Pitirim A. Sorokin on Order, Change and the Reconstruction of Society: An Integral Perspective

Barry V. Johnston
Indiana University Northwest

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol41/iss41/4

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Comparative Civilizations Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
Abstract
Integralism is simultaneously an epistemology, psychology, sociology of change and theory of history. It is the theoretical foundation of Sorokin's general sociology and later works on the crisis of modernity, altruism and social reconstruction. This paper delineates the evolution of the concept from Social and Cultural Dynamics to Sorokin's work at the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism. What results from this chain of historical analysis is an integrated conceptual approach to the nature of humanness, knowledge, conflict resolution, and prosocial forms of human organization. As a result, integralism broadens sociological discourse and yields new insights into social problems and their resolution.

Theoretical Context and Orientation
The Sorokinian oeuvre is remarkably wide and complex. Don Martindale (1972, 5) has noted by January 1963 Sorokin had published thirty-five books, over four-hundred articles and essays and there were more than forty-two translations of his volumes. This exceeded the published work of Talcott Parsons and C. Wright Mills, and as far as these things can be ascertained makes Sorokin the most productive and translated sociologist ever. Underlying a substantial portion of this massive and diverse body of work is Sorokin's integral perspective. It is the theoretical orientation to history, politics and philosophy that replaced his earlier preference for positivism and scientific sociology. History simply did not allow him to maintain the optimism that had characterized his worldview prior to the First World War. As he noted:

...World War I had made some fissures in the positivistic, scientific, and humanistic Weltanschauung I held before the War. The Revolution of 1917... eventually shattered this world-outlook [and] forced me... to sternly re-examine my prewar [views].... This reconstruction took place slow-
ly during five years in Communist Russia and then, after my banishment in Europe and the United States... It resulted in what I now call the *integral system* of philosophy, sociology, psychology, ethics and values. Some indications of it are already noticeable in my Russian *Sixtiema Sotsiologii* .... [But] in their mature form the basic principles of Integralism are systematically stated in my volumes published in the last three decades. (Sorokin 1963, 204-205).

The works to which he refers begin with *Dynamics*, progress through his crisis studies, and culminate in his works on altruism and social reconstruction. As I demonstrate below integralism binds these studies and gives them coherence. It emerges first as a theory of social change, evolves into an explanatory principle for the crises of modernity, and culminates in a sociological axiom for the reconstruction of society. In all its manifestations it adumbrates a new approach to social science and the practice of the sociological craft.

In 1937 Sorokin published the first three volumes of his magnum opus, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*. While each contained massive amounts of comparative statistical data, it was not a work in empirical sociology. Volume one developed theoretical concepts for the definition and analysis of cultural mentalities, cultural integration, and change. These were then used to study 2500 years of change in the forms of art, music, literature, and architecture. Volume two described changes in systems of reasoning, truth (e.g., science, vitalism, animism), ethics (absolutism, relativism), and law. The third volume focused on variations in forms of social relations (family, government, economy) wars, revolts, and revolution, among other things. In each phenomenon Sorokin found fluctuations in substance but not an intensifying progression from primordial forms to higher levels of achievement and integration. Indeed, he used his finding of a trendless historical flux to attack the idea of a progressive linear evolution that culminated in a modern age of science and progress.

Regrettably, the reviews of the 1937 volumes were mixed and the book fared poorly at Harvard and in the sociological community. (Tibbs 1943: 473-480, Johnston 1995: 114-123.) More importantly, for our purposes is that the fourth volume of *Dynamics*, which contained the most powerful argument and evidence for Sorokin's Integralism, was not published until 1941.
By then few sociologists were interested. In volume four we learn that Integralism is an epistemology, a theory of human nature, and a philosophy of history. While each element is analytically separate they combine in Sorokin's discussion of complex cultural supersystems and give great insight into the dynamics of society, and the process of history.

Integralism — systems of truth and human nature — posits at the microsociological level that humans are three dimensional creatures possessing a body, a mind, and a soul. Each dimension knows the world differently and supports a distinctive epistemology. The body learns through the senses and knows the world empirically. The mind seeks knowledge through reason, and understands the world rationally. The soul or supersensory capacity exist independent of reason and the senses. It develops from intuition, grace, and God's revelation. Through it humans grasp the sublime or transcendent truths of their existence.

