Sociological Paradigms and Civilizational Studies: Complementary Contributions of E. A. Ross and P. S. Sorokin

Lawrence T. Nichols
West Virginia University

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This paper argues that the theories of Edward A. Ross and Pitirim A. Sorokin have more in common than is generally realized and documents unrecognized reciprocal influences between the two scholars. Ross developed a social-psychological reading of history emphasizing externally induced change; while Sorokin championed a cultural interpretation grounded in the concepts of immanent causation and the principle of limits. Closer examination, however, shows that Sorokin's theory of creative altruism resembles Ross's moral activism, and that his "integral culture" accords well with Ross's linear evolutionism. The complementary emphases of the paradigms are consistent with the contexts in which the theorists trained: Ross expresses youthful American optimism while Sorokin articulates the stoicism of the older Russo-European civilization.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given their different styles and outlooks, Pitirim A. Sorokin and Edward Alsworth Ross are not ordinarily considered together by sociologists or civilizational scholars. Ross, born just after the Civil War, was more of a nineteenth-century figure than Sorokin, his junior by twenty-three years. Politically, Ross was a renowned liberal and champion of pro-

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gressive causes, including academic freedom, a legal dismissal wage and birth control. Sorokin, by contrast, identified himself as a "conservative Christian anarchist" skeptical of government's ability to resolve social problems. Ross's perspective was thoroughly American, while Sorokin's remained primarily Russo-European. Why then discuss the two together?

A longstanding professional and personal relationship provides one justification. Ross helped Sorokin relocate to the United States after his voluntary banishment from the Soviet Union in 1922 (Ross 1936; Sorokin 1963). Most importantly, Ross arranged for his emigre colleague to lecture on the Russian Revolution at the universities of Wisconsin and Illinois, and so facilitated his entry into the American academic world. Archival materials, moreover, show that the Ross-Sorokin relationship was more intimate and enduring than has been realized (Nichols 1996). The two collaborated to gain a legitimate place for sociology in American universities. They exchanged and critiqued works in progress, incorporated each other's publications into their own courses and writings, and created publication opportunities for one another. Ross in fact took the role of a solicitous mentor toward Sorokin, advising him on how to become established professionally.

A mutual interest in problems of civilizational analysis provides further justification for linking the pair. Both Ross and Sorokin, moreover, traced twentieth-century transformations of Russian civilization. In addition, they carried on a dialogue about one another's civilizational writings. A comparison of their works also demonstrates how civilizational topics and data can be interpreted in diverse yet complementary ways.

There are, moreover, historically interesting ironies in the relationship. When Ross was engrossed in studying culture mentalities, Sorokin was preoccupied with building a generalizing science of sociology that eschewed idiographic ethnography. Later, when Sorokin analyzed cultural fluctuations and creative decline, Ross critiqued his prophecies in terms of the same principles of naturalistic inquiry earlier applied by Sorokin. Indeed, Ross did
most of his civilizational research in mid-career and tapered off as he approached retirement, while Sorokin began such work in earnest in his middle years and continued it to the very end.

This paper will sketch the general contributions of Ross and Sorokin to civilizational studies and then compare their underlying sociological paradigms. I will emphasize several topics: the importance of social psychology versus culture; linear trends and trendless fluctuation; internal and external sources of change; the centrality of values; and methodology. The analysis will also trace personal interactions between Ross and Sorokin, reveal their reciprocal influences, summarize their assessments of each other's theories, and examine differences between popular and professional responses to their writings. The discussion will reveal not only predictable differences but also surprising similarities between the two pathbreaking scholars.

I employ three methods in the paper: textual analysis of primary sources; contextualization through the use of archival data, especially correspondence; and translation of Sorokin's early works from the original Russian. The combination of textual and contextual strategies is a form of triangulation that reduces the risk of erroneous readings. I supplement these approaches with the use of appropriate secondary literature by recognized experts.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CIVILIZATIONAL STUDIES

Ross's Ethnographies and Progressivism:
1. Social Control (1901).

