truly democratic government could never exist and was an illusion. Their conclusion that the only reality in government existed within the interrelationship of power was anathema to the numerous democratic governments created at the end of World War I. Such elitist theories proved persistent, however, and are found in the writings of such divergent and recent thinkers as the prominent economist J. A. Schumpeter and the sociologist C. Wright Mills.

Although agreeing that political relations were in fact power relations, these political philosophers failed to explain the source of that power. Did they view political power as stemming from economic, military, psychological, moral, or legal authority, or some combination thereof? Gaetano Mosca, the earliest of these critics, assumed power to be a self-evident term and never defined it beyond saying that one could know power by the way in which it was exercised. The most important elements of his contribution to political theory and criticism were

presented in The Ruling Class, published in 1896 and re-issued in revised editions several times during his lifetime. It was precisely the nature of this political power or control that Mosca and Ferrero could not agree upon during their many years of private correspondence and friendship. They did agree, however, on the importance of law. Ultimately Ferrero believed that a state's ruling class depended upon a psychological and moral basis for its power while Mosca placed more emphasis on the judicial system and political control.

With the publication of The Ruling Class Mosca accepted a post at the University of Turin as professor of Constitutional Law. While a professor, he was elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1908. From 1914 to 1916 he served as Under Secretary of the Colonies and entered the Senate in 1919. In 1923, the year the second revised edition of The Ruling Class was published, he was called to the University of Rome as professor of political theory. Evidently, Mosca was one of those rare men who could maintain both an intellectual and a political career over a sustained period of time.

Mosca began his theorizing about government by distinguishing his view from that of Aristotle, who divided governments into three types: government by the one, by a few, and by the many. Mosca argued that there was only one form, rule by the few. In all societies,

past, present and future, there were only two classes of people, the ruled and the rulers. The "elite," "ruling class," or "political class," maintained their control mostly by force, but also by moral and legal leverage which Mosca called the "political formula," sometimes referred to by others as the general principle of sovereignty.²

Mosca believed that classes experienced periods of expansion and degeneration, replenishing their membership in what has been referred to by Pareto as the "circulation of elites." According to this theory the political class must constantly absorb new members and make adjustments to the times. When the ruling class loses touch with the political realities, an inevitable change in personnel ensues. The cohesive strength of its moral authority eventually becomes empty and meaningless and the political class no longer is able to reorganize to meet change or to command. In his formulation of the theory of political class, Mosca demonstrated his greatest originality. In contrast to the emphasis by political theorists on constitutional principles, he focused on the relationship between theory and practice, on how the principle of sovereignty operated in the real world. For him the study of constitutional law was a branch of political science rather than its dominating concern. This was accomplished partially by demonstrating the

functional role of constitutions. He explained that constitutions were useful not because they had any inherent legal status but rather because they were part of the vast symbolism and panoply used by the political class to rule.³ Behind the constitution was the real manipulation of power that Mosca wished to uncover.

In order to maintain control Mosca perceived that the rulers invent the political formula--all of the laws and justifications used to support their power--which gave them the legal justification for their rule.⁴ Although the political formula was not the basis of political power, it legitimated that power. The political formula and democratic theory were part of the same trappings, a veil for the realities of the political class.

Ferrero's absorbed reading of The Ruling Class prompted him to write to Mosca. This correspondence began in 1896, shortly after Mosca published the first edition of The Ruling Class, and they remained in communication until Mosca's death in 1941. They did not let differences of opinion stand in the way of their friendship. Their relationship was based on mutual respect for one another's intelligence and sincerity. Over the years they and their families visited frequently, and Ferrero often met Mosca in Rome where the latter served as a parliamentary deputy and a senator. Often they commented on one another's books and essays, offering encouragement

and criticism. In reviewing their respective works publicly, they were sometimes critical, but only after personal correspondence had made their differences known. Reviewing one another was a form of mutual advertising. A generally favorable review by Mosca aided Ferrero's reputation while Ferrero's reviews of Mosca's work in foreign journals increased the latter's world-wide reputation and added to his prestige in Italy. Mosca once commented that despite all the talk about Italian national pride, a book in Italy was never given its due recognition until it had been reviewed in the foreign press.⁵ This was one way in which they offered one another intellectual stimulation and support.

It soon became clear that they shared an interest in the question of the progress and decadence of nations,⁶ and a general apprehension about the political, moral, and intellectual fate of European culture. Decadence more than progress concerned them. It was the theory of decadence that enabled Ferrero to reject his earlier positivist perspective and its implied standard of continuous improvement.

They shared what one author has called a certain "anti-Jacobin" sentiment, that is, a fear that revolution would bring in its wake barbarism and the subversion of the social order and laws. They considered that the subversion of the social order had already begun with the

French Revolution.⁷ Together they joined the criticism of parliamentary democracy and the debate on social and cultural decadence.⁸

Ferrero had initially criticized the Italian government as socialist by objecting to the policies of Prime Minister Crispi and the other leaders of the Liberal party. He lamented the lack of encouragement offered those who wished to industrialize the new state. In light of the fact that Mosca disliked and even feared the socialists, Ferrero's friendship with him requires some explanation.

Ferrero began his correspondence with Mosca at about the time of his departure from the Socialist party, although it is unlikely that one event had anything to do with the other. Ferrero, however, had always had differences of opinion with the Marxist socialists. As a Darwinist he could not avoid the conclusion of the biological superiority of some individuals over others. Mosca's The Ruling Class reinforced for him, in political and sociological terms, what seemed to be the inescapable principle that the world was biologically divided into the rulers and the ruled. For Ferrero, Mosca's work furnished proof of the natural superiority of some people over others. It was an idea which he repeated throughout his writings even in the last work published during his lifetime, The Principles of Power.

Whenever Ferrero and Mosca spoke or wrote to one another, politics was at the heart of their concerns. They dealt with such topics as the structure of government, the fundamental laws of governing, the proper relation between the ruler and the ruled, and the consequences of a break in political structure. Mosca was interested in the organization of the ruling class or, as he called it, the political class, whereas Ferrero was concerned with the organization and operations of "legitimate" and revolutionary governments. Their approach to politics differed in that Ferrero placed in government the problem of what Leonard Krieger called "moral authority" whereas Mosca, diminishing the role of morality, assumed that the role of law concerned only "authoritative power."⁹

The most serious political difference between Ferrero and Mosca concerned the issue of democracy. As a socialist who modified his earlier equalitarian views, Ferrero hoped that the principle of popular sovereignty would come to be realized in the western European nations. But by 1919-20 he was losing hope and his position was moving closer to that of Mosca in that he agreed that sovereignty of the people was, at the very least, not workable. World War I seemed to bring only more "military tyranny." Writing to Mosca he lamented:

For many years I believed that the sovereignty of the people, as a principle of authority, would be the basis of a more just political and social

order, less oppressive, milder, and more humane like that of antiquity. A more profound study of history of the nineteenth century, the examination of reality, and a long reflection has persuaded me that you are right. . . . I no longer doubt that the present order of things is destined, almost everywhere, to collapse and will be substituted by a military tyranny and demagoguery that will be arbitrary, capricious, oppressive, cruel and rapacious and as bad as the worst despotisms of the past.¹⁰

In this pessimistic vein, he believed that a return to free elections and parliamentary government would not occur in his lifetime.¹¹

In 1921 Mosca's thoughts were moving in the opposite direction, no doubt in response to the circumstances surrounding the European postwar settlement. He asserted that popular sovereignty was a viable "principle of authority." It was Ferrero who, in a letter to Mosca, shed doubt on whether in fact such a principle was truly workable. The principle of popular sovereignty, Ferrero concluded, lacked the force of tradition, religious restraint and authority. "Will it [democracy] be a force to support the world or fall into the void of a sterile victory?", he asked.¹²

The success of the fascists and Mussolini's rise to the premiership confirmed Ferrero's fears of tyranny. Mosca, meanwhile, who had recently advocated the sovereignty of the people, believed that fascism, once in power, would conform to the pre-war representative parliamentary rule. At the very least, he maintained a wait-and-see

attitude, believing Ferrero to be excessively pessimistic.¹³ Ferrero expressed dismay at Mosca's attitude, for he did not think the fascist government would be anything but a tyranny. Responding to a recent article written by Mosca, Ferrero wrote:

But I think that in your two discourses there is a contradiction between the premise and the conclusion. From your premise the logical conclusion seems to be that the new government, which attempts to reduce representative government to a minimum, will inevitably be forced to become a dictatorship of force. Do you think Mussolini will reestablish representative government?¹⁴

By 1925 Ferrero had renewed his faith in democracy, partly because he saw no other practical alternative, and partly because of his outrage over the machinations of the fascist government. The other nations of western Europe had not succumbed to post-war dictatorship as he had feared. If anything, democracy was more widespread after the war, extending into central and eastern Europe in such countries as Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Italy was moving in another direction, out of step with the rest of the continent. He strongly objected to Mosca's statements that universal suffrage had caused the difficulties of the Italian government. Ferrero pointed out that in the pre-war period universal suffrage had not existed in Italy and that the real difficulty with the government was its mixture of older monarchical with newer democratic elements. They could not, he believed, co-exist.

Additionally, under Mussolini the constitutional guarantees of free speech, press, and assembly had been suspended and the two houses of parliament ruled by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. Absolutism was winning out. He felt that Mosca, as a member of parliament and a student of politics, shared some of the responsibility for the situation.

A responsibility of you constitutionalists is that you have never enlightened and never explained the essence of this mixed government. This government was no longer absolutist after 1815 but was also a long way from the parliamentarianism of England and France. Thus great confusion was created in the mind of the public. Consequently the public found that it was not ready to face this new situation. The public has been drawn in by an anti-parliamentary movement in a country where parliamentary democracy has never really existed. The governments of Giolitti have been governments of the Court and the Cabinet, not a parliamentary government. Until Italy abandons this lie, of which many people have taken advantage, Italy will not come out of this terrible situation that cannot but develop into a catastrophe.¹⁵

The ambivalence of Mosca's position needs further explanation. He had always opposed universal suffrage and the principle of full democracy as unworkable. But he had come to accept the parliamentary government in which he himself had served for many years as viable under a system of limited franchise. Once it became clear that the Mussolini government was not going to become a traditional liberal representative parliamentary government, he saw even more value in this system and lamented its passing. By the end of 1925 even Mosca could no longer hold out. He

resigned from the Senate, as Croce had done, rejecting the law that made fascism a legal form.¹⁶ Ferrero's original estimation of the fascist government was proven correct.

Both Ferrero and Mosca wanted some form of representative government. Ferrero began to place more emphasis on the "forms of government" or "legitimacy" which required more than the appearance of the participation on the part of the people. Mosca, in subsequent articles printed near the end of 1925, just as he was resigning from an active role in the government, placed the blame for Italian ills on universal suffrage. This time he argued that fascism was partially the product of the universal franchise system. Ferrero disagreed, stating that the process of elected parliamentary government had a chance to work at the end of World War I when it was suddenly interrupted.

The system exploded in the air during the war. What do you think happened then? In 1919-22 universal suffrage attempted to take total control of the government, but it was not successful. The government /fascist bureaucracy/ finally gained total control of parliament and universal suffrage was chained and reduced to a mere instrument.¹⁷

By the government Ferrero meant the king, the court, and the bureaucracy. If universal suffrage had been allowed to exist and even expand, fascism could not have come to power.

As late as 1931 Mosca was still arguing that the

growth of universal suffrage in the nineteenth century had been the greatest mistake of the European nation states, although he added that it was the necessary outcome of democratic ideas and therefore would have been difficult to prevent.¹⁸ Universal suffrage had weakened democracy and liberty. For Mosca the "will of the people" was not a scientific concept and had very little basis in reality. He believed himself to have uncovered the scientific and practical aspects of political life.¹⁹

In line with the traditional nineteenth century liberal position,²⁰ Ferrero warned of the potential dangers from expanded democracy and expressed the view that checks must be maintained, while Mosca was more pointedly critical of democracy as an impossibility. Although they did not agree on the exact nature of the danger posed by political and cultural democracy, they were in agreement that it posed a threat to the quality of life as they knew it. They also shared a respect for the importance of law, not only as a social and political control but also as an integral part of the social structure. They believed that an understanding of law, including Roman law, must be integrated within the study of society and was necessary for the functioning of a balanced social system.²¹ The study of Roman law enhanced their mutual interest in their Roman heritage and was also seen as a fascinating case study of the interaction between the written law and the actual

administration of the Roman empire.

The importance of Mosca, however, is not the attention he gave to law. Rather it was the diminution of the importance of legal codes and procedures in the historical process and its more complete integration in the larger context of functional political life.²² By declaring the judicial defense of the social order to be fictional, although necessary, he undermined its power as a legal symbol.

There is some question whether Mosca should be considered within the broad spectrum of the liberal tradition. While it is true that unlike the traditional liberals, he diminished the emphasis placed on constitutionality as a political force, in a wider context he realized that constitutions and legal systems in general were necessary to support the actual political structure. The illusion of participatory democracy was required to maintain social cohesion. Indeed, Mosca supported all of the existing institutions and served in both houses of the legislature. He supported a limited franchise.²³ In such a context he cannot be considered anything else than a traditional liberal concerned with the defense of the state and the working out of a viable political solution for post-Risorgimento Italy.

Ferrero, even more so, must be considered in the context of the liberal tradition. Even in his socialist

days, he was primarily a liberal reformer, not a revolutionary. As time went on and as he continued his relationship with Mosca, he came to fear more and more the implications of revolution and rapid social change. He increasingly emphasized the importance of tradition, especially in regard to the formation of legitimate government, the conservation of natural resources, and self-restraint in material consumption.

Mosca and Ferrero hoped to discover the laws governing human political behavior with an eye toward the creation of a science of politics. For Mosca the subject matter of that science was the state. He based his methodology on nineteenth century historiography and to a lesser extent on the development of the modern state, which presented a subject matter as vast as that confronted by Aristotle and Machiavelli. He set out to collect and compare political information from as many societies as possible.²⁴ Ferrero relied heavily on the faith that the facts would speak for themselves and that comparative studies were helpful in revealing many truths that ordinarily would not be revealed. Both believed that this comparison of data would reveal general patterns and trends and would be sufficient for the revelation of all truths about human society. Ferrero had come to this position earlier, but then he had begun from a position much more committed to science and to the dis-

covery of general principles of human behavior.

The fact that both Ferrero and Mosca were concerned with the moral progress and the decadence of their own government did not prevent them from considering their scholarly work as wholly objective and scientific. They wished to be as clinically detached as the scientist observing nature. Morality could be studied in the same manner as one studied the natural sciences.²⁵

As has been noted in previous chapters, such an approach to political science and theory owed much to the natural sciences. Croce accused Mosca of confusing natural science with political science. Mosca denied that the principal formation of human society was based on the Darwinian struggle for survival. He believed that society rested on the human struggle for stability.²⁶ "The struggle for existence has been confused with the struggle for pre-eminence," he said.²⁷ It is possible that the early Darwinist, Ferrero, became less committed to the natural selection explanation owing partly to the influence of Mosca, although there is no proof of this. It is known, however, that Ferrero gave up his Darwinist terminology and began to rely more heavily on political motivation to explain human behavior. Surely Mosca's political arguments opened Ferrero to some new ideas about political sociology and theory. Mosca was temperamentally more cautious and exercised greater care in announcing new

social laws. He, in fact, had very few laws other than his absolute insistence on the rule of the political class in every society.

The contrast between Ferrero's quest for laws and Mosca's cautiousness on this subject may be seen in the latter's review of Young Europe in 1897. Mosca was severely critical of his younger colleague's many generalizations. He rejected Ferrero's statements, presented in the form of the "law of singularity," which argued that great political leaders had distinct moral and intellectual characteristics that separated them from the people. Mosca argued that the factors accounting for political success were too varied and not reducible to a governing principle. He judged that Ferrero did much better in his description of the German people and life when he relied on simple observations. Ferrero erred again when he generalized that the Germanic people were superior, less Caesaristic than the Latin "races" who were more lustful and less disciplined. Taking a sounder empirical position, Mosca contended that at the very least, not enough was known about such matters.²⁸ Ferrero exaggerated and was too anxious to find explanations for complicated phenomena. Certainly such a simplistic cause-effect relationship was an insufficient explanation.

