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INTEGRALISM, ALTRUISM AND RECONSTRUCTION

ESSAYS IN HONOR OF PITIRIM A. SOROKIN

ELVIRA DEL POZO AVIÑÓ, ED.



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*Integralism, Altruism and Reconstruction:
Essays in Honor of Pitirim A. Sorokin*

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Preface

Although the Preface to a book may be frequently reserved for the author or editor I am delighted to have the opportunity to open this volume. My reason is simple. I have long considered Pitirim Alexandrovitch Sorokin a powerful, yet neglected master of the sociological craft. I was tremendously pleased and excited when I learned that Elvira del Pozo Aviñó had undertaken the challenge and opportunity of moving Sorokin yet again to the attention of the sociological community. The essays contained herein provide an engaging, instructive and in-depth introduction to a tremendously prolific, complex and insightful master of the sociological craft. Sorokin's major works were and are those of a pioneer. Beginning with his ground breaking volumes at the University of Minnesota, then Harvard University and later the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism, he constantly labored at the outer boundaries and forefront of what was then the Standard American Sociology. The essays contained herein open the depth and breadth of his scholarship for a new generation of sociologists. These essays constitute an encompassing, knowing and engaging selection of insights into a complex, gifted, and controversial master of the sociological craft.

Barry V. Johnston
December, 2005

Introduction

The genesis of this volume dates back to 2000, when as a graduate student at Eastern Michigan University, I was introduced to the work of sociologist Pitirim A. Sorokin (1889-1968) by Professor Jay Weinstein. This discovery made my early graduate experience not only intellectually stimulating, but, as I have come to notice in time, it also profoundly influenced my academic path. The study of Sorokin's works, and particularly, of his later works on Integralism and creative altruism, along with Professor Weinstein's positive influence, motivated me to read, think, write, present a paper at a conference on Sorokin, and finally, decide to write a master's thesis based on theories of altruism. I believe that my master's thesis, *A Sociological Approach to the Study of Altruism: The Case of Amnesty International*, and the later decision to continue graduate studies at the Universitat de València would not have ever taken place had I not first discovered Sorokin's work.

After my arrival at the Universitat de València in Spain (2002), and after a thorough examination of the existing Sorokin publications in Spain, it became apparent that little is known about one of the more prolific sociologists of all time. Only nine of his thirty-seven books have thus far been translated into Spanish, in Mexico, Argentina, Colombia and Spain. Of these nine, four have been published in Spain: (1) *Dinámica social y cultural* 1962 (*Social and Cultural Dynamics*, Sorokin 1939-1941); (2) *Sociedad, cultura y personalidad* 1973 (*Society, Culture and Personality*, Sorokin 1947); (3) *Las filosofías sociales de nuestra época de crisis* 1960 (*Social Philosophies of an Age of Crisis*, Sorokin 1950); and (4) *Achaques y manías de la sociología moderna y ciencias afines* 1964 (*Fads and Foibles in Modern Sociology*, Sorokin 1956). A review of other documents, articles and dissertations published in Spanish Journals or by Spanish Universities also indicates that there has been little, if any, recognition of Sorokin.

This book was therefore born out of an interest to introduce and encourage other Spanish academics to delve into his work, and also, to continue the effort of refocusing attention upon Sorokin's work. Current contemporary crises are closely associated with issues such as wars, hunger, poverty, and enmity, to name a few. We believe that many of these problems could be mitigated with the "ennoblement of our personality," a task to which Sorokin dedicated many years of research and for which he studied concepts like Integralism, altruism and reconstruction.¹ The present volume is the result of essays written by a group of scholars who believe that Sorokin should be included in the center of contemporary sociological thought, and that this focus is an important task to develop internationally. Hence, we have all joined with essays discussing Sorokin, his life, and his work.

¹ See *The Reconstruction of Humanity* (Sorokin 1948:225).