These three capacities are also collectively manifested at the macrosociological level as major types of culture. The pure forms are ideational and sensate, and the third, a mixed form Sorokin termed idealistic. The defining characteristic of each type derives from the principles of ultimate truth through which it organizes reality. In ideational cultures, ultimate reality flows from immaterial everlasting being. Individual needs and goals are spiritual and realized through their supersensory capacity. There are two subclasses of this mentality: ascetic and active ideationalism. The first seeks spiritual growth by denying the world and disciplining the flesh. In its extreme form the individual achieves oneness with the deity or ultimate value. Active ideationalists focus on the world and strive to convert others to their vision of God and ultimate reality.

Sensate cultures are the opposite of ideational and take ultimate reality to be revealed through our senses. The supersensory does not exist and agnosticism pervades the culture. Human needs are physical and satisfied by developing the environment. Sensate cultures have three forms. The milder is the active sensate. The more shortsighted and exploitive form is the passive sensate, and even less disciplined is the cynical sensate. Each mentality is instrumental, but some are more ecologically and socially responsible in satisfying needs. Many cultures fall
between ideational and sensate and Sorokin viewed most as poorly integrated. The exception was a true idealistic culture in which reality was many sided, and human needs were both spiritual and material, with the former dominating. The vitality of this idealistic culture sprang from its complex conception of reality. The known world is that which results from the intertwining of spiritual and empirical truths.

Sorokin searched the histories of Greco-Roman and Western civilizations, and to a lesser degree those of the Middle East, India, China, and Japan for actual cases of these cultural types. The results showed that cultures move through ideational, idealistic and sensate periods separated by transitional times of crises. Over the last 2500 years Western culture had passed through the sequence twice, and was now living in the declining phase of a third sensate epoch.

Sorokin described this process of cultural changes as the result of two forces: the principle of limits and immanent determinism. Social systems, like biological ones, change according to their inherent potentialities. Immanent determinism claims that the internal structure and dynamic organization of a system establishes its capacity for change. Systems, however, have limits. For example, as they become more and more sensate, moving towards the extreme cynical sensate, they reach their limits of development. In a dialectical fashion, ideational counter trends are produced that grow stronger as the system polarizes. These counter trends start to move the culture towards an idealistic form. The dissonant changes reverberate throughout the system and violence increases as it takes on a new configuration.

Sorokin next asked why these changes happened as they did. The answer advanced his integral philosophy. The character of a culture is determined by the principle that underlies its system of truth and reality. Historical analysis revealed that ideational systems rested on intuitive-spiritual truths; sensate systems on the senses; and idealistic cultures on the truths of reason. But, none of these principles alone provides absolute truth. Each contained key elements for the adaptation of humans to the physical, social and cosmic milieus. The systems change because each has strengths and weaknesses. When one dominates it forces out others and prohibits holistic understandings of the world. The
longer a mentality dominates, the more anomalies accrue. That is, people become increasingly aware that their system is too narrow to explain important aspects of life, and the epistemic usefulness of the system is increasingly questioned. Soon other means are needed to address those aspects of culture and cosmos not satisfactorily understood through the dominant mentality. Unhappily, the superrhythms of ideational, idealistic and sensate mentalities could go on forever without humans realizing ultimate truth.

Sorokin’s solution to this endless cycle of historical change and crisis was an Integral culture based on Integral truth. This form of knowing connected the three forms of truth. By connecting the truths of reason, senses, and faith, we achieve an integral understanding which gives us a more complete and valid grasp of reality. It also broadens our comprehension and deepens our knowledge of the constitutive forms of knowing. This broader base of knowledge is capable of sustaining an Integral culture which is better adapted to human nature and hence more stable.

In Integral philosophy Sorokin affirmed that cultures change out of a need for a more adequate knowledge from which to deal with life’s major questions. Sensate knowledge gives us science, technology and physical comfort, but tells us little of the spirit. The truths of faith address that issue, but leave us relatively helpless in the face of nature. As each type of culture tries to provide what is missing, it enters a period of crisis and changes. Integralism, however, binds the truths of science, reason and intuition into a comprehensive whole. It is our means of obtaining a satisfying cultural framework from which to comprehend life, cosmos, and the role of humanity in each. The Integral system binds the three dimensions of truth in a way that more closely approximates the three-dimensional nature of humanity and reality. Therefore, it provides a more satisfying and complete approach to knowing and understanding. Similarly, an Integral culture and personality are more harmoniously balanced, integrated and stable because they incorporate the heterogeneity of their essences. Through Integralism we come to know ourselves, the things we make, and the cultural world we construct more completely. It is simultaneously an epistemology, psychology, sociology, and theory of history. Indeed, it was his Integral analysis of history that drove Sorokin to focus on times of crises.
and to seek means of social reconstruction.