At the time Ferrero wrote Young Europe he was still a socialist. Ferrero held out the possibility that the

future German socialist society would lack a ruling class. Such a proposition seemed to Mosca to be an impossibility, although he did not make it the main point of his criticism of Young Europe. Instead he gave attention to what he believed to be Ferrero's most original and riskiest idea--that the moral superiority of the Germans rested on their supposed cool sexuality. Here Ferrero had attempted to reduce the entire difference between two peoples to a speculative, immeasurable cultural and psychological disposition. Also risky but less original was Ferrero's idea that anti-Semitism in Germany resulted from the struggle between two races and two ideas of art, society, and the critical spirit.²⁹

After having presented his objections, Mosca praised Ferrero for his high intelligence and superior presentation. He was impressed with Ferrero's understanding of human psychology and his acute moral sense. Young Europe was entitled to some faults since its author was so young. Mosca was pleased to see that while much of the book concerned the decadence of Italy, Ferrero was also hinting at the possibility of a renewal for his native country, a young Italy. Mosca was willing to forgive some of Ferrero's zeal for social laws on the grounds that the latter was concerned about the moral problems of Europe and Italy.

Ferrero believed that Mosca considered moral

progress basic to the development of the state.³⁰ What determined the degree of society's moral perfection?-- that was the question which Ferrero saw at the center of Mosca's concerns, as it had been at the center of Montesquieu's work. But, whereas Montesquieu had arrived at only a legal solution to the problem in his division of power, Mosca attempted to deal with the life of politics and the events in the lives of those making and using the law. Mosca's works, Ferrero believed, were really sociological explanations of Montesquieu's division of powers and constitutional forms. This sociological and political explanation of Montesquieu was the real value of Mosca's political theory.³¹

Both Ferrero and Mosca viewed history as a series of events connected by universal principles, such as generational ambition and legitimacy or the development of the ruling class.³² They gathered facts and made comparisons of similar events in the past with the belief that the truth would emerge.³³ Utilizing the historical method it was possible to arrive at an understanding of distant events and to confirm the common humanity between participants of such events and living contemporaries.³⁴ They drew heavily upon their knowledge of antiquity for comparisons with their own times. The ancients provided a wealth of knowledge about politics and moral behavior and provided an example of societies in ascendance and decline.

Ferrero, as an historian of ancient Rome, relied more heavily on those studies. Mosca also used examples from antiquity in The Ruling Class and referred to Ferrero as the source of certain insights. They looked to Republican Rome before the Punic Wars as a model of discipline and virtue. The Republic represented the simple life uncorrupted by luxury and the vanities that undermine the social order and eventually the state. They were deeply interested in the historical problem of Rome's decline and its significance for the modern world. This does not mean that they agreed on every or even most points in the interpretation of Roman history. As early as 1899 Mosca was reading Ferrero's manuscripts on Roman history and making suggestions. One of the areas of Ferrero's work he especially liked was the material on Augustus.³⁵ More often than not they argued out their main differences of historical interpretation in the domain of ancient history.

Mosca contested the main thesis of Ferrero's book, The Ruin of Ancient Civilization, which concluded that Rome fell for lack of a strong and indisputable principle of authority. In treating the same topic in the second part of The Ruling Class, Mosca concluded that the influx of mysticism in the fourth and fifth centuries, or, more precisely, the spread of Christianity, destroyed Rome by infiltrating the political class and undermining its values.

In Mosca's terms, the rise of Christianity led to a change in the political formula and, consequently, the political class. Ferrero made clear that he did not deny the importance of Christianity, only that one must look even more deeply to understand what made Christianity a force for changing the Roman empire.³⁶ For Ferrero, the salient issue was the undermining of the traditional authority of the senate, which upset the legitimate authority that Rome had always maintained. Once the senate was removed as a political authority, the position of emperor was open to unlimited power and abuse. The military crisis of the third century resulted in the establishment of a despotic emperor under the influence of the legions. Such a change in the executive authority of the empire excluded the traditional rights and powers of the all-important aristocracy and of middle-class monied interests.

Ferrero had argued for years that the Roman emperor was not a monarch because his office was not hereditary. The non-hereditary nature of the office was part of its weakness. Mosca had treated the emperor as a traditional monarch, thereby missing the role's limitations and the importance of the declining senatorial authority.

The differences that separated Ferrero and Mosca on historical questions were largely the same issues that separated them in contemporary ones--whether the nature of

contemporary political life had declined because of a loss of legitimate authority, as Ferrero argued, or because of the decline of the power of the ruling class in modern Europe, as Mosca contended. Both theories implied some sort of corruption, moral or psychological, political or economic. Mosca and Ferrero could not agree on the nature of historical or contemporary corruption because they could not agree on what constituted the corrupting influence or what in fact was corrupted. They could, however, agree that the corruption or decadence of ruling classes was a phenomenon worthy of further study and understanding. Their two perspectives were different but intimately related. Any argument that placed emphasis on the rise and decline of legitimate authority must imply the importance of a political ruling class who exercised such authority and whose fate was closely tied to it.

Ferrero never denied the importance, whether historical or contemporary, of the concept of political or ruling class; he disagreed with Mosca only on the nature of such a class. He believed ultimately that the political class could be made responsible to the principle of popular sovereignty and that such a class depended on the principle of legitimacy and not, as Mosca emphasized, on power and secondarily on the political formula. For Ferrero legitimate authority was not merely a symbolic form

created to improve the image of the rulers. He believed, as did Plato, that the ruling class would be the artists and intellectuals who provided moral and esthetic leadership. Mosca's ruling class was political and economic.

Mosca saw the facts of history like those of science, as simply the given and not subject to interpretation. Although his position did become more subjective as he grew older, he still claimed to remain a positivist. Most important, he did not see history as a function of historians at work and dependent on the views of each historian.³⁷ He consistently held to this point despite the knowledge of Croce's philosophy of history, that all history is contemporary history, and despite his debates with Ferrero. Ferrero maintained that the writing of history was literary and intuitive. The fact that he continued to look for laws of history and social behavior gave Ferrero the appearance of continuing his earlier positivist position. He came to believe that such laws could be arrived at intuitively whereas Mosca was much more cautious about pronouncing any laws. In actual fact, even Mosca did not remain faithful to his positivist tradition on all points, as Croce perceptively pointed out in his review of the second revised edition of The Ruling Class published in 1923.³⁸ However, Mosca continued to claim he was doing objective political science and history.

Writing to Mosca about the revised edition of The

Ruling Class, Ferrero explained the source of his argument with Mosca.

I wish to make two observations of a general nature. It seems that still you do not give enough emphasis to what you call the political formula and what I call the principle of legitimacy of governments. You seem still to consider it a kind of pia fraus or a conventional lie used to justify power in the eyes of the ignorant masses. I am convinced that this principle is at the root of government and that force is only a subordinate element. There can be no true government unless it successfully persuades all those who are subject to it that it has the right to command. The weakness of all government is this: the gathering of a handful of police and soldiers who beat those who are reluctant, a police operation in which anyone can be successful, even a Lenin or a Mussolini and similar muddling revolutionaries. The periods in which government is uncertain of itself are always the periods of troubled times, even if the government has many policemen at its disposal.³⁹

Mosca did admit that perhaps he did not place enough importance on the political formula but added that he had at least admitted its necessity in The Ruling Class.

Ferrero, unlike Mosca, considered the revolutionary upheavals of the nineteenth century to be great disruptive forces giving people liberties they were unprepared to handle and ushering in new forms of social and political controls. Mosca later admitted that perhaps he did not give enough weight to these events.⁴⁰ Ferrero offered the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars and not universal suffrage as a more plausible explanation for the disruptions of wars of the twentieth century.⁴¹ Napoleon was of special importance to him since the creation of the dictatorship and the empire changed the course of the French

Revolution, and because Napoleon represented another important stage in an attempt to reinstate a monarch in a European society that no longer would accept such an institution or such a limit on individual liberty. Napoleon, like Caesar and Mussolini, attempted to do the impossible, to create a government based on his own will without the necessary requirements of legitimacy, that is, of a long-standing acceptance on the part of those who were to be ruled.

When Ferrero went into political exile in the 1930s, he became increasingly concerned with the failure of the nineteenth century political and military leaders to check the advancement of dictators and the growth of armaments, and the subsequent inability to exercise legal and moral control. Napoleon loomed larger and larger as the villain. Ferrero even devoted a full study to Napoleon's campaigns in Italy, demonstrating, with a good deal of plausibility, that Napoleon's achievements were not entirely the product of his own genius but had been carefully planned by the Directorate in Paris.

In 1934 Ferrero was still arguing with Mosca over the aspect of the French Revolution and over the question of suffrage. There was no way of returning to both economic and political inequality, he reminded Mosca. In fact he saw political equality as a diversionary tactic used by modern governments to avoid having to come to terms with

economic inequality.

He continued to remind Mosca of their major points of contention. He wanted to substitute, or, as he said, "reinforce," Mosca's political formula with the principle of legitimacy.

Also the theory of the political formula, it seems to me, needs to be reinforced. I would substitute for this somewhat neutral expression another one that is more vigorous: the principle of legitimacy. . . . Outside of this principle there is no longer legitimate government. There is only usurpation. I feel you are considering the political formula as a plaything or a game which serves, at most, to moderate the governments a little. To me the principle of legitimacy is the most serious, most grave, and most necessary. It is the very essence of civilization. A civilized people that falls from legitimate government to one of dictatorship becomes feeble minded. Unfortunately today two-thirds of the world's governments are falling into barbarity precisely because a great number of the old legitimate governments have fallen to be replaced by dictatorships. How long will this continue? This is the very question.⁴²

Mosca could never have accepted Ferrero's theory of legitimacy since it would have undermined the entire structure of his political thesis. After a lifetime of describing political behavior as based essentially and overwhelmingly on power, he could not turn around and accept Ferrero's moral and legal principle. He knew that this legitimacy was not simply a utilitarian concept such as the political formula. Legitimacy was also a moral principle based on the virtues of the ruler and the ruled. It required a deep commitment to honest and free government.

One should not assume that Mosca lacked moral concerns. He believed that government should create conditions for maximizing personal liberty; but he held that real liberty required a full understanding of the necessities of government. Primary among these was the leadership of the political elite since there was no other viable alternative.

Ferrero had come to incorporate at least some of Mosca's insights into his own thought. He spoke and wrote more deliberately about the inevitable division of all government into the rulers and the ruled. Mosca's work enriched his understanding of the principle of sovereignty and the need to view it in the context of power, morality and legitimacy. He also became convinced that government must work according to some kind of equilibrium of these forces. He reinforced his conviction that the state could not function unless the majority of the citizens remained faithful to the accepted norms of that society and maintained some consensus concerning politics, society and religion. Ferrero also learned something about the circulation and degeneration of elites. Most important, and perhaps ironically, examining political problems with Mosca opened the way to a further clarification of legitimacy, the very point that most divided them. Mosca had raised certain questions about the nature of government, sovereignty and the rule of law that aided Ferrero in

thinking about the principle of legitimacy. The long-standing exchange with Mosca demonstrates further that Ferrero was well on the way to defining a theory of legitimacy long before World War I. His stated "discovery" of the principle in 1918 cannot be considered a discovery so much as a final drawing together of several ideas that were under consideration earlier.

FOOTNOTES

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⁵G. Mosca to G. Ferrero, June 12, 1923, Columbia University, Archives, Ferrero Manuscripts.

⁶G. Mosca to G. Ferrero, November 8, 1897, Ferrero Manuscripts.

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¹¹Ibid.

¹²G. Ferrero to G. Mosca, November 16, 1921, Ferrero Manuscripts.

¹³G. Mosca to G. Ferrero, January 4, 1923, Ferrero Manuscripts.

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¹⁸G. Mosca to G. Ferrero, September 26, 1931, Ferrero Manuscripts.

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²⁴Norberto Bobbio, "Gaetano Mosca e la scienza politica," Problemi attuali di scienza e di cultura (Roma: Academia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1959-60), p. 4.

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²⁷James Burnham, The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom (New York: The John Day Company, Inc., 1943), p. 95.

²⁸Gaetano Mosca, "Il fenomeno Ferrero," La riforma sociale VII (1897), p. 1027.

²⁹Ibid., p. 1162.

³⁰Ferrero, "Lo Stato e la liberta," p. 290.

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³²Burnham, Machiavellians, p. 92; Hughes, Gaetano

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³⁶G. Ferrero to G. Mosca, July 24, 1921, Ferrero Manuscripts.

³⁷Hughes, "Gaetano Mosca," p. 146.

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³⁹G. Ferrero to G. Mosca, May 6, 1923, Ferrero Manuscripts.

⁴⁰G. Mosca to G. Ferrero, May 15, 1923, Ferrero Manuscripts.

⁴¹G. Ferrero to G. Mosca, October 1, 1931, Ferrero Manuscripts.

⁴²G. Ferrero to G. Mosca, February 17, 1934, Ferrero Manuscripts.

CHAPTER VI

WAR AS A MORAL PROBLEM

Ferrero's opinions on the cause of war changed over the years and there were apparent contradictions in his writings on the subject which obscured the unity of his thought. Although he emphatically stated his belief that the major causes of World War I were the proliferation of armaments and the general increase in competition among nations (what he called militarism), he continued to hold to the assumption that war, all war, was ultimately caused by the moral and intellectual breakdown of society. There were other occasions on which he concluded that war was the result of political upheaval such as an attempt on the part of Germany in World War I to maintain a legitimate government based on the dynastic principle.

His views on the origins of war may be roughly divided into three periods. First was his positivist period, ending about the turn of the century, in which he saw human action as a response to the pleasure-pain principle. In the second period, lasting from the turn of the century to about 1917, he envisioned war as the consequence of increased materialism and unchecked desires of economic man. This unchecked need to accumulate was caused

by man's misunderstanding of the true meaning of progress and his unwillingness to exercise personal restraint. Near the end of World War I Ferrero began his third period, in which he maintained his belief in the culpability of the individual while adding the political motivations that he derived from his study of the principles of legitimacy. For example, he argued that Germany was the aggressor in war not only because the Kaiser and his generals wanted to move against the western powers but also because there was an internal political need to bolster the sagging monarchy by opposing the demands for popular sovereignty and rallying around the Kaiser in war time seemed an opportune way of achieving that political objective.

In his writings on war and peace, Ferrero began to unfold his larger solution to modern man's problems. War was a moral and intellectual problem, the violent eruption of human venality, the inability or unwillingness of individuals to exercise self-restraint. War could be eliminated by the sacrifice of individual or communal passions for the rational good of the community. But the more lasting solution was the creation of an ascetic movement which would place the proper restraints on human behavior and make possible a world free of war. These ideas were most fully developed in his writings on World War I, hence this chapter will mostly concentrate on the evolution of Ferrero's thought in relation to that war.

In Young Europe he described the Latin nations as more inclined to use military force because of their psychological and cultural predisposition towards caesarism, imperialism, and militarism. He seemed to have taken up the topic of war and peace as a result of an invitation from Mario Borsa, organizer of the Unione Lombarda per la Pace and director of Vita Internazionale, and expanded his ideas into a series of lectures, published in 1898 under the title of Militarism.

In Militarism, Ferrero tried to explain human behavior, including warfare, in the context of the utilitarian pleasure-pain principle. In his published lectures he proposed that civilization progressed only with the control of man's negative passions and the encouragement of his positive virtues. War, which was destructive of civilization, originated in man's base instincts and civilization was a "progressive repression" of intellectual passion. By means of the repression of these base instincts civilized life provided the framework for solving man's basic problem, that is, his continuous quest for increased pleasure and happiness and diminished pain. Entire societies, like individuals, could be viewed in this respect.

While basing his interpretation of civilization on the pleasure-pain principle, Ferrero argued that the expansion of justice and truth was necessary for the attainment of pleasure or happiness.

The whole existence of society is an effort-- whether profitable or futile--towards the acquirement of happiness, which is the same as saying towards justice and truth, every increase in the general happiness of a nation being accompanied by some progress in justice and knowledge. The whole history of man is but the history of the attempt to find a more complete solution to this problem, what we call the advances of civilization are simply the successive and laborious approaches to a more and more perfect and durable solution of this great problem: to be happy-- not each of us for himself, but altogether in the community of social life.¹

Ferrero assured his readers that justice, truth, and knowledge were increasing with the spread of modern civilization and that the possibility of war was more remote despite the fact that many of his contemporaries were predicting imminent war.² He further explained that in a military clash between two states the state with a greater degree of justice would be in a superior position. This was because a well-governed state would experience greater harmony and cooperation among its citizens and would encourage greater loyalty. In the Spanish-American War, for example, decadent Spain was defeated by the more just United States because the Spanish elite did not participate in the war, creating a peasant army, whereas America more fairly employed all classes.³ Americans had another advantage, he argued, in their desire to work, which had provided the basis for a more moral social order. In fact, the superiority of America lay in its morals.