Although sociologists generally fail to appreciate Ross as a civilizational scholar, several of his writings justify this designation. Thus, his renowned first major work explicitly addressed a range of civilizational issues. Indeed, Ross began by announcing that the purpose of the study was to ascertain how ... the West-European breed are brought to live closely together. ... The existence of order among ... this daring and disobedient breed challenges explanation (1901:3).
Some of the controls that Ross identified were social, others primarily cultural. Thus, custom was "a power--and an ally and reenforcement of the other powers that bind the individual" (1901:184). Religion was also among the earliest and most potent civilizing forces. Indeed, Ross suspected that religion had "a great career" yet in store, because as "social compulsion entirely disappears from it, social religion will become purer and nobler" (1901:217). Most surprising, given his image as a social psychologist, Ross (1901:416) accorded social art a place "next to religion in power to transform the brute into the angel."

Progress, Ross believed, requires the creativity of elites and exemplary individuals. Thus, discussing "the genesis of ethical elements," he contends (1901:350) that

The humble beginnings of a social ethos can be conceived as the outcome of a folk-evolution. But its later and higher stages require the inventive genius (emphasis added).

Progress also demands democratization and education. Indeed, Ross's term "social control" refers to popular will rather than mere domination (as in today's usage). In a passage that Thomas Jefferson might have endorsed, Ross (1901:415) observed:

there are other instruments that are coming into wider usefulness. Instruction as to the consequences of actions, with a view to enlisting an enlightened self-interest ... will meet with universal approval in an age of public education.

Thus, in Social Control Ross goes beyond the issue of how social order is maintained to consider the historical advance of civilizations. As his biographer Weinberg (1972:102) comments, the volume "was intended to make progress purposive ... to bring about a planned society, rational in its means and humanistic in its goals." (See also McMahon 1996.) In this sense, the work resembles Sorokin's later Reconstruction of Humanity (1948).
2. Changing China (1911).

This bestseller based on Ross's travels painted a broad mural of culture and society, with stagnation and creativity as leitmotifs. Ross portrayed China as "the European Middle Ages made visible," because its social atmosphere has become oppressive, lacking the stimulating oxygen it had in the distant days when the Chinese invented gunpowder, block printing, banknotes, porcelain, the compass, the compartment boat and the taxicab (Ross 1911:57).

Ross blamed excessive population pressure and the weight of tradition for this stagnant state. He argued that the Chinese, believing in the absolute necessity of male descendants, had recklessly reproduced and thereby condemned themselves to both material and cultural poverty:

the prime means of progress are inventions and discoveries, and it is just these that bond-slaves to poverty ... are not able to bring forth (1911:92).

China also languished, Ross contended, because of its treatment of women. He railed against their home confinement, early marriage and limited education, and denounced the pervasive abuse of foot binding. In short:

All the railroads that may be built ... all the trade that may be fostered, cannot add half as much to the happiness of the Chinese people as the cultivation of the greatest of their "undeveloped resources"--their womanhood (1911:215).

Despite such problems, the operation of progressive forces led Ross (1911:344-345) to an optimistic forecast:

The exciting part of the transformation of China will take place in our time. In forty years there will be telephones and moving-picture shows and appendicitis [sic] and sanitation and baseball nines and bachelor maids. ... The renaissance of a quarter of the human family is occurring
before our eyes.

Subsequent events have vindicated this bold prediction.

3. South of Panama (1915).

During 1913 and 1914, Ross traversed several Latin American countries. Copious field notes and articles written for magazines were woven into another well received book for general readers. According to Weinberg (1972:180):

The middlewestern Progressive found much to criticize ... the failure of Latin Americans to attract large-scale white immigration, their lack of a yeoman farmer class ... the absence of a strong middle class ... and of labor unions, the Catholic church's domination of education ... the caste system, and the sexual license permitted to Latin males.

Nevertheless, Ross again concluded on an optimistic note, expressing the hope that within decades

slavery, forced labor, patriarchalism, polygamy, male domination over women ... foot bondage and the veil, ecclesiasticism, and every form of irresponsible power will disappear (Weinberg 1972:185-186).


Ross's deepest involvement with another culture focused on Russia's revolutionary period and its aftermath. He published three in-depth studies of these transformations: Russia In Upheaval (1918), The Russian Bolshevik Revolution (1921), and The Russian Soviet Republic (1923). The latter is most relevant for civilizational studies, as Ross traces the emergence of a new way of life.

