

THE SEARCH FOR A SCIENTIFIC SOCIOLOGY:  
THE SOROKINIAN "SYSTEM" IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

by

STUART AUBREY BEAVERIDGE

B.A., University of Victoria, 1976

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

History

ACCEPTED  
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DATE

20 Sept 82

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

Dr. W. George Shelton

Dr. Ralph C. Croizier

Dr. T. Rennie Warburton

Dr. Robert B. Hagedorn

© STUART AUBREY BEAVERIDGE  
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

February 1982

*All rights reserved. This dissertation may not be reproduced  
in whole or in part, by mimeograph or other means,  
without the permission of the author.*

Supervisor: Professor W. George Shelton

#### ABSTRACT

Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968) was a sociologist who became well known for a variety of reasons, but who is not normally remembered for his efforts to make sociology scientific. Sorokin conducted this search for a scientific sociology when he was at the height of his career, and when his earlier works were probably more widely read and translated than those of any other living sociologist, but he published his ideas in Social and Cultural Dynamics (1937-41), the very work in which he also began uttering prophecies and making extravagant claims for his "integralist system" of sociology, utterances and claims which contributed to the rapid decline of interest in his work. Publication of the first three volumes of Sorokin's Dynamics also coincided with the appearance of Talcott Parsons' Structure of Social Action, a book which also claimed to provide a theoretical basis for a scientific sociology, and which initiated the rise of interest in Parsonian theory. Subsequent debates between Sorokin, Parsons, their critics and their partisans were usually couched in conceptual-analytical language which served to further obscure interest in Sorokin's substantive study of sociocultural change and the categories in terms of which he undertook it. Yet these constituted a sincere attempt to provide sociology with insights and techniques designed to make it more scientific. As such they belong to the history of such attempts.

The present study presents and discusses Sorokin's 1937 work,

emphasizing ideas and findings which pertain to his search for a scientific sociology; similar but briefer treatment is accorded the better known ideas of Durkheim, Pareto, Weber and Parsons. It then examines Sorokin's ideas in relation to those of the other four. It concludes that, although Sorokin's studies constituted an imaginative effort to improve upon and to advance the thought of Durkheim, Pareto and Weber, his willingness to become involved in flights of fancy and in arid conceptual-analytical debate with Parsons and others contributed to the subsequent neglect not only of his own studies, but also of the very problem those studies had attempted to solve--the problem of discovering an adequate basis for the scientific study of sociocultural phenomena.

[REDACTED]  
Dr. W. George Shelton

[REDACTED]  
Dr. Ralph C. Crozier

[REDACTED]  
Dr. T. Rennie Warburton

[REDACTED]  
Dr. Robert B. Hagedorn

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT . . . . .	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS . . . . .	iv
CHAPTER I Introduction . . . . .	1
CHAPTER II Background . . . . .	14
CHAPTER III Durkheim, Weber, Pareto . . . . .	26
CHAPTER IV Sorokin: Life, Methodology, Classifications . . . . .	49
CHAPTER V Sorokin: Substantive Inquiry . . . . .	74
CHAPTER VI Sorokin and Parsons . . . . .	94
CHAPTER VII Sorokin: Theoretical Writings . . . . .	114
CHAPTER VIII The Search for a Scientific Sociology . . . . .	131
CHAPTER IX Conclusions . . . . .	169
LITERATURE CITED . . . . .	179
APPENDIX--Samples of Sorokin's Lists, Tables and Graphs . . . . .	184

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Social science confronts historians with an interesting challenge, a challenge best epitomized, I think, in Thomas Luckmann's phrase ". . . contemporary historian of ideas and . . . future historian of social science. . . ." <sup>1</sup> The point is that we have little option but to treat social scientists' ideas as we do those of philosophers, journalists, novelists or pamphleteers: we focus on interesting or influential individuals, fashions of inquiry, and more-or-less-integrated schools of thought. At the same time, however, we must deal with thinkers who, for the most part, envisage future social science as achieving some kind of consensus comparable to that which enables natural scientists to agree on fundamentals and historians of science to discuss their ideas against the relatively stable background of universally acclaimed, developing scientific knowledge. How social scientific consensus is likely to be achieved constitutes, ironically, one of the basic questions that divides social scientists into competing schools of thought and research traditions. Within these traditions, however, consensus does tend to resemble that found in the natural sciences. Thus the historian who would treat social science simply as ideas risks doing

---

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Luckmann, "Philosophy, Science and Everyday Life" in Maurice Natanson, ed., Phenomenology and the Social Sciences (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1973), vol. I, p. 157.

an injustice to the intentions, aspirations and sense of scientific commitment felt by the thinkers he studies; at the same time, if he treats those ideas as science, he automatically aligns himself with whatever research tradition a particular set of ideas represents.

Historical studies consequently tend to be pursued by practitioners in the various fields, contributing rather more to the polemics of social science than to the historical assessment of it.<sup>2</sup> Such studies are often full of insights, yet in one respect they resemble the records of chroniclers and court historiographers of old: we must understand them in terms of whom they are intended to please. The writer usually regards one particular orientation or tradition as providing the only "real" or promising basis for social science, and examines earlier thinkers who are treated as having laid the foundations for the partial viewpoint which the writer himself espouses. Recent studies by Anthony Oberschall and others under Paul Lazarsfeld's influence are examples of this type of history in the field of sociology; intrinsically they are also examples of how very penetrating such partisan studies can

---

<sup>2</sup>" . . . L'histoire des sciences sociales est généralement le fait de sociologues, de psychologues et d'autres . . . qui, étant eux-mêmes impliqués dans le jugement qu'ils se proposent de porter, ont plutôt tendance à colporter les images conventionnelles qu'à se soumettre au travail méticuleux qu'exige la recherche historique. [. . .] Sans doute Lazarsfeld est-il, lui aussi, juge et partie lorsqu'il entreprend de rechercher les origines de la sociologie empirique. [. . .] Mais . . . ses travaux . . . ont le précieux avantage de concevoir l'histoire des sciences sociales sur un autre mode que celui de l'histoire des idées, des concepts, des doctrines ou des systèmes." [Raymond Boudon, "A propos d'un livre imaginaire," introduction to Paul Lazarsfeld Philosophie des sciences sociales (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), reprinted in Raymond Boudon, La crise de la sociologie (Paris: Droz, 1971), p. 115].

be.<sup>3</sup> More in keeping with one tradition in the history of ideas are the studies of particular thinkers and the surveys of series of thinkers' conceptions of social reality. We can admire the thinkers studied, but there is usually nothing which can be said to hold them together except for the author's talent and the label "philosopher," "psychologist," or "sociologist." In the "sociologist" category, Raymond Aron's Main Currents in Sociological Thought<sup>4</sup> and Nicholas S. Timasheff's Sociological Theory, Its Nature and Growth<sup>5</sup> provide examples of this second type of study. The first type described above has the disadvantage of representing single currents in the sociological tradition to the exclusion of others. The second usually tries to reflect all currents, but tends to emphasize irreconcilability at the expense of the idea of unified social science. In the present study I hope to avoid what I perceive as the shortcomings of both these approaches.

If the historical judgement which designates certain thinkers as contributing to the science of sociology is in fact premature, how can the history of ideas hope to render judgements which are generally meaningful to sociology? In broad terms, I would suggest that the answer to this question lies in the direction of exploring the history

---

<sup>3</sup>See for example Anthony Oberschall, ed., The Establishment of Empirical Sociology: Studies in Continuity, Discontinuity and Institutionalization (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

<sup>4</sup>New York: Basic Books, 1965.

<sup>5</sup>New York: Random House, 1967.

of attempts to solve particular problems. Although the social sciences have, in common with philosophy, the tendency to elicit a wide variety of "answers," they nonetheless share with natural science the tendency to focus on particular questions.<sup>6</sup> Although historical study cannot possibly solve the problems of social science, it might lead to greater awareness of what is fundamental in those problems if it can successfully distinguish the significant from the merely contingent in previous attempts to solve them.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, as Quentin Skinner suggests,<sup>8</sup> it may even help to increase self-awareness among those who might want to tackle the same problem.

The present study deals largely with the "system" of sociology proposed by Pitirim A. Sorokin in the late 1930s. Thus, in keeping with one tradition in the history of ideas, I focus on the thought of an individual. At the same time, however, I try to do justice to sociology as a whole by treating his ideas in the historical context of problems which thinkers of various orientations attempt to solve. To

---

<sup>6</sup>Quentin Skinner, with whom I agree on most points, nevertheless asserts ["Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," History and Theory, vol. VIII (1969), p. 50], following R. G. Collingwood, "there simply are no perennial problems in philosophy: there are only individual answers to individual questions with as many different answers as there are questions and as many different questions as there are questioners." Inasmuch as social science is "just philosophy" this may be true. But inasmuch as it tries to be a science it tends to emphasize consensus as opposed to individuality.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 53: ". . . to learn from the past the distinction between what is necessary and what is the product of our own contingent arrangements, is to learn the key to self awareness itself."

<sup>8</sup>See note 7 above.

some extent, therefore this study also resembles the other main tradition in the history of ideas (that which traces the history of concepts and ideologies through various thinkers).

The main problem which Sorokin tackled is the overall problem of discovering a basis for consensus in sociology. Like Emile Durkheim, Vilfredo Pareto and Talcott Parsons, Sorokin believed the solution to this problem lay in the discovery of an adequate general theoretical framework. The primary problem context is therefore that of twentieth-century efforts by sociologists to provide such a framework. Prior to World War I this was explicitly attempted by Durkheim and Pareto. Less explicit, but nonetheless influential, was the thought of their contemporary, Max Weber. In 1937 both Pitirim Sorokin and Talcott Parsons endeavoured to succeed where their illustrious predecessors had fallen short. Sorokin's sociology, now largely eclipsed in North American academic circles, nonetheless continues to attract sympathetic readers on this continent and--especially--abroad. Sorokin's later writings frequently allude to the system he developed in the 1930s. With few exceptions, however,<sup>9</sup> treatments of his ideas have tended either to be obscured by polemical controversy, or to be focused on his later writings, rather than on the system of sociology which he claimed to have provided in his earlier work. The ideas of Sorokin and Parsons

---

<sup>9</sup>One notable exception is Jacques Maquet, The Sociology of Knowledge: Its Structure and Its Relation to the Philosophy of Knowledge: A Critical Analysis of the Systems of Karl Mannheim and Pitirim A. Sorokin (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951).

have not yet ceased to inspire impassioned loyalties and antagonism, but the rivalry seems much less fervid than formerly. Moreover, the active search for a general theory of sociology has, for the present at least, abated. Perhaps now is a suitable time to begin to try and penetrate the politics of faction and personality in order to discover what exactly these two prominent sociologists accomplished in their early works.

Sorokin in particular bears close examination. Although his writing is lucid in comparison with Parsons' notoriously opaque style, it is far more cluttered with extravagant effusions, sweeping generalizations and polemical tirades. Whereas interpreters of Parsons have tended to perform exegeses of his texts, making his ideas more accessible and understandable, Sorokin's interpreters have tended to focus on his later work, referring readers to earlier publications for understandings of his basic thoughts. It is my aim, in approaching the Sorokinian system in historical perspective, to cut a pathway through the thickets of naïve allegiance and rejection as well as the sheer misunderstandings or misrepresentations which characterize expositions of Sorokin's thought and which serve only to obscure it. Large portions of Chapters IV, V, and VII are therefore devoted to a presentation of Sorokin's ideas, so that the reader will be able to understand my own observations and comments in relation to what Sorokin actually wrote.

Fundamental in Sorokin's inquiry, and closely related to the problem of establishing a general theory, is the subsidiary problem

concerning the status of science in sociological studies. Sorokin's reasoning led him to certain hasty conclusions regarding the direction which sociology should take, conclusions which duly became the butt of professional criticism, much of it well founded. This, however, should not be allowed to distract from the very real issues with which Sorokin was attempting to deal. His reasoning has the virtue of making particularly clear the paradox inherent in sociologies which try to embrace science as a social phenomenon, and which simultaneously aspire to be regarded as science. How Sorokin became ensnared in this paradox is clearer still--and much more relevant to the search for a scientific sociology than in his weak attempt to extricate himself by postulating an "integralist" sociology.

Social and Cultural Dynamics, the inquiry which provided occasion for Sorokin's main theoretical observations and which supplied the basis for his sociology of knowledge, is a voluminous study of sociocultural change. The problem of how sociocultural change can be measured and plotted scientifically is its main concern. In attempting to solve this problem, however, Sorokin seems to have had no prominent forerunners or successors. Nonetheless, in terms of Dynamics' vast scope and its aim of discovering patterns in history, it resembles those very "philosophies of history" of which it is inherently also a critique. The history of modern "philosophies of history" therefore provides one context within which to consider Sorokin's study of sociocultural change. Another is the emergence from speculative beginnings

of other pattern-of-the-past sciences such as geology.<sup>10</sup>

The present study examines Sorokin's Dynamics in connection with earlier thinkers who also tackled the overall problem of establishing a scientific sociology. It argues that in at least three areas--general theory, sociology of knowledge, and sociocultural change--a study of Sorokin's thought provides insights which are likely to be important in any future attempt to provide a scientific basis for sociology.

It also examines briefly Talcott Parsons' Structure of Social Action, published the same year as Sorokin's first three volumes. Structure, it argues, was not only an independent and original attempt to provide sociology with scientific credentials, but also a sustained polemic against Sorokin.

Although the notion of a "scientific sociology" occurs frequently in the present study, my own use of this phrase corresponds to no particular past or current view of what sociology ought to do, must explain, or should contain. Rather, it is governed by a notion of science as a body of knowledge, a set of systematically interrelated explanations (theories) which are internally consistent, consistent with empirical reality, capable of answering at least some significant empirical or theoretical questions concerning the domain of inquiry, and independent of whatever philosophical, religious or political views individual scientists may hold. Other sciences such as astronomy,

---

<sup>10</sup>The emergence in recent years of academic specialties in "interdisciplinary" or "quantitative" history is still another.

meteorology, and biology have achieved this kind of status, and the history of sociology records many attempts to discover some key element, general law or developmental principle that would enable it to become scientific in this sense. The history of such attempts and Sorokin's place in it are what primarily concern us here.