Ferrero saw the entire world moving slowly but inevitably towards a "great transformation in all social

relations."⁴ Such was the unfolding of the social law of modern society. In his vision it was inevitable that war would gradually be eliminated by the progress of a heightened sense of morality and the consequent increase in happiness. He believed the peace movement, which he supported, was contributing to that eventual goal.

Although Ferrero tried to present a purely scientific explanation for the origins of war by the use of the reflexive and the seemingly elemental pleasure-pain principle, he in fact could not surrender an attempt to incorporate justice and liberty into his requirements for the just state. But it was incongruous to defend the traditional values of justice and liberty with the stark pleasure-pain principle. Justice and liberty were values that were deeply rooted in Ferrero and he never lost sight of them. They gained little or nothing from the scientific or utilitarian argument. When all was said and done, Ferrero simply preferred the state that extended the greater amount of justice and liberty.

Almost as soon as Militarism was published, Ferrero started his second period. He began to give up his emphasis on the pleasure-pain principle and its positivist trappings and to find other explanations for man's tendency to war. Just as his historical writings reflected a greater role for individual action and responsibility, so too he placed a greater responsibility on the will of

individuals in determining whether or not there would be wars. Wars occurred because men were either greedy or they were unable to control their base emotions such as fear of one's neighbors. In his later years, Ferrero placed an emphasis on the emotion of fear and man's attempt to avoid it by overcoming or conquering that which he feared as a motivation for war. Fear, "the soul of the living universe," was the cause of war. "It is in the reflecting game of fear that we find the true origins of war."⁵ An insecure and fearful nation, in Ferrero's estimation, was more likely to resort to war as a solution to its problems. Fear, of course, played a larger role in history than solely as the cause of war, although fear of war and anarchy were, in Ferrero's view, man's greatest fears.

Man is born fearful, but he differs from other creatures in that he wants to overcome fear. Ferrero went so far some years later as to define civilization and progress according to man's attempt to overcome his fear.

Civilization is a school of courage and is measured by the results of the effort man makes to vanquish his chimeric fear and to understand the real dangers that threaten him. Progress is everything that is of help to man in vanquishing his imaginary fears and discovering and eliminating the real dangers.⁶

Ferrero claimed that while fear may be at the center of human existence, civilization is the conquering of fear.

History, then, can be viewed as the record of fear's progressive conquest, the story of the development of man's courage. It is through will--man's determination to live according to law, to discipline himself, to work for a larger cause outside of himself and reduce his material needs--that man conquers, or at least temporarily controls, his emotional life and voluntarily directs the course of events.

Ferrero was stunned by the outbreak of World War I. It violated many of his assumptions and vitiated what he had written on war and the prospect for preventing it. Of course there had been talk about the probability of war for some time, but he had never expected anything more than a local conflict that could be brought under control. Once having accepted the reality of the war, he had no trouble giving it meaning. The conflict, as he understood it, was the natural consequence of a decadent, materialistic, and uncontrollably expanding industrial world. His immediate response was the desire to keep Italy out of the war, although he quickly changed his mind when he considered the prospects of a Europe under German hegemony.

Not unlike other historians, Ferrero feared that the advancement of liberty and democracy throughout the nineteenth century had contributed to the cataclysmic onslaught of the war.⁷ While he generally approved of the

expansion of liberty he believed that this had been accompanied by negative aspects such as universal conscription, increased tax support for military armament, and mass propaganda which could unite an entire people behind popular national figures and the war effort. As a liberal he was also concerned with the point at which such expanded liberties, under democracy, would cease to be of positive benefit to the society as a whole. World War I confirmed his fears that the nineteenth century had ushered in a period of expanded freedom that had begun to show clear signs of losing control. He compared the massive disorder, extent, and duration of World War I to an age of revolution, an era that knew no limits in either political, moral, economic, esthetic or social life. For him it was the trial of western civilization, a moral crisis of the first magnitude.

World War I has been spoken of by historians as a great turning point in Italian history. Federico Chabod described it as having a greater significance as a shift in the nation's historical direction than the advent of fascism.⁸ The war represented a break in Italian social tradition as it had been constituted since the formation of the Italian state. Generally, the attitude of Italian intellectuals towards their nation's intervention in the war was a reflection of their judgments about the entire post-Risorgimento period. Intellectuals such as the his-

torian, Gaetano Salvemini, who rejected the post-Risorgimento period as corrupt, tended to accept the war as an opportunity to sweep away the old evils. For such men as Croce and Luigi Salvatorelli, who looked favorably on the post-Risorgimento period, the war was a tragic mistake.⁹

While Ferrero believed that post-Risorgimento political manipulations set the groundwork for fascism, he, unlike Salvemini, did not believe that the war would remove all the old evils. He hoped that something would be achieved by the Italian state after having paid such a terrible price in fighting the war. He could not help but be disappointed by the political arrangements of the post-World War I government.¹⁰ Ferrero's commitment to reason was too great for him not to be appalled and frightened by the wave of irrationality brought on by the war. Political anarchy seemed to be a real possibility, even an inevitability.¹¹

Initially he had considered opposing Italian intervention in the war, but the thought of entering the campaign on the side of Germany was intolerable. The man who had looked to Germany as the future socialist state, the progressive, well ordered society, now saw Germany as the monstrous aggressor. The values that he had come to appreciate during the writing of his Roman histories and which he considered the unique qualities of the

Italian people--order, harmony and moderation--seemed to be threatened.¹² He decided in 1914 to support Italian intervention on the side of the Allies as a means of defending Latin culture, both Italian and French, against the Prussian aggressor.¹³

The war did not alter Ferrero's basic outlook. He was forty-four when it began and he had already formulated his major ideas, although he appeared to add a new emphasis to old themes and became more pessimistic for a while about the future recovery from the devastation. More important, it was his thoughts on the war, or more accurately about the peace, that aided him in refining his ideas about political legitimacy. The fact that the war might be viewed as an assault on the positivist assumptions about the progress of mankind did not concern him since he had put aside strict positivism and faith in material and scientific progress some time earlier. What troubled him more deeply was the threat that the war presented to the entire proposition that man was a reasonable being who had made at least some advances in his knowledge, moral development, and orderly government. At times the sheer size and carnality of the war overwhelmed him with despair. Out of his despair came his third and most mature period of thought on the origins of war, in which he renewed his faith in human intelligence and will and combined it with his developed political speculations.

The outbreak of war did not interrupt his intellectual work. On the contrary he experienced a flurry of activity. The family moved from Florence to Turin to join others who were speaking and writing on behalf of intervention. He wrote for newspapers and journals and went on speaking tours with Jules Destree, the Belgian refugee who spoke against the unprovoked attack on Belgium. They toured Sicily where Ferrero was greeted with cheers of "Long live our great historian." In February, 1915, he had the lead article in the New York American entitled "Belgium, Key to the World." He often spoke to large gatherings such as the meeting at the Palace in Florence in July 1916.¹⁴ Gina Ferrero also spoke to Italian women's groups on the issues of intervention.

Although he felt moral outrage over the attack on Belgium, he confined his written and spoken arguments on this subject to more practical concerns. If Germany was allowed to keep Belgium, she would be in a better position to control eventually all of Europe. The United States and Germany were the two biggest producers of iron. Belgium's rich ore deposits in German hands would only contribute further to upsetting the European balance. Germany would also have eighty million people compared with Britain's forty million, for example. "If Belgium falls to Germany, the latter would be free tomorrow to dominate Europe and the day after tomorrow, perhaps all of the

world."¹⁵ Further, a German victory would be a defeat for democratic institutions and liberty and would advance German monarchical and militaristic tendencies such as mobilizing the nation in peacetime.

He did not doubt that Germany and Austria had "kindled the great conflagration."¹⁶ By this he meant that they had taken the final step in a long chain of events leading to war. As terrible as the war might be and as simple as it was to find the villains, there was something more terrible troubling him. Once the German people had thrown down the gauntlet, why were citizens of other nations so eager to pick it up? Why were reasonable men with freedom and property so willing to go to war? "How is it that an epoch so concentrated on the increase of wealth, the greater security of life and the establishment of the universal rule of reason could prepare, will and wage this appalling conflict?", he asked. No longer accepting the pleasure-pain principle as an adequate motivation for war, he applied the new ideas he had developed during and shortly after his trips to North and South America. He thought the answer had to do with the "increase of wealth," the cycle of accumulation and waste that had undermined man's sense of values and had driven men in an expansionist quest beyond all reasonable limits. Reasonable men no longer understood reasonable limits.

During Ferrero's third period he usually began

his analysis of the war by stating that the competition between the Great Powers since 1870, which he called the crisis of militarism, was the effective cause of the war. He argued that since the Franco-Prussian War there had been an attempt to return to the principles of authority and monarchy which had been on the decline since the French Revolution. Leaders emulated Bismarck and many people believed in the fatal war to come.¹⁸ The Germans had used the military institution that had been created by the French Revolution--peacetime conscription of a non-professional army. After 1870 German militarism seemed justified by success.¹⁹ The second crisis was the growth of the metallurgical and mechanical industries that made great war possible. Finally it was the third crisis, the moral and intellectual dimension, that received most of Ferrero's attention. He defined that crisis as:

that unshakable optimism, that blind faith in progress and strength of man, that unbridled ambition and covetousness which has effected or at all events dimmed the sense of limitation, of proportion of the humanly possible and the reasonable in the whole western civilization, in the realms of philosophy, religion, art, science, politics, finance, industry and commerce alike.²⁰

More than any other nation Germany placed its "blind faith in Progress" and unbounding expansion. Germany's loss of simple moral virtue led her into difficulty.

While Ferrero was willing to place the full re-

sponsibility for the war on Germany and Austria, his own theory of the intellectual and moral roots of the war indicated that these nations were only the worst offenders and that all of Europe and America were culpable in their embrace of progress and expansion. Progress, after all, was only a manifestation of the modern world's concern with materialism and unbounded growth. Ferrero's determinist view of a world destined to fulfill its own crude definition of progress and locked in a struggle between quality and quantity contradicted his view that held certain nations or groups morally responsible when the whole process went awry. Given the conditions at the end of the war, anyone in an allied country who said that Germany was at the mercy of blind forces in a world out of control would be making a statement that would seem to defy good sense. Thus it is perfectly understandable that Ferrero should believe Germany guilty of launching the war, although such a conclusion was not consistent with his own ideas about the war's intellectual and moral origins and the defects of western civilization.

Ferrero did not fully explain why or how Germany became the most representative nation of the modern expansionist spirit, nor was he consistent about how Germany had started World War I. He offered vague suggestions that the German's "human instinct" had failed.²¹ German life was orderly but cultural life was undisciplined,

allowing ideas to range everywhere, preventing one from distinguishing the important ideas from the unimportant.²² German culture lacked strength because it lacked rooted principles, traditions, and real intellectual authority. The absence of intellectual authority led to a dominance of the passions, giving impetus to the appeal of nationalism and allowing the monarchy to believe it was the only authority. The monarchy finally thought it could save itself by the use of war as its ultimate weapon. The Great War resulted from "the want of a balance." Ferrero submitted that in Germany's case the lack of a balance was between the political and the intellectual, while in Europe in general the imbalance was between material quantitative expansion and the spiritual and esthetic qualitative values.

The European war would not have broken out had the German people been wiser or the government weaker. The catastrophe was brought about by political discipline and intellectual disorder. The disorder resulted from unbridled imagination and ambition.²³

After the French Revolution some monarchies, such as the German, had put aside the legitimacy of divine right monarchy and had ruled by force, driving the spirit of revolution underground until 1821. While this repression did not destroy the spirit of rebellion, it did great harm to the legitimate structure of the government. Loyalty to the regime rather than the nation or the people was rewarded and became the criterion for securing office.

Police, public officials, military men and university professors were corrupted. Vice that was suited to government was encouraged.

The first European peace failed because the doctrine of Divine Right and legitimacy had for the greater part of the continent ceased to be anything but an imposture practiced by interested parties. It failed because it had ruthlessly sacrificed several peoples, among others Italy, the first-born of European civilization. It failed, finally, because it had refused to recognize any of the legitimate ambitions and aspirations of the middle class.²⁴

The question of legitimate authority was one which pervaded the nineteenth century. For example, conflicts over differing views of legitimacy caused France to enter a war with Prussia in 1870 in a weakened position. Napoleon III ruled in an atmosphere of such conflict, doubting his own legitimacy and foolishly seeking affirmation in war. After the Franco-Prussian war, Germany, in Ferrero's opinion, continued its aggressive stance. "The child of war, Germany seems unable to exist except by fighting, by continuing in industry, art and science the combat interrupted on the battlefield."²⁵ Germany was left defending an untenable authoritarian monarchy in central Europe, while France struggled to create the Third Republic.

World War I decided the legitimacy question, the conflict between the principle of divine right and the principle of popular sovereignty. The latter had won out, but the conflict had also contributed mightily to the war

itself. The instability in Europe, the confusion over moral and intellectual principles, the mindless desire to expand in all directions, had all added to the intensity of the war. Who will rule the people?, Ferrero asked. Will it be dynasties which claim the right to rule from God or the people with parliaments, freedom of press and assembly?

It is this dispute which kindled the wars of the Revolution and the Empire. . . . At bottom all the wars and civil wars of Europe in the nineteenth century reveal this conflict, even the world war on which Germany decided in order to save the dynastic principle in the Austrian Empire which was threatened by Nationalism.²⁶

Before World War I Ferrero had accused the Americans of being excessively taken with physical expansion, progress and quality, or what he later called the "colossal." After the outbreak of war he attributed these characteristics to Germany. America, he decided had only done this in industry and business. The Germans had been consumed by the pursuit of the "colossal" until they lost touch with themselves and reality.

For Ferrero the colossal meant the conquest of matter, quantity without quality. This was the characteristic which, because of his studies of the ancient world, he attributed to the East. The colossal was opposed to true greatness--spiritual and intellectual quality. Greatness was the characteristic of the ancient Greeks who for him represented harmony, balance and

intelligence. Ancient Rome strove for greatness and after an initial success surrendered to the colossal. Since the time of the ancient Greeks, life had been a struggle between the great and the colossal. All Europe in the fifty years prior to the war had been affected by the desire for the colossal. But only Germany had been completely consumed by its quest.²⁷

This war must be the final victory of true intellectual and moral greatness over the mania for the colossal which had hardened and blinded the mind of man; it must restore that which is great solely by reason of the smallness of its proportions and its humility, a greatness which is wholly from within, it must once more raise up generations which can accomplish great things simply and humbly and a world which shall recover its moral equilibrium in the sense of true greatness.²⁸

The loss of the simple virtues had undermined society. Ferrero believed it imperative that the simple virtues described in the Roman histories be restored, although such a restoration was almost improbable. Modern economic man had lost his sense of virtue. He was expected to be active, patriotic, and politically unquestioning, yet not required to have any personal moral code.²⁹ Modern economic and industrial man was concerned with feverish accumulation. Contrary to the expectations of many, life actually became more complex and trivialized, with more work and worry. War, often considered an escape from the dreary life, only further compounded the problem. But the intellectual dislocation

resulting from the war was probably more serious than the material loss. By destroying the traditional beliefs of European society, the war had initiated the "great crisis of modern civilization."³⁰

Why were these beliefs so easily destroyed? Ferrero thought that European society had too many goals and had lost the ability to distinguish between the important and the unimportant. Even the war itself was a product of the mentality that thought it possible to have both the joys of military conquest and the fruits of peace. Germany especially wanted both power and high culture,³¹ and could not accept the fact that both were not possible simultaneously.

After the war, Ferrero wrote, men would have to choose their intellectual principles. In the quest for more power, under the heading of progress, they would have to choose between the force of creativity and the force of destruction. Men had to learn from this war experience or there would be another great war in fifty years. There had to be a reconciliation between quality and quantity, between ancient thought and modern power. Men had to set a higher goal and avoid the temptation of thinking they were all-powerful. Men could no longer avoid their real limitations, but had to choose between Latin and German goals.