Responding to widespread fears in the West, Ross (1923:394) contended that, "The revolution in Russia cannot and will not be duplicated in any other society." It was, he believed, the product of a unique constellation of historical conditions, especially the "land hunger" of peasants and a hopelessly inefficient and corrupt
autocracy. The Soviet economic challenge, he added, should not be feared because failed post-revolutionary policies reaffirmed the soundness of orthodox Western economic doctrine.

Though sympathetic to many features of the Soviet experiment, Ross castigated its perpetuation of prerevolutionary problems. Thus, he indicted "justice under Communism":

In its callousness and indifference to the fate of the individual, the Tcheka is of the Russia of the czars. There is bound to be ruthlessness about any popular government which prevails in Russia until the bulk of the people have been softened under the influence of decent treatment, education, and higher ideals (1923:369). Nevertheless, Ross predicted that the birth of the Soviet Union would influence world civilization broadly, for "nothing in history has focused the world's attention on the labor question as has the Russian Revolution" (1923:398).

SOROKIN'S CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY

1. Early Ethnographic Studies, 1910-1917.

Like Ross, Sorokin participated in field studies of an individual civilization, that of the Zyryan (Komi) people. Publications based on this research, though still untranslated, indicate special concern with the issues of family types and religious survivals. These works are: "Traces of Animism in Zyryan Culture" (1910); "On the Problem of Evolution of the Family and Matrimony of the Zyryans" (1911); "Contemporary Zyryans" (1911); "On the Problem of the Primitive Religious Beliefs of Zyryans" (1917). (See Johnston, Mandelbaum and Pokrovsky 1994).

At the time, however, the idea of culture was not uppermost in Sorokin's thinking. He conceptualized sociology rather as "the science that studies the most general features of the psychological interactions of individuals, in their structural organization and temporal evolution" (Sorokin 1913:96). The inclusion of the term "evolution" here is particularly interesting in light of Sorokin's later assaults on theories of linear change.2

In his mature period, Sorokin enriched civilizational studies through works on cultural integration and the fluctuation of cultural systems. He defined the generic sociocultural phenomenon as "meaningful human interaction" (Sorokin 1947) organized into units of varying complexity, from sentences to "supersystems" combining art, architecture, music, literature, religion, philosophy, ethics, economics, law, political theory, science and technology.

In his major work, Social and Cultural Dynamics (1937-1941), Sorokin examined the historical fluctuation of cultural mentalities in Europe and America over a period of twenty-five centuries. Dynamics argued that any cultural system was organized around a central unifying premise, but that such premises were inherently incomplete. The process of historical fluctuation of major culture mentalities was therefore an endless dialectic of complementarity and self-correction (see Ford et al. 1996; Hanson 1996).

Sorokin interpreted the history of European and American societies as a dialectic between spiritual and secular premises. The spiritual ("Ideational") assumption was incomplete because it ignored worldly phenomena and physical values; whereas the secular premise ("Sensate") was inadequate because it denied the spiritual aspects of human life. Spiritual/Ideational supersystems also had inherent absolutist tendencies that stagnated into "fideism"; while secular/Sensate systems were inherently relativistic and tended toward intellectual and moral anarchy in their "over-ripe" periods. The most controversial conclusion of Dynamics was that Western societies had entered a period of extraordinary historical crisis that could only be resolved through the creation of a radically different and spiritually-oriented culture. Sorokin argued that this would require a renewal of existing religions and the creation of new faiths, the development of cooperative and familistic social relationships, and the reorientation of all major social institutions, including science.
3. Russia and the United States (1944).

While the Second World War was still raging, Sorokin gave a series of lectures on the cultures of Russia and America which was published in book form. Though intended for a popular audience and not as well known as Sorokin's major works, this volume has relevance for civilizational issues. Its main thesis, which would later be further developed into a "convergence" hypothesis (Sorokin 1964), was "the congeniality of American and Russian mentalities." Sorokin attributed this resemblance partly to similar features of the natural environments in which the two civilizations developed.

In so far as the totality of geographic, climatic, and geo-political conditions influences the mentality, culture, and social organization ... the continental character of the two countries makes for essential similarity. It imposes upon both ... the role of a great power (Sorokin 1944:27)

In support of this view, Sorokin listed "common traits" shared by the two allies. Foremost among these, he said, were freedom from rigid mono-nationalistic traditions ... open-mindedness and breadth of mental outlook, cosmopolitanism, and self-esteem (Sorokin 1944:55).