Why do I speak of bringing Sorokin's work to the forefront? Sorokin was at one point a highly respected scholar, but as most of the included essays clarify, some of his work did not always receive the appreciation that it deserved. A large part of his work was ignored, particularly his research from the later phase of his career, developed immediately before and after the opening of the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism. It is argued that Sorokin's research fell short of empirically validating a theoretical framework of analysis. But at the same time, it is suggested that the positive paradigm is now a more inclusive and integrated way of understanding reality. This paradigm could also encompass some aspects of Sorokin's integral perspective, which includes both material and spiritual elements for the analysis of social relations. Thus, Sorokin's work should be revitalized within sociological research programs. A group of scholars from North American universities (some of which are included in this volume) have, for several years now, been working to create a wider recognition of this work. While the size of this group is rather small in number, the strength of their current movement is indeed robust. Many of their efforts have consisted of trying to extend Sorokin's legacy to other scholars and, once again, positioning Sorokin where he belongs, as a major theoretical influence in American Sociology.

For example, the recent re-edition of Sorokin's *The Ways and Power of Love* (Post 2002)—first edited in 1954—by the Templeton Foundation amounts to one of these efforts initiated in North America, as it introduces young scholars to one of Sorokin's major works. This re-edition represents as much an attempt to promote this work, as it is to challenge scholars by pulling them, once again, into the study of altruism and the power of love. It aims to interpret altruism as behavior that is part of human nature, and as behavior that should be part of the paradigms used by social scientists interpreting society.

As the title of the book reads, *Integralism, Altruism and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of Pitirim A. Sorokin*, the following pages discuss several dimensions of Sorokin as an individual and as a scholar. It covers many aspects of Sorokin's life and contributions, Sorokin as a sociologist, as a social thinker, as a social theorist, as an applied sociologist, and Sorokin as a social reformist. While we honor all of these, we attempt to emphasize the major benchmarks from the later phase of his career: Integralism, Altruism and Reconstruction. We focus equally on these three, and we do so in chronological order as a way to respect, to the extent that it is possible, the phases that were drawn by Sorokin's path. According to Vincent Jeffries, Integralism was for Sorokin "a scientific system of thought" that combines three ways of knowing reality, the sensory (empirical), the rational (logical), and the super-rational (intuitive). Altruism was defined by Sorokin in *Reconstruction* (1948) as "the action that produces and maintains the physical and/or psychological good of others. It is formed by love and empathy, and in its extreme form may require the free sacrifice of self for another" (Johnston 1995:177). According to Barry Johnston, for Sorokin, the time had come to do something about society through the application of Integralism, to act in a reconstructive way (Johnston 1995:127-128, 240).² Thus, Reconstruction refers to Sorokin's efforts to apply Integralism as a theory that helps create, through the altruization of human beings, solidarity and more peaceful relationships among people.

² See Barry Johnston's *Pitirim A. Sorokin: An Intellectual Biography*.

Our first aim is to honor Sorokin and his work. Yet, we also argue that Sorokin's work is still important to sociology and the social sciences today. Sorokin was a pioneer in many areas of study that are still at the center of sociology, namely social mobility, social conflict, social change, altruism, and the sociology of knowledge. His work and theories are very deep, similar to the works of other major academics and sociologists such as C. Wright Mills, Marx, Comte, and Hegel, among others, as you will witness in the essays in the volume.

The organization and content of the nine essays included in this volume can be divided into four groups. In the first, the essays of Samuel Oliner, and Edward Tiryakian, a former student of Sorokin, introduce Sorokin's contributions to sociology. Samuel Oliner summarizes both his general and specific areas of study. He argues that his most significant works, which include the study of the power of love and altruism, have greater relevance to sociology and the social sciences today. Next, Edward Tiryakian's concluding essay focuses on Sorokin's post-WWII stage in his career, where, marginalized from the New Department of Social Relations, he engaged in innovative studies on altruism combined with radical critiques of sociological epistemology and dominant trends in the American cultural system.