The possibility of achieving peace in the future

would require the reduction of militarism and the diminution of patriotism, which were among "the many tragedies of human pride."³² Political equilibrium and moral equality must take their place. Poland and Austria must be strengthened, Alsace-Lorraine should be restored to France and Schleswig had to have a plebiscite. In Germany, he believed, the emperor would probably not fall, although the House of Hohenzollern would have to change, allowing more power to the middle class.³³ The pugnacious German aristocracy would have to be replaced in favor of the peaceful bourgeoisie. Finally the moral climate had to change if peace were to be possible.

Modern civilization, this civilization of which we brag, is filled with pride. Pride occupies too great a part among the motives that push man and countries to action. This is the great weakness of our times, the reason for so many catastrophes, first among them this war.³⁴

He hoped that his generation had paid the price of pride and that the next one could live in peace and prosperity.³⁵

There were times when Ferrero maintained that the possibility of peace rested on the "question of political equilibrium." In domestic affairs the future had to reside with the middle class. There had to be disarmament. He went so far as to deny that the problem of peace was "one of ideas and prejudices,"³⁶ but simultaneously maintained that peace rested on the reduction of human pride and greed and the idea of progress, the

crucial questions for European society. The contradiction cannot be explained by arguing that ideas and values were long-range causes and consequences and that political institutions required immediate changes. He simply denied the importance of ideas and values at one point while declaring at another that they were crucial to his analysis. The apparent contradiction is difficult to explain although it is evident from an over-all reading of his work that he believed there was a crisis of western civilization, that it had contributed to the war, that it was essentially a crisis of morals, values and ideas, and that men would have to change, by an act of will, if European society, as it was known, was to survive. Ferrero believed himself to be a political analyst, yet he invariably turned to problems of morality. His moral sensibilities rendered him incapable of avoiding such questions.

Ferrero never resolved the contradiction between his blame of Germany for the war and his argument that the war was the inevitable outcome of the crisis of western civilization. He did not resolve the conflict of attempting to find the cause for the war in Germany's dynastic aims and its loss of intellectual and moral will. Nor did he resolve the question of whether peace would result from the creation of better political institutions or the improvement of moral standards and control of human behavior. He did continue to repeat that any political

solution was a matter of collective will while asserting at the same time that "the will is sick."³⁷

The will was sick, he maintained, because men wanted perfection and power, attributes opposed to one another. In order to survive and improve, a society had to make clear definitions of what was beautiful, what was true, and what was just. These choices, always arbitrary to some extent, had to be made by an act of the will and not of the intellect. If a society, such as contemporary Europe, refused to give up some advantages in favor of others, it could only end in disaster. "Our will is in a state of complete confusion . . . This disorder of the will is the disease from which our age is dying," he wrote.³⁸

The confusion and disorder of the will had been brought on partially by industrialization, which produced more goods, required more feverish activity and more choices than people could reasonably handle. Ferrero broadened his attack on industrialization to include the entire capitalist system and the socialist regime as it existed in Russia in the 1920s. Capitalism was geared to excessive production and consumption, the very economic system that had put man in his present unhealthy condition. Socialism, of the Soviet or any other variety, had also made the same commitment to materialist values and was therefore, in Ferrero's eyes, part of the same

problem. Capitalism and communism together had embraced the concept of material progress.

The empire of capital will fall on the day when the people turn away in horror from the luxuries, waste, pleasures and vices that the rich have taught them, after having enriched themselves by means of these same luxuries, waste, pleasures and vices.³⁹

This statement was written by Ferrero during World War I and then restated ten years later in Words to the Deaf. It is the heart of his moral teaching as it took shape during and shortly after the war. As he envisioned it, the world of capitalism, or more accurately, the world of quantity, could be threatened only by an esthetic revolution in which people accepted a different moral standard based on non-materialist values. Only St. Francis of Assisi was an appropriate revolutionary.⁴⁰ He was certain the ascetic movement would come some time in the distant future.

Although he made negative statements about international communism, Ferrero was not opposed to the concept. He opposed the Soviet regime because he believed that it was a more violent continuation of existing trends away from higher spiritual goals. The Russian people were being promised, by the socialists, all the material goods of the western world at less exorbitant prices. Yet the concept of communism he called "one of the most marvelous flowers of history."

Is not the family a communist institution? Do not the great monastic orders, Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, and all the others--glory and splendor of Christianity and the Middle Ages--live under the gentle law of a fraternal communism? Communism is not contrary to human nature; it is one of its most divine expressions, so far as man is capable of the spirit of sacrifice. Every true communistic system--the family as well as the monastic order--is a system of renunciations, whereby the individual sacrifices his liberty and his possessions to attain a beautiful ideal, to satisfy a noble passion--paternal love, the love of God, the love of fellow men.⁴¹

The idea of communism suited Ferrero's ascetic sense of self-sacrifice for the larger community and a more just distribution of goods and services. It was not suitable to his longing for an intellectual and cultural elite to lead Europe, nor his desire to preserve the high quality products and gentility of previous aristocratic ages. Although it is abundantly clear that he could not have accepted the reality of the communist world, the ideal of a unified, purposeful and just community life greatly attracted him.

Some of his passages began to sound Biblical as he lashed out against the life of wealth and luxury, the increase of which he believed was related to the war.

From the trenches, in 1914, a reddish river began to flow, mingling in its course gold and blood; the blood of one generation immolated to the god of war, and the god of three generations, squandered in the purchase of fighting instruments. Inconsiderable at first, this stream of gold and blood has grown year by year, until it has overflowed the face of the earth.⁴²

In such an interpretation World War I took its place in history as "the night of Gethsemane for western civilization, or a gigantic bacchanal."⁴³ The history of the one hundred years before the war was the history of how man came to live in the world without limits, of unchecked power and wealth. The future must be the story of how men extricate themselves from the darkest hours of the war into the long struggle to give new meaning to his world and restore unquestioning faith, loyalty, and asceticism.

The fascist regime prevented Ferrero from publishing his political and social writings in Italy after 1924. During this time he turned to fiction and did not return to the same questions until 1930 when he devoted an entire book to the subject, entitled The Unity of the World. The English translation was presented with a glowing foreword by Charles A. Beard, who claimed for it the status of a classic on a par with Plato and Aristotle.⁴⁴ In Unity of the World it was evident that Ferrero had modified his concept of the influence of will in history that was his essentially optimistic faith in the power and trustworthiness of the human spirit to conquer its adversary. His experiences under the fascist regime, no doubt, had dampened his optimism and turned him towards a greater reliance on blind and inevitable forces of history. He began a reinterpretation of history as an inevitable movement towards "universal civilization" begun in the fifteenth

century. Europe and Asia were at present sick and had been in that condition since the nadir of western civilization just before World War I. All of this, however, was a starting point for the inevitable universal civilization to come.⁴⁵ Wars and revolutions were merely interruptions in the natural course of events, the "providential pattern of history" directed by the "most profound law of humanity."⁴⁶

The coming unity would not be political in the sense of a universal government. Ferrero foresaw a world without great nations. Rather there would be a large number of states that would be increasingly less dependent upon one another politically. These governments would be independent republics. The republic was a form of government superior to monarchy in that it was "far more natural" and invariably it had to be cosmopolitan and universal even if it was not politically and militarily powerful.⁴⁷ The unity of these new republics had to be a moral unity.

Ferrero failed to explain the nature of these inevitable forces for unity. Democracy was certainly one of the most important forces, even though it too had potential for disunity. Mass production and standardization were economic unifiers along with the Americanization of Europe and the rest of the world. "Americanization was one form of world unification which was rapidly being

felt both in democratic institutions and morals in the belief in progress as our generation understands it."⁴⁸ Whether this was a positive trend remained to be seen. America, while having fewer luxuries, lived and worked in tranquility and safety with little threat of war, revolution or famine. The Americanization of Europe, however, was threatening Europe without producing the benefits available to Americans. Americanization could only contribute to world unification if Europe was internally stable. Europe, he held, must not be absorbed by America.⁴⁹

Oddly enough, Ferrero thought that America would play an important part in restoring European goals. Even though America seemed to be the most materialistic of countries, he concluded that wealth in America was at least not false and inflated as it had become in Europe and Americans could be counted on to put their wealth to work for the higher purpose of improving the life of the entire nation. During Ferrero's first visit to the United States he concluded that American culture was not materialistic but rather dominated by a mystical concept of self-sacrifice for the betterment of the nation. Ferrero never abandoned his faith in America as the hope of western civilization.

Even in Ferrero's teleological view of history there was a large area left to the moral force of the will.

If the unifying forces of democracy and liberty were to be felt fully, then the electorate, those who exercise the great will, must act wisely. This electorate, Ferrero argued, was of two wills--the profound and permanent will which impels us towards the essential ends of our existence--our work, our family, our social role, large or small." On the other side is the "fleeting and capricious will . . . loves, hates, ambitions, rivalries, enthusiasms."⁵⁰ These two sides of will exist in the larger society and in each individual. The capricious electorate may direct a nation away from its "historic mission." History, once again, was directed by the will and nations were obliged to find ways of expressing their permanent will. Much of this was to be achieved with the aid of an elite of scientists and artists to protect morality and independent thought against the excesses of the state and the capricious electorate. Even without such an elite European culture was strong enough to survive the war and its aftermath. Until the new elite (aristocracy of culture) arose, however, it would be necessary to protect liberty from the dictatorship of "armed minorities . . . in the name of a narrow fanatical nationalism or of a new nation of universal goodness."⁵¹ With enough liberty, the proper institutional safeguards and the willingness to sacrifice for the larger group, Europe should be able to move out of the depths of the

war and away from dictatorship.

Liberty will be everywhere the surest collaborator with the elite which should always watch over the sovereign will of the people to see that it asserts itself under its "profound and permanent" form.⁵²

Liberty could function only in an atmosphere where individuals sacrificed their desires for the larger community and listened to the philosophic elite. Unfortunately, when Ferrero wrote these optimistic words his native Italy was under the fascist dictatorship and he was about to go into exile in Switzerland. The elite that he had in mind was quite different from the one that governed Italy in the 1920s and '30s.

FOOTNOTES

¹Guglielmo Ferrero, Militarism (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1972), pp. 12-13.

²Ibid., p. 13.

³Ibid., p. 47.

⁴Ibid., p. 50.

⁵Ferrero, The Principles of Power: The Great Political Crisis of History, trans. Theodore R. Jaeckel (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1942), pp. 30-33.

⁶Ibid., p. 38.

⁷John Thayer, Italy and the Great War (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), p. 390.

⁸Federico Chabod, "Croce storico," Rivista storica italiana, LXIV (1952), p. 521.

⁹Thayer, Italy, p. viii.

¹⁰Ferrero, La guerra europa: studi e discorsi (Milano: Rava & Co., 1915), p. 250.

¹¹Ferrero, Peace and War (London: Macmillan and Co., 1933), p. 240.

¹²Ferrero, La guerra europa, p. 126.

¹³Private correspondence. The above biographical information was derived from conversations between Mrs. Nina Raditsa, daughter of G. Ferrero, and the author on May 8, 1975.

¹⁴Alberic Cahuet, "Guglielmo Ferrero's Change of Heart," The Living Age, 313 (May 19, 1922), p. 400.

¹⁵Ferrero, La guerra europa, pp. 119-120.

¹⁶Ferrero, Who Wants the War (London: Oxford University Press, 1915), p. 38. Also Ferrero, Europe's Fateful Hour (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1918), p. 24.

¹⁷Ferrero, Europe's Fateful Hour, p. 215; idem, La guerra europa, p. 45.

¹⁸Idem, La guerra europa, p. 124.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 127.

²⁰Idem, Europe's Fateful Hour, p. vi.

²¹Ibid., p. 31.

²²Ibid., p. 33.

²³Ibid., p. 36.

²⁴Idem, Problems of Peace, From the Holy Alliance to the League of Nations: A Message from a European Writer to Americans (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1919), p. 107.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 197-98.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 264-65.

²⁷Idem, Europe's Fateful Hour, pp. 40-44.

²⁸Ibid., p. 47.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 183-84.

³⁰Ibid., p. 197.

³¹Ibid., p. 189.

³²Idem, New York American, March 28, 1915, p. CE-7.

³³Ibid., March 14, 1915, p. CE-5.

³⁴Ibid., March 28, 1915, p. CE-7.

³⁵Idem, La guerra europa, p. 162.

³⁶Idem, New York American, March 14, 1915, p. CE-5.

³⁷Idem, Words to the Deaf: An Historian Contemplates His Age, trans. Ben Ray Redman (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), pp. 141-42.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 3-4.

³⁹Ibid., p. 111.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 122.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 109-110.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 125-26.

⁴³Ibid., p. 28.

⁴⁴Charles A. Beard, Foreword to The Unity of the World (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1930), p. 8.

⁴⁵Ferrero, The Unity of the World, p. 15.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 30.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 58.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 120.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 128.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 91-92.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 186-87.

⁵²Ibid., p. 195.

CHAPTER VII

LEGITIMACY

Ferrero is most often associated with the concept of legitimacy. His formulations of the idea of legitimacy and its crucial importance for understanding the functioning of the modern state came shortly after World War I. His theory of a legitimate state suited the line of thought he had been developing before the war when he had formulated his theory of limits and the quality-quantity formula. The application of the theory of limits brought together Ferrero's belief about the necessity of moderation in all things and his belief that the political institutions were the most important forces in maintaining the cohesion of the entire society.

In brief, Ferrero saw legitimacy as a control on the expansionist and revolutionary tendencies of the state. Legitimate government had to have limited goals in its domestic and foreign relations. Also legitimacy had to encompass a principle of sovereignty, a mode of authority established by tradition and custom and accepted as legal by the vast majority of those who came under its control. For Ferrero the only legitimate principle that was both acceptable and workable in the twentieth century European

or American state was the sovereignty of the people, the modern democratic state.

Ferrero and Gaetano Salvemini, the famous Italian historian and anti-fascist, had argued the legitimacy question when the fascists first came to power. On the first Sunday after the March on Rome, October 26-30, the Ferrero family held an open house to which friends were invited to discuss the fascist rise to power. Salvemini arrived at the house to find Ferrero pounding on the table, declaring that a fascist government would have long-lasting and terrible consequences for Italy precisely because it was illegitimate. Salvemini urged his host to relax, prophesying that the new government would be short-lived and would also have to make certain accommodations to existing parliamentary government.¹ Ferrero believed that such accommodations were not possible. Salvemini, like many other socialists and liberals, came to see the accuracy of Ferrero's prediction.

From the inception of Mussolini's regime, Ferrero knew that the fascist government would never be restrained by the moribund parliamentary system. Many Italian intellectuals such as Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini, editors of La Voce, were converted to fascism. The dramatist Luigi Pirandello believed that fascism would be good for the arts. "There must be a Caesar and an Octavian for there to be a Virgil," he proclaimed.² No doubt he saw

himself as the Virgil. Even Croce believed he saw some good in fascism, at least until 1924. Mosca, and of course Salvemini, thought Ferrero excessive in his apprehensions for the future.