At other points in the exposition, he described this similarity as the assimilation and valuation of diversity. Both Russia and the United States, he claimed, were melting pots of diverse racial, ethnic, national, and cultural groups and peoples. Russia, indeed, is a melting pot even more diverse than the United States (Sorokin 1944:33).

Russia and the United States also voiced strong nationalistic themes reminiscent of Sorokin's pre-1922 writings and more often thought of as characteristic of Ross's works. The following passage describes Russia as benevolent protector. One of the historical missions of Russia has certainly been to serve and
protection of European and other nations ... by bearing the brunt of the blows of ruthless conquerors. ... At the cost of untold misery and bloodshed ... she has saved many nations in the past, just as she is now helping to save the United Nations from the menace of Nazism (Sorokin 1944:58).

Sorokin went on to assert that Russian culture included a unique ethos of universal love and solidarity:

Universal love and brotherhood, a universal and eternal Logos, ultimate reality as an infinitely manifold Godhead--these have been the leitmotif of Russia's philosophy, religion, ethics, and charity (Sorokin 1944:59).

He had expressed the same view thirty years earlier, in *Leo Tolstoy as a Philosopher*. There, arguing that Tolstoy's philosophy was "typical of the Russians," Sorokin said:

this mysticism does not appear to be accidental for us. ... The endless snowy plains, the songs of the blizzard, the long twilight and endless forests together with the sorrow of our life even in ancient times were constructing the soul of the Russian man in a mystical harmony. 3

**COMPARISON AND CONTRAST**


Ross and Sorokin differ in the central concepts they use to interpret civilizational phenomena. For Ross, group attitudes and social psychology are paramount, while for the mature Sorokin cultural systems provide the master key. These contrasts arguably reflect the sociocultural milieux in which the two sociologists trained. American individualism sees society as an amalgam of discrete persons, while European communalism understands individuals as products of culture.

Interestingly, this distinction was not always clearcut. Indeed, in his earliest definition of sociology (1913), Sorokin acknowledged its strong resemblance to social psychology.

... social reality is a social bond, having a psychological reason and realizing itself in the consciousness of individuals. ... This social spirit that
from the sociological point of view is civilization, is also, from the historical point of view the world of values, as opposed to the world of things that form the object of the physical sciences.4

Discussing collective psychology in the same article, Sorokin (1913:108) likewise stated:

If its problem shall be the study of all basic forms of psychological interaction, that is, the same thing that sociology studies according to our definition, then obviously it is identical with sociology and one of these two terms will be superfluous.

2. Trends and Trendlessness.

Ross interpreted civilizational phenomena in terms of a presumed overarching process of evolution. Thus, for him, civilization denotes a relatively linear trend toward greater complexity and a "higher plane" of living—a view comparable to David Wilkinson's recent concept of "Central Civilization."4 In The Changing Chinese (1911:58), for example, Ross speaks of "our descendants ... half a thousand years hence ... enfolded in the colossal body of a single, self-consistent planetary culture." Ross acknowledged differences in the rate of advance, but did not believe in the possibility of complete regression. His reading of civilizational dynamics has the optimistic stamp of youthful American culture.

Sorokin's Dynamics and related works, by contrast, generally asserted the impossibility of continuous linear development over long historical periods, conceptualizing this in terms of "the principle of limit." His reading bears the stoic imprint of the older European experience, with periods of prosperity and want, ages of faith and apostasy, times of peace and war.

Interestingly, however, the notion of "integral" culture which became prominent in Sorokin's later writings (Johnston 1996) resembles Ross's evolutionary view—a point generally overlooked. As some commentators (e.g., Perrin 1996:120) have noted, integral culture cannot be identified with the "Idealistic
mentality" of *Dynamics*, which Sorokin presented as a brief union of Ideational and Sensate polarities. The later integral form is rather a x convergence of cultural opposites more suggestive of linearity than of trendless fluctuation. This is perhaps most evident in Sorokin's little noticed *Basic Trends of Our Time*, which discusses both the "convergence" of U.S. and Soviet systems toward a "mixed" type, and the "emergence of a new integral order in West and East." Regarding the latter, Sorokin (1964:74) argued:

if neither a resuscitation of the decaying sensate or ideational order, nor a disintegration of all human cultures into a universal and perennial eclectic wasteland appears to be probable, there seems to remain only one course for the creative history of mankind in the near future, namely, the emergence and development of a new integral order as the dominant order in the East and the West.