In the second group, the essays of Vincent Jeffries, Lawrence T. Nichols, and José Beltrán Llavador discuss Sorokin's system of thought, which transcends disciplinary boundaries, and combines perspectives and methods of the social sciences, philosophy, and to some extent, religious ideas. Vincent Jeffries' essay on "The Eleven Theses of Integralism" illustrates Sorokin's main ideas regarding the nature of Integralism. Jeffries argues that there are eleven theses that serve as a basis to examine the distinctive features of an integral social science. Next, Lawrence T. Nichols explores the possibilities of Integralism as a system of values which can be interpreted from Eastern, Western, Christian and Non-Christian variants. This essay assesses how Sorokin's major publications are linked to elements inherent in all of these perspectives. Finally, José Beltrán Llavador reviews some of Sorokin's most mature essays, including his essay on Tolstoy, to reflect on whether Sorokin's work can contribute to the discipline of the sociology of education.

The third group includes essays by Jay Weinstein and Jenniffer Haskins Corwin, Stephen Post and Elvira del Pozo Aviñó, which focus on Sorokin from theory to application. The essay by Jay Weinstein and Jenniffer Haskins Corwin explores the correlation between the fear of death and dying and altruism by presenting data from a recent empirical study. Stephen Post focuses on Sorokin's *The Ways and Power of Love* to draw some conclusions on the psychological and physical benefits of altruistic behavior. He then assesses Sorokin's assertion that unselfish love has a therapeutic value. Elvira del Pozo Aviñó's essay centers on Sorokin's theories of altruism and Amitology along with other more contemporary works on altruistic actions. The author argues that these theories can inspire future sociological work in the area of volunteerism in NGOs and participation in social movements.

Finally, Barry Johnston reflects on Sorokin's system of thought as the basis of analysis to forward the Reconstruction of Society. Integralism was fully developed in 1941, with the fourth volume of *Dynamics*. But it was at the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism where Sorokin finally explored—through research on the nature of love—ways to improve relationships among people. However, the author contends that this theoretical approach is yet to be developed among sociologists.

This book is for a large audience of both mature scholars, who are interested in further interpretations of Sorokin's work, and also for young scholars, who are interested in Sorokin's philosophy, theories, and unique perspective of the world. It is a collaboration of analysts from both the US and Spain. This book unites not simply a collection of essays discussing Sorokin, but rather it honors Sorokin's continuing influence on a growing group of young scholars who, as Barry Johnston once said, "ask big questions and are not afraid of controversial answers."³

This volume manifests a profound respect to this courageous group of American scholars who are championing the cause of a *forgotten* Sorokin. Additionally, it is the beginning of what we hope will become a way to introduce Sorokin's works into current Spanish Sociology.

My thanks to the authors of these essays: José Beltrán Llavador, Jennifer Haskin Corwin, Vincent Jeffries, Barry Johnston, Lawrence T. Nichols, Samuel Oliner, Stephen Post, Edward Tiryakian, and Jay Weinstein for their participation and irreplaceable contribution to the interpretation of Sorokin's work. Additionally, my special thanks go to Jay Weinstein for his passion in teaching Sociology, to José Beltrán Llavador for his encouragement and entire support of this project, to Barry Johnston for his reviews of some of the included essays, and highly appreciated reinforcement in the preparation of the volume, to the director of this collection, Carme Manuel, for her kindness, patience and technical assistance in the preparation of this manuscript, to Vincent Jeffries for the numerous conversations regarding the process and potential of this book, as well as future efforts to bring Sorokin's work to Spain, and to my husband, Dave, for his reviews of my essays and his overall generosity in loving the work I do.

³ Comment included in my copy of *Pitirim A. Sorokin: An Intellectual Biography* signed by Barry Johnston on the 6th of April, 2001, Kentucky, Louisville.