It was inevitable that Ferrero could not accept fascism. All of his thought up to 1922--his distaste for dictators and love of liberty, his belief in the qualitative, limited, and legitimate regime and his hopes for democracy--were antithetical to the new Italian government. The entire thrust of his thought alerted him early to the potential dangers of fascism. He believed that Il Duce could not possibly solve the problems of Italy in this age of popular sovereignty. Fascism was not simply an accidental deviation from the normal course of European history; it was a disease that had been incubating for a long time and would take a long time to cure. In contrast, Croce, who finally came to oppose fascism in 1925, never agreed that there was anything basically wrong with Italy or her institutions. This disease, as it was spoken of, was for him only a temporary and sudden illness in liberal Italy.³ Ferrero, on the other hand, argued, as did most traditional liberals such as Giustino Fortunato and Piero Gobetti, that fascism was the consequence of the natural development of the Italian state since 1870 and indeed, the development of all Europe since 1789.⁴ For them, Italy's problems had begun with the Napoleonic invasion

in 1796, the formation of the state, and the division of Italian society into two parts. Ultimately, Ferrero believed fascism would destroy the very state that had made its rise possible.⁵

Ferrero's active opposition to fascism began in 1923, the year the government took over the liberal journal Il Secolo for which he wrote as a political commentator. A letter of protest, addressed to the resigning editor, was published in the last issue of July 1923, signed by Ferrero and other journalists.⁶ Later, he joined the anti-fascist coalition formed by Giovanni Amendola, leader of the Constitutional Democrats. On July 20, 1925 Amendola was brutally beaten by a fascist group, never fully to recover. He died two years later at the age of forty-four, thereby depriving the organization of its best leadership. In spite of these setbacks, many intellectuals continued to make their protests known in writing, culminating in the famous "Battle of the Manifestos." In May 1925 Ferrero signed the Manifesto of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals drawn up by Croce in response to the fascist Manifesto written by Giovanni Gentile. Croce's manifesto was signed by numerous Italian intellectuals including Amendola, Gaetano Salvemini, Luigi Albertini, Adriano Tilgher, Gaetano Mosca and many others.⁷ Under the watchful eye of the fascists, Ferrero was prevented from continuing his political writing and so he

returned to his country home in Ulivello, near Florence. In the same year he was placed on the Florentine fascist list of enemies and his house slated for sacking.⁸ He was spared in the end only because his name was internationally known and the government wanted to avoid adverse publicity. He was not allowed to leave the country to accept invitations to speak in Geneva and the United States. The fact that he was prevented in August 1927 from attending a conference on population in Geneva became known abroad. The police harassed him with twenty-four hour surveillance around the house, following him everywhere and opening his mail. Guests were discouraged from visiting him and those who did were required to appear at party headquarters to reveal what Ferrero said to them. In May 1928 the matter of Ferrero's surveillance was raised in the Senate by Senator Ciccotti who argued that such police activity was expensive and unnecessary. Ciccotti asked why the government had prevented Ferrero from traveling abroad. The Undersecretary of State replied: "Because he would do there what the others are doing." Ciccotti asked, "Have you succeeded by such surveillance and such coercion in confining those who are now abroad and who seem to be giving you such annoyance?"⁹

Eventually, Ferrero sent his son Leo to Paris.¹⁰ His wife Gina and daughter Nina left Italy in the Spring of 1930 at the personal request of the king of Belgium,

who was a friend of the family and who was in Italy for a family wedding. Ferrero was invited to teach at the University of Geneva. Finally, in the Spring of 1931, he was given permission to leave the country and was joined by his family in Geneva where he began his long-desired teaching career at the age of sixty. He spent the remaining twelve years of his life waiting and teaching history. His home in Geneva was a popular meeting place for other Italian exiles and anti-fascists. Count Carlo Sforza, fellow exile and former foreign minister in Giolitti's cabinet, described Ferrero's life in exile.

At Geneva not only did he inspire admiration for Italian thought, but he maintained as well a center of welcome and understanding among all Italians in exile, for that was what his house in the upper part of the city became--the old Turrentini Palace, built in the sixteenth century by other Italians who, like Ferrero, had preferred exile to the denial of their religious ideas. Also the exiled, the persecuted, the people of Italy, knew for years that at the Ferreros' there was always a bed for them and a place at the table. For Ferrero, purified by grief, with this great kindness equaled only by the angelic kindness of his wife, Gina, had learned this in Geneva, that it is not the giving that counts, but the manner of giving.¹¹

Most of the political refugees from Italy settled in Paris or London. A few, like Salvemini, came to the United States. Ferrero decided to settle in Geneva away from the center of anti-fascist political activity. Life in Geneva offered him the opportunity to teach at a university, thus providing a steady income to support his family, writing and research. It was close to Italy and

thus he was frequently visited by old friends. His French was fluent, therefore the language presented no barrier. Ferrero probably found himself happier in Geneva than he had expected, certainly better off financially than he had been in years although he did often complain of missing the wine vineyards in his old country home.

Ferrero had not published any historical or political material since 1924. During those years he had turned to fiction, a direction which gave rise to a four-volume novel entitled Civilization and Barbarism. The sudden shift to fiction, no doubt, had to do with the fact that his traditional literary outlets were cut off. But he claimed that there were other factors at work. He welcomed the challenge of fiction, which he had briefly tried some years earlier and had put aside. Now that he was attempting fiction in earnest, he saw a connection, even a continuum, between his earlier history and the novels. For him, history had always been "the active expression of the inner self." "I had taken," he explained, "historical research with the purpose of investigating the working of ethical forces, together with the emotions that animate individuals and multitudes alike."¹² Looking back, he believed that the history of ancient Rome had provided the material for presenting the complexity and depth of the human emotions, for bringing history to life. He said

he did not finish his history of Rome because he had learned all he could about history. One century of Roman history revealed all time. Also, he concluded that the most fruitful study of ethics was an analysis of the lives of individuals and not groups. Social history was no longer of any interest to him. He turned to fiction when he decided that it was the genre most suited to the ethical lives of individuals.

The time came when I felt the need to test my intellectual and ethical postulates through the study of the individual conscience, and I realized then that this could be achieved only through a work of fiction in which I could describe the conduct, not the historic personages, but imaginative creations.¹³

His novels were ethical works set in late nineteenth century Rome. The connections between history and fiction, between the individual and the group, between action and thought, were the bases of the continuous struggles of the individual.

Just before Ferrero turned to fiction he managed to loose one last written attack on fascism. It too was not without intellectual and ethical postulates and references to the crisis of individual conscience. It was a collection of essays he had written between 1919 and 1923 on the decline of parliamentary government and the rise of fascism. The work accurately chronicled the events of the fascist takeover and also correctly predicted the course the new government would take. Here he

expressed the opinion that Mussolini and the fascists were products of the failures of the pre-1914 liberal parliamentary government in which personal government, exaggerated beyond any control, was now moving to its logical conclusions. He seemed to be almost as angry at the failures of the liberals as at the fascists. The liberals had not been strong enough in resisting King Humbert's attempted reshaping of democracy into "dictatorial parliamentarism." The king had attempted to corrupt the sovereignty of the people with one-man rule, using the courts and his personal party following to reduce the effectiveness of parliament.

The worst corruption, however, came from within the parliament itself. Prime Ministers Depretis, Crispi and Giolitti continued to dominate parliament through the use of personal rule. Giolitti proposed universal suffrage while also attempting to hinder the parties and refusing to come to terms with the ineffective Senate. In effect, Italy was ruled by an oligarchy.¹⁴ Democracy became a reality only briefly in 1919 when the socialists and Popular party joined the government and spoke for the people. Ferrero called for the reform of the Senate, labeling it anachronistic and belonging to the period of Louis Philippe. After the war, social disorder continued, culminating in the factory occupations of 1920. Prime Ministers Nitti and Giolitti were unable to control the

volatile Fiume occupation, which in turn led to more government chaos and ineffectiveness. In order to gain control of the situation, Giolitti foolishly formed an alliance between his liberal followers and the fascists against the Popular party and the socialists. This was his fatal mistake.

Mussolini, Ferrero claimed, was the direct successor to the political practices of the previous liberal Prime Ministers Giolitti, Crispi and Depretis. The prewar personal government was restored and parliament once again became a tool of the prime minister. Ferrero contended that Mussolini had won the election of April 1924 through extorting parliament, beating up candidates and manipulation at the polls, all methods not unknown in the prewar days. The fascist government would be weak, he said, because "all personal governments are weak."¹⁵ At the very least its legitimacy was doubtful. As a dictator Mussolini would eventually become the prisoner of his friends, ministers, and officers. Furthermore, his talk of empire at a time when the great age of Europe had ended could result only in disappointment and failure.

Ferrero saw how the old liberals and the fascists had contributed to the continuous process of undermining and corrupting democracy.¹⁶ Yet for him the origins of fascism were to be sought even further back in history. The antecedents extended to the Napoleonic invasion of

1796, the destruction of the ancient regime, and the division of Italian society into two parts--one that looked to the order of the past and the revolutionary elements that looked to the future. That division remained in Italian culture and society. The advent of industrial society and its propensity towards continuous expansion and material progress further divided all of European culture. Even as Italy was becoming united politically under one central government, that government was itself divided between its old and new forms. Both dictatorial and democratic parts were giving way to caesarism, another long-range contribution to the fascist takeover.

At the base of fascism, according to Ferrero, was caesarism, the rule of a despot, the military hero. Caesarism has long existed in Europe, manifested in the terror of the French Revolution, in the "asiatic spirit" of the Catholic Church, and, more pointedly, in Napoleon, the Jacobin lay despot who led the new French state into twenty years of terrible warfare. Fascism was a continuation, an extension of this despotic and militaristic outlook. It was the continuation of decadent European monarchy.

The concept of caesarism was for Ferrero no longer what it had been in his early writings, Militarism and Young Europe, the primary force that opposed the consolidation of the working class. In Young Europe Ferrero had

written, "Caesarism is rule by the class that does not represent the productive worker."¹⁷ By the end of World War I, the concept was no longer associated in his mind with a party or group. Caesarism became simply one-man rule by a strong leader, the caesar, Napoleon, or monarch.

Fascism, while inheriting many aspects of prewar government, also inherited the monarchical aspects of the Italian king who had stayed on after the formation of parliamentary government as a powerful force behind the scenes. The real government was "the old absolute monarchy" in conjunction with the bureaucracy, while parliament was merely the visible government.¹⁸ With World War I the effectiveness of the monarchy had been destroyed, while the reality of dictatorship had continued. Parliament had renewed power but was afraid to use it and the people called out for more parliamentary authority.¹⁹ But the kind of authority based on one-man rule was bound to be weak. What had been true of Crispi, Depretis, and Giolitti would be even more true of Mussolini, Ferrero predicted. In the postwar world dictatorship no longer worked.

Mussolini was simply another dictator in the tradition of Caesar and Napoleon, a living anachronism. Fascism was another authoritarian form of government that had asserted itself in Europe. The breakdown of the old monarchical authority, the failure of monarchy to adjust to the

new realities of popular rule and democracy, led to the sudden collapse of monarchies in World War I. Fascism was the new authority which filled the vacuum.

For the past hundred years, there had been two principles of government in Europe--authoritarian and democratic. The authoritarian government was becoming less and less acceptable to the general populace and hence less legitimate. Fascism belonged to the authoritarian form, thereby making it less legitimate than the democratic. It was also revolutionary and for that reason too it was illegitimate. War, revolution, and coup d'etat could not create legitimate governments, and fascism, a product of these upheavals, could never be legitimate.

Ferrero summarized the essence of his formulation on legitimacy in the following questions:

Who has the right to command and within what limits? Who has the right to obey, and up to what point? That is the first of all problems raised by man's life on earth, for all the others are dependent upon it.²⁰

In other words, how much political and intellectual freedom were the people to be allowed.²¹ The political problem of balancing liberty and coercion could be solved, or at least made workable, Ferrero believed, by the use of major principles or guidelines upon which all members of society agreed. Of these major principles, legitimacy was the most important.

First, legitimate government had both the right

and the power to rule. The right derived from the ruled, those who placed their faith in the belief that the rulers were qualified by talent, virtue, heredity, or any combination of these. "A government is therefore legitimate if the power is conferred and exercised according to principles and rules accepted without discussion by those who must obey," Ferrero wrote in the last work published during his lifetime, The Principles of Power.²²

The consent of the ruled constituted, in Ferrero's mind, an elemental form of social contract, legitimacy being its crucial test. Such a relationship between the rulers and the ruled came into existence at the moment when the government was accepted as legitimate. "The principles of legitimacy are only varying forms of this implied contract, among which the government and the governed of whatever country and epoch may choose."²³ The principles determined how power was to be used. They carried an implied willingness to live by rules that had been set down. When one or both parties to the contract no longer accepted these principles, legitimacy was lost, the contract was broken and chaos rushed in to fill the void.

Although this social contract may seem to resemble Rousseau's, Ferrero considered it to be quite different. Rousseau's analysis, according to Ferrero, was incorrect in that society was not created by a contract. First, man had to develop in a social setting and only when he con-

sciously created a government was a contract created. Also the principles of legitimacy, as Ferrero conceived them, were not possible without the previous existence of both society and government.

Legitimacy rested on the "great will," the consent of the people. Ferrero believed that Rousseau was much too rigid in his conception of the great will, not allowing the possibility of a working government of either the monarchical form or the representative variety. Rousseau, he believed, did not respect the rights of minorities and those in opposition. Ferrero was especially sensitive to this issue as a member of the opposition in Italy. He interpreted Rousseau to mean that the general will was achieved by fitting one's personal ambitions and thoughts into the mold of the majority. Freedom came from wanting what the majority wanted. Ferrero believed that Rousseau had sought not only a new morality but also a new religion.

The general will is an absolute, religious in character. It can be discovered only by the mind, when the latter is in a state of grace, to use a religious term. And the political state of grace required to discover the general will consists in freeing ourselves of specific desires that each of us may possess as an individual, in order to preserve only the general will he possesses as a citizen.²⁴

Ultimately, Ferrero asserted, Rousseau had created a revolutionary doctrine that denied the possibility of

practical and workable government. Complete agreement of all citizens which was required in Rousseau's theory was not humanly possible.²⁵

Ferrero's own conception of the "great will" as a practical and useful reflection of society's desires made legitimacy possible even in a somewhat imperfect form. A government could be legitimate if the rights of the people were respected and a representative democracy with a majority and opposition was allowed to function. In short, whereas Rousseau's interpretation of the general will was that the citizen had to acquiesce externally and internally, for Ferrero, the majority must obey while leaving room for minority dissension. Furthermore, according to Ferrero, the individual retained his freedom of thought. Ferrero feared, as J. H. Talmon later did, that Rousseau's doctrine ultimately would lead to the totalitarian mentality. Indeed, Talmon believed that Rousseau was largely responsible for initiating totalitarian democracy by merging the general will with the principle of popular sovereignty.²⁶

One should not think, however, that Rousseau and Ferrero were adversaries on these matters. After all, Ferrero also believed in the creation of the new moral man who would control his desires for the welfare of the

community. He believed that man should limit his wants, seek goals outside and larger than himself, and live ascetically. By ascetic living he meant that one must reduce one's material wants and live within the bounds of a rigorous moral code. It was only through such individual practices, as he saw it, that legitimate government could be restored in Italy and the rest of Europe. Rousseau's "religion" was perhaps more encompassing and rigid but not essentially different from Ferrero's. The major point was that Ferrero required legitimate government to protect the rights of the opposition as the second principle of democracy, the first principle being that those in opposition must obey the law.

All principles of legitimacy were slow in being accepted and all were, to some extent, irrational and unjust. The period of time before a government was accepted was called the pre-legitimate stage. For example, the Weimar Republic was not legitimate because it was not accepted by many Germans. Legitimacy was more a "question of emotion" than doctrine. Also, in spite of all the doctrinal and religious supports of a government, that government still had to satisfy certain basic human needs in order to maintain the loyalty of the people. When doubt was created in the minds of citizens, the legitimacy of a

government began to wane. Ethical considerations were vital to the question of legitimacy.

Ferrero posited four principles of legitimacy: the elective, the democratic, the aristocratic (or aristocratic), and the hereditary. These principles were based partially on reason, but much about them was absurd. The hereditary principle was especially absurd, although it was effective because it maintained continuity and a sense of order. A strictly utilitarian definition of legitimacy was not acceptable to Ferrero who believed that the government's actions had to be confirmed by the people whose motives were not strictly practical and useful. The government had to be able to reduce rational and irrational fears.

Since monarchy was a real part of Italian government and closely related to the rise of fascism, Ferrero gave a good deal of attention to monarchy as a principle of legitimacy. Hereditary monarchy, the form that became dominant in western Europe, did not become a truly legitimate form of government until the Middle Ages when the Christian sanctification of marriage permitted a secure and unquestioned formula for the succession of one monarch by a member of his own immediate family. Once the hereditary principle was established, monarchy could guarantee a reasonable amount of stability and continuity.

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries monarchies were having difficulty maintaining their control. They resorted either to emphasizing the absolutist quality of monarchy, as in the case of France, or to giving up some power to constitutional parliaments, as in the case of England. Both methods were insufficient to the needs of the times. French absolutism ended in the upheaval of the French Revolution. The attempt to restore the monarchy after the Napoleonic wars resulted in the inadequate citizen-king Louis Philippe, a compromise that Ferrero considered quasi-legitimate and an unrealistic solution to the problem of establishing a workable government. The monarchical principle in the nineteenth century was not equal to the task of confronting the rise of the quantitative, industrial, mass society based upon the democratic principle.

Ferrero focused on the Louis Philippe monarchical compromise precisely because he believed that it was this form of rule that had been adopted by the Latin countries.²⁷ The dying remnants of quasi-legitimate monarchy lingered on in Italy, preventing a truly democratic state from emerging, and ending in decadence and finally fascist rule. It was the decline of the monarchical principle and the slow rise of the democratic principle that opened the way to the new dictatorship of violence and coercion.