In the same section, Sorokin also speaks of creative leadership becoming "'planetary' in the sense of being active not only in the West but also in the East" (1964:65). This formulation is quite congenial with Ross's earlier "planetary" view.

3. External versus Internal Determination.

Ross's evolutionary approach treats forces outside the affected system (i.e., natural and social environments) as the primary sources of change. He does, however, recognize some internal dynamism, especially the leadership of creative elites. His model resembles later functionalist theory, but does not emphasize the conservative tendency toward equilibrium that became a hallmark of the functional approach (Parsons 1951). Ross's optimistic and liberal perspective is closer to Parsons's concept of "moving equilibrium," except that, for Ross, such movement is always meliorative.

Sorokin (1937-1941) develops the opposite point of view, postulating the principle of "immanent causation," according to which sociocultural systems are continually modified by their
own operation. Outside forces are acknowledged, but their influence is secondary: they modify the rate or direction of change (see Perrin 1996). Despite Sorokin's animus toward Marxism, this view accords well with Hegelian-Marxist readings of history, at least with respect to the interiority of civilizational dynamism. Sorokin more closely resembles Hegel in viewing change as the "unfolding of creative possibilities," rather than class warfare.

Thus, for Sorokin, to be human is to create a "superorganic" life-world not given in nature, and to be incessantly changed in the process. Ross implicitly concurs, since he characterizes civilizations like China with the pejorative term "stagnant." The two sociologists, however, differ on the reasons for creating. Ross regards creativity as an instrumental means of survival. Sorokin, on the other hand, suggests that the survival value of culture is subordinate to its existential worth. His approach recalls Toynbee's (1948:56) famous dictum:

This enterprise or experience is an effort to perform an act of creation. ... Civilization ... is a movement and not a condition, a voyage and not a harbour.

4. The Place of Values.

For both Ross and Sorokin, values are central to any understanding of civilizational dynamics. In Ross's works, values evolve with the historical development of societies. Interestingly, this theme appears even in his analysis of "the criminaloid," where Ross (1901:vii-viii) argues for a modernized view of "sin and society."

In its reactions against wrong-doing the public ... lays emphasis where emphasis was laid centuries ago. It beholds sin in a false perspective, seeing peccadillos as crimes, and crimes as peccadillos. It never occurs to the public that sin evolves along with society, and that the perspective in which it is necessary to view misconduct changes from age to age.

Evolving civilization, in other words, requires the leadership of
Ross also perceived the evolution of standards in China, attributing it partly to the influence of religion that challenged traditional beliefs. Thus:

the aggressive rivalry of Christianity, coupled with the coming diffusion of education among the masses, is bound to raise continually the religious plane of the Chinese by forcing the native faiths to assume higher and higher forms in order to survive. A silent, secret permeation of the religions of the Far East by the ideals and standards of Christianity is inevitable; and if eventually they prove capable of making a stand against the invader, it will be owing to their heavy borrowings from it (1911:255-256).

Ross also saw religious changes meliorating other aspects of Chinese culture, such as the treatment of women.

The missionaries have not proclaimed the "rights of women".... But the women converts gain ... ideas of their dignity, and come to feel that they have rights. ... the man learns to look upon his wife in a new light and to feel that he owes her love and respect (1911:240).

A similar emphasis on evolving values appears in Ross's analysis of the Soviet Republic. Consequently, despite the failures of the revolution (e.g., its mistaken notions of economics), it will be a force for good.

For a long time to come the example of Russia will be a provoker of social disturbance. ... Wherever the hand of the employer is felt to be rough and heavy ... the whisper will run through the ranks of the toilers: "We don't have to stand this. Look at what the Russians did." So ... it is safe to predict that the old arrogant labor-crushing type of employer is doomed ... and that a new, more humane, suave and reasonable type will come to be representative of capitalists (1923:399).

