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## **Chiming the Hours of History: The Historiosophy of Pitirim A. Sorokin As a Spring of His Integralistic Sociocultural Paradigm**

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"He goes deeper and ultimately higher."

French pianist Helene Grimaud about Beethoven

"Almost all great sociological systems are a brand of philosophy of history, and ...  
most of the great philosophies of history are a sort of sociology of cultural change."

Pitirim A. Sorokin

**Keywords:** *System of sociology, integralism, integralistic historiosophy, integralistic paradigm of scientific study of structure and dynamics of society, culture, and personality, cyclical theory of history, linear theory of history, fluctuational theory of history, sociocultural supersystem, recursiveness, macro-level sociocultural entities, long-term sociocultural processes, deconstruction of the phenomenon of civilization*

### **Introduction**

The purpose here is to present an original rethinking of the genesis, evolution, essence, role, place, and significance of the philosophical and historical views of the great Russian and American philosopher, sociologist and educator Pitirim A. Sorokin. In addition, an attempt will be made to determine their place and role in his scholarly work, as well as in the world's treasury of the highest achievements of the human spirit.

For a number of reasons, the scholarly and philosophical heritage of Pitirim A. Sorokin is sometimes viewed and analyzed not in its integrity, multidimensionality, systemic complexity, and evolution, but, like an elephant felt by three blind men in the ancient Indian parable, the trunk of the colossal animal is mistaken for a hose, the legs are likened to columns, and the tail is thought to be a rope. So here, the historiosophy of Sorokin is presented in light of its development, in the context of his other sociocultural theories, and also as the most important part of a fundamental philosophical and ideological paradigm, which he called *integralism*.

Both *integralism* as a whole and the *integral historiosophy* of Sorokin, in particular, are based on sociological, cultural, psycho-neurological and psycho-physiological concepts and theories, which, as they originate and develop, Sorokin outlines in numerous works throughout his half-a-century long scholarly career, and which we conditionally call his *system of sociology*.

The evolution of Sorokin's developed historiosophy and the stage of reintegration by him of his scientific and the ideological worldview within the framework of the integralistic paradigm is of particular interest. In this process, the features of integralism are acquired by all his numerous concepts and theories, including his sociology, philosophy, psychology and, first of all, by historiosophy. The latter not only turns out to be Sorokin's area of primary scholarly interest, but it also gradually absorbs many of his other social concepts and theories.

Based on a thorough analysis of Sorokin's works, we believe that historiosophy of Sorokin occupies a much more significant place in his developed integralistic scholarly and philosophical paradigm than some researchers of his legacy have assigned it. As the statements of Sorokin himself quite clearly demonstrate, it is inseparably connected with his system of sociology, and both scientific fields, being parts of the integralistic paradigm, are in fact one and inseparable and interconnected whole.

### **System of Sociology**

Initially, Pitirim A. Sorokin's system of sociology was a monumental project to develop the fundamentals of a science of the structure and development of society. He intended to present it in a multi-volume work, to be entitled accordingly "The System of Sociology." In a sense, this work is the foundation of all his subsequent scientific sociocultural and philosophical constructions. Sorokin planned to publish ten volumes of the "System of Sociology," but for many reasons (revolution, civil war, emigration, and a number of cardinal revisions of his scholarly worldview) this idea remained unfulfilled, and as of 1920 only two volumes of the monograph had appeared in print (Sorokin, 2008).

The first volume of the System is devoted mainly to the analysis of individual social interactions, while the second one examines the structure and interaction of social groups of various types and levels. In the early years of his scholarly career, Sorokin professed a pronounced positivistic and behavioristic approach towards both the social structure and the sociocultural dynamism of history.

In his early terminology, the first two volumes of the System were devoted to social analytics.

The main ideas of his “social mechanics,” i.e., activities of people under the influence of various environmental factors, as well as their own psycho-neurological and psycho-physiological impulses, were intended for publication in the third volume of the System, which did not appear in print. Nevertheless, he managed to present them in the second part of the “The Public Textbook of Sociology,” published in the same year of 1920. (Sorokin, 1994).