That history also abounds in debates concerning the very possibility of sociology becoming scientific, in prescriptions setting forth procedures for making it scientific, and in opinions regarding what facts a scientific sociology must construe or what questions it should be able to answer. While it is natural, and perhaps even necessary, for sociologists to take stands on these issues, in order to lend support to whatever line of activity or inquiry they consider "most promising," the historian can afford to suspend judgement on most such issues.<sup>11</sup>

On certain related issues, however, judgements have been made for purposes of the present study. One such judgement, implied in my definition of science above, concerns the relationship between ideology and science. Sociologists who believe that sociology can never become scientific in the sense used here have commonly regarded social ills, inequalities and injustices as the problems which a science of society should solve, and have tended to view what I call "ideology"--visionary

---

<sup>11</sup>Some instances in the history of science even suggest that the very domain of incipient sciences becomes defined by the range of problems solved by a successful theory. See for example Larry Laudan, Progress and Its Problems: Towards a Theory of Scientific Growth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 33-35.

speculations,<sup>12</sup> theories<sup>13</sup> and politico-social programmes<sup>14</sup>--as the sociological equivalent of scientific theory. Others, however, including Sorokin, have believed the very opposite, and have actively striven to make sociology scientific. From this viewpoint, ideologies constitute systems of belief which--however secular--have more in keeping with religion than they do with science. The choice, however, between the belief that sociology can become scientific, and the belief that it cannot, itself remains something of an ideological decision--and will so remain unless and until some compelling, non-visionary theory of society begins to win widespread support because of its scientific merits.

Nevertheless, my own judgement in favour of the anti-ideological position is not a matter of belief: I do not pretend to know whether or not sociology can or will become scientific. My judgement has to do with the status of ideology with respect to established sciences. A physicist may regard himself as an idealist or a materialist, a socialist or a conservative, a Muslim or a Buddhist without such philosophical, political and religious views interfering significantly with his scientific knowledge. The same is generally true of all

---

<sup>12</sup>"Ideo . . . logy . . . visionary speculation. . . ." (Concise Oxford Dictionary, third edition), p. 563.

<sup>13</sup>"Ideology. . . . Visionary theorizing." (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1959), p. 411.

<sup>14</sup>"Integrated assertions, theories and aims constituting a politico-social program. . . ." (ibid.).

sciences except when they encounter organized opposition from socially entrenched doctrinaire religions or ideologies--such as evolutionary theory met, on the one hand from Christian literalists and, on the other, from Marxist Lamarckians. If, then, there is to be a scientific sociology in the non-ideological sense envisaged by Durkheim, Sorokin and numerous others, it will likely develop despite ideologies rather than from them, and it will likely flourish amidst a variety of philosophical, religious and political speculations and opinions. Such ideological influences on scientists and their activities are normal, and can be expected to continue, and even to intrude from time to time into scientific theorizing and debate--no matter how objective the scientist, no matter how developed and independent the science. These influences tend to become decreasingly significant as knowledge advances and as each generation learns to recognize, and labours to remove, the extra-scientific elements of theory which an earlier generation took for granted or consciously espoused.

✓ A judgement closely related to the foregoing is that which concerns the scientific status of the historicism upon which ideologies are normally based. The fact that successful scientific theories often disclosed regularities in nature which were usually not apparent to the casual observer of natural events led many philosophers and philosopher-historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to hope that historial events might be made to reveal similar orderly secrets, and even led some to suppose that the theories they postulated to this end were the socio-historical equivalents of scientific theory. ✓

The resulting speculations about man's past almost invariably viewed history as a more or less deterministic process "above and beyond individual human action"<sup>15</sup> and decision; as the expression of "a will or destiny . . . which imposes itself on individuals."<sup>16</sup> This type of speculation I call "historicism." Whereas my decision regarding ideology relates to its status with respect to established sciences, my judgement on historicism concerns its place in the history of historical scholarship. Historicist thinking was in fact a primary stimulus to academic historical research, and to the emergence of history as a discipline. As generations of historians succeeded one another, however, they demonstrated a declining interest in the historicist kind of thinking. Theories that had once been able to stimulate historical thought and research began to look more and more like amateurish, if imaginative, glosses, and they are so regarded by most professional historians today. (The main exceptions are historians whose first commitment is to Marxism, seen here as an ideology rooted in a historicist theory, rather than to history.) Historicist thinking also supplied the matrix from which sociology as a discipline, as well as the idea that sociology could become scientific, were born. Just as early twentieth-century historians laboured to rid their discipline of historicist fancies and facile generalizations, their contemporaries

---

<sup>15</sup>Roland N. Stromberg, An Intellectual History of Modern Europe (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 243, n. 5.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

who believed sociology could become scientific sought to free that discipline from what was perhaps an even greater burden of speculation. The history of that search for a scientific sociology and a consideration of Pitirim Sorokin's place in it constitute the subject matter of the chapters that follow.

## CHAPTER II

## BACKGROUND

Twentieth century attempts to inaugurate a scientific sociology did not, of course, occur in a vacuum, but arose against a background of earlier social thought and changing social conditions. To begin with, religions seem to have provided the framework for the social knowledge in most parts of the world; for Europe, in any case, the role of Western Christianity in providing such a framework is generally acknowledged.<sup>1</sup> But the 'declarations of independence' of Martin Luther, Jean Calvin and others were destined not only to involve Europe in fratricidal war and to have far-reaching political and economic consequences in the West, but also to bring into question the very

---

<sup>1</sup>For example by J. D. Bernal, Science in History (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1965 [1954]), p. 753; Ernest Becker, The Lost Science of Man (New York: George Braziller, 1970), pp. 32, 111; Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 241. Although I tend to agree with the central thesis in Andrew Greeley, Unsecular Man: the Persistence of Religion (New York: Dell Publishing, 1972), that ". . . human religious needs and the basic religious functions have not changed very notably since the late Ice Age . . ." (ibid., p. 1), it is important to observe that the gradual secularization of intellectual elites, of political authorities, of education, medical care and social welfare, as well as of institutions associated with these, is a clearly evident process which spans the last three or four centuries. Nowhere is this process more evident than in the history of social philosophy and social science, where leaders of thought often seem to be self-consciously attempting to purge their works of whatever might be construed as morality or metaphysics. The "conventional wisdom" which Greeley attacks is a by-product of this process, not the process itself: it mistakenly assumes that secularization extends to the generality of mankind.

basis of religious knowledge and, in so doing, the whole foundation of natural and social philosophy as well.<sup>2</sup> Bible criticism by such devoted Christians as Isaac La Peyrère and Richard Simon, and by less orthodox thinkers such as Benedict Spinoza and Pierre Bayle, systematically chipped away at scriptural credibility and simultaneously contributed to the emergence of social science by facilitating "the removal of man from a religious framework to a purely secular one. . . ."<sup>3</sup> The sacrosanct status of the traditional social order began to be questioned when it was subjected to historical criticism in the writings of Bayle, Voltaire and others: cross-cultural comparisons and secularized moral judgements succeeded in exposing inadequacy, injustice and the abuse of power by nobility and clergy alike. This critical historical outlook has been well described as ". . . a force exerting its influence in all directions . . . a force that starts at a certain point in the sphere of theology and spreads from there until it pervades progressively all fields of knowledge. . . ."<sup>4</sup> The idea of the emancipation of human reason from the fetters of ignorance and superstition permeates Enlightenment thought: ". . . the campaign to abolish torture cannot be divorced from the campaign to abolish Jesuits or to spread technological knowledge--all are part of the struggle to impose man's rational will on

---

<sup>2</sup>Richard Popkin, The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes (Assen-Holland: Van Gorcum, 1964), pp. 1, 3 and 15.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Popkin, "Bible Criticism and Social Science," Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, vol. XIV (Dordrecht/Boston: D. Reidel, 1974), p. 353; see also pp. 344, 346-47, 350 and 352.

<sup>4</sup>Cassirer, Philosophy of the Enlightenment, pp. 198-99.

the environment."<sup>5</sup> Leading eighteenth-century thinkers from Montesquieu to Diderot believed that the spread of learning would inaugurate "a new moral order and a new orientation of the social history of man."<sup>6</sup> The idea of the emancipation of reason was itself a doctrine of social progress; and the growth of secularization, the innovation in politics and industrial technology, the confusion and disunity in organized religion were all applauded as evidence of that progress. The majority of Enlightenment thinkers felt no need to elaborate the self-evident into a secular theory of society, to formulate their ideas of progress or to analyze the trends in which they participated. 'Common sense' revealed that the destruction of ignorance, superstition, hierarchy, injustice and Christianity would necessarily lead to a better society. The removal of social evil would inevitably reveal social good. This was the Enlightenment consensus which for many leading thinkers had gradually come to replace the traditional Christian paradigm.<sup>7</sup> The

---

<sup>5</sup>Peter Gay, The Party of Humanity: Essays in the French Enlightenment (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1964), p. 130.

<sup>6</sup>Cassirer, Philosophy of the Enlightenment, p. 214; see also Gay, Party of Humanity, p. 268.

<sup>7</sup>It has even been compellingly argued [Carl L. Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966 [1932])] that there is a point-by-point correspondence between Christian and Enlightenment outlooks: for example, intellectual immortality with posterity replaces Christian immortality of the soul, the decline from classical antiquity corresponds to the fall from Eden, and the future earthly paradise supplants the Christian concept of heaven. What Becker calls 'the heavenly city' and Gay [Party of Humanity, pp. 201-9] the 'earthly city' strike me as the same: Becker is describing the very Christian architecture of Enlightenment thought; Gay argues cogently but at

revelations of common sense were assumed to be amenable to all who were capable of acquiring learning; and the dogma<sup>8</sup> that held religion to have been characteristically at loggerheads with science and reason 'explained' why learning and, hence, common sense had not formerly prevailed. This Enlightenment consensus came to constitute a paradigm for social knowledge, inasmuch as it gradually dominated the influential secular thought of the age. It was much less rigorous and only a little less static than its religious forerunner, but it was more suited to the times. The times were revolutionary, and the philosophes ". . . made themselves spokesmen for a revolutionary age in search of an interpreter."<sup>9</sup> When political revolution came to France the interpretations of these spokesmen appeared fallacious; instead of universal reason and common sense, divisive opinion and human oppression reigned. The Enlightenment consensus was thereby disrupted and its tenuous paradigm status destroyed. Auguste Comte's conclusion to the effect that the French Revolution had failed "for want of a theory of society . . ." indicates the sort of rationale by which social philosophers of later centuries were to justify their endeavours.<sup>10</sup>

---

cross-purposes when, in effect, he contends that the furniture and fittings came from divers sources.

<sup>8</sup>See in this connection Richard Popkin, "Scepticism, Theology and the Scientific Revolution in the Seventeenth Century," Problems in the Philosophy of Science (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing, 1968), pp. 1-39.

<sup>9</sup>Gay, Party of Humanity, p. 117.

<sup>10</sup>Auguste Comte, System of Positive Polity or Treatise on Sociology, Instituting the Religion of Humanity (New York: Burt Franklin, 1966 [London, 1875-77]), vol. III, p. 511.

Rapid social change during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century plus the social turmoil generated by the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and the industrial revolution helped bring Europeans to a new kind of awareness. This was reflected in the outlook which regarded the present social world as the result of past human thought, action and inaction. That outlook obviously contained the seeds which engendered historicism in philosophy, and history as a discipline; but it also provided fertile ground for growth of evolutionary concepts in sociology, biology and geology. Moreover, the idea that human thought and action are capable of producing social change, coupled with a growing awareness of economic and other social ills, gave rise to a new wave of economic and political theorizing and of concomitant political activity.

The propensity of Hegel, Comte, Marx and Spencer to interpret social phenomena historically should be understood, in part, as attempts to grasp the significance which underlay social change. We have seen how Enlightenment thinkers had begun to understand the world this way, and to view progress as the increase of reason in the world. Many nineteenth-century thinkers in Europe shared and developed this notion of linear social progress: the world was seen as getting better and better, and Europe, in part or on the whole, was usually thought to be in the forefront. Progress was variously explained as the increase of science, freedom, secularism, industrialization or wealth; as the advantage of particular racial or religious affiliations, or combinations of such factors. This major tendency for thinkers of all

schools to cast around for the key that could concisely "explain" the present by the past (and, in many cases, also predict the future) is what I refer to as "historicism." Historicist thinking dominated the philosophies not only of those who optimistically continued to view the world as increasingly rational, but also those who, like Friedrich Nietzsche, viewed western civilization as in decline.

In addition to providing interpretations of the human socio-cultural past and present, historicist thinking also helped generate various secular belief systems--ideologies often based on the "manifest destinies" of different nations, races and classes. Social thought thus became invested with a variety of conflicting segmental views of humanity, all of which claimed historical authenticity. Whereas such views became programmatic in politics, thus contributing to imperialism in the nineteenth century and to the wars and revolutions of the twentieth century, their very irreconcilability helped greatly to discredit historicism as a methodology: experience suggested that historicism could be used to "prove" any and every doctrine.

However, the historicist outlook also provided the matrix for the idea of social, biological and geological evolution. The notion of social evolution was implicit in earlier thinkers as well as in Hegel, Comte and Marx. It became explicit with Herbert Spencer and others who made current the view that the various tribes and cultures of the world represented a series of stages through which all mankind had developed. The idea of biological evolution had also been around for years, including speculations about man's descent from animal beginnings.

However, it was not until Charles Darwin completed his twenty-year study and published his Origin of Species that scientific credibility began to be accorded to evolutionary concepts. Thus, not only was a somewhat historicist view of the world sustained, but biology as a science achieved a new level of respectability through it. From that time on, the methods and understandings of biology increasingly provided evolutionary, organic and functional models for social scientific thinking.

The historicist tendency, however, was only one of the major preoccupations of nineteenth-century social thought. Another was the economic one. Marx's inversion of Hegel and his explanation of social change in terms of economic factors and class struggle was one response to the manifest socio-economic ills which revolution, war and industrialization had wrought in Europe. Yet it would be a mistake to view Marx's preoccupations with these factors as in any way unique. In fact, the economic aspect of social phenomena dominated nineteenth-century thought to such an extent that other facets of society and culture now studied by sociology were pursued almost exclusively in terms of their relevance to economic questions. The eighteenth-century heritage of French and British social and moral philosophy which culminated in Adam Smith suddenly became shorn of all non-economic elements and gave rise, through Smith himself, to the "political economy" which came to dominate nineteenth-century social thought. That this particular mode of economic thinking coincided with utilitarianism in Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, linked up with

positivism in John Stuart Mill, and at the same time fuelled the economic interpretation of history propounded by Marx is significant testimony to the importance of Smith's thought. It might be asked, however, if the "other-three quarters" of his moral philosophy stimulated less interest because it was distinctly inferior to his Wealth of Nations, or simply because it was less relevant to the economic preoccupations of the age. I believe the latter provides at least part of the explanation.