**Prophetic Sociology And The Crisis of Modernity**

Sorokin’s analysis of the Western experience indicated that we were now in the declining period of a third sensate era. As in the past, it was a time of social upheaval, destruction, and conflict. But the evidence from *Dynamics* suggested a deeper, more terrifying set of disasters than those of earlier times. One global war and a series of revolutions had already taken place. The world was then embroiled in what would become a second global confrontation. Additionally, the moral fiber of society was weakening and people were losing faith in their systems of truth, justice and law. Codes of right and wrong were no longer valued. Instead they were increasingly seen as devices by which the rich and powerful consolidated their privileges and manipulated disadvantaged underclasses. Even more dangerous was a growing sense that only the childlike and dull treated others with honesty and respect. The wily citizen of the modern age sought advantage, not fairness, in interpersonal relationships. This ethos undermined civility and eroded the foundations of just social relationships. Knowledge, too, had become instrumental and pragmatic. Functional rationality replaced substantive rationality at the personal and group levels. Love of learning, aesthetics, and creativity declined as people became increasingly trained rather than educated. Rationality pervaded human relationships and people became frighteningly comfortable in their "iron cages". There was a crisis of the human spirit that promised as much damage as the threats from the new weapons of mass destruction. This was indeed a time of crisis, and required not only the skills of the scholar, but those of the activist. It was this sense of urgency that moved Sorokin to the borders of the academic community and into the public arena. Sorokin became a prophetic sociologist.

As a prophet, Sorokin strove to broaden popular awareness and understanding of the crisis of modernity. His work during this period sent clear messages to lay and professional readers: There is a crisis and it was described and analyzed in *Dynamics* and the jeremiad *Crisis of Our Age*. However, we are not dominated by it. An alternative to sensate, ideational or ideological
culture is the Integral way of life which replaces functional rationality with substantive direction and moral relativity with absolute values. Sorokin reasoned that epistemology and morality were intertwined. Sensate epistemology and science could produce no eternal truths, just probabilities. Therefore, as a knowledge system its fundamentals are in continuing flux, and so is any system of morality based on sensate understandings. Integralism provided a more inclusive epistemology and consequently a more stable basis for knowledge, morality and society. In this approach moral relativity can be replaced by a set of absolute values. Consequently, one could expect a more peaceful, fulfilling, and satisfying way of life. The question dangling before his audience was how does this come to be so? At that point Sorokin had no answer, but he did have ideas. These were later explored, developed and advocated through the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism.

**Integral Social Science and Ethics**

Sorokin’s concern with prophecy was tempered by the skills of the sociologist. Early on he had grasped the connection between a descriptive/nomothetic science, and prescriptive ethics. While the ethicist was concerned with what ought to be, and the scientific sociologist with what is, they were linked in the applications of their crafts. The practical ethicist often lacked the data and knowledge of social structure to develop effective implementation strategies. The sociologist could provide the contextual understandings necessary for moral principles to be transformed into practical implementation formulae. Programs of social and ethical reconstruction depend on data and systematic knowledge of the situation. This conceptual partnership between sociology and ethics motivated Sorokin and others to try to improve the discipline as a science. In the same way that dealing with biological facts made for better medicine, deepening the understanding of social facts would enable sociologists and ethicists to reduce human misery and help society live more wisely. Progress in social and moral reconstruction would be substantially enhanced by such an arrangement.

Toward this end Sorokin educated specialists and citizens about the modern crisis, and attempted to stimulate commitment
to social improvements. After publishing volume four of Dynamics in 1941 he also published The Crisis of Our Age, and "The Declaration of Independence of the Social Sciences". These were followed in 1942 by Man and Society in Calamity and two articles on the nature of conflict and reconciliation: "The Causes and Factors of War and Peace," (1942) and "The Conditions and Prospects of a World Without War" (1944). Crisis is a condensed and popularized Dynamics, and Calamity is a study in the sociology of disasters. Along with the war studies they were attempts to inform and mobilize people for action. They combined analysis with moral injunctions and wrapped Sorokin in the cloak of prophetic sociology.