The turbulent events of the beginning of the 20th century introduced radical corrections into the plans of a young, but already widely known scholar. For example, in the years 1921-1922 Russia was gravely threatened by a famine, which reached an unprecedented scale and claimed several millions of lives. This colossal disaster prompted Sorokin to expand the second part of the “Public Textbook of Sociology,” now containing an analysis of the phenomenon of hunger.

He wrote that:

Having published my two volumes of the *System of Sociology*, I postponed the writing of the third volume in order to study at first hand phenomena typical of the Revolution, and to note them in such form as to make their investigation easier in normal times.

With my students and collaborators, and in close co-operation with the academicians Pavlov and Bekhtereff, I began an investigation of social changes, social groupings, and regroupings in our society. Included was the study of time-budgets of our fellow-men, and the comparative force of different factors in determining human behavior.

The behavior of the people around me was stripped of inhibitions which in normal circumstances disguise its mechanism and make difficult its determination.

As the principal object of my study, I took the influence of hunger upon human behavior, social life, and social organization. In the study of this problem, I had had personal experience, and the benefit of personal contact in my own environment. The influence of food and acute want of food on human behavior had never before been seriously investigated. (Sorokin, 1950: 283-284).

In turn, the last chapter of “Hunger as a Factor” became a separate large volume. Entitled “The Sociology of Revolution,” it was written in 1923, when Sorokin was already in Czechoslovakia.

The devastating cataclysms of the First World War, the Russian Revolution and the subsequent Civil War radically changed his scholarly outlook.

The results of Sorokin's many years of efforts to reintegrate his views on sociocultural development within the framework of the new, integralistic paradigm are now known as the four-volume work Social and Cultural Dynamics (Sorokin, 1991), although its roots can be traced to the "System of Sociology," and to such specialized works, as, for example, "Principles of Rural-Urban Sociology" (1929) and "A Systematic Reading Book on Rural Sociology" (1930-1932).<sup>1</sup>

These large-scale works were based on a vast amount of historical material and contain detailed analyses of both the structure and the dynamics of the development of an agrarian society, as well as agrarian-urban relations. Being, in essence, a comparative agrarian-urban philosophy of the history of humanity, they represent a kind of testing ground where Sorokin developed concepts and theories of such future classical works as "Social and Cultural Dynamics" and "Society, Culture and Personality."

And so, in the preface to the first volume of "A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology" the authors state: "Human society throughout its history - in its origins, forms, activities, processes, growth, and evolution - has been so largely under the pressure of agricultural and rural forces that up to the present sociology as a science of society has virtually been the sociology of rural life. (Sorokin, Zimmerman, Galpin, 1965: VII).

The works also introduce such key concepts as the formation of the integralist paradigm, social stratification, social mobility, and authoritarian, contractual and family-based types of social relations. Unique in their shocking truthfulness, scientific depth of content, and transparency of presentation, Sorokin's works allow us to witness events of the turbulent beginning of the twentieth century, as well as to look into his creative laboratory.<sup>2</sup>

Pavel P. Krotov observes that "In numerous works analyzing the scholarly legacy of Pitirim Sorokin, his autobiography, as a rule, remains outside the interpretation of a shift in his philosophical paradigm."

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<sup>1</sup> Sorokin, P.A., Zimmerman, C.C. (1929). *Principles of Rural-Urban Sociology*. New York: Henry Holt and Company. 652 p.

Sorokin, P.A., Zimmerman, C.C. Galpin, C.J. Ed-s. (1965). *A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology*. Vol. I. New York: Russell & Russell. 645 p.

Sorokin, P.A., Zimmerman, C.C. Galpin, C.J. Ed-s. (1965). *A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology*. Vol. II. New York: Russell & Russell. 677 p.

Sorokin, P.A., Zimmerman, C.C. Galpin, C.J. Ed-s. (1932). *A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology*. Vol. III. Minneapolis New York: The University of Minnesota Press. 752 p.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Pitirim A. Sorokin. *Leaves From a Russian Diary - and Thirty Years Later*. Boston: The Beacon Press. 1950. 346 p.; Pitirim A. Sorokin. *A Long Journey: The Autobiography of Pitirim A. Sorokin*. New Haven, Conn.: College and University Press. 327 p.

“A Long Journey,” published in 1963 in the USA, is perceived by many researchers, including biographers, only as a classic memoir. Nevertheless, the autobiography of Pitirim Sorokin can hardly be attributed to historical memoirs, although the list of historical facts in the text is enormous. In addition, the author was a direct participant in the crucial events in the national history.