In systematizing his typology of government,

Ferrero divided each form into legitimate and illegitimate varieties. Illegitimate government was by its very nature revolutionary. It was one in which power was derived from force and fear and not from the consent of the people. The most outrageous cases of illegitimate government in the past 180 years had been caused by the unwillingness of revolutionary governments to accept democratic principles at a time in history when the rights of the popular majority should have been taken into consideration. Rule strictly by the few was no longer possible in western Europe or America.

Ferrero recognized that democracy also had some difficulties and inherent problems. He always favored what he called the qualitative civilization, the civilization that maintained high cultural and ethical standards. But the emphasis on the qualitative civilization seemed to be in contradiction to his support for equalitarian democracy. Ferrero maintained that both quality and quantity were possible, at least in politics. Likening democracy to the railroad, he said that he would not outlaw the railroad even though it had done more to spread the triumph of quantity and the ruin of tradition than anything else. The railroad could be kept under control. The same could be done for democracy. Left to itself, democracy could become anarchy, but this did not have to occur.²⁸

The inevitable push of democracy, though fraught with

dangers, as Tocqueville pointed out, could become the positive force, the legitimate principle, that would make fascism impossible.

Ferrero did not accept the idea that such participation on the part of the majority had been made possible by the revolutions of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He argued instead that such revolutions had created instability and illegitimacy, the worst example of the past two hundred years being the French Revolution, which had imposed the will of a small minority on the majority of the French people. Although the revolution had opened the way to certain liberties, it violated two basic principles of legitimate democracy: free elections and majority rule.²⁹

Totalitarianism, a term that came into extensive use in Italy in 1925,³⁰ was for Ferrero a completely revolutionary form of government in which the ruling minority, being keenly aware of its illegitimacy, worked even harder to defend its revolutionary principles and would resort to the most extreme form of repression. "Totalitarianism is merely the most complete outward form of fear that gnaws revolutionary government."³¹

A similar line of reasoning was taken by J. L. Talmon in The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy, in which he contended that modern totalitarianism had its origins in the eighteenth century and especially in the French

Revolution. More accurately, he theorized that there existed two types of democracy stemming from the same source: "empirical and liberal democracy" and "totalitarian Messianic democracy."³² Ferrero would have agreed with Talmon that totalitarianism and revolution were a natural combination. In his own mind, however, Ferrero had married popular sovereignty and legitimacy and therefore would not have concluded that the sovereignty of the people could be totalitarian except in those cases where the rights of the minority had been violated. Revolution and totalitarianism meant violating the will of the people. The fascist government in 1922-23 was caught between imposing its will by force or attempting to become legitimate by working through parliament. The first alternative, "a Government of pure force," would require a real revolution, overthrowing the existing parliament and the crown. The second alternative was not possible either because parliament had been violated, its rules altered, and its authority undermined in the eyes of many voters.³³ Ferrero could only guess in 1923 that fascism would take the more revolutionary course. In 1924, with the Matteotti murder, fascism entered what is usually referred to as its totalitarian phase.

A revolutionary or totalitarian government could never become legitimate. Such a government had to be aggressive in foreign affairs in order to draw attention

away from its lack of legitimacy. Revolution could never bestow the respectability needed to found a dynasty, as Napoleon discovered during the course of his campaigns. Revolutionary and totalitarian governments were the historical consequence of the fact that the monarchical principle in Europe no longer carried enough authority while the newer democratic principle had not yet achieved full respectability.

Some governments were quasi-legitimate, neither legitimate in the sense of Louis XVIII nor illegitimate as in the case of Napoleon. This meant they could count on a certain amount of loyalty and were not fearful to their subjects. Louis Philippe was neither republican nor monarchical and hence was in limbo. Metternich understood this situation. Such governments had the partial respect and confidence of their people and could rule for a while without fear. Legitimacy was the attempt to remove fear from human affairs.³⁴ "In short, a legitimate government is a power that has lost its fear as far as possible because it has learned to depend as much as it can on active or passive consent and to reduce proportionately the use of force."³⁵

Ferrero recognized that fascism would engender more and more fear and instability and was therefore bound to be revolutionary. In an article printed as early as September, 1922 and reprinted in Four Years of Fascism,

he predicted that the fascists, as revolutionaries, would not establish a legitimate government and that a return to parliamentary government was inevitable. Revolutionary fascism functioned through the establishment of duplicate and parallel institutions alongside but superseding the already existing democratic ones. For example, the fascist grand council established in December, 1922 paralleled and rendered useless the regular Italian parliament and the fascist national militia assumed the authority of the regular police.³⁶ Government became the creature of the financiers while the middle class supplied the manpower.

A parliamentary democracy with a small private army in its midst, at the disposition of one party, is an absurdity which cannot have a long life. . . . This small army is the grain of dust amid the springs and wheels of a watch, which stops it. That watch is the Constitution. So long as this small army dominates so large a part of the nation, the State will be a watch which will not go.³⁷

Of interest also is Ferrero's statement about the nature and limitation of the modern state.

Place no trust either in the axe or the fasces, or the other instrumenta regni related to them, such as the gallows. The modern state has not too little but too much power, too many arms, too much money; that is why it is so dangerous to itself and to the rest. What it is short of is intelligence, wisdom, justice, rectitude, dignity, moderation, modesty; and, because of that, authority. The more it abounds in arms and money, the worse use it will make of them. When people tell you that they want to see the state strong, answer that you want to see it intelligent, wise, just, and authoritative.³⁸

Fascism, Ferrero concluded, was the direct descendent of both decadent monarchical institutions and of authoritarian government. It was also revolutionary in that authoritarian rule violated the essential and accepted principle of democratic government. Fascism did not have to resort to violence to be revolutionary; it simply subverted parliamentary government by establishing its own authoritarian institutions. It was by its very nature illegitimate and unstable and could not develop into an acceptable form of government by modifying itself as many thoughtful people had hoped.

Ferrero's concept of legitimacy developed out of his previous ideas about the character of a stable society. The undermining of established government was only one of the problems of decadence that interested him. He was originally concerned with the advancement and decay of societies. Positivist training led him to believe that he could find the principles of such progress and decline in society. Legitimacy was only one in a list of related principles that he had experimented with throughout his long career. He went through a series of unifying principles designed to explain social change, the rise and decline of societies, never doubting that societies could be measured in such ways. Beginning with generational ambition, moving on to his concept of decadence, caesarism, and finally legitimacy, he attempted to identify the single

most important principle that could serve as a social law. Of course, by the time he arrived at his principles of legitimacy, he was no longer as concerned with the explanation of social laws. In fact, legitimacy was more of a prescription than an explanation of social dynamics. If government followed such and such principles they could expect sound rule to result. Also, his social explanations for events became more and more politically oriented over the years.

All of his principles from generational ambition to legitimacy were interrelated. They all implied that the solution to social ills had to do with the limiting of individual desires or ambitions. The ambitions of the younger and more affluent generation had to be checked by the stricter code of personal behavior set down by the older generation. On the larger scale, societal decadence was often the result of society's inability to check the ambitions of men who no longer wished to abide by the old restraints. Caesarism, for example, was not simply monarchy, but rather a despotism that had pushed the law to one side. Illegitimacy resulted when political leaders flouted the existing, and often unwritten, constitutional or contractual relations between the rulers and the ruled. Illegitimacy was revolutionary despotism, the situation in which the will of one or a few was imposed on the unaccepting majority. In order to have their way the rulers

had to obscure the existing law, thereby becoming revolutionary. In so doing, their position became less tenable, not more secure, and they were forced to resort to violence in order to maintain their lawless regime. The will of the majority had to be the will to subordinate individual desires to the needs of the group without, of course, violating basic liberties. This balance between coercion and liberty was certainly of major concern to Ferrero. However, what must be emphasized is that he sought the solution in the normal restraint of each person. He believed that the proper balance would only be fully achieved when the general will exercised itself in the form of a universal ascetic movement. Although he was never very specific on the matter, the ascetic movement seemed to be the one type of revolutionary movement that he would consider legitimate. Asceticism was revolutionary because it rejected the materialist ideas of modern society. Revolutionary asceticism would be legitimate, presumably because it would constitute the will of the people and would therefore constitute a new principle of legitimacy.

Legitimacy is often considered a conservative principle in contrast to popular sovereignty. Because of Ferrero's identification with the concept of legitimacy, he is often considered a political conservative. Ignazio Silone, the novelist, called him "the poet of conservative

anguish in an epoch of transition."³⁹ Silone understood Ferrero's complaints about contemporary world problems, but as a Marxist he could not agree with Ferrero's analysis of the root cause or the proposed solutions. Silone's judgments of Ferrero were not untypical. Certainly, there was much that Ferrero wished to preserve and there was much regret over the loss of old values in the new industrial society. But Ferrero had strong democratic inclinations. The future of the democratic republic concerned him more than the past. His originality lay in his ability to associate the concept of legitimacy with the popular will. Legitimacy, the force of stability in society, the force that traditionally resisted change, was not connected to the sovereign people as the source of that stability in Europe.

Ferrero believed that democracy was the only viable principle of legitimacy in the twentieth century. He claimed that he had rediscovered the importance of legitimacy as a key concept in the political vocabulary of nations. But legitimacy as a viable concept seemed, in the eyes of professional politicians and political scientists of the 1920s, hopelessly outdated. In the European world of realpolitik, it was considered part of the past. Legitimacy was replaced in the vocabulary of political science by the concept of stability or authority. Ferrero used the older term and then claimed originality

for his thought. What he was reviving was a greater emphasis on morality in politics and all other aspects of modern life. Legitimacy was the political support or backbone of this political and moral authority. Much of the problem with modern society, he believed, was the breakdown of authority. Due to the disruption of society by revolution and industrialization, people no longer had a sense of loyalty and obedience. Force had replaced authority. Legitimacy was to restore the balance by being useful and, at the same time, providing a moral standard.

Legitimacy implied a moral standard or value judgment, which the more contemporary term, stability, did not. Only recently has Henry Kissinger reintroduced the term legitimacy, which he briefly analyzed in his A World Restored.⁴⁰ Kissinger, who was familiar with Ferrero's work, has attempted to reconsider similar ideas in international relations.⁴¹ Structures of government for Ferrero could only be of two types: legitimate and revolutionary. Kissinger used the same categories to describe the two possible international structures. Kissinger has maintained this distinction to the present day.⁴² International peace or stability occurs when nations operate within a given set of rules and when there is a distribution of power among reasonably satisfied nations. For example, an illegitimate condition occurred in Europe when Germany refused to accept the Versailles Treaty after World

War I.

Peace and stability exist when these nations agree on a suitable form of legitimacy. In Kissinger's words, legitimacy "means no more than an international agreement about the nature of workable arrangements and about the permissible aims and methods of foreign policy."⁴³ He believes that American foreign policy must include some clear definition of "political legitimacy" and that the first problem in international relations is a "psychological and moral" one, that is, the creation of a consensus among nations as to what can and cannot be done. Such a consensus must not simply be among those persons who serve in government but also among the populace of a nation.⁴⁴

Kissinger and Ferrero drank from the same well, the lessons of diplomacy taught by the principals at the Congress of Vienna. They shared similar opinions about the impact of the French Revolution and about the importance of seeking limited goals in both foreign and domestic relations. A quotation from Kissinger illustrates their overlapping views:

Our period has seen the culmination of a process started by the French Revolution; the basing of governmental legitimacy on popular support. Even totalitarian regimes are aberrations of a democratic legitimacy; they depend on popular consensus even when they manufacture it through propaganda and pressure. In such a situation, the consensus is decisive; limitations of tradition are essentially

essentially irrelevant. It is an ironic result of the democratization of politics that it has enabled states to marshal even more resources for their competition.⁴⁵

Kissinger agreed with Ferrero's historical analysis that a breakdown of traditional limitations had occurred since the French Revolution, that traditional limits no longer prevailed. There are, however, some important distinctions between their views of legitimacy. Kissinger believes that political legitimacy is not concerned with justice, and his "morality" is of an eminently utilitarian and practical variety. He is also closer to Talmon in arguing that popular democracy can, by degrees, be distorted and extended into a form of totalitarian democracy. Because of the awesome power of the modern state, democracy can be overcome and, indeed, can aid totalitarian rule. Ferrero saw democracy and totalitarian rule as antithetical forms, the latter being related to monarchy and revolution. Even more important, a legitimate government was a just government and Ferrero was much more openly moralistic and teleological.⁴⁶ Hereditary, aristocratic, and monarchical institutions were not transcendent and just; they were utilitarian and weak.

For Ferrero all problems were ultimately moral issues. His approach followed the tradition of Mazzini and numerous other Italian intellectuals who were so deeply imbued with a humanistic heritage that stretched back to the Renaissance. Mazzini had seen the task of modern

society as being the "moral education," if not a religious education, of its people.⁴⁷ He saw enlightenment as necessary to the creation of the republican state. Republicans like Ferrero continued this line of thought and the tradition of the professional moralist, critic of political and social morality.

The concept of legitimacy helped Ferrero confront fascist claims with a clear, firm moral and political critique. He saw that as an illegitimate government, as a revolutionary government that relied on force, there was no way it could be assimilated into traditional parliamentary democracy in spite of the fact that the fascists claimed to represent order against the radical left. Fascism represented the worst aspects of the prewar quasi-legitimate Italian government, the corruption, paternalism, personal party structure, lack of respect for existing institutions and law. Only fascism had gone one step further, pushing aside the facade and becoming openly revolutionary.⁴⁸

The virtue of Ferrero's interpretation was the placing of fascism in a context of historical and political events. He uniquely attempted to uncover the origins of fascism in both the monarchical and revolutionary traditions and to resolve the contradictions. As an historian it was a natural consequence of his methodology and perspective to view fascism as a long-range development

stemming from distant events such as the French Revolution and the absolute monarchy of the eighteenth century. His association of monarchy with the modern dictator was unabashedly straightforward. Yet there were few intellectual authors who drew the same relationship. It was commonly accepted that fascism was an entirely new phenomena. Ferrero stressed continuity of events over change and his simplification obscured the complexity of fascism. Other intellectuals used the term totalitarianism to signify the differences between traditional dictatorship and what they perceived to be the new form of the twentieth century. Ferrero chose to fit totalitarianism into his definition by emphasizing its continuity with older political forms. Once again he sacrificed the unique qualities of contemporary events to his formulation.

In his concentration on legitimacy, revolution, and caesarism, Ferrero did not place much, if any, emphasis on other aspects of fascism that have received attention from historians. For one, he ignored the relationship between nationalism and the rise of fascism. He touched only slightly on the class origins of fascism, a subject that presently is receiving much attention. Ferrero missed the fact that fascism, despite its claims, was really not a totalitarian regime and, while revolutionary in intention, did not live up to its boasts.⁴⁹ Further, he took no cognizance of the idea that fascism was the transforma-

tion of market and organized capitalism.⁵⁰ In short, fascism was seen in traditional terms as a more extreme variation on old themes and not as a new phenomena. It was the old struggle of political liberty against the ever-present tyranny.

Political liberty and popular sovereignty, necessary for modern society, were the principles he wanted to defend. The restoration of these values was the challenge facing Italy. Above all, it was not just an economic or political challenge but rather one in which the people had to act collectively and courageously to restore their own liberties.⁵¹ Part of the solution would require the balance of the quantitative and potentially leveling nature of democracy with the qualitative aspects of life. While it was not mentioned in Democracy in Italy, Ferrero had suggested elsewhere that part of the solution also included the creation of an elite of artists and scientists, not unlike St. Simon's or even Plato's intellectual elite, whose moral and intellectual influence would guide the democracy away from danger. To his belief in the great will, he superimposed the guiding gentle voice of the intellectual who would speak to the receptive and perceptive electorate.

A major task of this cultural elite was to create new limits in a world that had dissolved its old bonds and would take into consideration the interests of all classes.

Its task was to create and defend the moral standards of the society. Political liberty, which itself resulted from a break with older political limits, had to be safeguarded as the first line of defense against further erosion of social and cultural life. But the elite was not in itself the final answer.