Thus, Ross seems to say that social control will evolve across societies in an internationalized Toynbeean pattern of moral challenge and response.
For Sorokin, values are also central for understanding cultural systems. In his model, the premise of any supersystem defines an ultimate "reality-value." This means that social order is always an establishment of values, a point most fully appreciated by F. R. Cowell (1970:49), who maintained that, "Sorokin has revolutionized the study of sociology by subordinating it to values as the mainspring and motive force in human society." Indeed, Sorokin endorsed this view, commending Cowell for an analysis that was "not only an excellent introduction to my works, but a brilliant variation on my main themes."\(^5\)

Consistent with his model of trendless fluctuation, Sorokin read civilizational dynamics as a dialectic of values, rather than a continuous improvement through historical time. For him, values (like belief systems) are inherently flawed because they are finite and contain their own negations. Thus, the historical dialectic of values (the "super-rhythm") is ultimately good because it corrects the tendency to fixate on particular values (i.e., either sacred or secular). In his 1948-1959 works on altruism, however, Sorokin abandoned the fatalistic tone of Social and Cultural Dynamics and argued that promotion of altruistic values could shorten the transition between cultural supersystems and mitigate the "crisis of our age." In this respect, his approach resembles Ross's treatment of activist moral leadership.

5. Methodology.

Ross gathered information by means of direct observation, which he organized as strategic tours of selected countries. On foot, in a rickshaw, by boat or railroad, he would make contact with both common folk and high officials, interview them and fill notebooks with data. His primary methodology, in other words, resembled anthropological fieldwork, as well as the participant observation of the "Chicago school" of sociology (Fine 1995) and the community studies tradition (e.g., Whyte 1994). Ross would supplement such data collection by systematic reading about countries he planned to visit (Weinberg 1972).

Sorokin, as noted, likewise engaged in direct observation of
Zyryan (Komi) civilization during his graduate training. In his mature period, however, when culture had become the central concept of his paradigm, Sorokin developed the "logico-meaningful method." Whereas traditional causal-functional analysis elucidated external relationships, Sorokin's approach sought insight into the internal unity of cultural phenomena. As he defined it (1937:1,32): "The essence of the logico-meaningful method of cognition is ... in the finding of the central principle (the 'reason') which permeates all the components, gives sense and significance to each of them, and in this way makes cosmos of a chaos of unintegrated fragments." This approach did not require direct personal contact with cultures under study, and allowed analysts to traverse historical time by examining symbolic artifacts such as documents.

Ross's method resembles the American pragmatism of such contemporaries as William James, John Dewey and George Herbert Mead. Sorokin's strategy, by contrast, bears a likeness to German historical scholarship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that nurtured the works of Max Weber and Oswald Spengler. Where Weber and Spengler emphasized the uniqueness of Chinese civilization or the Magian worldview, however, Sorokin premised his research on recurrent universal categories and their limited variability. (See Richardson 1996).


Both Ross and Sorokin self-consciously exploited their civilizational studies to influence public opinion, for example, tailoring some writings for non-academic readers. Ross also drew upon civilizational works in his frequent, high-profile public lectures.

Ross's writings for general audiences were enormously popular, and Sorokin's also prospered, as evidenced by the willingness of Beacon Press to bring out a series of such volumes in the 1950s. This success, however, did not win the respect of professional peers. Thus, Ross's civilizational travelogues are regarded as an indicator of creative decline even by a sympathetic biograph-
er like Weinberg. Sorokin's reputation among the public seems ironically to have peaked while his mature works were being repudiated by social scientists (Nichols 1989, 1996). For popular audiences, however, both scholars were successful prophets in their own time.

SCHOLARLY DIALOGUE

As noted above, Ross and Sorokin responded to other's writings both in correspondence and in publications. The most important documents, for civilizational scholars, are letters on the subject of social change. Thus, in early 1925, Ross expressed his general concurrence with Sorokin's newly published Sociology of Revolution.

I have come gradually to feel about as you do respecting social revolution. What I learned first hand, both before and after, regarding the revolutions in China, in Mexico and in Russia convinces me that sociological science should regard social revolutions with a very hostile eye. They are a terrible strain upon the social fabric and produce more damage and destruction than the revolutionists ever anticipate. It is well that popular leaders should learn to be patient and consent that their reforms arrive tardily in order that they may arrive without cataclysm. In fact, provided there is free speech and free press i.e. opportunity to communicate ideas I would say that revolution is never justified.5

Here, Ross's assent flows from faith in progressive evolution.