It would also be insufficient to define the “A Long Journey” as a scholarly memoir, despite the fact that Sorokin here gives a detailed description of almost all of his works. The autobiography reflected scholarly discussions that largely determined the development of modern domestic and American sociology.

From my point of view, the interpretation of “A Long Journey” as a scholarly research, in which Sorokin analyzes the transformation of his worldview and his personal history, based on the postulates of the late-stage concept of “creative altruism,” opens up new possibilities for a deeper understanding of the book and Sorokin - the scholar.<sup>3</sup>

With publication of such fundamental works as “Society. Culture. Personality,” “Modern Historical and Social Philosophies,” “Crisis of our Time,” “Pitirim A. Sorokin in Review,” “The Basic Trends of Our Times,” “Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time” and, in particular, the last major work of the thinker, “Sociological Theories of Today,” Pitirim A. Sorokin actively continued his search for the ultimate truth about the sociocultural universe. In a certain sense, the scholar continued to work on his system of sociology for the rest of his life. Having incorporated many aspects of a scientific analysis of the structure and development of society, it became the foundation, a cornerstone of the colossal edifice of the integralistic paradigm of scientific study of the structure and dynamics of society, culture and personality.

Since the developed historiosophy of Sorokin is a part of his integralistic philosophical and scientific paradigm, let us turn to its genesis and evolution.

## **Integralism**

In our previous works (Alalykin-Izvekov, 2017), we have considered both the genesis and the evolution of the scholarly and the ideological paradigm of Sorokin and offered the following chronology of its periods:

- 1) Christian-Ideational (1889-1905).
- 2) Positivistic-Behavioristic (1905-1920).
- 3) Transition from Positivism to Integralism (1920-1937).

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<sup>3</sup> Krotov, P.P. Autobiography as a Reflection of Altruistic Transformation of Pitirim Sorokin (in Russian Language). Electronic source: <http://www.komi.com/IRSI/soroktxt.html>

- 4) Integralistic (1937-1940s).
- 5) Visionary (first half of the 1940s).
- 6) Altruistic (second half of the 40s - 50s.).
- 7) Generalizing (60s).

From the point of view of the evolution of Sorokin's developed historiosophy, the stage of recreation by the thinker of his scholarly and ideological "picture of the world" within the framework of the integralistic paradigm deserves special attention. This process coincides in time with a period of work on his fundamental work "Social and Cultural Dynamics."

In this process, the features of integralism are acquired by all numerous concepts and theories of Sorokin, including his sociology, philosophy, psychology and, first of all, his historiosophy. In fact, his historiosophy not only turns out to be the area of his primary scholarly interests, but it also gradually absorbs many of his concepts and theories. According to Nikolai F. Zyuzev, the root of Sorokin's integralism is in his integralistic theory of truth and cognition. "Pitirim A. Sorokin's integralistic epistemology combines all forms of knowledge - empirical, rational and intuitive, and in it its decisive advantage over any one-sided theory of knowledge." (Zyuzev, 2004: 150-152).

Sorokin himself postulates his views as follows: "... the integral truth is not identical with any of the three forms of truth but embraces all of them.

In this three-dimensional aspect of the truth of faith, of reason, and of the senses, the integral truth is nearer to the absolute truth than any one-sided truth of one of these three forms.

Likewise, the reality given by the integral three-dimensional truth, with its sources of intuition, reason and the senses, is a nearer approach to the infinite metalogical reality of the *coincidentia oppositorum* than the purely sensory, or purely rational, or purely intuitional reality, given by one of the systems of truth and reality. The empirico-sensory aspect of it is given by the truth of the senses; the rational aspect by the truth of reason; the super-rational aspect by the truth of faith.

The threefold integral system of truth gives us not only a more adequate knowledge of the reality, but a more valid and less erroneous experience, even within the specific field of each system of truth." (Sorokin, 1991: 690-691).

Traditionally the "Bible" of Sorokin's integralism is considered his four-volume monograph "Social and Cultural Dynamics: The Study of Change in the Basic Systems of Art, Truth, Ethics, Law and Social Relations." Clearly, the key words here are *dynamics* and *change*.