Sovereignty of the people, liberty, and cultural elites could only do so much in the face of man's basic imperfectibility. Ferrero had given up any notion of the perfectibility but not the improvement of man. Society could not progress very far without experiencing setbacks. Each generation, as Kierkegaard said, must live through its own errors, usually the same errors as the previous generation. Ferrero had exchanged his earlier view of progress in history for one of cyclical change based on the fallibility and corruptibility of human nature. To the extent that man was perfectible, it was through moral insight and strength of the will.⁵²

His form of advancement, suited to the moral development of man in history, was out of step with the modern assumptions about technological, economic, and industrial progress. Ferrero believed such progress was too narrowly conceived and too restricted to material development. Material progress, as he saw it, was a source of spiritual discontent. He had said as much as far back as 1910 in "The Life After This." Fortune and

success were illusions that led to unhappiness. Every desire fulfilled led to a new desire. This was true even of the most important needs. Man had to work for a goal he could not achieve, something outside of himself.⁵³

Ferrero thought that the goal of establishing and maintaining legitimate government was one that could encompass the needs of the individual for a higher purpose beyond himself. In his mind, legitimacy was associated with the "good society" and in that sense embraced values that were worthy in and of themselves. Studied over a long period of time, legitimacy revealed the moral health of a society whether it was on the rise or decline. Legitimacy was a control, one sense of order in the all-important limits in domestic and international relations. It reflected the moral restraint required of national leaders in conducting political affairs. Whether legitimacy would be able to save the western democracies from what he perceived to be perilous conditions was a question he could not answer.

FOOTNOTES

¹Private correspondence. Conversation between Mrs. Nina Raditsa, daughter of G. Ferrero, and the author on May 8, 1975.

²Alastair Hamilton, The Appeal of Fascism: A Study of Intellectuals and Fascism 1919-1945 (New York: Avon Books, 1971), p. 71.

³John Diggins, Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 370.

⁴Hamilton, The Appeal, p. 89.

⁵Ferrero, La democrazia in Italia: studi e precisioni (Milano: Rassauna Internazionale, 1925), pp. 113-14.

⁶Mario Borsa, Memorie di un redivivo (Roma: Rizzoli, 1945), p. 424.

⁷Hamilton, The Appeal, p. 89.

⁸Gaetano Salvemini, "Such Things Happen," Neither Bread Nor Liberty: The Meaning and Tragedy of Fascism, ed. Frances Keene (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, rev. ed., 1969), p. 122.

⁹Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁰Mario Borsa, preface in Ferrero's Young Europe (Milano: Garzanti, rev. ed., 1946), p. xviii.

¹¹Carlo Sforza, Contemporary Italy: Its Intellectual and Moral Origins, trans. Drake and Denise DeKay (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1944), p. 329.

¹²Aldo Sorani, "Ferrero Turns Novelist," The Living Age, 329 (May 22, 1926), p. 412.

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¹⁴Ferrero, Four Years of Fascism, trans. E. W. Dickes (London: P. S. King and Sons Ltd., 1924), p. 27.

- ¹⁵Ibid., p. 132.
- ¹⁶Ibid., pp. 123-124.
- ¹⁷Idem, Young Europe (Milano: Fratelli Treves, 1896), p. 418.
- ¹⁸Idem, La democrazia, pp. 13-15.
- ¹⁹Ibid., pp. 26-28.
- ²⁰Idem, Words to the Deaf: A Historian Contemplates His Age, trans. Ben Ray Redman (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), p. 99.
- ²¹Idem, The Unity of the World, trans. Howard Coxe (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1930), p. 187.
- ²²Idem, The Principles of Power: The Great Political Crisis of History, trans. Theodore R. Jaeckel (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), p. 135.
- ²³Ibid., p. 42.
- ²⁴Ibid., pp. 58-59.
- ²⁵Ibid., p. 64.
- ²⁶J. L. Talmon, The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy (London: Mercury Books, 1960), p. 43
- ²⁷Ferrero, The Principles, p. 162.
- ²⁸Idem, La democrazia, p. 135.
- ²⁹Idem, The Principles, p. 190.
- ³⁰Adrian Lyttelton, The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy 1919-1929 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), p. 269.
- ³¹Ferrero, The Principles, p. 198.
- ³²Talmon, The Origins, p. 1.
- ³³Ferrero, Four Years of Fascism, pp. 98-99.
- ³⁴Idem, The Principles, p. 279.
- ³⁵Ibid., p. 41.

³⁶ Four Years of Fascism, p. 91; Lyttleton, The Seizure of Power, pp. 104-05.

³⁷ Ferrero, Four Years of Fascism, p. 100.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 115-16.

³⁹ Ignazio Silone, "Ferrero and the Decline of Civilization," Partisan Review IX (Sept.-Oct. 1942), p. 380.

⁴⁰ Henry A. Kissinger, A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace 1812-22 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), p. 1.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 341.

⁴² Stephen Graubard, Portrait of a Mind (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1974), p. 17.

⁴³ Kissinger, A World Restored, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Idem, American Foreign Policy (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1974),

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 54-55.

⁴⁶ Ferrero, The Principles, p. 135.

⁴⁷ Benedetto Croce, A History of Italy 1871-1915, trans. Cecilia M. Ady (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 73.

⁴⁸ Ferrero, La democrazia, p. 98.

⁴⁹ Roland Sarti, "Politics and Ideology in Fascist Italy," Modern Italy, eds. E. R. Tannenbaum and E. P. Noether (New York: New York University Press, 1974), pp. 55, 75.

⁵⁰ Lyttleton, The Seizure of Power, p. 202.

⁵¹ Ferrero, La democrazia, p. 82.

⁵² Giuseppe Santonastaso, "La notion de decadence chez les penseurs politiques de l'Italie au XX^e siècle: Ferrero, Orlando, Pareto, Mosca," Guglielmo Ferrero: Histoire et politique au XX^e siècle, eds. L. Salvatorelli, P. Treves, et al. (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1966), p. 69.

⁵³ Ferrero, "The Life After This," In After Days: Thoughts on the Future Life, eds. W. D. Howells et al. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1910), pp. 189, 191.

CHAPTER VIII

HISTORY AND THE MORAL CRISIS OF THE AGE

Ferrero believed that he had an advantage over most historians of the previous century. They had written about the French Revolution but had not lived through it. He, at least, had lived through the revolutionary upheavals of postwar Italy and he therefore knew revolution at first hand. He had experienced the oppressive fascist regime and had been forced to flee.

When in 1930, I was obliged to take the path of exile, I had discovered the fundamental meaning of that word, "revolution," which our age had so abused, and I carried away with me the key to the gigantic revolutionary hoax of which the Western world has been the victim for 150 years.¹

Increasingly he became convinced that the French Revolution and revolution in general did not usher in a period of freedom for the French people or anyone else in Europe. The argument that there was no real connection between revolution and freedom proved to be the major argument shaping his future historical writings of the French Revolution and its aftermath.

Ferrero wrote his final historical works during his exile in Geneva, Switzerland, where he taught modern history at the University of Geneva and the Institut Uni-

versitaire des Hautes-Etudes Internationales. Between 1931 and his death in 1942 he completed an historical trilogy on Napoleon's invasion of Italy, the Congress of Vienna and a final, more philosophic work on the principles of legitimacy since the French Revolution. A fourth work entitled The Two French Revolutions, perhaps most familiar to Americans, was put together posthumously from Ferrero's lecture notes by one of his students and served as an introduction to the trilogy. Here he presented his most cogent thoughts on the dangers and misconceptions of political revolution and the errors of the 1789 revolution.

Legitimacy, its development and decline, was the thread which bound together The Gamble, The Reconstruction of Europe, and The Principles of Power. These three modern histories constituted a philosophic commentary on the moral crisis of western civilization. Together they were his most important historical works and, in a sense, grew out of and continued the Roman histories begun more than thirty years before.

Although the trilogy's subject matter was the Europe of the past one hundred and fifty years, Ferrero's theme remained society's decline as a consequence of its inability to limit or control, morally and materially, its own expansion and development. There was nothing here that had not been said in previous books. However, there

was a deeper understanding and a clarification of his earlier thought and in that respect it constituted a significant contribution to historical research.

While Ferrero's thoughts on revolution and legitimacy were influenced by the postwar upheaval, he was not entirely dominated by those events. The trilogy was not a response to fascism and forced exile.² Any comparisons between Hitler and Napoleon and the status of Germany as the new revolutionary state were afterthoughts, or at least minor themes presented in the preface to The Reconstruction of Europe. The trilogy originated in Ferrero's earlier ideas and constituted a summation and not a new departure on his basic themes.

It was only fitting that The Two French Revolutions served as an introduction to the trilogy since it was with the French Revolution that Ferrero began his analysis of legitimacy and the breakdown of the traditional limits of western society. The first phase of the revolution was the "constructive revolution," the "new orientation of the human spirit," which established the National Assembly and issued the Declaration of the Rights of Man. This was followed by the "destructive revolution" begun in 1793, characterized by the collapse of law and authority and Robespierre's Reign of Terror. Ferrero, of course, favored the first revolution and disparaged the second. His problem was to explain why the constructive

revolution went wrong and ended in the destruction of its initial successes.³ He rejected the accusations of rightist historians, who claimed that the revolution was a "fit of folly" and failed because of the false and idealistic nature of the revolutionary principles. The leftist historians, denying that the revolution failed, were equally incorrect, he held, in assuming that the revolution had liberated man from tyranny. What had occurred, Ferrero maintained, was that two revolutions had taken place simultaneously, that the second had subverted and redirected the first from its positive goals. Some coherent legal system was necessary to hold off the forces of destruction. The first revolution failed in its attempt to create a new legal system for France and a panic set in. With the fall of the monarchy and the only form of legitimate government familiar to the vast majority of its people, the Great Panic began to gather force.

The fear took hold not only of the peasants, the workers, and the petty bourgeoisie, but of all the social classes; of the court as of the Assembly, the people, the nobility, and the clergy, great and humble, rich and poor, wise and ignorant, all trembled together, now that the pillar of society, the law, had been overthrown. It was general terror which multiplied the real dangers by every kind of imaginary danger and created a veritable delirium of fright.⁴

Ferrero believed that the monarchy and the legal system should not have been destroyed so suddenly, for a "new orientation of spirit" could have existed without destruction. When the second revolution began on June 2,

1793 with the Commune uprising against the Convention, the chances for the creation of a new legitimate legal system ended.

The fear which Ferrero described as the motivating force of these events was his motif for explaining historical change throughout the trilogy. He maintained that the dualism created by the French Revolution, that is, the forces of violent revolution in opposition to peaceful and legal change, became thereafter dominant features of European society. The Eighteenth Brumaire marked the beginning of the first totalitarian government in Europe, a government that was both revolutionary and dictatorial. It was the illegitimate nature of this government and not, as Albert Mathiez said, foreign invasion, that led to the takeover by Napoleon. The French military situation had actually improved by 1793, Ferrero contended.

The root of the evil was not external; it lay not in the threat of the Allied armies but internally, in the manner in which the government was organized and in the principles that were enunciated to justify its authority.⁵

The Thermidorian Reaction was a return to the first revolution in which there was an attempt to create a legal basis for power.

Ferrero's thesis of the two revolutions was not original, having been developed, at least in part, by Madame de Staël. The emphasis on legitimacy was, of

course, his own, along with an analysis of the implications of the French Revolution for the twentieth century. Of greater interest was Ferrero's summation of the revolution's impact on European society. The major weakness of his thesis was his attempt to argue that the Great Fear and the Reign of Terror were simply internal responses to the breakdown of legitimate authority and not also responses to longstanding grievances and the immediate danger posed by foreign invasion. This attribution of cause was a form of reductionism which ignored the specific economic and social inequities of the ancient regime.

The Two French Revolutions form the background for the trilogy and especially for the first work entitled The Gamble: Bonaparte in Italy 1796-1797, first published in France in 1936. Translated into English in 1939, most copies were destroyed before distribution in a German air raid attack. Not until 1961 was it published in the United States, which was made possible by the use of one of the few existing copies in the British Museum.

The Gamble focused on Napoleon's invasion and campaign in Italy. Ferrero believed that Napoleon's reputation as a great military leader had been vastly exaggerated. The invasion of Italy, traditionally credited to Napoleon's genius, was, according to Ferrero, really the work of the Directory, as Napoleon was simply following its orders.

Furthermore, the resisting Piedmontese army under the Count of Turin had already decided to surrender, so there was no real resistance to the French invasion. The Piedmontese had felt defeated and betrayed by the Austrians.

Napoleon represented what Ferrero called the "spirit of adventure," an innate force in human beings which drives them on to seek new challenges and stimulation. Sometimes such a spirit acted as a cohesive factor bringing an entire society, with everyone apparently striving for the same goal, to the creation of a "collective state of mind." Certain men arise who know how to direct this irrational spirit of adventure and solidify the collective state of mind. Such men, like Napoleon, have an intuitive understanding of people's yearnings, but generally lack any long-range vision or guiding principles. They are most often self-centered, ambitious, and violent. In his adventurousness, Napoleon broke the rules of eighteenth-century war. He violated the neutral duchy of Palma, thereby encouraging the Austrians to violate Venetian territory in retreat, compounding violation upon violation.

Ferrero raised some important points in his attempt to confront the Napoleonic mystique. He indicted historians and the general public for accepting the legend of Napoleon as a great leader and military genius. Few readers were converted to Ferrero's revisionist view of

Napoleon, although there were some who applauded the book. The anonymous reviewer in the Times Literary Supplement wrote that The Gamble was "one of the most brilliant historical revisions of our time. . . . This truly remarkable work of scholarship remains in 1961, as apposite and as much a tract for the times as it already was in 1936."⁶ Ferrero, however, did not accomplish what he had set out to do. He was unsuccessful in dispelling the Napoleonic legend. Napoleon's status as a great general remains secure.

Ferrero's remarks on the long-term impact of the Italian campaign were even more significant. The fighting in Italy, characterized as it was by the lack of resistance and the violation of the traditional rules of war, contributed to the breakdown of Italian society and the ancient regime in Italy. The disregard for the traditional rules of war was part of the heritage of the French Revolution and would become the standard for the nineteenth century. Once having committed itself to war, the French government found that it had created revolutionary conditions in the Italian states. While the Directory and Napoleon did not want to foment revolution in Italy, they felt they had no choice but to support it, which only created more fear among the other nations of Europe. The violation of the republic of Venice and the creation of the Cisalpine Republic not only upset the balance of power

in Italy, but created fear and chaos in the rest of Europe. Furthermore, the treaty of Campo Formio between France and the Austro-Hungarian empire threatened the rest of Europe. By calling for the dissolution of the free and independent republic of Venice, the treaty violated eighteenth-century diplomatic and military principles. "The treaty of Campo Formio, . . . was the beginning of the great chaos of the West, in which we are still struggling," Ferrero lamented.⁷

Ferrero illumined aspects of the French Revolution which had long been overlooked. But in emphasizing the importance of the division of the Venetian republic and its impact on subsequent events, he gave undue importance to his theories and insufficient attention to other historical events. In actuality, the fall of Venice had no greater impact on modern history or revolutionary principles than did the division of Poland, conducted in accordance with the diplomatic and military principles of the ancient regime. It was most unlikely that the violations against the Venetian republic could have upset the balance of power and created a "panic"⁸ in Europe precipitating fifteen years of warfare.

The persuasiveness of The Gamble was based largely on logical deduction rather than extensive empirical evidence. Much of his argument rested on one letter from the Directory dated April 7, 1797, which instructed Napo-

leon not to establish the Cisalpine republic at that time but to make all government appointments himself. Ferrero saw vast implications in this instruction for the future of Europe. Monarchical legitimacy had been replaced by the sovereignty of the people, and the sacerdotal shell surrounding the figure of the king had been broken. In the case of Italy, however, it was Napoleon who was directed to speak for the people. To Ferrero this implied the creation of a modern dictatorship, one which claimed to respect the sovereignty of the people, but in actuality usurped their power. In the political schemes of the Directory, as carried out by Napoleon, Ferrero saw the potential for future abuses of government in the form of bolshevism, fascism, nazism, and other totalitarian regimes. This letter, he claimed, was the "hidden key to the history of the nineteenth century."⁹

Ferrero had argued in this work and elsewhere that fear lay at the foundation of all human history and that Napoleon's campaign in Italy clearly illustrated fear in action. It was, of course, impossible to know from one letter whether the Directory's and Napoleon's actions in Italy were motivated largely by fear or by ambition.

While some of Ferrero's arguments were exaggerated, there were some insights that seemed to ring true. The increased secularization of society brought about by

the French Revolution did not eliminate the oppressiveness of the ancient regime and usher in a period of liberty, as historians favorable to the revolution had maintained. There were some important new political liberties, but the new and more centralized and bureaucratic state was to make its own demands on the individual. Ferrero was a liberal historian who was willing to acknowledge that the French Revolution gave rise to new threats to liberty and contained potential totalitarian implications.