Robert W. Friedrichs' conception of changes in the sociological tradition is particularly appropriate for understanding Sorokin's transformation (Friedrichs 1970: 57-110). Dynamics had signaled Sorokin's shift from priestly to prophetic sociology. In Friedrichs' terms the priestly practitioner is committed to the canon of a scientific sociology modeled on the natural sciences. They practice the rites of value neutrality, venerate objective analysis, and suspect blasphemy in all forms of knowledge other than empirical. They surrender themselves to the exegesis of order, and the divination of empirical laws for predicting the future. These priestly sociologists use a special language (mathematics), serve long novitiates in graduate schools mastering the liturgy and rituals of research, and form a community committed to empirical truth rather than the truths of the transcendental world (Fitch 1958: 368-370). As a group they often are interpreters between literati and laymen, because the latter lack the expertise to comprehend their methods and findings. As a result they do not educate their lay audience, nor do they make them more rational and independent thinkers. Instead they encourage dependency, and paradoxically often ask their followers to accept their findings on faith (Bendix 1951:190).

Prophets are driven by other principles and goals. Their sociology goes beyond a science and seeks the improvement of society. They are value committed, see truth in many forms, and are scholar-activists. They view the objective of science and sociology as service to humanity. Friedrichs observed that prophets have a long and distinguished history among sociologists. It
extended from Comte and the "Prophets of Paris" to more modern scholars such as: Karl Mannheim, Pitirim Sorokin, Robert Lynn, Robert Maclver, and Louis Wirth. (Friedrichs 1970: 74). As a participant in the long and distinguished tradition of prophetic sociology, Sorokin became isolated from the priestly profession.

The Sociology of Moral and Social Reconstruction

Above all Sorokin was a sociologist and his interest in the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism was a product of academic concerns, philosophical commitments, and cultural origins. As Lawrence T. Nichols (1998) shows in his translation of Sorokin's study of Tolstoy they shared major domain assumptions about the nature of the world, humanity, and how life is best lived. These primitive agreements were grounded in their shared ethnicity and philosophy. Ethnically, the Russian worldview is committed to: the importance of feelings over rationality and science; the centrality of the soul and God; the importance of love in social relations; and the values of peace, equality, and altruism.

Indeed God, love, and happiness are the roots of personal and social peace. They are also among the answers to the four most important questions in philosophy: What is the essence of the world? What is the essence of the I? What is the relationship of the I and the not I? Who am I, and how am I to live? The essence of the world is God. The essence of the I is the soul. The relationship of the I to the not I is the difference between wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom comes from knowing God and the growth of the soul. The world of knowledge (fact, theory) tells us many things, but little of the core concerns of existence. Additionally, one should live happily, and true happiness comes from connection to God and others. We connect through love which nourishes the soul and bonds the one to the many.

Sorokin recognized that such tenets were part of many of the world's major religions. Indeed he ends Crisis by asserting that this is the direction the prophets and their followers should take. Had he stopped there many of his critics would have been correct: Sorokin was looking for a new age of faith, a restoration of an ideational or ideological social order, and he had become a modern Jeremiah, exhorting us to prepare for the coming Kingdom of
God. But Sorokin, the sociologist, recast his philosophy in sociological terms. A common denominator of the essence of the world, the I, wisdom and proper living, is love. It ties humans to each other and to the transcendent, promotes a commitment to wisdom, and empowers one to live a life of connection and happiness with God and others. In consequence it promotes peace and reduces suffering. The interesting psycho-social questions are: How does one cultivate the growth of love personally, in primary and secondary groups, in community and society, and thereby increase amity and reduce conflict? In short Sorokin was looking for an answer similar to that put forth by his countryman Peter Kropotkin in *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. Kropotkin, based on historical and naturalistic studies, asserted that the evolution of animals and the ethical and social progress of humans resulted not from struggle, but from learning to cooperate and help each other. Love and related emotions were, in Sorokin's mind, the foundation for such prosocial behavior. Consequently, increasing them would promote cooperation as a social force and as an important factor in the progressive evolution of humankind. (Jaworski 1993: 72). Indeed the how of this, and its social implementation, would become a central concern of the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism.

A unique opportunity to pursue these interests emerged in 1946 when, with a grant from the entrepreneur and philanthropist Eli Lilly, Sorokin established the Harvard Center. The twenty-thousand dollar award was used to formulate a statement of the Center's purpose, commission anthropological, clinical and mediational studies of altruism, and write *The Reconstruction of Humanity* (1948). This book served as the exemplar of the Center and guided its fourteen year research program.