Thus, the first two volumes of “Dynamics” are devoted to the change in the above-mentioned cultural systems, in the third volume the change in social systems is analyzed, while in the fourth volume Sorokin’s analytical apparatus is being presented.

Sorokin himself testifies: “Volumes One, Two, and Three, taken together, constitute a preliminary study of cultural and social dynamics. In Volume Four I will present in a more finished and more fully analytical form, a systematic theory of social and cultural changes, as well as a formulation of the guiding principles of sociological methodology.” (Sorokin, 1937, v. III: VI-VII).

Therefore, in “Dynamics” Sorokin presents the sociocultural dynamics of development of society from the point of view of his integralistic paradigm. Where do we look for his structure of society in its developed, integralistic representation? As we remember, Sorokin outlined the structure of society in his “System of Sociology” published in 1920. However, the “System of Sociology” was written from the positivistic-behavioristic point of view.

Apparently, the most comprehensive statement of Sorokin’s integralistic *paradigm* is reflected in his monograph “Society, Culture, Personality: Their Structure and Dynamics. The System of General Sociology” (Sorokin, 1947). Here, he unfolds in front of the reader a wide panorama of the sociocultural universe, accompanied by the fundamental and interdisciplinary scientific analysis.

As the title of the book clarifies, the integralistic sociocultural paradigm (and, therefore, historiosophy) of Sorokin is built on the triadic basis of indivisible (except for the purposes of scientific analysis) unity of society, culture, and personality.

Next, Sorokin profoundly analyzes the structure and dynamics of development of a society via the connection of three main components of the sociocultural universe, and he also presents the most general, universal trends, patterns and laws of social development derived from this analysis. He always emphasizes in his writings that the unity of society, its members, and its culture is inseparable and, with necessary assumptions, is possible only for purposes of scientific analysis.

He, for example, writes in the third volume of “Dynamics” that “Whereas Volumes One and Two deal mainly with fluctuations in the field of cultural processes, this volume concentrates on those in the field of social phenomena. Cultural and social are two aspects of a single, indivisible reality; but for the purposes of analysis they may be conditionally divorced and studied separately.” (Sorokin, 1937, v. III: V).

All numerous works of Sorokin’s developed period confirm, complement and illustrate his integralistic paradigm of cognition and analysis of society, its culture and its main creators and builders - individual persons.

In front of the reader is a kind of generalizing work that includes all the components of his integralistic scientific and ideological paradigm, which literally bursts forth from descriptions and definitions of hundreds of thousands of small and great sociocultural phenomena and processes. Literally each of them is immediately brought to the level of universal philosophical and historical conclusions and postulates.

A prominent scholar of Sorokin's legacy, Barry V. Johnston, also concludes that the monograph "Society, Culture, Personality" is a generalizing work, one which synthesizes and reflects the integralistic paradigm of the sociocultural universe in its entirety, versatility, and consistency.

He observes: "Sorokin takes his next theoretical step in *Society, Culture and Personality: A System of General Sociology*. Much of this volume integrates earlier works. The discussion of society and culture draws heavily on *Dynamics*, while the resulting generalizations point to problems described in "Crisis of Our Age." The "news" is in the sections on personality, where Sorokin brings the systems together and focuses on social organization and the development of the self." (Johnston, 1995: 170).

As part of his integralistic paradigm of scientific study of the structure and dynamics of development of society, culture, and personality, Sorokin not only comprehensively analyzes the past, the present and even the future of the sociocultural universe, but he also offers deeply original and truly effective solutions to existential problems of rapidly globalizing humanity. That is why his integralistic paradigm represents a reliable scientific basis for the rapidly developing, now numerous new areas of research of macro-level sociocultural entities and long-term sociocultural processes.

This includes, for example,

- *comparative study of civilizations* (William McNeill, Carroll Quigley, Andrew Targowski, David Wilkinson, and others),
- *noospheric studies* (V. Vernadsky, T. Chardin),
- *culturology* (Y. M. Lotman, etc.),
- "Big History" (David Christian, and others),
- *world history* (D. Diamond, F. Fernandez-Armesto, and others),
- *world-system theory* (I. Wallerstein and others),
- *globalistics* (Andrei V. Korotaev et al.,
- *The School of Russian Cyclism* (Yuri V. Yakovets and others), and
- *Biocosmology - Neo-Aristotelism* (Konstantin S. Khrutsky), etc.