The Legislative Assembly, the Convention, and the Directory were all revolutionary governments because they were ruling elitist institutions that violated the democratic principles they claimed to uphold. Their intentions, Ferrero argued, were to be only revolutionary until a permanent regime could be established. In other words, they intended to establish a legitimate government. Napoleon, on the other hand, never intended to abide by any of the principles of legitimacy, but rather simply to maintain his own control at any cost. The Consulate, therefore, was the first truly revolutionary government to violate the principles of national sovereignty as a policy of government. This revolutionary government became the first totalitarian government which was "the most complete outward form of fear."¹⁰

If Napoleon and his Italian campaign represented the spirit of adventure and a violation of traditional limits, the Congress of Vienna stood for the defense of such principles and the "constructive mind" at work. Ferrero's second book in the trilogy, entitled The Reconstruction of Europe: Talleyrand and the Congress of Vienna 1813-1815, concerned the reordering of Europe after the Napoleonic wars. While Napoleon, representing the spirit of adventure, was the villain of the first book, Talleyrand was the hero of the second, as an example of the constructive mind.

In this second book Ferrero attempted, unconvincingly, to defend Talleyrand by maintaining that his reputation as a treacherous manipulator and a man without principles was grossly mistaken. Ferrero saw Talleyrand as one who, as a youth, had been forced into a career as a priest and was justified in his rebellion against such treatment. Ferrero himself had been unwillingly placed in a seminary school from which he rebelled and consequently was sympathetic to Talleyrand's plight. Ferrero argued that Talleyrand, rather than being a derelict priest, was a man of strong principles, a creative individual who could apply his well-considered principles to new situations.

He was predestined to be the most constructive force of his age, in a state of permanent revolt against the spirit of adventure and its insane

fears. In a world that no longer believed in anything but violence, he was predestined to rediscover the most fundamental and the most difficult truths which the human mind is at once capable and incapable of understanding: that force is useful to man only when he knows how to control it and that it destroys itself when intensified. He was predestined to be the only man of his generation to understand that the Revolution would never make peace because its wars had everywhere overstepped the limits beyond which force became suicidal.¹¹

Talleyrand's constructive mind was strengthened by great self-discipline and the conviction that physical force alone could not maintain order to create a better society. He saw the solution to the restoration of stable government in Europe in the reintroduction of the principles of legitimacy, which were set forth in his memoirs. Ferrero believed Talleyrand to be the first person to establish clearly the political problem of legitimacy, the significance of which he alone understood. Commenting on a few pages of Talleyrand's memoirs, he said, "But these seven pages contain the key to the whole history of Western civilization from the French Revolution to the present, and very probably the key to the history of subsequent generations."¹²

Apart from Ferrero's excessive claims to originality, there were other problems with his book. Individuals were given undue credit for influencing the course of historical events. Talleyrand and Czar Alexander of Russia were credited with saving Europe from further

destruction even before the Congress of Vienna. Talleyrand was described as the living manifestation of the moral will at work directing events. Ferrero claimed that Talleyrand's powerful moral vision and his insight into the nature of government made him such an effective statesman. For example, on March 31, 1814, after the city had been captured by the Allies, Talleyrand stayed in Paris, against Napoleon's orders to evacuate, to meet Czar Alexander. Together he and the Czar issued a manifesto announcing that the Allies would not negotiate with Napoleon, and he exhorted the French to create their own constitution. "On March 31, 1814 the fate of Europe for the next century was decided by two men. In this instance they happened to be courageous and intelligent."¹³ Likewise, it was Talleyrand's intervention in the negotiations at the Congress of Vienna that settled the deadlock over the Polish question by persuading the other members to accept the principles of legitimacy for France.

Talleyrand was for Ferrero more than a major historical figure; he was the embodiment of his ideal man. The independent thinking mind was for him the essence of human nature. Man, he believed, was by nature contrary, contradictory, and rebellious, but society could not exist in a state of such anarchy and freedom had to be voluntarily tempered to create some form of certainty. "Society then is founded upon a contradiction between

human liberty and the social necessity for the reactions that can be foreseen."¹⁴ Man confronted this contradiction by creating laws to govern actions. Such laws were the product of constructive human intelligence, which created order out of the chaos of independent human relations. "The constructive mind is the union of those intellectual and moral qualities which are necessary in order to discover and impose these laws."¹⁵ Its first task was to create a legal system and construct principles upon which men may rely. Free men had to subject themselves to the laws of society, although that submission could not and should not be perfect.

The independence of the human mind is never completely subjugated; it is a permanent menace to the juridical order, ready at any moment to burst into crime. But juridical order, in spite of its weakness, rests on firm foundations; specific laws and the means to enforce them.¹⁶

The constructive mind must create several different kinds of order, the most important being political order.

Ferrero believed that Talleyrand represented a prime example of the type of constructive mind that created order suited to the universal order and that understood the importance of metaphysical force over physical force. Talleyrand was a humane and powerful thinker, knowledgeable, energetic, and rightfully outraged by injustice. Ferrero believed that Talleyrand had done what he himself tried to do, that is, dedicate his life to the

construction of clear principles, thereby contributing to a more stable society.

Although he saw Talleyrand as the most distinguished statesman at the Congress, Ferrero gave credit to all the other statesmen at the Congress of Vienna for constructing a viable political and diplomatic system that survived in some force until at least the 1890s. The Congress of Vienna attempted to replace the eighteenth-century balance of power with a new Concert of Europe, the premise being that peace could be maintained by mutual consent. This began the "new diplomacy," the consideration of common interests over narrow national interests. Ferrero recognized this as a major diplomatic achievement even though it was not always successful. Most of the major problems which concerned him he saw reflected in the Congress Settlement: legitimacy of power, the problems of war and peace, and the philosophic problem of quality and quantity. He had hoped that the successes of the Congress would serve as examples for statesmen of his own generation. Readers, however, were more impressed with Ferrero's analysis of past events than with his solutions to contemporary problems.¹⁷ His analogies were simplistic, tending to focus on similarities at the expense of complex differences.¹⁸

The final volume of the trilogy, entitled The Principles of Power: The Great Political Crisis of His-

tory, sought to expand Ferrero's ideas about legitimacy. It is a political history of Europe since the French Revolution, analyzed in terms of legitimacy. It was written while war was beginning again in Europe. Ferrero believed the war to be part of a larger internal crisis of European civilization. "Europe is dying of a disease that threatens to infect the whole world," he wrote ominously in the preface of the work.¹⁹

The return of "fear and barbarism" of the past century-and-a-half was resulting in a political crisis in which the traditional methods of governing nations was being put aside. The older principle of monarchical legitimacy was being replaced by the newer principles of democratic and elected legitimacy. Although the older principles were dying, the newer ones had not yet been established. Civilization was exceedingly frail and its life was dependent upon man's observance of certain principles and his ability to vanquish the fear of social disorder. Fear itself was the disease. "Civilization is a school of courage and is measured by the results of the effort man makes to vanquish his chimeric fear and to understand the real dangers that threaten him."²⁰ Europeans had failed to stem the tide of fear, to support their institutions with consistent principles acceptable to the vast majority of the people, to create workable institutions, and to face problems courageously.

The Principles of Power was not simply a history of legitimacy. It was a deeply personal statement about Italian political life since the Risorgimento and the consequences for his own existence.

My life has been a network of different tragedies centering around one major tragedy, resulting from the quasi-legitimate government to which I was subjected: that I knew was not what it ought to have been, without being able to discover what it really was tormenting and afflicting me. I intend to tell the story of that tragedy; perhaps it will serve to enlighten those who have passed through the same experience, and there must be many of them in Europe.²¹

What Ferrero claimed had gone wrong--which he did not understand for many years--was that Italy and much of Europe hung in a political limbo somewhere between legitimacy and illegitimacy. This middle position Ferrero chose to call quasi-legitimacy, an especially dangerous and insidious political state because even when acknowledged it was so little understood. While quasi-legitimate government might exist through the support of a certain segment of the society, it could never gain the support of the majority and could only lead to further social degeneration. The quasi-legitimate state was one caught between two principles of legitimacy. It was a government that was extremely unstable and unsure of itself.

Illegitimate government was revolutionary government which had been imposed on a people who had not yet accepted it. This was to be distinguished from prelegiti-

mate government which could eventually become legitimate by becoming acceptable to the people. Prelegitimate government was one that intended eventually to fill the requirements of legitimate government. Illegitimate government had no intention of respecting the principles of legitimacy, although it might give lip service to them.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the worst violations of legitimate government had been the result of the misapplication of democracy. The revolutionary and totalitarian governments were democracies that had been corrupted by either forbidding the right of opposition or violating the right of free elections. The failure of democracy had begun with the French Revolution and had upset most of the European states in the struggle for the acceptance of the new principle. Some states such as France had successfully weathered the long struggle between declining monarchy and emergent democracy, while others, like Italy, were not so fortunate.

The Italian state since the Risorgimento had been caught between the partial acceptance of the democratic and elective principles of legitimacy and the dying but persistent monarchy. Italy's floundering in this unstable and indecisive condition opened the way to dictatorship and fascism. Ferrero found other examples of quasi-legitimate government in the Roman empire and the reign

of France's Louis Philippe. The latter had been especially interesting to him because it demonstrated the conflict of a monarch who was forced to compromise with revolutionary principles and failed, in the end, to establish either a republic or a monarchy. The consequence was the revolution of 1848. Revolution, Ferrero believed, was always the consequence of the unstable nature of quasi-legitimacy.

The chapters on quasi-legitimacy provided the core of The Principles of Power. Ferrero believed that he had uncovered not only the principles of legitimacy, but also an explanation as to why disregarding the principles often resulted in revolution. He wanted passionately to share these insights. He believed that at last he understood why Europe was sick and what had gone wrong in Italian political life. Reviewers were generally sympathetic to Ferrero's last book, believing that it contained some important truths, but it did not have the impact that Ferrero had hoped. One reviewer spoke to this.

Although it is probably the greatest single contribution to clarity in political thinking that our generation has seen, its effect has been negligible so far as one is able to ascertain . . . Yet it sheds more light on the origins of the terror that has gripped our world since 1918 and before than any other book I know.²²

Sidney Hook's review of The Principles of Power confirmed what others had already said, that Ferrero was a man with a political and moral message and not a scien-

tific historian. Hook sensed the urgency that Ferrero conveyed about the need for statesmen to understand the nature of revolution and quasi-legitimate government, but he was wary of the implications of Ferrero's thought. He saw in it, "one of the most ingenious defenses of gradualism ever penned."²³

One of the difficulties was the theoretical nature of the work. Even if the reader agreed with Ferrero's analysis of the contemporary malaise, there remained the more serious problem of applying his abstract political ideas to practical action. The Principles of Power had focused on the problems of legitimacy without reference to the economic and social realities of political life. Ferrero's urgent message ended in a lament of the past failures of European politics. Americans, to whom Ferrero looked as the hope of the future, did not seem to respond to his urgings, although reviewers of the book expressed the opinion that there was a profound message to be heard. Ferrero could not impress upon Americans that the crisis of legitimacy applied to them and their future. Such problems were viewed as remote and peculiar to an aging Europe. The book was published not long before the Allies turned the tide against Nazi Germany. Americans were looking forward to a brighter future and Ferrero seemed to be tied to the past and out of touch with the immediacies of a complex age. Reinhold

Niebuhr commented, "The primary weakness of Ferrero's analysis lies in his inability to grasp, or to do justice to all the complex economic and social factors which have contributed to the decay of hereditary rule and the rise of democratic government."²⁴

Ferrero died before the final volume of the trilogy could be published. He did not live to defend his work or to see the fall of fascism and the restoration of democracy in Italy. The popularity his books had enjoyed before the war did not endure in the postwar period. Very soon most of his works were forgotten or vaguely remembered. The memory of his personal struggles remained vivid among the Italian exiles as well as among his fascist opponents. Nevertheless, his legacy had been squandered among his fellow contemporaries who little remembered nor little cared about his valiant struggle to shape their political destiny. Ferrero's memory fared better in the United States where his trilogy remained in print. The questions that he attempted to rethink concerning what constitutes the legitimate government, and the necessity to create political stability and a just state, are as valid today and will remain so in the future as they were when he first began to search for their resolution.

FOOTNOTES

¹Guglielmo Ferrero, The Principles of Power: The Great Political Crisis of History, trans. Theodore Jaeckel (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), p. 276.

²Idem, Colloqui con Guglielmo Ferrero: Seguiti dalle Grandi Pagine, ed. Bogdan Raditsa (Lugano-Gineve: Nuove Edizioni di Capolago, 1939), p. 76.

³Idem, The Two French Revolutions 1789-1796, trans. Samuel Hurwitz (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1968), p. 3.

⁴Ibid., p. 28.

⁵Ibid., p. 167

⁶Review of The Gamble in the Times Literary Supplement, July 14, 1961, p. 431.

⁷Ferrero, The Gamble: Bonaparte in Italy 1796-1797, trans. Bertha Pritchard and Freeman C. Lily (New York: Walker and Company, 1961), p. 278.

⁸Ibid., p. x.

⁹Ibid., p. 299.

¹⁰Idem, The Principles, p. 198.

¹¹Idem, The Reconstruction of Europe: Talleyrand and the Congress of Vienna 1814-1815 (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1963), p. 80.

¹²Ibid., p. 48.

¹³Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Review of The Reconstruction of Europe by Hoffman Nickerson, "A Place for European Peace: Mr. Ferrero Parallels Talleyrand's Day With Our Own," The New York

Times Book Review, September 14, 1941, p. 1.

¹⁸Review of The Reconstruction, by Max Fisher, The Commonweal, September 12, 1941, p. 500.

¹⁹Ferrero, The Principles, p. viii.

²⁰Ibid., p. 38.

²¹Ibid., p. 236.

²²Review of The Principles, by John Chamberlain, "Good Men Demand Good States," The New York Times Book Review, September 20, 1942, p. 1.

²³Review of The Principles, by Sidney Hook, The New Republic, October 19, 1942, p. 510.

²⁴Review of The Principles, by Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nation, September 19, 1942, p. 241.

CONCLUSION

Ferrero once described himself as one who spent his life in the defense of a few basic ideas. He defended democracy, legitimate principles of government, and intellectual, ethical and cultural standards, which he called the "qualitative society." On the other hand, he vehemently opposed dictatorship, fascism, and the strictly materialistic implications of modern society. Indeed, he concerned himself with those ideas which he considered basic to Western man's view of the world and vital to the very survival of society.

Although Ferrero is thought of as a secondary intellectual figure, his life and work contribute to an improved understanding of the intellectual life of Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In his attempt to make sense out of the chaotic and destructive events of the twentieth century, he reflected the apprehensions of those who envisioned and dreaded the dismantling of their intellectual and moral world. His writings addressed the urgent need of his times to provide explanations for the turbulence and uncertainties of his own day and to clarify the political and moral relationships between individuals and a state that had changed

from a monarchy to a quasi-democratic republic, to a dictatorship.

Ferrero is not important solely because of his specific conceptions of history or western civilization in crisis. His independent struggle and his refusal to compromise his principles when faced with ridicule and, eventually, exile from his country, afford insight into a modern intellectual who labors against the dominant and overwhelming trends of his own time. Ferrero was the "engaged historian" caught up in the important questions of his day who sought to provide answers through contemplation, argumentation, and reason. He wove ideas together in the presentation of a critique of modern society and utilized these in examples and comparisons. By these means he tried to elucidate the underlying intellectual structure of western society in an attempt to account for what he believed to be the problems of contemporary Europe and America.

Ferrero, who had begun his career focusing on economic and social history, ended by considering political and moral history the central focus of his concerns. He had moved from ancient to modern history, from an interest in groups to the moral crisis of the individual historical personality, and finally from a positivistic and scientific to an intuitive historical method. He was a living example of what had concerned him most in

history, "the inner transformation of personality." The moral struggle of the individual had been the heart of his work and it is that struggle that continually renews our interest in him.

What Ferrero invested in his life as an engaged intellectual, however, he took away from his career as a scholar. Although his contributions include relatively good histories of Rome, the Congress of Vienna, and the French Revolution which are still widely read today, he never achieved anything approaching a unified system of thought. Yet, he believed that his life was made meaningful by the search for and defense of what he called basic principles. He was an enthusiast for great ideas, believing the life of the mind to be the true battleground, posing both the greatest threat to our survival, and offering man the greatest hope of triumph in the future. His attempt to clarify abstract ideas and their application to contemporary problems make Ferrero a significant European intellectual of the twentieth century.

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