Sorokin's Major Contribution to World Sociology

Samuel P. Oliner
Humboldt State University

Introduction

I first heard of Pitirim A. Sorokin some fifty years ago as an undergraduate student. Although my sociology professors frequently invoked his name, it was just as frequently dismissed. Sorokin, I quickly learned, was outdated and was not relevant to sociology, and indeed, did not merit any of my serious reading attention. I must shamefacedly confess that I readily accepted this judgment. Its utterance admitted me into the ranks of the sociological cognoscenti of that time in one bold stroke, and simultaneously relieved me of the necessity of plowing through thousands of pages of print, which constituted the formidable quantity of Sorokin's publications. Hence, there is some degree of irony and more than an ordinary degree of pleasure in accepting the task of assessing Sorokin's contribution to American sociology, and how I "rediscovered" him in my later research on altruism. His profound insight into altruism was helpful to me in our writing of *The Altruistic Personality* 1988, *Toward a Caring Society* 1995, Sorokin's *Vision of Altruistic Love as a Bridge to Human Consensus*, and *Do Unto Others* 2003. A number of other scholars who are included in this special issue have also rediscovered him and found him to make a major contribution to our understanding of human behavior. Additionally, Sorokin made an enormous contribution to the development of the world of sociology as well as American sociology.

My own personal re-evaluation of Sorokin parallels to some extent the fluctuations, which have characterized mainstream sociological thought. The period of fifties, the time of my introduction into sociology, reflected one of those times when Sorokin was perhaps held in lowest esteem. Immersed as he was then in his work on altruism, the "philosopher of love," as he was sometimes called, tended to be dismissed as an ideologue. He had effectively withdrawn from the Department of Sociology at Harvard, then dominated by the towering figure of Talcott Parsons, with whom he had less than cordial relations.¹ He subsequently became deeply involved in the study of creative altruism. As a result of a movement orchestrated by Robert Merton, Sorokin's prestige as an eminent world sociologist was restored by electing him president of the American Sociological

¹ Some insight into the relationship between Sorokin and Parsons was provided to me via correspondence written by Neil J. Smelser, Charles Loomis and Vernon Parenton. Smelser informed me that the relationship between Sorokin and Parsons was openly hostile. With the publication of Parsons' *Social Systems* in 1951, Sorokin circulated a mimeographed document, which led some of its readers to believe that he had implicitly accused Parsons of plagiarism. However, the word "plagiarism" was not used in the document itself—although Sorokin pointed out the similarities in this work with his own.

Association in 1963 and was the first to be placed on the ballot by a write-in campaign (Johnston 1995). Sorokin presided over the ASA conference held in Chicago in 1965.

The combination of Sorokin's latter day intellectual interests, expressed primarily through the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism, and the political conflicts within the Department of Sociology at Harvard help explain in part at least the low status he held among sociologists at that time.

If criticism was especially harsh during this period, it was more than matched by accolades bestowed in earlier times and to some extent, re-emerging today. Admirers have held him to be in the company of the likes of Simmel, Weber, Durkheim, W. I. Thomas, Znaniecki, the Beards, Spengler, Toynbee, Spencer, Mannheim, and Marx, as well as Kroeber and Malinowski. They maintain that Sorokin's failure to be appreciated lies primarily in his being misread, misinterpreted, and misunderstood. Vernon J. Parenton credits Sorokin with a major transformation of American sociology, and whose work was considerably ahead of his time. Soper (Sorokin 1937:720) echoes a similar theme in these words:

St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas or John Wesley did not write more lucidly than Sorokin, since his thinking is in every way as provocative and as pivotal as theirs. While more inclusive, it cannot be said that he has written less significantly. A titan, Sorokin has not yet reached the average person nor even the average college professor.²

Certainly few sociologists have written more than Sorokin or have a better international reputation. He is the author of some forty-five books and over four-hundred articles published in scientific journals around the world. A number of his works have been translated into a number of languages, including German, Polish, French, Japanese, Spanish, and even Hindu. Not many sociologists have had the distinction of numbering among their students and associates many prominent scholars, which include Robert Merton, Kingsley Davis, Tilly, J. W. Riley, Charles Loomis, W. Moore, Homans, Becker, Florence Klucholm, Neil J. Smelser, and Parenton. Few sociologists have risked writing in such a variety of areas including criminal sociology, rural sociology, culture, society and personality, social stratification, the sociology of knowledge, social dynamics, and social change. Certainly the scope of his work, which embraced nothing less than the total history of civilizations and cultures, distinguishes him among sociologists. And few if any sociologists have had the varied personal life experiences abroad in critical historical times which were his. If this collection of distinctions suffice to ensure Sorokin's place in American sociology, it is perhaps also inevitable that it would engender fierce criticism. The sociological spirit, after all, requires not only admiration for work well done but also critical evaluation. A powerful internationally known figure such as Sorokin will command more than mild degrees of both. It is clear that Sorokin had a good number of critics, some may have been very unkind, never the less, Sorokin did denounce his critics, charging that "since Comte and Spencer, Hegel and Marx, LePlay and Tarde, Durkheim and Max Weber, Simmel and Dilthey, Pareto and DeRoberty, there has hardly appeared a name worthy of mention in sociology (1941:127)" (Nichols 1996:55).