Economic theory also enjoyed certain inherent advantages over other kinds of social thought. It dealt almost entirely with phenomena that were tangible and quantifiable, and with human activities that seemed reducible to rational decision-making, calculated risk-taking, and performances of measurable efficiency. These characteristics were attractive to moral and social philosophers who sought, for their own area of inquiry, the secure kind of foundations which the insights of Copernicus, Galileo and Newton seemed to have provided for natural philosophy. The problem of discovering such secure foundations could be solved, it was thought, either if all sociocultural activities could be reduced and explained in terms of economic factors, or if economic theory could somehow be extended to embrace other, less tractable, sociocultural phenomena.

These economic and historicist preoccupations generated at least two distinct sociological research traditions which have continued to attract adherents during the twentieth century. Marxism combined economic and historicist social philosophy with a revolutionary

political programme in what was undoubtedly the single most coordinated social doctrine to emerge from the nineteenth century. More nebulous and less programmatic, but equally historicist and materialist, was the tradition that vaunted industrial technology, material progress and political democracy, and that usually explained these developments and their sociological configurations in terms of the "survival of the fittest" and other evolutionary concepts. This sort of reasoning finds its nineteenth-century archetype in Spencer. However, many of the leading thinkers in the first half of the twentieth century considered these and similar outlooks to be inadequate as frameworks for a scientific sociology. Some--notably Emile Durkheim, Vilfredo Pareto, Pitirim Sorokin, and Talcott Parsons--tried to develop alternative frameworks. In so doing, however, they tended to keep only one eye on the "errors" and "omissions" of their predecessors and contemporaries. The other eye was kept on problems posed by the philosophy of science.

The tendency for eighteenth-century social thought to eschew elaborate theorizing conveniently avoided the thorny issues that had arisen after Bacon and Descartes gave seemingly irreconcilable accounts of what constituted--and, by implication, what should constitute--scientific reasoning. It was nevertheless in the course of that same century that David Hume and Immanuel Kant attempted to resolve these epistemological issues, and did so with special reference to the question of whether it was possible to establish social science.

Hume's scepticism regarding causality and his psychological interpretation of experience as "impressions" are sometimes understood

as an attempt to discredit the foundations of scientific reasoning. However, his principal concern seems to have been to show that the assumptions of natural philosophy were no better than those of social philosophy.<sup>11</sup> Later thinkers such as John Stuart Mill and Ernst Mach elaborated and polished Hume's image of science under the Comtean label of "positivism." Historically the positivist philosophy of science underwent successive reformulations, but always tended to retain Hume's emphasis on the epistemological unity of natural and social science. It understood scientific laws to consist of theoretical generalizations on the basis of observed fact. This elementary formulation of the positivist position suggests why such a large number and wide variety of social scientists, beginning with Comte and continuing to the present day, have felt justified in claiming to subscribe to its tenets. However, definitions of "fact" and "theory," the relationship between them, and the manner in which facts can be said to test or prove theories have all provided a seemingly endless supply of grist for the mills of epistemological and methodological debate among philosophers and social scientists who consider it important to attack, defend or explicate positivism.

Although positivism is primarily a research tradition in the philosophy of science, in the history of social science its

---

<sup>11</sup>"If this impossibility of explaining ultimate principles should be esteemed a defect in the science of man . . . it is a defect common to it with all other sciences. . . ." [A Treatise of Human Nature (London: Dent, 1974 [1911]), vol. I, p. 7].

methodological prescriptions played an important justificatory role for historicism and materialism, as well as for psychological behaviourism. As different as were the sociological systems of Durkheim and Pareto, both sought shelter beneath the positivist umbrella. Sorokin indeed began there, but found it necessary to dispense with positivist protection when he set out to establish his system. However, the real significance of positivism (in terms of the present study) is that, for over two hundred years, it kept alive the Humean ideal of a science of man that could be as valid as the science of nature.

A different conviction prevailed among philosophers and social scientists who followed Immanuel Kant. Kant is important to the present discussion because he wrote his Critique of Pure Reason largely in response to Hume. His philosophy was held in high regard because he appeared to salvage natural science from Humean scepticism. In so doing, however, he sharply distinguished between the determinate world of nature and the free world of man, thus giving rise, especially in Germany, to an abrupt cleavage between Natur- and Geisteswissenschaften, and hence to the predominantly German school of historical sociology out of which developed the thought of many prominent social scientists and philosophers, including Max Weber.

The impact of Kant's philosophy on the idea of social science was thus the creation of a loosely connected research tradition which sought no models in natural science and which was directly opposed to positivism which did. It tended to seek no causal or covering

laws,<sup>12</sup> but instead sought Verstehen, understanding. It tended to emphasize the subjective aspect of knowledge and to investigate the meaningful aspect of the sociocultural world. This led, on the one hand, to a proliferation of theories which were tantamount to ideologies, and to the open identification of ideology with social theory. On the other hand, it also played an important part in keeping alive sociological considerations of the non-material aspects of human activity, the subjectively "meaningful" which positivistic sociological theory compassed with difficulty or--more often--ignored entirely.

It is noteworthy that Marxism also arose in this context. Although it acknowledged individual human activity in its concept of praxis, it is viewed here as placing excessive emphasis upon the economic organization of society. Moreover, following Hegel, it invoked historical causality to account for, but also to predict, social change. Thus, although Marxism arose in the social-science vacuum created by Kantian epistemology, it owed rather more to the abrogation of Kantian precepts than to conformity with them.

---

<sup>12</sup>Max Weber was an exception; see Chapter III below.

## CHAPTER III

## DURKHEIM, PARETO, WEBER

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed the loosely-knit positivist and neo-Kantian schools of thought gradually entrench themselves in university lectures on, courses in, and even departments of sociology. Theoreticians of both schools tended to be concerned with methodology and not a little with ideology. Students interested in social reform were particularly attracted to the emerging discipline. The tendency to equate sociology with socialism was widespread, and not without foundation; but Marxism, when it entered into academic consideration, did so usually as the object of revision, criticism or censure.

Between 1890 and 1920 many sociologists attempted to prescribe for, and to formulate, general theories of society in fulfilment of the positivist programme, and in response to the Marxist challenge. I have chosen to examine the thought of only three such sociologists here because of the high esteem in which the work of each was held by both Pitirim Sorokin and Talcott Parsons during the 1930s.<sup>1</sup> I shall first

---

<sup>1</sup>Talcott Parsons' The Structure of Social Action: A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers (New York: McGraw Hill, 1937) is based almost entirely on an interpretation of the thought of Alfred Marshall (strictly an economist), Vilfredo Pareto, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber; and on p. 14, n. 2, he states that "Professor Sorokin, asked in a gathering of eminent social scientists for his opinion of who had been the most important recent sociologists, gave these [last] three names and only these.

examine some of the ideas of Emile Durkheim and Vilfredo Pareto and discuss some of the ways in which these two "positivists" differed from one another and with nineteenth century positivist sociology; I shall then turn to the thought of Max Weber who, though esteemed by modern positivists, nonetheless rejected positivist ideas of what should constitute, or could constitute, a science of society.

Emile Durkheim's philosophical stance was positivist. In the Comtean tradition he envisaged the possibility of positive sciences of society and morality. In his Rules of Sociological Method, Durkheim sought to provide the theoretical basis for such sciences. He saw his theoretical problem in terms of defining and identifying "social facts" (sociological counterparts for the "facts" which, according to positivist interpretations of natural science, provide the basis for knowledge). He then tried to explain social causality, and, on these foundations, to provide a methodology that would avoid the errors and shortcomings which he perceived in the works of Comte, Mill, Spencer and others.

Social facts, like the facts of physical science, were things which had an effect on the lives of individuals. They were not physical things, but social things; social facts could be identified above all by their constraining influence on individual behaviour; and they were social inasmuch as they were effective throughout society. Constraint and generality were therefore the two characteristics which identified social facts. In dealing with many modern societies, according to Durkheim, sociologists did not need to look very far for

general and constraining influences: these were often already summarized in the legal and moral codes of nations (in Rules Durkheim limited his notion of society to the political unit).<sup>2</sup>

However, in Rules and Suicide Durkheim also focused attention on crime and suicide, phenomena which, though not constraining and general, could be regarded as by-products of general social constraints. The "facts" he emphasized in these discussions and which he drew upon in Suicide were statistics. A given crime or suicide rate could be regarded as "normal" for a particular society. Any deviation from the normal rate was considered by him as "pathological" and, thus, worthy of explanation by sociology.

The fact that "normal" rates differed among various societies led Durkheim to attempt a theoretical classification of societies. Even though he adamantly rejected evolutionistic constructions in principle, his attempt to classify societies led him into the same speculative historicist kind of thinking he openly deplored in Comte and Spencer. His thinking also led him into an evolutionist kind of functionalism when he explained, in terms of generative cause and effect, that effects not serving a useful purpose in society did not survive. Durkheim's ideas of social change are thus causal and functional, in a biological sense.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Method (New York: Free Press, 1938), p. 83.

<sup>3</sup>Rules, pp. 110-11, 119-20. Durkheim, in his Division of Labor [(Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1933), p. 49] distinguishes two biological

There are several things to note for present purposes concerning Durkheim's theoretical framework for sociology. In the first place, although his "general and constraining social facts" do not in themselves become the objects of inquiry in his studies, they do consistently provide a background to them. For example, by reference to these Durkheim explains the varying incidences of suicide in different societies, and likewise identifies four classes of suicide in terms of excessively weak or strong integration into the social milieu. Similarly, two of his three "elements" of morality<sup>4</sup> (discipline, and group attachment) clearly relate to generality and constraint. Secondly, as observed above, Durkheim's study of suicide rates, normal and pathological, is also anticipated in his discussion of crime in Rules. Thirdly, even patently speculative historicist and functionalist assertions, such as frequently occur in Durkheim's later studies,<sup>5</sup> are clearly foreshadowed in his "genesis of types of society" and the

---

uses of "function"; however the term "functional" was also used by contemporary positivists in its mathematical sense; see, for example, Ernst Mach, Erkenntnis und Irrtum (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Emile Durkheim, Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education (New York: Free Press, 1961), pp. xi-xii et passim.

<sup>5</sup>For example, "In proportion as [religious thought] progresses in history, the causes which called it into existence . . . are no longer perceived. . . . Popular mythologies and subtle theologies have . . . superimposed upon the primitive sentiments others which are quite different, and which, though holding to the first, of which they are an elaborated form, only allow their true nature to appear very imperfectly. [Durkheim, Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968 [1915]), p. 7].

"survival of beneficial effects" discussed in Rules.

Despite the diversity of Durkheim's interests, there is nonetheless a coherence to his work, in terms of the theoretical framework which he provided in Rules. That framework is inconclusive as regards method and somewhat inconsistent: inconclusive because Durkheim merely postulated the existence of constraining and general social facts, but gave no prescription for their use (and he himself tends to invoke "social milieu," "moral standards of society" or "degree of social regulation" as a deus ex machina to explain a wide variety of observations and speculations); inconsistent, for example, because Durkheim seems to employ (in pondering the origins of different "social species") the very methods he deplores in Spencer. Durkheim, to my mind, consistently follows his theoretical framework as far as it goes. The reason why his publications vary so greatly is that his theoretical framework is itself not very rigorous, or very explicit regarding how the sociologist can or should set to work within it.

Durkheim's approach nevertheless constitutes an innovation in positivist thinking. As opposed to the "psychologicistic" positivism of his predecessors and contemporaries, Durkheim developed what Sorokin accurately described as "sociologicistic" positivism. Rather than base explanations upon individual motivations, Durkheim sought to explain social behaviour in terms of influences which he perceived as society-wide, and as determining individual behaviour to a large extent.

Talcott Parsons gave currency to the view that Durkheim tended to preach positivism and to reach towards "idealistic" interpretations

of society. For example, Parsons observes that

It is not surprising that Durkheim, in the breakdown of his sociologicistic positivism, adopted a kind of idealism. The fact that he vacillated between two modes of thought goes far towards explaining the extraordinary lack of understanding that his work has encountered.<sup>6</sup>

I see no evidence of Durkheim's sociologicistic positivism breaking down. In fact I see the sociologicistic nature of his positivism as the main stumbling block for modern readers of his works. Whereas positivist sociologists of our day tend to look for statistical facts which they can correlate with other statistical facts in the hope of arriving at increasingly valid generalizations, Durkheim began with facts which needed no discovering: they were there in the moral and legal codes and social milieu, waiting to be used to explain statistical and historical facts. Furthermore, Durkheim's social facts were viewed as being changeable by education and legislation, thus implying that human social and moral life should be moulded to ends desired by the state. Neither the society-wide uniformities implied by his sociology, nor his idea of state-controlled moral education is particularly acceptable or even understandable to sociologists who take for granted individualism and the pluralistic society; thus, two notions which help bind together Durkheim's work, also help make it objectionable to modern positivists, particularly in North America.

Although, true to his positivist conception of knowledge,

---

<sup>6</sup>Parsons, Structure of Social Action, p. 74.

Durkheim begins with facts, rather than general theory, one characteristic of the "social facts" he begins with is their generality. This, combined with the idea that general and constraining social forces largely determine behaviour, may be understood to amount to a "general theory" of sorts, even though Durkheim propounds no clear scheme for conducting sociological inquiry or for dealing with results within that general framework.

Closer to a general theory is the overall picture of society which Durkheim unfolds in the course of his studies. This, however, is achieved not simply by his considerations of "social facts" and their influence, but primarily with the aid of other assumptions common in nineteenth-century positivism, especially the positivist version of the Enlightenment historicist assumption that Europe was becoming increasingly rational, secular and scientific (and simultaneously less superstitious and less religious). Durkheim, like Comte, simply objected that earlier thinkers had conducted "a purely negative operation."<sup>7</sup> The positive programme was to provide secular and scientific substitutes for the cohesive forces which religion and religious morality had formerly provided. In this context we can readily understand Durkheim's investigations of morality and religion. According to him, the "real" object of religious worship is society itself. Only for this reason did it appear to be the source of social cohesion. However, just as religious authority had given way in modern

---

<sup>7</sup>Emile Durkheim, Moral Education, p. 8.

society to secular authority, religious morality had to cede to secular morality. This could be accomplished in a satisfactorily rational way only if morality were subjected to scientific scrutiny and analysis. Once the logical structure of morality was properly understood, education and legislation could then introduce whatever changes would benefit secular society and could thus endow it with all the social cohesion enjoyed by pre-scientific religious societies. / Thus we see that Durkheim's general picture of social reality depends rather little on positivist epistemology and rather a lot on positivist historicism. Again it is a general theory of sorts, but one not likely to appeal to positivists of recent decades even if they were able to accept Durkheim's "sociologism." The assumption, common to positivists of all schools, that "empirical science" is the way to positive knowledge often carries with it the idea that magic and religion were probably primitive forms of science and statecraft. However, many modern positivists tend to recognize the historicist fallacy and avoid it, even though they retain the related assumption that only through the methods of science can profession-wide consensus and general theoretical understandings be won.