The author of this paper has developed and proposed a number of related concepts, theories and paradigms, for example, the concept of *civilizational science*; the concept of *philosophy of civilization*; the concept of *fluctuational theory of history*; the concept of *macro-level sociocultural entities*; the concept of *long-term sociocultural processes*; the concept of *deconstruction of the phenomenon of civilization*, and others. (Alalykin-Izvekov, 2017).

## Historiosophy

In the preface to the four-volume edition of “Social and Cultural Dynamics,” Sorokin shares with us his thoughts on his large-scale historiosophical concept:

Of all the semi-historical disciplines that it resembles, it is the closest to what is often called the philosophy of history. Since almost all the great sociological systems are part of the philosophy of history, and since most of the great philosophies of history are a kind of sociology of cultural change, I have no objection to the use of this name by those who are interested in defining this work.<sup>4</sup>

At first glance, this phrase is somewhat mysterious in its recursive nature. However, upon reflection, we can try both to find the key to deciphering it and to determine the place of Sorokin’s historiosophy in his integralistic paradigm rather accurately. Unlike the “individualizing” (i.e. descriptive, for example, history) social sciences, Sorokin considers sociology as “generalizing,” (i.e. exploring the most common patterns of the phenomena under consideration). (Sorokin, 1992: 543).

Consequently, under “sociology of cultural change,” he has in mind the most general laws of the cultural development of society, or, as he puts it, the constant and inevitable change of cultural systems and supersystems. Further, this statement also indicates that, from the point of view of a scientist, almost all great philosophies of history include a sociological system, that is, one or another paradigm of the social structure and development of society.

As a matter of fact, Sorokin himself willingly provides us with the key to a true understanding of his integralistic historiosophy, and to its place and role in the integralistic scientific and philosophical paradigm. In private correspondence from the year 1954, he notes:

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<sup>4</sup> Sorokin P.A. Social and Cultural Dynamics. Volume I. 1937. p. IX.

As to the enumeration of my specific contribution to sociology, in brief they are as follows:

Systematic theory of social mobility, corroborated by an enormous body of empirical evidence. My monograph on Social Mobility still remains the only existing monograph in the field.

Logical and empirical consistent system of sociology as science. It is more systematic in its logical and empirical system than any other sociological system of the past two or three decades.

Logical and empirical system of social and cultural dynamics, or of philosophy of history. This system has already entered the annals of History side by side with the systems of Spengler, Toynbee, and a few others, as possibly the most significant contribution in this field.

Theory of social class, particularly of agricultural class and rural Sociology  
Discovery, formulation, and confirmation of the law of polarization  
Discovery, formulation, and confirmation of the law of fluctuation, governmental regimentation, and control.

Exhaustive study of the vital, moral, mental, religious, artistic, and other fields of calamities and catastrophes.

A systematic theory of revolution and wars, together with the first empirical investigation of all wars and of the revolutions from the 6th Century B.C. up to the present times. My investigation of revolutions and their dynamics and causes remains still the only existing investigation of all the internal disturbances from the 6th Century B.C. up to the present time.

A thorough-going criticism of the fallacies in the existing sociological, psychological and other theories.

First attempt at a scientific study of the phenomena of creative love. The enclosed leaflet gives you an idea about this phase of my work. Then in the volumes of my work there are formulated, and possibly discovered, several other uniformities in social and cultural life, but in a short letter these uniformities cannot be enumerated.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> From the letter to: Mother Olowienka, Feb 10, 1954. Electronic source:  
<http://cliffstreet.org/index.php/theories>

At first glance, including historiosophy in the framework of his purely sociological research, the sixty-five-year-old scientist takes out of the brackets of such, in fact, its most important provisions. We, however, believe that in fact Sorokin thus incorporates both the system of sociology and historiosophy into the general context of its integralistic paradigm. Within such an interdisciplinary understanding, his historiosophy outgrows the seemingly “sociological” framework he has given to it, and it becomes one of the most important components of his integralistic scientific and ideological paradigm.