Sorokin's initial research showed that the study of love and altruism had been largely ignored by the sociological community. However, he was committed to discovering its nature, and learning how to produce, accumulate, and use it to form better people and more cooperative and constructive social relationships. Over the years, the results of these efforts were reported in many books and articles. The more important are: *Altruistic Love: A Study of American Good Neighbors and Christian Saints* (1950), *Explorations in Altruistic Love and Behavior*: A
Symposium (1950), Social Philosophies of an Age of Crisis (1950), S.O.S. The Meaning of Our Crisis (1951), Forms and Techniques of Altruistic Love and Spiritual Growth: A Symposium (1954), The Ways and Power of Love (1954), Power and Morality: Who Shall Guard the Guardians (1959). The goals of the Center were to produce practical and applied principles in psychology, sociology and history capable of transforming and reconstructing behavior at different levels of social organization extending from the dyad to the society as a whole. These works reflect the efforts of Sorokin, as an applied sociologist, to develop a conceptual and practical algorithm for human improvement and social reconstruction based on his Integral view of society and humankind.

Amitology and The Harvard Research Center
In Creative Altruism

Working from an Integral perspective Sorokin defined Amitology as an applied science that would increase the expressions of love and cooperation in society. Humans, as the creators of a complex social life, had added to the inorganic and organic worlds, the superorganic realm of culture. Their cultures tied them to a total reality and through it they sought the supreme Integral value: the unity of social peace, harmony with nature, and the growth of the soul. The means to these ends was altruism. How to make humankind more altruistic was the task of the Center.

Humans become altruistic through practice. The capacity grows by letting the soul (superconsciousness) gain more influence over the mind. Love then directs behavior toward prosocial and cooperative forms. World religions were rich sources of norms to guide such behavior and deepen altruistic potential.

Particularly useful, for Sorokin, were the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. These were more than biblical injunctions, they were principles for character development. If society sought to eliminate social evils, then it must develop better people. This approach was ignored by most social scientists who typically focused on the dynamics of antisocial behavior. Yet religion provided values and directions for leading a good life. For example, parents would care for children in
ways that improved their character and nurtured their development. Politicians would avoid creating unjust legislation. Scientists, businessmen, and inventors would work for the common good. Sorokin viewed culture as the result of millions of individual acts. If each of us avoided the selfish abuse of our functions then the world would be improved. But if we each behaved altruistically then the world would be enriched.

The Center would develop methods to encourage the expression of love (and related emotions such as compassion, sympathy, and empathy) in all social relationships. The results would be a safer, more temperate society that nurtured human development and constructive interpersonal relationships. The research agenda for the reconstruction of humanity focused on multiple levels of social action: the preparation of individuals, the primary group, secondary group, collectivities and communities, and altruistic reforms at the national and international levels.

Sorokin's program drew from cross-cultural works like Roger Godel's comparative study of science and religion. Godel demonstrated how the Hindu turned inward, and the Westerner outward, in seeking scientific knowledge and religious awareness. Religiously, both approaches left the seeker waiting in quiet supplication for the presence of God. Scientifically, they remained separate paths until quantum physics confirmed that each was partially valid, but that they were stronger and more productive when combined. (Godel 1954: 3-12; Sorokin 1956: 279-296). Godel's essay supports Integralism as an epistemology and model of human nature. It also demonstrates how sensate and ideational truths had intertwined to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the natural and the sublime.

Western religions, like their Eastern brethren, also developed physical techniques to promote the growth of the soul. Anthony Bloom described those of Orthodox Christian monks, and Pierre Marinier explored prayer. The link of body to mind and soul is deepened by Orthodox monks through mortification, meditation, and other exercises that Bloom described as Christian Yoga. (Bloom 1954: 93-108). These rituals synergistically prepared the seeker to experience the transcendent. Prayer was however more typical of the religious and Christian experiences. It focuses attention on God and yields a number of physical and psycho-
logical benefits. The former were of particular interest to Marinier, but he also viewed prayer as a way to moral recovery, and a heightened awareness of reality and God. Prayer was a transcendental universal. (Marinier 1954: 145-164).

These and other essays in *Forms* showed how to control the appetites, transcend the ego, and develop the soul. They were only a few of the techniques used universally by seekers to develop their spiritual and altruistic capacity. These methods of character development also motivated the religious to overcome egoism and act altruistically.

Altruization techniques also worked in larger social contexts. For example, J. Mark Thompson's research demonstrated how sustained acts of kindness by an adversary regularly changed hostile relationships into congenial ones within primary groups. (Thompson 1954: 401-417). Anger and hostility were also studied in a number of secondary groups including a mental hospital. There the focus was on the tensions inherent in the long-term relationships between nurses and patients. These were greatly reduced when each group learned to take the role of the other. As their empathy increased nurses moved beyond a clinical indifference to compassion. Similarly, patients became less hostile and more responsive. The longer each persisted in these behaviors the better things became. (Hyde and Kandler 1954: 387-399). These studies are illustrative and by no means exhaust the Center's work on such subjects. Indeed, Sorokin broadened and deepened these explorations in several volumes including *The Ways and Power of Love* (1954b).