Unconnected with Durkheim's work, though contemporary with it, and likewise primarily positivistic in its formal epistemological orientation was the work of Vilfredo Pareto. Whereas Durkheim had arrived at sociology by way of social philosophy and had established his professorship in a faculty of education, Pareto came from mathematics and engineering to economics and thence to sociology. Many of Pareto's

economic writings point in the direction of his General Treatise of Sociology and develop concepts there taken for granted.<sup>8</sup> Pareto is important for our understanding of Sorokin not only as one earlier thinker who attempted to lay a foundation for the study of social phenomena, but also as one whose ideas are in some respects suggestive of those later developed by Sorokin.

Pareto's was a mechanistic model of society. In strictly positivist terms he analysed the "elements" acting upon society and to which society in turn reacted; and he examined the adjustment of movements and counter-movements which, he maintained, tend to a state of "equilibrium." Whereas Durkheim sought to found his sociology on general or collective social facts, eschewing the psychological basis for sociological explanation which predominated at the time,<sup>9</sup> Pareto's "elements" were psychological and structural; and even structure (social stratification) was explained psychologically. Pareto distinguished three varieties of psychological elements which he called "residues," "derivations," and "interests." It was not for sociology, according to Pareto, to explain the various psychic states, but rather to explain the behaviour which these manifest. Overt human conduct may be logical or non-logical; logical behaviour is verifiable for the simple reason that subjective and objective perceptions of it correspond; non-logical behaviour may be variously interpreted. Because we know how to deal with

---

<sup>8</sup>S. E. Finer, ed., "Introduction" to Vilfredo Pareto, Sociological Writings (London: Pall Mall Press, 1961), p. 13.

<sup>9</sup>Thus in one way anticipating logical positivism.

logical behaviour Pareto explains, social theorists before his time failed to recognize that non-logical behaviour actually preponderates. Metaphysical, moral, religious and political ideas are unverifiable and are therefore verbal manifestations of the non-logical. They do however contain some constant elements which can serve as a basis for scientific inquiry. These constant elements are the "residues"--what is left over when the variable ingredients of ideas have been removed. These variable ingredients of non-logical behaviour are Pareto's "derivations": arguments, explanations, justifications and rationalizations which satisfy our craving to appear logical. "Interests," as opposed to both residues and derivations are manifestations of our material desires, actions which lead to results and which are therefore usually the consequence of logical reasoning. Economics deals primarily with this logical sort of behaviour, but the non-logical elements (residues and derivations) also have an effect upon economic life; moreover, interests can also act as residues, giving rise to derivations such as "metaphysical" demands for justice and equality. Residues, however, as the constant element in non-logical behaviour, form the "ultimate inspectable data" of sociology.<sup>10</sup>

The social role of the residues is . . . enormous. Outside natural science and technology, strategy and the field of economics, almost all social conduct is dictated by the residues, not by reason. Rational argument is in most cases an appearance which serves only to justify action or heighten the basic residues from which this action springs.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>S. E. Finer, ed., op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

Pareto distinguishes six classes of residue: Class I residues are what he calls "the instinct of combinations," that is, the urge towards innovation; Class II is called "the persistence of aggregates," that is, the opposite urge to follow traditions. Class III residues are our proclivity to express emotions in actions. Classes IV and V are respectively opposite residues of sociality and individuality. Class VI residues are expressions of the sexual urge.

Although society changes in the course of time, Pareto teaches, it is not so changeable as supposed: form changes but not the substance; derivations but not the residues. This consideration brings us to Pareto's social change theory, the "circulation of élites."

By élite Pareto means "the best," those most fit to govern; the true élite therefore governs only when perfect social mobility exists; when it does not, "those wearing the label and those having the capacity diverge."<sup>12</sup> All governments are oligarchies which govern by force and/or consent, though these two instrumentalities are usually mutually exclusive. The rise and decay of governing classes is due to rhythmic and necessary alternations in proportions of Class I and Class II residues. The first is opportunistic and gains consent through persuasion and guile; the second is traditionalistic and governs through coercion. Moreover, the governing class, in whom Class I residues tend to predominate, is small, a small change in absolute numbers easily upsets this balance. "The populace, in whom Class II residues

---

<sup>12</sup>S. E. Finer, ed., op. cit., p. 52.

predominate, carry them upwards into the governing class either by infiltration (circulation of the élite) or in sudden bursts through revolutions."<sup>13</sup>

Pareto's correlation of political to cultural change clearly influenced Sorokin. For Pareto asserts that intellectual and artistic pursuits (derivations) tend to follow the alternating predominance of Class I and II residues. As cultural "derivations" of Class II residues decline, those deriving from Class I increase. Exponents of the latter will regard Class II derivations as "outworn prejudices and will try to destroy [them] and supplant them by what they think are scientifically grounded and logical theories and programmes."<sup>14</sup> The countertrend (when Class II residues replace Class I) takes the form of an attack on logic and reason, "thus anti-intellectualist or mystical theories or species of intuitionism arise, to displace the old positivistic or rational theories."<sup>15</sup> Finally, Pareto descriptively correlates fluctuations in these two classes of residues and their derivations, with fluctuations in the rate of wealth accumulation and in the pace of élite circulation. What Pareto did here descriptively greatly resembles what Sorokin later undertook to explore statistically.

Pareto's sociological studies are, however, entirely descriptive. Pareto makes much of the positivist "méthode expérimentale," for example

---

<sup>13</sup>Pareto, Trattato § 2227, cited in Finer, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>14</sup>Finer, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

faulting Durkheim and others who "discutent fort peu les sources de leurs informations et donnent souvent des rapprochements fortuits pour des démonstrations rigoureuses."<sup>16</sup> Although many modern readers would share in Pareto's uneasiness with Durkheim's handling of statistics in Suicide, they nonetheless feel more comfortable with data which can at least be scrutinized. Pareto presents no data for scrutiny other than the particular historical facts which he adduces to substantiate his arguments. His general sociology is quite simply the elaboration of an idea on the basis of a wealth of historical knowledge. Epistemologically it is an emphatically psychologistic positivism: the "ultimate inspectable data," the "elements" of his system, are the various classes of residues. However, Pareto construes these elements in an entirely speculative manner. Even were his "psychologism" acceptable to modern positivists, his speculative approach would still separate him from them. Furthermore, his criticism of Durkheim's brief flirtation with statistics is reminiscent of Comte's similar dismissal of Adolphe Quételet's pioneering work in social statistics. As N. S. Tamasheff points out,<sup>17</sup> one ironical difference between neo-positivism and its forerunners is precisely the opposite attitudes they hold towards quantification. To later positivists Durkheim was thus more acceptable

---

<sup>16</sup>Pareto, review of Durkheim's Suicide in Zeitschrift für Socialwissenschaft, I (1899), pp. 78-80, reprinted in Pareto, Oeuvres Complètes, t. 6, pp. 122-24.

<sup>17</sup>Nicholas S. Tamasheff, Sociological Theory, Its Nature and Growth (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 22 and 23.

than Pareto on two counts. First, his "social facts" are not quite so intractable as are Pareto's "elements": the former can be viewed as "operational" inasmuch as they are said to be explicit in a society's moral and legal codes, whereas the latter rest merely on one individual's impressionistic analysis. Secondly, Durkheim (in Suicide) makes significant use of statistics, correlating those for suicide with, for example, those for marital status and religious affiliation. Nevertheless, when we look at Pareto's general sociology, we find that he did make a significant break with the positivist historicism which still captivated Durkheim.

The basic positivist version of historicism which characterized the general sociology of Comte received only a minor corrective in the Durkheimian version: the scientific stage which followed the theological and metaphysical in Comte's "law of the three stages" was not, according to Durkheim, necessarily the last.<sup>18</sup> The Hegelian form of "dialectical" historicism, which postulated a succession of political states, said to have generated one another in the course of ages, had not itself survived into the twentieth century; however it had stimulated further theorizing, notably on the part of Karl Marx, whose "dialectical materialism" did. Marx took as given the existence of various economic "classes" and of an on-going "class struggle,"<sup>19</sup> and postulated that

---

<sup>18</sup>Durkheim, Rules, p. 119.

<sup>19</sup>Comparable to the notions of "struggle" between races and nations that also survived into the twentieth century.

these were "bound up with particular, historic phases in the development of production"<sup>20</sup> and with a succession of "modes of production" which had generated one another in the course of man's economic history. Marx, like Comte, perceived his various stages of history as culminating in a final one; but, whereas Comte saw himself as participating in the final stage of science and as having scientifically replaced the worship of God by the worship of Humanity (a religion to be supervised by sociologist-priests), Marx envisaged the dictatorship of the proletariat, the withering of the state, and the advent of world communism as still somewhere in the future. The Spencerian version of social evolution, the third main nineteenth-century variant of historicism, also tended to regard human development as terminating in a final stage, the "industrial state." All three versions of historicism thus not only propounded doctrines of linear social progress, but also tended to be teleological in the sense that they purported to read, from the immanent trends of historical developments, the destiny of human society.

Pareto, like Comte, Marx, Spencer and Durkheim, was a speculative thinker. He nevertheless made a significant step towards freeing social science from historicist speculation, simply by propounding a coherent interpretation of the past which was neither

---

<sup>20</sup>Karl Marx, Letter to Weydemeyer (1852), Selected Correspondence, p. 57, cited in Howard Selsam et al., Dynamics of Social Change (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 31. Marx's emphasis.

linear nor teleological. Pareto's élites circulate, and societies become more or less tradition-bound or innovative depending on the predominance, within their ruling oligarchies of either Class I or Class II residues. Social change thus consisted of trendless fluctuations. Science and superstition alternately replaced one another. Economic "interests" were, admittedly, something of a driving force, but it was a case of alternating preponderance of "speculator" and "rentier" interests, throughout all classes, rather than the dialectical supersession of one class by another postulated by Marxists.

Of course Pareto's sociology was unpopular. Doctrines of scientific, material, intellectual, political and moral progress, which had lent meaning and purpose to secular life and thought for over a century, were unconfirmed by it. Not only did Pareto support his interpretations with an abundance of historical data, some of which had been unavailable to his historicist predecessors, but he also propounded a theory of social change which offered no alternative ideology for his readers to cling to. One could believe in Comtean, Marxian or evolutionary historicism. Readers of Pareto could judge him right or wrong, believe him or not, but he offered them nothing to believe in. In this sense Pareto's ideas, speculative though they were, were nonetheless also a step closer to what later positivists would regard as social science.

Both Sorokin and Parsons also considered a third sociological thinker of the pre-World War I era as important in the history of attempts to formulate theoretical foundations for social science:

Max Weber, however, approached sociology from a position which was explicitly anti-positivistic and which, at the same time, repudiated many tendencies of German historicism.

Weber held that "an 'objective' analysis of cultural events, which proceeds according to the thesis that the ideal of science is the reduction of empirical reality [to] 'laws,' is meaningless."<sup>21</sup>

All knowledge of cultural reality . . . is always knowledge from particular points of view. [. . .] If the notion that these [points of view] can be derived from the "facts themselves" continually recurs, it is due to the naïve self-deception of the specialist who is unaware that [his outlook arises from] evaluative ideas with which he unconsciously approaches his subject matter. . . .<sup>22</sup>

The objective validity of all empirical knowledge rests exclusively upon the ordering of the given reality according to categories which are subjective. . . . The belief in the value of scientific truth is [itself] the product of certain cultures and is not a product of man's original nature."<sup>23</sup>

. . . Evaluative ideas are . . . empirically discoverable and analyzable . . . but their validity can not be deduced from empirical data as such. The "objectivity" of the social sciences depends . . . on the fact that . . . empirical data are always related to those evaluative ideas which alone make them worth knowing. . . .

. . . The significance of the empirical data is derived from these evaluative ideas.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>Max Weber, The Methodology of the Social Sciences, Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch, eds. & trans. (New York: Free Press, 1949), p. 80.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 81-82.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

Thus, in neo-Kantian fashion, Weber asserts that it is empirically impossible to prove the validity of evaluative ideas. With arguments such as these he basically challenges positivism's search for general laws and its claim to scientific objectivity.

Weber was trained in law and in economics, and considered himself a political economist; sociology was, for his purposes, explicitly an adjunct to economics.<sup>25</sup> Weber's substantive studies were, however, basically historical, and his conceptions of history and the philosophy of history are important for understanding his sociological ideas. German historiography in Weber's lifetime was dominated by the ideas of Hegel and Ranke, and Hegel especially had a decided influence on Weber, as had Carlyle and Marx.<sup>26</sup> Weber was particularly hostile towards Hegel, Comte and Marx as philosophers of history whose works purported to exhaust all possibilities. (For this reason he dubbed them "metaphysicians").<sup>27</sup> He took particular exception to what he saw to be Marx's claim of having established a single, universal cause which amounted to a merely "segmental perspective" of social reality; however Weber himself can be said to have employed Marx's debunking techniques and historical method.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>26</sup> Reinhard Bendix, Max Weber: an Intellectual Portrait (New York: Doubleday, 1962), p. 387; H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> Julien Freund, Max Weber (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1969), p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> As suggested by Gerth and Mills, From Max Weber, p. 46.

Nevertheless, whereas Marx's analysis perceived historical laws operating in the past and projected into the future, and whereas Hegel, though maintaining that "history ends in the present," felt that the analyst could make a universally valid interpretation of the past, Weber insisted that we can have only a fragmentary grasp of reality and that "final" constructions of the past and future were equally untenable.<sup>29</sup> (Indeed Weber has been credited with being the first to enunciate clearly what is now a commonplace in the study of history, that our view of the past is being continually renewed through reinterpretation).<sup>30</sup> Although Weber was sceptical of philosophical systems that perceived the processes of history as cyclical or uni-linear, his own descriptions of progressive "disenchantment," "rationalization" and "bureaucratization," as well as the "decline of charisma" do imply uni-linear trends.