² Similar praisers are Tiryakian, Cowell, Martindale, Vine, Loomis. See bibliography for full citations.

Personal Background

Sorokin's contribution to American sociology was of two types. As a disseminator of sociological knowledge, he played a unique role. It is probably no exaggeration to say that he brought world sociology to the United States almost single-handedly. In so doing, he helped raise American sociology out of the narrow and parochial framework within which it had operated. His second major contribution was in terms of his own seminal ideas, which influenced a good many scholars in anthropology as well as rural sociology, social mobility, social theory, sociology of knowledge, and social change. Some preliminary comments regarding his personal life and his major writings may be helpful in illuminating both of these contributions.

Sorokin was born to peasant parents in a Komi village in Czarist Russia in 1889. By age ten, he, together with his older brother, left the family to find odd jobs to support themselves. Signs of his precocious intellect were already apparent at this early age and he was able to secure a scholarship and some rudimentary education. He went on to study at the Karmonova Teacher's Seminary in Kostroma Province, a Russian Orthodox school, and entered the Psycho-Neurological Institute at the University of St. Petersburg in 1909.³ His admiration of the peasantry and their community spirit, enhanced by his extensive readings of Tolstoy, Pushkin, and other Russian classicists, inevitably led to participation in early revolutionary activities against the regime, for which he was first arrested in 1906. During his initial incarceration, he celebrated his eighteenth birthday (Johnston 1998:4). Both the Czarists and the Bolsheviks imprisoned him (Clifford 2004). His revolutionary inclination was sharpened in jail as he and his fellow political prisoners discussed Marx, Engels, Lenin, Bakunin, Darwin, Tolstoy, Spencer and other political theorists. He resumed his studies upon his release and graduated with the highest honors from the Institute with a Master's Degree in Criminal and Administrative Law. Although sociology was not taught at St. Petersburg until 1918, Sorokin had already acquainted himself with Comte, Spencer, Pareto, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel, among others. When Sorokin received his undergraduate degree in 1914, sociology was not part of the University curriculum. According to Johnston, "He continued studying with his masters through the faculty of law and economics, where sociology was taught as a theoretical basis for law" (1998:6).

In 1917, Sorokin became heavily involved in politics. He became Kerensky's secretary or personal assistant and worked tirelessly on his behalf. Some believe that while Sorokin held the office of personal assistant to Kerensky that "he may have possessed greater political power than any other sociologist in the history of the discipline" (Johnston 1998:7). Although he continued his political activities even after the Bolshevik coup, he was fundamentally opposed to Bolshevism and hence suspect. It was his opposition to the Bolsheviks that led to imprisonment and repeated threats of execution (Clifford 2004). Thanks to the intervention of one of his friends, he narrowly escaped death at Lenin's hands when Lenin suspected him of an assassination attempt. It was during this period in jail while awaiting execution that he became a severe critic of the revolution. Through the influence of his friends, he *managed* to leave the country with his wife and a few personal belongings in 1922. He traveled to Czechoslovakia where he received a warm welcome from President Masaryk. In 1924 he accepted an invitation to teach at the University of

³ Sorokin tells much about his experiences and early life in *Leaves From a Russian Diary*, *Sorokin in Review* by Allen, and *The Long Journey*. Also see Zimmerman's *Sociological Theories of P. A. Sorokin*.