The same philosophy, however, led Ross to criticize Sorokin later in the year. After praising his friend's social psychological insights, Ross identified a crucial difference:

I think I find, however, an important lack in your theory. You do not bring out clearly the fact of tremendous significance that every successful social revolution involves a permanent transference of power. The dominant class after the revolution is not the same as the dominant class before. If this dominant class is more vital, more truly representative of the living interests of the people, less effete than a class from which it has wrested power then the social revolution results in a permanent gain. This being so the revolution is not a sickness from which one slowly
recovers and which leaves one no better off than before but rather a neces-

sary surgical operation which ... leaves the patient free ...  

For his part, Sorokin praised Ross's works in *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (1928) and in the fourth volume of *Social and Cultural Dynamics* (1941). At certain points, however, he took an openly critical stance. Thus, reviewing psycho-sociological views of religion in *Theories* Sorokin (1928:698-699) Sorokin accused Ross's Social Control of using tautological concepts. In *Dynamics* Sorokin (1941:699) chided Ross for being: 

seduced by the theory of evolution and of progress with a perpetual linear tendency ... According to this theory Omnipotent Evolution and Providential Progress unerringly lead mankind ... toward some "bigger and better" state.

Sorokin considered this evolutionary-progressive view untenable with regard to the majority of sociocultural processes.

Ross's counterpoint critique of Dynamics appears in private correspondence. Replying to a letter from Porter Sargent (of the Boston publishing firm), he condemned Sorokin for abandoning scientific sociology. He has sent me all his books and I am quite familiar with his attitude. I spent several weeks this summer reading the three volumes that you have been studying. I read closely Volume I and half of Volume II. Finally I laid the volumes down and shall not take them up again.

Sorokin is a case of a man warped for life by his experiences in the Russian Revolution. I deem him a first-class man and thought that his call to Harvard would turn out to be a fine thing for American sociology; but it appears that instead of his warping from the Revolution diminishing with the lapse of time, it is increasing, so I fear that after all he can be of little benefit to our sociology in spite of his high ability and high character.

... He is a case of a very good man having gone off on an impossi-

ble tack.
COMPARATIVE CIVILIZATIONS REVIEW

CONCLUSION

This paper has compared the contributions of Edward A. Ross and Pitirim A. Sorokin to civilizational studies. Both interpreted civilizational issues in terms of large-scale historical processes (evolution and dialectics). Both also appreciated the influences of change in subsystems on other components of culture. Each likewise saw long-term change as driven by internal conflicts, tensions and ambivalences of group life. Each postulated some version of "challenge and response" in accounting for creativity and cultural transitions, especially in times of crisis.

Both, finally seem to have shared the fate of being largely neglected or forgotten in sociology. In a sense, the sociological profession has tended to side with Ross in rejecting Sorokin's pessimistic and spiritually oriented assessment of contemporary Euro-American civilization. Yet sociologists have also moved away from the evolutionary hypothesis that undergirded Ross's reading of events, and which provided the basis for his optimism. The profession has likewise generally failed to build upon the historical dimension of the work of either scholar.

The writings of Ross and Sorokin on civilization may thus be understood as a challenge yet to be accepted, but one that may still open wider horizons for sociology and related fields.

West Virginia University

NOTES

1. Sorokin was, however, already critical of the idea of "progress," as is evident in his 1911 article, "The Main Theories of Progress in Contemporary Sociology."

2. Pitirim A. Sorokin, Leo Tolstoy as a Philosopher (Moscow: Mediator Press, 1914). The quoted passage is an excerpt from my translation which is forthcoming in Palmer Talbutt, Rough Dialectics: Sorokin's Philosophy of Value (Value Enquiry Books).

Sorokin's article) is a quote from Kozlowsky ("La realite social," Revue Philosophique 1912, p. 171) that Sorokin uses to express his own view. Sorokin was twenty-four when this article appeared.

Sorokin's views have remained largely unknown because most of his Russian writings have not been translated. Indeed, many sociologists are quite ignorant of Sorokin's early and prodigious productivity.


5. Letter of Sorokin to Cowell, 2 April 1952. In the Sorokin Collection, University of Saskatchewan Library Archives, Saskatoon, Canada.


8. In Theories (p. 670), Sorokin praises Ross's "typical inspiration" and "shining style," and identifies him as "one of the founders of American sociology" and "author of several valuable works."


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