According to Weber, we understand social phenomena on two levels. The first is "direct understanding," the rationally or empathically intuited act in itself.<sup>31</sup> The second is "explanatory understanding" which involves the "rational understanding of motivation, which consists in placing the act in an intelligible and more inclusive context of meaning."<sup>32</sup> Natural sciences, according to Weber, are

---

<sup>29</sup>Freund, Weber, pp. 60-61.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>31</sup>Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, Talcott Parsons trans. & ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1947), p. 94.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

limited to the formulation of causal uniformities. Social sciences have the advantage of being able to supplement these with subjective understandings.<sup>33</sup> Interpretation on the level of meaning cannot, however, "claim to be the causally valid interpretation."<sup>34</sup> In order for an explanation to be sociologically valid, it must be subjectively meaningful; it may also constitute an instance of an empirical regularity or statistical expectation, in which case it is also causal. In fact, any adequate explanation on the level of meaning does have causal significance for sociology, but, "for this there must be some degree of determinable frequency of approximation to an average or pure type."<sup>35</sup> "We apply the term 'adequacy on the level of meaning' to . . . subjective interpretation of a coherent course of conduct when . . . its component parts . . . constitute a 'typical' complex of meaning."<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere he argues that

every science of psychological or social phenomena is a science of human conduct. . . . These sciences seek to "understand" this conduct and "explain" it "interpretatively." . . . The fact that "error" is, in principle, just as accessible to understanding as "correct" thinking proves that we are concerned here with the normatively "correct" type of validity, not as such, but only as an especially easily understandable conventional type.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 103-4.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>36</sup> Weber, Social and Economic Organization, p. 99.

<sup>37</sup> Weber, Methodology, pp. 40-41.

These allusions to "pure" and "correct" types and to a "typical complex of meaning" refer to what Weber elsewhere elaborates upon in terms of "ideal types."<sup>38</sup> In his essay on objectivity Weber explains that the criteria for evaluating social and cultural phenomena are more fleeting and more personal than those used in the natural sciences. Therefore, in order to close the gap, the historian and social scientist must make especially explicit the evaluative criteria by which they select, designate and assess the phenomena they study. These criteria by which we classify, designate and assess are what Weber calls "ideal types." They may represent personal viewpoints, cultural outlooks or entirely arbitrary constructs. Although they are usually internally logical, they need not be; but they should always be made explicit, and, in that sense, objective.

Weber considers three main categories of ideal type. The first are the "synthetic constructs" such as the "laws" of economics which offer an ideal picture of society assuming specific organizational principles and "rigorously rational conduct";<sup>39</sup> the second are the "generic" concepts, i.e. the concepts by which we classify phenomena

---

<sup>38</sup>Contrary to the usual understanding, I do not believe that Weber viewed the ideal type as a new tool of analysis. Rather, I understand him to be labeling as "ideal types" a variety of conceptual tools commonly used by historians and economists. Weber's purpose is to discuss their disciplined use. Like most of Weber's contributions to the history of ideas, "ideal type" is simply a label. His main discussion of ideal types occurs in his essay on objectivity, where he explicitly states that his purpose is ". . . not to attempt to offer solutions but rather to disclose problems . . ." [Methodology, p. 51].

<sup>39</sup>Weber, Methodology, pp. 89-90.

such as the "sect" or the "state."<sup>40</sup> The third category of ideal type is represented in the historian's characterizations of the ideas, ideals or practice of a given period, for example, his making clear exactly what he understands by the "Christianity of the Middle Ages."<sup>41</sup> Weber's idea is simply that, once we know what the historian means by "Christian Middle Ages," what the sociologist defines as a "sect," or what the economist judges empirical market behaviour by, we are then in a position to appraise his work.

Weber's own substantive sociology, for example his voluminous historical study of the influence of religious values on economic life, necessarily involved concepts in all three of the categories described above. It displays a keen awareness of the need to define concepts explicitly. Perhaps for this reason, it is through just such concepts as "charisma," "rationalization," and "disenchantment" that Weber's thought survives into recent sociology.

Weber's work is of course also intended as a sustained critique of Marxist monocausal explanation--as was Pareto's emphasis on the social manifestations of the non-logical in human motivation. Unlike Hegel, Comte, Marx, Durkheim and Pareto, however, Weber expressly refuses to claim finality for his interpretations. They are simply that: interpretations rather than a system of thought.

Although Weber toyed with a great many ideas on the

---

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 94 & 99.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

epistemological level, in the realms of general theory he offered only rebuke. In this respect his thought is typically Verstehen in the Kantian mould. Although his substantive studies range over ". . . military, religious, political and juridical . . ." institutions and their development, the gist of his argument is that these "are functionally related to the economic order in a variety of ways."<sup>42</sup>

Durkheim died in 1917, Weber in 1920 and Pareto in 1923. Although Pareto had lived much longer than the other two, the major sociological writings of all three had roughly coincided, and had ended approximately with the close of World War I. Durkheim had repudiated the "psychologism" of his day and, for a positivist, had made bold use of statistics in one of his major studies; however, his general sociology remained firmly rooted in positivist historicism. Pareto, though holding to positivist "psychologism," introduced a view of the past which denied every kind of linear progress and which also contradicted the secular millennialism which characterized much nineteenth-century positivist, Marxist and evolutionary historicism. Weber, despite the respect he continues to receive from some empiricist, positivist sociologists, seems to me to have sought to demonstrate the subjective nature of all social knowledge and, hence, the inadmissability of all historicism and positivism, and of all claims to "objective" social science.

---

<sup>42</sup>Gerth and Mills, From Max Weber, p. 49.

## CHAPTER IV

SOROKIN: LIFE,<sup>1</sup> METHODOLOGY, CLASSIFICATIONS

Pitirim Sorokin was born on January 21, 1889, in Turya village in the province of Vologda in northern Russia (now the Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of the USSR). His mother, who died when Sorokin was three years old, was of Komi (Ugro-Finnish) stock. His father was a Russian who migrated to the Komi region as an itinerant tradesman specializing in the silver and gold ornamentation of religious images. Pitirim Sorokin and his elder brother, Vassiliy, travelled with their father and learned his trade. By the time Pitirim was ten and

---

<sup>1</sup>The first section of this chapter draws particularly on Pitirim A. Sorokin, A Long Journey: The Autobiography of Pitirim A. Sorokin (New Haven: College and University Press, 1963), the fullest account of his life; a shorter version is Pitirim A. Sorokin, "Sociology of my Mental Life," Pitirim A. Sorokin in Review, ed. Philip J. Allen (Durham, N.C.; Duke University Press, 1963), pp. 3-36. Other autobiographical and biographical writings include the following: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Leaves from a Russian Diary--and Thirty Years After (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950) which describes the years of revolution, 1917-1922; Don Martindale, "Pitirim A. Sorokin, Soldier of Fortune," Sorokin and Sociology: Essay in Honour of Professor Pitirim A. Sorokin, ed. G. C. Hallen (Moti Katra, India: Satish Book Enterprise, 1972), pp. 3-42, expanded in Don Martindale, Prominent Sociologists since World War II (Columbus: Merrill 1975), pp. 105-37, is a coherent brief biography and assessment of Sorokin's contributions to sociology; Carle C. Zimmerman, Sociological Theories of Pitirim A. Sorokin (New York: Humanities Press, 1974) repeats much that can be found elsewhere but also contains a few passages of original anecdotal material on Sorokin's life. See also Elena P. Sorokin "Prologue" in Pitirim A. Sorokin, Hunger as a Factor in Human Affairs, Elena P. Sorokin (trans.), T. Lynn Smith (ed.), (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1975 [Russ. 1921]), pp. xxii-xxxvi.

Vassiliy fourteen, and after their father's growing alcoholism had led to violence, the two brothers struck out on their own. For several months they continued, under Vassiliy's leadership, to find jobs and earn their livelihood in this trade, travelling together from place to place until it came time for Pitirim to leave for school.

Although regular schooling had been impossible because of their itinerant life, Sorokin had managed to learn to read and write, partly from his father and older brother, partly through irregular attendance at schools. He was also bilingual, having learned at an early age to speak Russian as well as Komi. When he was eleven Sorokin passed the entrance examination and won a scholarship to a new 'advanced grade school' in the village of Gam. There he boarded and studied for nine months of the year, working during vacations with his brother or at Rymia on the farm of his maternal aunt and uncle. In 1903, when Sorokin was fourteen, he graduated with a scholarship to the Khrenova Teachers' Seminary in Kostroma Province.

Up to this time Sorokin's entire experience--at work, at school and in the life of his extended family--had been bound up in the traditions and beliefs of Eastern Christian Orthodoxy. He describes his life as being imbued with an idealism that enabled him to confront hardships and to integrate his rather diverse experiences into a unified world view, and recalls finding comfort and composure in this peaceful, rural, nineteenth-century outlook. These years of childhood, spent guilding holy images, mending church roofs, singing in choirs, attending confessional schools, and speaking on religious subjects at village

gatherings--these were the years of Sorokin's first Weltanschauung.

His entry into the Khrenova Teachers' Seminary marks the first "crisis" or turning point in his outlook. Not only was his country soon beset by war and revolution, but also Sorokin himself had to journey to a larger centre for his further education. There he encountered new experiences, ideas and ideals which led him to adopt a revolutionary outlook and to become actively involved in revolutionary politics. At the seminary Sorokin ". . . earned a reputation as the best student in [his] class and was a leader in literary, scientific and political activities."<sup>2</sup> Through meeting people from different walks of life, among them revolutionary political spokesmen, and through reading widely, his earlier outlook was altered. He began to resent his school's compulsory church attendance and ". . . became an enthusiastic missionary for the anti-Czarist revolution and the leader of the local Social-Revolutionary Party."<sup>3</sup> Arrest and four months' imprisonment for these activities led automatically to his expulsion from school. It also meant that he could not be employed or attend school elsewhere in the region. At sixteen Sorokin therefore began to devote himself to spreading the revolutionary gospel ". . . from factory to factory, village to village . . ."<sup>4</sup> and relying for sustenance on the hospitality of local party members. By the summer of 1907 Sorokin had become the

---

<sup>2</sup>Sorokin, Long Journey, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

object of an intensive police hunt and had also become exhausted from the continuous exertions on behalf of revolution. He withdrew to his aunt's farm in Vologda province for two months of recuperation and outdoor work. Then he set forth again, this time for the Russian capital.

Arriving in St. Petersburg nearly penniless, Sorokin quickly found a means of livelihood in tutoring. At the same time he began to study six nights a week to prepare himself for the entrance examinations of the University. Though he continued to be socially and intellectually involved with revolutionaries in this period, the emphasis of his life was once more an academic one. He got top marks in the entrance examinations and enrolled in the Psycho-Neurological Institute where--unlike the University of St. Petersburg--courses in sociology were offered. However, in his second year he enrolled at the University in order to ensure exemption from compulsory military service. During his first year he continued to earn his keep by tutoring and writing articles. Thereafter, this source of income was replaced by scholarships, assistantships and, in his first graduate year, by a lectureship. In this way he also found time to continue revolutionary activities by addressing factory, student and other groups. This work ". . . for which nobody paid us a single kopeck and which involved the risk of being arrested, imprisoned and penalized by the Czarist government, we considered as the important moral duty of every 'critically thinking and morally responsible person' to use the

popular expression . . ."5 Although Sorokin was twice more arrested and again briefly imprisoned for these activities, his formal studies were not curtailed as they had been at the teachers' seminary.

By 1914 he had graduated with a 'first-class' and was able to remain at the University of St. Petersburg, financially secure and with four years in which to prepare 'for professorship'. He had also by this time an established reputation in scientific, cultural and political circles. Many of his undergraduate papers had been published in intellectual journals, on some of which he also collaborated editorially. In the catastrophic years of war, revolution and famine that now began for Russia, Sorokin continued these varied activities. Throughout 1915 and 1916 he was also called upon to stimulate and administer home-front war efforts, and the growing weakness of the Czarist government involved him with other leading Social-Revolutionaries in formulating concrete plans and draughting potential national constitutions in preparation for what seemed the "inevitable" collapse. When the Russian Sociological Society was founded in 1916, A. S. Lappo-Danilovskii became president, and Pitirim Sorokin secretary.<sup>6</sup> When Alexander Kerensky became Prime Minister in the provisional government of July, 1917, Sorokin became Cabinet Secretary. The social chaos which

---

<sup>5</sup>Sorokin, Long Journey, p. 71.

<sup>6</sup>Joseph S. Roucek and Raj. P. Mohan, "Contemporary Sociology in the Soviet Union," in Raj. P. Mohan and Don Martindale, eds., Handbook of Contemporary Development in World Sociology (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), p. 287.

swept the country that year seems to have affected Sorokin's academic activities only to the extent that it forced cancellation of his oral defense of Crime and Punishment, Service and Reward (which he had submitted for his Master's degree, although it had already been published in 1913).

The Kerensky government was soon succeeded, however, by the "October" Bolshevik revolution. During the weeks and months that followed, Sorokin saw his comrades in the Social Revolutionary Party being carted off, one at a time, by the Bolsheviks.<sup>7</sup> His own arrest and imprisonment did not come until the 2nd day of January, 1918. His wife<sup>8</sup> and friends<sup>8</sup> appealed to the authorities and obtained his release two months later.<sup>9</sup> However, his freedom was shortlived. The Sorokins

---

<sup>7</sup>The Social Democratic Party was Marxist and thus drew greatest support among the urban proletariat: the Mensheviks constituted its right wing, the Bolsheviks its left. The Social (or Socialist) Revolutionary (S.R.) Party regarded revolution as the affair of everyone but was largely peasant-based, advocating the redistribution of land, but not its nationalization. When the S.R.'s split also into "right" and "left" factions in 1916, Sorokin sided with the moderate, gradualist right wing. He became editor of a Right S.R. paper, Viola Naroda (Will of the People). At a Peasants' Conference held in May 1917 he was elected "member of the executive committee and a delegate to the 'Commission for Elaboration of the Law for Election of Members of the Constitutional Assembly.'" Long Journey, pp. 121-22.

<sup>8</sup>In spite of the anarchy which encompassed the city and the multitude of activities which engrossed Sorokin personally at that time, he and Elena Baratinsky had chosen to marry on the 26th of May, 1917. Their marriage was frequently interrupted over the next few years by Sorokin's arrests and imprisonments and they experienced little tranquility until after leaving Russia. Yet it was a marriage destined to endure. [See Elena P. Sorokin "Prologue" in Sorokin, Hunger, pp. xxix-xxxvi].