According to Sorokin, the history of any organized group (and societies are a variety of such) is finite, i.e. in the end, cyclical. Any society, generally speaking, goes through the stages of its emergence, formation, flourishing, crisis, decay, and, ultimately, disappearance. On this conceptual basis lie the civilizational theories of Nikolai Y. Danilevsky, Oswald Spengler, and Arnold Toynbee.

As for cultures, according to Sorokin, they, in a way, plug in one into another, often inheriting the most resistant and viable elements of their distant predecessors. Therefore, surviving the societies in which they originated, the truly great cultural systems can exist for quite a long time. Sorokin thus avoids the one-sided, monistic approach characteristic of some philosophers of history, and, therefore, his work can be considered rigorously scientific.

Arnold Toynbee believed that the essence of Sorokin’s philosophy of history could be grouped under the following five headings:

- 1) the idea of cultural integration;
  - 2) the theory of social and cultural change;
  - 3) the identification of three cultural supersystems or lifestyles through which or around which cultures are integrated;
  - 4) the idea of alternating these three lifestyles over time, as well as an analysis of this process; and
  - 5) his concept of the relationship between types of culture and personality types.
- (Zimmerman, 1968: 31-32).

It is obvious, however, that these provisions do not encompass all aspects of Sorokin’s historiosophy, which includes a colossal number of categories, concepts, and theories of the structure and evolution of the sociocultural universe. It is easy to see, for example, that all original and fundamentally substantiated theories of social conflicts and crises, which include theories of revolution, war, famine, epidemics, disasters and many other crisis sociocultural phenomena, constitute an organic part of Sorokin’s philosophy of history.

Sorokin's historiosophy undoubtedly includes the discovery by of a principle of limits, a principle of immanent change in the sociocultural system, a principle of polarization, a principle of strengthening and weakening of social control, a principle of convergence, a principle of fluctuations between self-regulation and environmental modification, a principle of fluctuations in the size and stratification profile of groups, and many other fundamental propositions and patterns. It certainly ought to include all of his sociocultural and psychosocial theories, for they constitute the foundation on which he draws his insightful conclusions, conclusions and diagnoses.

It also ought to include Sorokin's conclusion that a society going through a period of severe turmoil is likely to suffer from a crisis of its fundamental values. Another example is his scientific research of the phenomenon of creative love. Actually, the research itself was undertaken in order to find and develop a means of solving or alleviating eternal problems of humankind — wars, revolutions, mass migrations, epidemics, famine, etc.

Thus, the matter of determining the boundaries of the Sorokin's historiosophy within his philosophical and scientific paradigm is resolved both naturally and logically. For the purpose of its illustration, we would offer an "architectural" analogy, and compare Sorokin's integralistic paradigm to the colossal building of a medieval cathedral. As we have already mentioned, the scientist continued to work on his system of sociology for the rest of his life.

There are multiple aspects of the scientific analysis of society, the bases or cornerstones for the entire integral scientific and ideological paradigm of Sorokin. Resting on the solid foundation of his sociological, cultural, psycho-neurological and psycho-physiological concepts and theories, that is, the Sorokin System of Sociology, his historiosophy represents, metaphorically speaking, the vaults, the walls, the frescoes, the sculptures, and the stained-glass windows. As for his theory of truth and knowledge, from such a perspective, it is the the keystone of the main, bearing arch of the colossal edifice of his *integralistic paradigm* for the *scientific study of the structure and dynamics of society, culture, and personality*.

## Conclusion

Throughout his unique half-century scholarly career, Pitirim A. Sorokin developed a great sociological system consisting of numerous sociological, culturological, psycho-neurological, and psycho-physiological concepts and theories, which we conditionally call his *system of sociology*. Both *integralism* as a whole and the *integralistic historiosophy* of Sorokin rest on the sound scientific basis of his system of sociology.

The fundamental integralistic paradigm of the scientific study of the structure and dynamics of society, culture and personality, developed by Sorokin, represents a solid foundation for the rapidly developing at the present time field of global studies of the macro-level socio-cultural formations and long-term socio-cultural processes.

The immense array of principles, concepts, and theories which make up the system of sociology are inextricably linked with the integralistic historiosophy of Sorokin, and therefore both are essential parts of his integralistic paradigm for the scientific study of the structure and dynamics of society, culture and personality.

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