Two exceptional altruistic communities are described in the Center's studies of the Mennonites and Hutterites. The Mennonites ranked high on all of Sorokin's dimensions of love. Their altruism had a broad social scope and reached well beyond the community. It was motivationally pure and performed without expectation of reward. It was culturally institutionalized and passed on by socialization to the young. As a result altruism became an enduring component of their culture. The Mennonites help many who experience loss and suffering. They maintain hospitals, orphanages, homes for the elderly, banks, cooperatives, and burial societies for Mennonite and non-Mennonite alike. (Krahn, Fretz, Krieder 1954: 308-328).
What motivates people to do these things and how is their altruism passed to new generations? Eberhard Arnold's essay on the Hutterites in Paraguay demonstrates the process (Arnold 1954: 294-307). Hutterites are also direct descendants of the Swiss Anabaptists and teach children early how time and resources are to be used for the work of God. Adult role models are the hub of socialization. They demonstrate selfless behavior, responsibility, cooperation, and Christian love. Their examples are mirrored by older children who also take responsibility for the young. Peer groups are never exclusive, reward and punish behavior but always leave open a clear path for the unruly to return to full membership. The family, however, is the hub of socialization, and there children learn the required life skills.

In the late teens the Society sends young members into the world for education and to expand their personal awareness. Afterwards, each youngster decides whether to stay or to return to the community. Most return and take their places as role models for the next generation.

**Altruistic Transformations in Complex Societies**

Sorokin next explored institutionalized altruism at the highest levels of sociocultural integration. In *Power and Morality: Who Shall Guard the Guardians?* he and Walter A. Lunden examined the challenges that nations face in becoming more humane. To overcome these challenges they suggest a government of scientists, sages and saints. Sorokin and Lunden argue that the technical complexity of today's world requires greater intellectual skill than is characteristic of traditional politicians. As a result they will be replaced by scientists. But, does this mean better government or just one elite replacing another? The existing evidence suggested that the shift to a scientific elite would not be enough.

Scientists lacked the wisdom of the sage. Society now required a pansophic intellectual who could integrate scientific understanding into a broader network of moral principles for social progress. (Sorokin and Lunden 1959: 169). These ethical pansophs would develop a strategy to replace moral relativism with a set of cross-culturally applicable moral norms. To be complete this moral transformation would also require a new brand of
religious leadership. These leaders would be more ecumenical and promote a moral education suitable for a global society. (Sorokin and Lunden 1959: 175-189). The guardians of the guardians were thus the moral leaders of the new global community. Their leadership would reenforce the transformation of sensate government into an Integral form. If such leadership delivered a few decades of peace, then the most dangerous part of the declining sensate transition would pass, and a solid foundation for an emerging Integral civilization would be in place (Sorokin and Lunden 1959: 184-193).

A Road Not Taken

Integralism is an epistemology and a comprehensive theory for understanding social order and change in modern Western society. It contains a crisis oriented model and an exemplar for character development and social reconstruction. As an paradigm it provides a framework for doing normal science in sociology, and it emphasizes the application of results to the practical problems of existence.

The historical conditions which catalyzed Sorokin's engagement with character development, prophetic sociology, and the social improvement of society are as serious today as when he began these studies. Indeed many have argued that they are more acute and palpable. Nations crumble, and wars, revolutions, and violence appear omnipresent. The time is ripe with challenge, but sociology seems to have lost its power and vitality as a theoretically driven, prophetically motivated discipline. Yet, Integralism challenges us to rediscover our core. It contains a historically grounded theory of social change; an epistemological foundation for a more comprehensive methodology; and a practical and theoretical emphasis on problem solving. As a classic sociological theory Integralism simultaneously provides an approach to systematic theory and a methodological framework that triangulates intuitive, rational and empirical understandings while maintaining a focus on social problems.

Integralism is a powerful and complex model for our age. Yet, it is a road not taken. Professional resistance could be a product of a narrowing academic culture among sociologists rather than a rational decision on how to do good science and
construct integrative, problem oriented, and empirically verifiable theory. The why of this resistance may have more to do with the domain assumptions and organization of academic sociology than with the value of integralism. But, that is a topic for another time.

Indiana University Northwest

REFERENCES