<sup>9</sup>Sorokin, Long Journey, p. 149: here and in Leaves, p. 132 the exact figure of "57 days and nights;" elsewhere [Sorokin, "Sociology

moved to Moscow a week later, and Pitirim Sorokin began another newspaper, the first edition of which was seized. A new order for his arrest was issued, but Sorokin went 'underground'. He and a companion made contact with moderate revolutionaries in northern Russia and attempted to reach Archangel but were unable to get through. Finding themselves the objects of an intensive manhunt, and with a price on their heads, they hid out in the forests for the remainder of the summer. They then separated and returned to hide among friends in the towns for the winter. Hiding finally became too much for Sorokin who turned himself in to the local police and spent six weeks in prison under sentence of death.

At this point his fortune changed. He became the subject of an article by V. I. Lenin published in Pravda. "Its main theme was that men of [Sorokin's] kind, representatives of the peasantry, in their origin and previous activities democratic, and only by unhappy chance enemies of the Communists deserved special attention," and should be persuaded to become allies of the revolution.<sup>10</sup> Sorokin was shortly thereafter released and rejoined by his wife at Moscow. They then returned to Petrograd in order that Sorokin should continue his work at the University and Psycho-Neurological Institute. Throughout the winters of 1919 and 1920, afflicted by cold, hunger and darkness;

---

of my Mental Life," Sorokin in Review, p. 8] he refers to the date of January 3rd--instead of January 2nd--1918 and to a period of four months.

<sup>10</sup>Sorokin, Long Journey, p. 171.

distressed by a wave of suicides and deaths through starvation and privation, as well as by the arrest and execution of many friends, Sorokin nevertheless managed to write, publish and successfully to defend his doctoral thesis, Sistema Sociologii (System of Sociology). He was also made the head of the University's new Sociology Department, and, in 1921, when Ivan Pavlov founded the Society for an Objective Study of Human Behaviour, Pavlov became its honorary president and Sorokin its chairman.<sup>11</sup>

A new wave of executions of academics (and of relatives who had failed to denounce them) began in 1921, however, and continued into the following year. During a visit which Sorokin made to Moscow that August, several of his friends and colleagues there were suddenly arrested. A telegram from his wife informed him that 'scarlet fever' had broken out in their home too. Back in Petrograd, but remaining under cover, Sorokin discovered that most of the one hundred and fifty scientists, scholars, writers and cooperative workers who had been arrested that day had merely been banished. He therefore decided once again to surrender himself, but to travel back to Moscow where he was less well known to the authorities. By this 'ruse' he was able to procure the simple order of banishment and the credentials necessary to travel abroad. A few days later, on the 24th of September 1922, Pitirim and Elena Sorokin crossed the border of Soviet Russia, never to return.

Exodus ended the crisis which had undermined Sorokin's second

---

<sup>11</sup>Roucek and Mohan, "Sociology in the Soviet Union," p. 287.

Weltanschauung. Philosophically as well as politically the outlook of his childhood had been replaced by a forward-looking one ". . . fairly similar to the prevalent 'world-view' of the majority of the Russian and Western thinkers of the pre-catastrophic decade of the twentieth century." Sorokin did not then foresee ". . . that this 'scientific, positivistic, and progressively optimistic' Weltanschauung soon would be found wanting by the crucial test of historical events and would engender the second crisis in [his] world-outlook. . . ." <sup>12</sup> His personal experiences of those devastating years, the death of both his brothers, of many of his student friends and of the most outstanding professors of his acquaintance--together with the disappearance of others who had fled the catastrophes or who had been exiled or imprisoned--would cause him to reflect, towards the end of his life, on ". . . the legion of creative spirits to be devoured by the gigantic wars and revolutions of this bloodiest and most inhuman twentieth century." <sup>13</sup> However, their most immediate effect was to stimulate Sorokin to begin anew trying to make sense of the world. Just as his childhood outlook had been undermined by experience of the wider world, his revolutionary outlook ". . . with its positivistic philosophy and sociology, its utilitarian system of values and its conception of historical process as progressive evolution towards an ever better man,

---

<sup>12</sup>Sorokin, Long Journey, pp. 75-76.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

society and culture," had now been decisively contradicted by events.<sup>14</sup> It was at this point that he began the process of thinking and investigation which was eventually to lead to the publication of Social and Cultural Dynamics. According to Sorokin, this reconstruction process began as early as 1917 and was already noticeable in his 1920 publication, Sistema Sociologii.<sup>15</sup>

Between 1922 and 1930 Sorokin taught at universities in Czechoslovakia and in the United States of America. He also published copiously, and his works were translated widely. Two of them, Social Mobility (1926) and Contemporary Sociological Theories (1928) became standard texts in some American universities. In 1929 he was invited as guest lecturer by Harvard University; and the following year he was hired by Harvard to establish a chair, soon to become a department, of sociology. It was there in 1930 that he finally began work on Dynamics. When he did so he was chairman of an incipient sociology department of a prestigious American university, and a sociologist of international repute. He was also a naturalized American citizen. His intellectual roots lay elsewhere, however, and a brief look at Russian positivism, and Sorokin's relationship with it, is called for.

The intellectual movements which had stirred Tsarist Russia from the 1860s onwards were, at one and the same time, profoundly sociological and profoundly ideological. Both the Realist (Nihilist)

---

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 204-5.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

ferment of the 1860s, and the Populist and Neo-populist waves of subsequent decades had received their primary sociological impetus from translations of A. Quételet, W. Whewell, A. Comte, J. S. Mill, G. H. Lewes and H. T. Buckle. What became known as the Russian School of Sociology consequently bore a characteristically positivist, anti-metaphysical and pro-scientific stamp on most of its prescriptions and theories. However, Russian positivism also acquired a distinctive flavour, on the one hand by its close identification with revolutionary politics and socialist ideology, and, on the other, by its sustained efforts to make positive social science somehow embrace historical relativism and subjective moral values. The ideas of leading Russian Populists such as P. L. Lavrov and N. K. Mikhailovskii thus exhibit a pronounced concern to develop a scientific sociology according to positivist precepts; but in their tendency to equate general theory with visionary definitions of social progress they often resemble Marxists; and, by their aspirations to effect a synthesis of Kant's theories of knowledge and morality ". . . within the framework of science and a union of historical and epistemological relativism," they actually prefigure the Marburg and Baden neo-Kantian schools.<sup>16</sup> Russian positivist sociology was thus, ironically, a distinctively subjective sociology.

The early twentieth century saw dwindling Populism revived. A

---

<sup>16</sup>Alexander Vucinich, Social Thought in Tsarist Russia: The Quest for a General Science of Society, 1861-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976), p. 38.

generation of "neo-Populist" thinkers openly abandoned some of the romantic-utopian trappings of earlier decades, energetically engaged in theoretical disputes with Marxists, and actively organized and recruited political support under the banner of the Russian Socialist (or Social) Revolutionary ("S. R.") Party. But all this new life implied no change in Populism's predominantly subjective sociology.

Pitirim Sorokin was one of the few Russian positivists<sup>17</sup> who consistently bucked this subjectivist trend. As early as 1913, while Sorokin was still an undergraduate, he published Crime and Punishment, Service and Reward. This distinction earned him another: public rebuke from the pen of S. R. Party-chief and leading neo-Populist theoretician, V. M. Chernov. Chernov criticized ". . . Sorokin's effort to develop sociology as an 'objective' science operating totally outside the realm of value judgements," thus rejecting ". . . Sorokin's claim that sociology, as science, should be above good and evil and that it should deal with 'what is' and not with 'what ought to be.'"<sup>18</sup>

Many were the changes that overtook Sorokin's thought and life during the eventful twenty-four years which separated that first book from his Social and Cultural Dynamics, the focus of the present study; yet Sorokin's commitment to the idea of an objective social science remained basically unaltered over those years. Even his formal break with positivism was largely a repudiation of the historicist progress

---

<sup>17</sup>Sorokin's mentor, E. de Roberty (1843-1915) was another.

<sup>18</sup>Vucinicli, ibid., p. 58.

cult, and of the narrower views of what ought to constitute the subject-matter of a scientific sociology.

Commitment to objectivity and repudiation of positivism are both evident in Sorokin's 1937 methodology and classifications. These in turn constitute the theoretical preliminaries to his substantive study of sociocultural change.

According to Sorokin, there are four kinds of scientifically important relationships between sociocultural phenomena, each with its rightful place in sociological inquiry. The simplest kind is that of mere association in time or place. Phenomena which simply occur together, without any apparent causal connection are what Sorokin calls "congeries." Statistical correlations and statements of probable associations and trends provide the best means of analysis and description here. Such analyses are important, however, inasmuch as they may reveal causal connections. Increases in malnutrition due to famine and increases in the loss of homes by fire may, for example, be unrelated in any direct way, but both may be causally associated with drought.

This example suggests the second kind of relationship: there are phenomena related causally to factors which are external to the sociocultural world. Elements of a culture explainable in terms of geography, climate or biology fall into this category. One example Sorokin gives is the occurrence of skis or snowshoes, moccasins or warm boots and complementary clothing, artifacts and customs of cold and snowy climates. Social and cultural responses to environment and bodily

needs can legitimately be explained in terms of such external factors.

Apart from simple congeries relationships and external causation, Sorokin postulates the occurrence of two kinds of purely sociocultural association, and speaks of these as "higher levels" of integration.<sup>19</sup> The first is what Sorokin calls "causal-functional" relationships.<sup>20</sup> Sociocultural phenomena may be interconnected in much the same way that organic or mechanical systems are. Sorokin illustrates such interrelationships by giving examples of each kind of system from which some component (bolt, vital organ, or institution) is hypothetically removed. In such cases elucidation of causal interconnections is the key to explanation. However, most, if not all, such causal-functional systems of sociocultural phenomena are also integrated at the still "higher" or "deeper" level of meaning. This fourth type of interrelationship, usually referred to by Sorokin as "logico-meaningful integration," is peculiar to sociocultural phenomena. Meaningful rather than causal integration, he argues, binds together the components of any scientific treatise, religious ceremony or work of art. Likewise, the various activities, institutions and cultural productions associated, say, with the Roman Catholic Church,

---

<sup>19</sup>Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 4 vols. (New York: American Book Company, 1937-41/Bedminster Press, 1962) vol. 1, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup>In Sorokin's earlier writings [e.g., Contemporary Sociological Theories, pp. 44-45, 527-28] his dominant use of functional is in the mathematical sense, even though he acknowledges a sociological application of its biological usage [ibid., p. 195]. In Dynamics [I, pp. 45-46] he explains anthropological functionalism in terms of causal chains.

with the American economy or with Stoic philosophy are interrelated in terms of their meanings.

These four kinds, or levels, of integration all have a legitimate place in social science. Congeries, external-causal and causal-functional relationships also find homologous explanatory models in the philosophy of science. Logico-meaningful integration does not. It is peculiar to the social sciences which must therefore develop an appropriate methodology for handling it.

✓ Social scientists who have rigorously tried to follow the models of natural science may at first balk at the very idea of "logico-meaningful integration." Yet a moment's reflection will enable them to realize that recognition of the meaning element is an ingredient in every empirical study. Both the selection of variables for research and the basis for supposing causal relations to exist assume that the factors studied are somehow meaningfully related. That is why we are unlikely to compare, say, divorce rates with footwear fashions. Even if we should discover a positive correlation between brown shoes and happy marriages we would be hard put to explain it because we could not do so in meaningful terms. Sociological studies are thus invariably guided by the clue of meanings.<sup>21</sup>

Assuming, then, that we are prepared to accept Sorokin's contention that meanings do exist, both as an aspect of all,

---

<sup>21</sup>Pitirim A. Sorokin, Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964 [Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1943]), p. 18.

/sociocultural phenomena and as a guide to all empirical research in the social sciences, what does Sorokin understand by "logico-meaningful integration?"

The kind of reasoning we use for identifying integration at the level of meaning is similar to that employed in logic or mathematics. In such reasoning "there is neither cause nor effect, neither variable nor function."<sup>22</sup> What we must use are the "logical laws of identity, contradiction [and] consistency . . ." both in the narrow sense and in the broad sense of expressions such as "consistent style," "harmonious whole," "contrasting" or "clashing." For example,

suppose we find side by side in some cultural conglomeration a highly developed ascetic-monastic life and a materialistic-sensate philosophy. At once we feel that the two are inconsistent . . .; their combination is not integrated in a logico-meaningful unity. [. . .] Asceticism and a purely idealistic philosophy of life, on the contrary, do belong to each other logically.<sup>23</sup>

When we rearrange the scattered pages of a treatise or put together a jigsaw puzzle, we are using the same kind of reasoning. If the pages were from a large number of different treatises, or if the pieces were from a variety of different puzzles, our task becomes more complicated, but the same sort of reasoning is used. Similarly, if the pieces did not belong together, there would simply be no logico-meaningful order to be found. Were we to attempt to impose order where it did not

---

<sup>22</sup>Dynamics, I, p. 20.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

belong, we would be committing ". . . an error similar to that of finding or imposing a causal relationship where it does not exist."<sup>24</sup>

Our understanding of physical phenomena is greatly enhanced by the discovery of universal and fundamental entities such as gravitation, the atom, protons, and electrons. The usual approaches to social science have not led to the discovery of any "social atom" or to agreement regarding what constitute universal elements in sociocultural phenomena. However, the logico-meaningful approach leads directly to a search for common denominators in sociocultural configurations, that is, for "the identity (or similarity) of central meaning, idea or mental bias that permeates all the logically related fragments."<sup>25</sup> Inasmuch as these central principles, ideas or norms bind together otherwise disparate sociocultural phenomena, they play a role analogous to that of the atom or other ultimate unit "universally common to all material systems."<sup>26</sup>

To discover the fundamental principles of logico-meaningful integration,<sup>27</sup> we must identify what Sorokin calls the "major logical

---

<sup>24</sup>Dynamics, I, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>27</sup>Sorokin also recognizes the validity of two other kinds of interpretation of the meaning of sociocultural phenomena. Where sufficient documentation permits, the "psychological" reading, ". . . one of the main procedures of history," may be used to demonstrate convincingly ". . . how this or that value was understood by this or that man, group or generation." [Dynamics, I, pp. 57 & 58]. Where sufficient survey or census data is available, the "causal-functional" reading, upon which most sociological understandings are

premises" which underlie meaningfully related sets of sociocultural phenomena. These may differ from culture to culture as they do from language to language or from one geometry to another. However, "the major premise of each system, once accepted, . . . is logically valid within its own limits." There are thus three important rules to be followed in order to arrive at an objectively correct identification of meaningfully integrated sociocultural phenomena:

. . . first, the application of the canon of deductive and inductive logic; second, the realization of the possibility that the major premises of various cultures may differ; third, the assumption of an impartial position in regard to the validity or invalidity of the major premises.<sup>28</sup>

Application of these three rules will ensure ". . . that we do not superimpose on a given configuration of external cultural phenomena meanings which are not there."<sup>29</sup>

It is in this context that Sorokin postulates the existence of "two profoundly different types of . . . integrated culture," which he terms "sensate" and "ideational":

---

based, may be used. "It is the privilege of the scientist to discover and to demonstrate . . ." the existence of causal relationships between population density and crime, or between religious affiliation and divorce. [Dynamics, I, p. 60]. Causo-functional readings of culture clearly allude to the sort of procedure followed by Durkheim in Suicide.

<sup>28</sup>Dynamics, I, p. 63.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

Each has its own mentality; its own system of truth and knowledge; its own philosophy and *Weltanschauung*; its own type of religion and standards of "holiness"; its own system of right and wrong; its own forms of art and literature; its own mores, laws, code of conduct; its own predominant forms of social relationships; its own economic and political organization; and, finally, its own type of human personality, with a peculiar mentality and conduct. The values which correspond to one another throughout these cultures are irreconcilably at variance in their nature; but within each culture all the values fit closely together, belong to one another logically, often functionally.<sup>30</sup>

The major premises of the sensate mentality hold that reality is purely physical, material and empirical--the reality of the five senses; that human needs are physical, biological and material; that the satisfaction of such needs (food, drink, shelter, sex, self-protection, recreation and amusement) is the basic business of life, and that, finally, the way to satisfy these needs is through modification of the physical world around us.

By contrast, the major ideational premises regard the physical world as merely a veil that hides the true reality which is spiritual--a greater reality beyond appearances. "Whether it be styled God, Nirvana, Brahma, Om, Self, Tao, Eternal Spirit, l'Élan vital, Unnamed, the City of God, Ultimate Reality, Ding für und an sich, or what not, is of little importance."<sup>31</sup> The satisfaction of physical needs for the bearers of such a culture is limited to essentials, whereas spiritual goals such as salvation, sacrifice or service to God are paramount and

---

<sup>30</sup>Dynamics, I, p. 67.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

are mainly pursued through modifications of the inner self, rather than of the external environment.<sup>32</sup>

These are ideal limiting cases, however:

The probability is that neither the Ideational nor the Sensate type has ever existed in its pure form; but all integrated cultures have in fact been composed of divers combinations of these pure logico-meaningful forms. In some the first type predominates; in others, the second; in still others both mingle in equal proportions and on an equal basis. Accordingly, some cultures have been nearer to the Ideational, others to the Sensate type; and some have contained a balanced synthesis of both pure types. This last I term the Idealistic type of culture.<sup>33</sup>

The premises of Idealistic culture are also logically integrated, according to Sorokin, inasmuch as they consistently regard both physical and spiritual realities as true, goals related to both as worthy of pursuit, and the modification of both the inner self and outer world as legitimate means for attaining these respective goals. "Quantitatively it represents a more or less balanced unification of Ideational and Sensate, with, however, a predominance of the Ideational elements. Qualitatively it synthesizes the premises of both. [. . .]

Its needs and ends are both spiritual and material, with the material, however, subordinated to the spiritual."<sup>34</sup>

Viewed in time, the culture of a single area, say, the Greek or the Roman or the Western European culture, exhibits periods

---

<sup>32</sup>Dynamics, I, pp. 69-72.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 67-68.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

when its integration is mainly Ideational, and other periods when the Sensate type dominates; while in the passage from the domination of one of these types to that of the other, several intermediary forms, among them the Idealistic, rise to positions of predominance. When such a shift happens, a corresponding change in all the main cultural values, as well as in the predominant types of personality, takes place.<sup>35</sup>

Having elaborated these definitions Sorokin has established the basic categories in terms of which he will conduct his substantive study.<sup>36</sup>

Sorokin's sketch of a methodology for social science is in itself quite intriguing: first of all, because it insists that analysis of meanings is entirely reconcilable with causal-functional and statistical-correlational analysis. He rather convincingly argues that the meaning element spontaneously enters into every consideration of sociocultural phenomena, whether or not its role is explicitly acknowledged by the social scientist. In this view, positivist approaches to society and culture invariably involve the meaning element, a primary concern of Verstehen sociology. A scientific sociology would accordingly have to embrace aspects of both traditions.

Sorokin's second methodological departure concerned his emphasis on meanings which he regarded as fixed or invariable. Weber's

---

<sup>35</sup>Dynamics, I, pp. 68.

<sup>36</sup>These limiting and medial cases were not analytically complete enough for Sorokin, however. He proceeds to equip himself with a vocabulary of sub-categories: ascetic and active ideationalism (reminiscent of Max Weber's other-worldly and this-worldly asceticism); active, passive and cynical sensate mentalities, and, besides the idealistic, another "mixed" form which he calls pseudo-ideational. He describes the qualities and attitudes implied by each and then devotes an entire chapter to examples of contemporary and historical cultures and individuals dominated by these various outlooks.

preoccupation with the meanings of particular historical configurations such as "capitalism" and "mediaeval Christianity" led inevitably to the problem that such concepts might mean quite different things to different researchers, and thence to the methodological importance of "ideal types" whereby the scientist could make explicit his own particular understanding. Sorokin's "meaning element" claims a kind of stability which Weber's "ideal types" deny, for, Sorokin argues, a limited number of fundamental, invariant meanings, basic assumptions or "major premises" underlie all transient, historical configurations of social and cultural phenomena.

Closely related to this is Sorokin's third methodological innovation, the idea that these fundamental invariant meanings provide the organizational clue for scientifically classifying and interpreting empirical sociocultural phenomena. Viewed in terms of their basic assumptions, certain meanings are either compatible or incompatible with others. Some "fit" together; others clash logically or aesthetically. Still others are simply matters of taste, preference or fashion and stand in what Sorokin calls a "congeries" relationship with one another; they display no systematic, logical or aesthetic interrelationships. Those that do, however, relate directly to the organized understanding of empirical sociocultural reality. A crucial measure of a society's integration and stability is the degree to which its members share a given coherent set of such fundamental meanings. Similarly, the cultural productions of any age or area may be regarded as interrelated only insofar as they too express or represent some coherent

body of meanings. This is what Sorokin referred to as "logico-meaningful integration."

This consideration entails a fourth methodological idea which is basic to Sorokin's sociology: logico-meaningful integration defines what may or may not be regarded as a social or cultural unity. A sociocultural system is not simply the aggregate of whatever phenomena happen to coexist in a particular place at a particular time. Such aggregates can be scientifically construed only in statistical-correlational terms and seldom give rise to important understandings. By contrast, he argues, phenomena integrated on the level of meaning constitute systems in a real sense and can therefore usually also be construed in "causal-functional" terms; they thus promise to generate scientifically significant explanations.

To summarize, Sorokin's outline of a methodology explicitly attempts to embrace causal, correlational and meaningful interpretations of society and culture. It does this by first seeking to discover invariant meanings which underlie all transient configurations of sociocultural phenomena. It then employs these invariant meanings or "major premises" as keys to discover "logico-meaningfully integrated" phenomena, and to distinguish these from others that merely coexist in time and space without any meaningful relation between them. In this way it provides a means of distinguishing sociocultural systems, which are meaningfully integrated, from "congeries," which are meaningfully unrelated. Only the former can be legitimately construed as unities for sociological analysis in causal-functional terms, whereas the

latter are suitable only for statistical-correlational study.

In terms of the history of social thought, Sorokin's theoretical preliminaries constituted a significant attempt to delineate a new framework for the scientific study of sociocultural phenomena. It was a pioneering effort because Sorokin consciously strove to draw on both the positivist and Verstehen traditions in social philosophy, to develop the insights of each, and to demonstrate the interconnections between explanatory models which had historically separated these two schools of thought. This consisted of much more than the simple juxtaposition of elements from the two traditions: it constituted an original and imaginative attempt to fuse the insights of each.

However, before concluding this consideration of Sorokin's theoretical preliminaries, I wish to draw attention to what I regard as the experiential origin of his categories. Sorokin presents his classificatory ideas as though they depend on his methodology. If I am correct in believing that there is a biographical explanation for these categories it neither strengthens nor weakens them as sociological classifications. It is historically significant, however, for correctly interpreting the course of Sorokin's thought. In particular it questions the status of his theoretical preliminaries, especially the sketch of a methodology outlined above.

In the description of Sorokin's life at the beginning of the present chapter, I emphasized the successive Weltanschauungen and intellectual crises of which Sorokin writes: religious outlook followed by crisis when he began teacher training; revolutionary outlook followed

by crisis when the Bolsheviks triumphed in 1917. What strikes me as clear is that his characterizations of these outlooks closely resemble his descriptions of what constitutes his two polar categories, ideational and sensate. I believe he began Dynamics with these experiences in mind, sketched the sensate and ideational outlooks as "cultural mentalities," then sought some way of using these categories for scientific purposes. However, he construed them as configuration of meaning, and this, I suggest, rendered them problematic for him because of his positivist background, and because the "meaningful" aspect of sociocultural phenomena had been the traditional preoccupation of Verstehen sociologists.

If this is true, what, then, must we make of the sketch of a methodology whereby he purports to establish these categories? The most obvious explanation would seem to be that he sought to justify the use of his preconceived categories, and that he felt the need to provide some kind of theoretical rapprochement between positivist and Verstehen sociology in order to do this. If this view is acceptable, then--whatever the intrinsic merits of his methodological ideas--his categories do not depend on the line of reasoning he displays to arrive at them in Dynamics. Moreover, except for the ideational, idealistic, and sensate categories themselves, his theoretical preliminaries could in no way be considered the basis for his substantive inquiry.

## CHAPTER V

## SOROKIN: SUBSTANTIVE INQUIRY

Twentieth-century academics have by-and-large concluded--and, I believe, usually with good reason--that "theories of history" have no place in serious historical scholarship or in scientific sociology, except as objects of inquiry.<sup>1</sup> This is one reason why it is unfortunate that Sorokin's Dynamics is sometimes represented and discounted as "just another theory of history." Dynamics attempts to be much more. Sorokin's goal was to conduct a sociological survey, very largely a statistical study, of the human sociocultural past, and to plot the fluctuating dominance of the three culture mentalities he had identified. This survey constitutes Sorokin's substantive inquiry. Certainly theory enters into his study--both sociological theory and "theory of history," but the discerning student will easily distinguish these excursions from the inquiry itself.

If we desire to see sociology established on firmer foundations, we must avoid committing errors such as the historicist extravagances of past thinking. This need not, however, lead us into the superstitious<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Cf. supra, Chapter I, especially pp. 12-14.

<sup>2</sup>When students learn academic taboos without understanding the reasoning behind them or the historical circumstances that led to their observance they sometimes develop avoidance behaviour that resembles nothing so much as superstition.

avoidance of historical sociology or of the study of long-term social change.

It is well known that, since the time of Comte, positivist philosophers and social scientists have been the main bearers of the conviction that we shall one day establish a science of society comparable to the sciences of nature. What is not generally recognized, however, is that this conviction is itself based on one historicist assumption, a theory of history, originally formulated in Comte's "law" of three stages. Sorokin seriously questions this positivist assumption as he does every other philosophy of history from Hegel to Toynbee. However, he does so in the name of scientific objectivity, and on the basis of a vast amount of statistical material. Even though the scope of Dynamics, and Sorokin's conclusions do naturally invite comparison with those same theories of history, Sorokin conceived it not as a competitor among theories, but a critique of them.

Sorokin's substantive inquiry treats fluctuations in forms of art; in systems of truth, ethics and jurisprudence; and in social relationships, war and revolution. In each of these fields, to the extent that he feels evidence permits, Sorokin attempts to deal with developments over the entire course of Graeco-Roman and Western European history. In addition he also makes occasional excursions into cultures such as the Egyptian, Assyrian, Chinese, Indian and Islamic. Although Sorokin did not undertake this project of seven years' labour single-handedly, the conception of it, the overall interpretations, the

style and conclusions were nevertheless entirely his own.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as Sorokin claimed and N. S. Timasheff has since testified,<sup>4</sup> the specialists who researched and classified data were, until completion of their work, intentionally kept unaware of Sorokin's purposes and hypotheses. Conception, organization and presentation were thus entirely the work of one mind: Dynamics, at the very least, bears eloquent testimony to Sorokin's erudition.

Throughout this vast inquiry, Sorokin uses his sensate-ideational-idealistic categories<sup>5</sup> for classifying the cultural productions and social forms of various times and places. Other concepts and classificatory devices are introduced in the course of his study. These, however, he simply defines, and employs with little

---

<sup>3</sup>On nineteen of the thirty-seven chapters which comprise Dynamics' substantive inquiry, Sorokin acknowledges the assistance of between one and five collaborators. A total of seventeen names are recognized in this way; most of these and five others who assisted with the "spade-work" are acknowledged at the beginning of Volume I (p. vii). In alphabetical order (with the number of chapters on which they are credited with collaboration in brackets) they are as follows: C. A. Anderson, Q. C. Berger, J. V. Boldyeff (2), Harold Cross (1), N. Evreinoff (1), N. N. Golovine (1), K. B. Krishna, I. I. Lapshin (7), N. O. Lossky (7), E. F. Maximovitch (1), R. K. Merton (2), G. Mickwitz (1), N. L. Okuneff (1), S. Oldenburg (1), P. A. Ostrouchov (1), E. F. Parker, R. H. Phelps, S. G. Pushkareff (1), P. Savitzky (1), Peter B. Struve (1), N. S. Timasheff (6), and A. A. Zaitsoff or Saitsoff--the spelling varies (1). When Sorokin refers to his "team" in the course of "Dynamics", he is referring to various combinations of these "older and younger scholars" to whom he is indebted [I, p. vii]. Anderson, Berger, Phelps, Merton and others were graduate students; most were emigrée Russians who were interested in various fields of culture covered in Dynamics.

<sup>4</sup>N. S. Timasheff, "Sorokin on Law, Revolution, War and Social Calamities" in Allen, ed., op. cit., p. 256.

<sup>5</sup>For definitions of categories, see supra, pp. 67-68.

fanfare, usually managing to relate them to his ideational-sensate continuum. He deals separately with different "compartments" of culture, beginning with artistic productions (painting and sculpture, architecture, music and literature). This is followed by studies of "systems of truth" (science, religion and philosophy), of "ethical and juridicial mentalities, of "systems of social relationships," and of war, revolution, personality and conduct.

Sorokin's procedure is basically as follows. In every case where sufficient historical records seem to permit, he analyzes each compartment and sub-compartment of culture--in terms of their sensate, ideational and idealistic content--from 800 B.C. to 1920 A.D. He then, for the most part, tabulates the resulting data for twenty-year and century periods, calculates the proportion of sensate, ideational and idealistic content for each, and plots the results in graph form.<sup>6</sup>

Sorokin's treatment is uneven, however. For some of the phenomena studied, no statistics whatever are given, and Sorokin's survey remains strictly descriptive. Description, however, is an ingredient in every section of his work. Sorokin invariably surveys the field, takes issue with some of its leading commentators, and substantiates his own arguments with the interpretations of some other analysts. Where statistics are not able to support his contentions, Sorokin appeals to the reader's reason in preferring one interpretation to another. Most compelling, of course, are the sections in which

---

<sup>6</sup>For examples of Sorokin's research data, tables and graphs, see Appendix, pp. 184-188.

tables and graphs substantiate interpretation.

In the following pages I propose to describe briefly Sorokin's handling of these various compartments of culture, and to outline the conclusions he reached and the arguments he presents in the course of his inquiry.

Sorokin begins his survey by examining various theories which claim to discover uniformities in the flourishing of different arts (literature, sculpture, architecture, music, painting) in all cultures and civilizations, and concludes that such claims are ". . . at best, only partially valid."<sup>7</sup> The laws ". . . so clear to the linearists, cyclicists, evolutionists and uniformists, in the social sciences of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries--are not laws at all. They represent but the unwarranted elevation of local and temporary relationship into a universal law."<sup>8</sup>

He then distinguishes the various styles of painting and sculpture which correspond to his categories. Sensate art, for example, tends to be naturalistic, even sensual, but also individualistic and innovative. Ideational art tends to be symbolic, religious, static and anonymous. Idealistic art portrays the nobler aspects of sensory reality, but ". . . idealizes, modifies, typifies, and transforms [it] in conformity with its ideals and ideas."<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>Dynamics, I, p. 220.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 241-42.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

He begins with a brief descriptive outline of recurrence of these styles and their fluctuation in Egyptian, Assyrian, Chinese and Hindu pictorial art; then follows this with a much more elaborate treatment of Greece, Rome and Western Europe. This in turn is followed by his "quantitative" analyses for various Western European countries, as well as Central Europe, Russia and the Islamic world. On the basis of these, he concludes,

The data show that art before the thirteenth century, and especially from the tenth to the thirteenth, was almost exclusively Ideational. The art of the thirteenth century was predominantly Idealistic. After the thirteenth century the Visual tide began to rise, the Ideational to ebb rapidly, and the nineteenth century was the climax, so far, of this Visualism.<sup>10</sup>

Sorokin then discourses on fluctuations in architecture in much the same way, concluding that the dominance of sensate, ideational and idealistic styles follows much the same pattern as in painting and sculpture.

Music is treated descriptively also, and its waves of sensate, ideational and idealistic expression are found to ". . . have proceeded in their essentials parallel with similar waves in other fields of art."<sup>11</sup>

Fluctuations in literature, which Sorokin also examines discursively, follow the fields of painting and sculpture "in close

---

<sup>10</sup>Dynamics, I, p. 502.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 593.

parallel."

At least such is the conclusion obtained after a study of the literature of the Western Christian and, to some extent, of the Graeco-Roman cultures. Whether such a parallelism is universal for all cultures and times, I am not prepared to say. We must not be too hasty with generalizations.<sup>12</sup>

Closing his treatment of the arts, however, Sorokin virtually contradicts the latter statement:

In spite of my dislike for the sweeping generalizations for all times and societies, so foolishly favored by sociologists and so severely criticized by me in . . . the whole . . . of this work and elsewhere, I am inclined to say that these associations are valid far beyond the periods of the Graeco-Roman and Western cultures which we have examined.<sup>13</sup>

We can now turn our attention towards Sorokin's second major area of inquiry, "fluctuations in systems of truth." Here he postulates three fundamental notions of truth (truth of faith, truth of reason and truth of the senses), in respect to which he sets out to answer questions such as these:

During which periods in the history of the Graeco-Roman and Western cultures from 600 B.C. to the present has each of these systems risen to importance or suffered decline? What is the dominant contemporary system of truth and how has it come to be dominant?

What has been the movement of discoveries in the natural sciences and of technological invention from 600 B.C. to the present? Which periods have been particularly fertile and which sterile in these respects, and why? Is the movement

---

<sup>12</sup>Dynamics, I, p. 597.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 682.

of discoveries and inventions connected with the rise and fall of the main systems of truth?

Have the main categories of human thought and the "first principles" of science, philosophy, and religion been fluctuating in acceptability and prestige during these twenty-five hundred years; and, if they have, which periods are marked by the domination of which of these categories and principles . . . ?<sup>14</sup>

To begin with, Sorokin explains that he avoids the conventional distinction between science, philosophy and religion in order to approach human knowledge in terms of the basic suppositions which underlie it. He thereafter proceeds to consider his ideational, sensate and idealistic categories in terms of the subject matter and methods of validation which would be expected to prevail in each. At this point Sorokin outlines his methods and prepares to begin a quantitative study of fluctuations in the predominance of these different systems of truth. However, he does not analyse his historical data--in terms of the three-fold typology just established, but in terms of the ". . . six main epistemological currents in the mentality of Graeco-Roman and European cultures. . . ." These are,

- . . . empiricism, religious or ideational rationalism, mysticism, skepticism, fideism, and criticism. Of these, ideational or religious rationalism, mysticism, and fideism incorporate mainly the truth of faith; the idealistic rationalism, mainly the truth of reason; empiricism, mainly the truth of the senses. Skepticism is a purely negative system of "cynical" and "passive" Sensate mentality; criticism, a specific mixture of skepticism, empiricism, and rationalism.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Dynamics, II, p. v.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 24 (emphasis omitted).

Upon this foundation Sorokin then tabulates his data for twenty-year and century periods, and draws these conclusions:

A mere glance at [the tables and graphs<sup>16</sup>] is sufficient to indicate that within the period of some twenty-five hundred years there has been no continuous linear trend of any kind. None of the main systems has tended steadily to increase or decrease or remain constant throughout all the period, but each system has fluctuated, now rising in its influence, now declining, or remaining for a time comparatively constant. The popular and almost commonly accepted opinion that there exists a linear trend in this field, and that the linear trend consists in a progressive increase of the empirical truth of senses at the expense of a progressively declining truth of faith (religious rationalism, mysticism, and fideism) or the truth of reason (idealistic rationalism) is contradicted by the data. During the last five centuries empiricism or the truth of senses has been rising very rapidly. If the whole period of twenty-five hundred years is considered, however, no such trend exists. To the contrary, after a fairly powerful period of influence from the sixth to the third centuries B.C., empiricism declined and from the fifth to the eleventh centuries A.D. remained almost nonexistent. No perpetual trend of any of the other currents is shown. This is more significant because we are dealing not with uneducated, illiterate masses incapable of logical thinking, but with the leading thinkers of the cultures studied. If among them there is no steady trend toward a progressive increase of one of the systems of truth and a decline of the others, all the theories supporting the existence of a linear trend of growth of the "scientific truth of senses" have to be declared unwarranted. Hundreds of thinkers of the past as well as of recent times believed in such a trend and most of the scholars and scientists of our time subscribe to it. In multifarious variations they repeat the formulas of Turgot, Condorcet, August Comte, Saint-Simon, particularly that of Comte--that in the course of time mankind as a whole passes from the theological to the metaphysical and then to the positive stage of its mentality. Stated in our terms this law of the three states indicates a passage from the truth of faith, to that of reason, and from the truth of reason to that of the senses. It is apparent that the formula is wrong.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup>For examples see Appendix, pp. 184-188.

<sup>17</sup>Dynamics, II, pp. 31 and 33.

After expatiating on these and related observations, Sorokin takes time out to demonstrate ". . . that a shift from one system of truth to another means the greatest revolution of human mentality and culture, and that these revolutions have occurred several times during the periods and centuries marked by the above tables."<sup>18</sup> He then descriptively surveys the entire field of Graeco-Roman and Western thought, emphasizing epistemological break-throughs and the systematic rejection of "heretical" systems of truth in each era.

Sorokin next proceeds to investigate scientific discoveries and technological innovation over the ages. He does so in terms of mathematics, astronomy, biology, medicine, chemistry, physics, geology, technology and in terms of geographical exploration. These data are then tabulated and plotted. Not surprisingly, Sorokin concludes that there is a strong positive correlation between periods dominated by the truth of the senses and those most productive of discoveries and inventions. Thereafter Sorokin explores various theories concerning the world's scientific and resource future, assembles further statistics on the frequency of patents and concludes that, although, "the empirical system of truth and the natural sciences have both had an unprecedented growth during the last four or five centuries," nevertheless ". . . scrutiny of the recent development of the natural sciences discloses a slowing up of the rate of progress and signs of 'fatigue.'" Furthermore, this ". . . accords with similar departures

---

<sup>18</sup>Dynamics, II, p. 61.

from the over-ripe Sensate culture, which our culture displays in most of its compartments."<sup>19</sup>

Sorokin then begins to look at fluctuations in philosophical "first principles," beginning with materialism and idealism. Since these are essentially identical with his ontological definitions for sensate and ideational cultures, it is not difficult to see how they relate to his categories. Graphs and tables once again supply us with summary expressions of the frequency of these opposite philosophical positions over the centuries, and, as usual, lengthy appendices provide us with the names of thinkers whom Sorokin and his team considered. Once again he observes that there is "no continuous linear trend," that "no mechanical periodicity" is detectable, and that "there is repetition in so far as [the] rises and declines formally recur, but [that] each repetition is a new variation. . . ."<sup>20</sup>

One other conclusion of this chapter is also worth noting in terms of the relationship between various aspects of culture in the twentieth century. I quote here without the reservations which Sorokin subsequently provides:

In some of the other compartments of culture studied--art, system of truth, and science--we discovered that at the end of the nineteenth and in the twentieth century there appeared the symptoms of revolt against the dominant tendencies of the overripe Sensate culture. In ontology we do not find a similar rebellion. . . .<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>Dynamics, II, p. 180.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

Using similar quantitative techniques, Sorokin surveys fluctuations of other sets of philosophical "first principles:" "temporalism" and "eternalism;" realism, conceptualism and nominalism; sociological universalism and singularism; determinism and indeterminism, and others. Most results and correlations are to be expected on the basis of the definitions of these principles, and most of Sorokin's conclusions are comparable to those already reached in the chapters described above.

Still other chapters deal with fluctuations in conceptions of juridical personality; causality, time, space and number; of processes (linear, cyclical and other); and with "fluctuations of general and special scientific theories." These, by contrast, are handled discursively only.

In these studies of "systems of truth," Sorokin's quantitative treatments outnumber purely descriptive ones by a ratio of two to one. This compares with his first-volume studies of art where statistics were provided for painting and sculpture only, and where architecture, music and literature were handled discursively. In the last quarter of the second volume, where he examines fluctuations in "ethicojuridical" culture, first appearances suggest a continuation of the two-to-one ratio in favour of quantification. This is not, however, the case.

Sorokin's study on the dynamics of ethical values begins with a qualitative description of ideational, idealistic and sensate systems of ethics. To ideational ethics belong the systems of absolute values usually associated with religion. Sensate ethics are, by contrast,

relativistic, hedonistic and ". . . always appear as man-made rules. . . ." Between these two extremes, of course, are idealistic systems. These are simultaneously transcendental and earthly: obedience to God fulfils the absolute ethic and simultaneously leads to happiness.<sup>22</sup> However, the quantitative work which follows is based on figures for fluctuations in "the ethics of love," "the ethics of absolute principles" and "the ethics of happiness." Not only does Sorokin have some difficulty in relating these to his three culture mentalities, but he also demonstrates some confusion in the course of his analysis.<sup>23</sup> This is unfortunate because his subsequent section discusses relativism and absolutism, but presents no new data because ". . . their movements in essentials coincide . . ." with those for the ethics of love and happiness.<sup>24</sup> Summary statistics are given for fluctuations in optimism and pessimism, but this question has no bearing on the fluctuations of cultural mentalities because, as Sorokin observes, ". . . optimism and pessimism have two different forms: Ideational and Sensate."<sup>25</sup> His last survey in this volume is

---

<sup>22</sup>Dynamics, II, p. 482.

<sup>23</sup>In Dynamics, II, pp. 486-89, Sorokin tabulates statistics for the ethics of love, which, "in a sense is a variety of the ethics of absolute principles" [ibid., p. 485]--his second category--and to compare these with a third category, the ethics of happiness. The latter in turn includes such seemingly strange bedfellows as hedonistic, eudaemonistic and utilitarian happiness--strange because Sorokin has identified hedonism with sensate and stated that "between the noblest systems of eudaemonism and that of the ethics of principles, the difference becomes often imperceptible" [ibid.].

<sup>24</sup>Dynamics, II, p. 516.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 515.

intrinsically interesting, but relates only tangentially to his central theme. His main conclusion is quite simply that,

beginning with the Barbaric codes and ending with the postwar criminal codes, there is no perpetual tendency either toward a progressive increase of severity of punishment, or toward its mitigation. Instead we have merely a fluctuation, with various ups and downs.<sup>26</sup>

Sorokin's summary of his second volume therefore understandably omits all reference to that chapter. However, in the form of graphs and coefficients of correlation, he convincingly demonstrates the relationship of other factors to his central thesis. Of the eight curves of ideational variables (idealism; ethics of principle and love; universalism and mystic unity; rationalism; mysticism and fideism; absolutism; realism; indeterminism; eternalism) only the curve for eternalism (dominance of the notion of being as opposed to becoming) shows no close correspondence with the other seven. The others follow similar paths.<sup>27</sup> Of the eight sensate attributes (materialism; ethics of happiness, empiricism, relativism, determinism, nominalism, temporalism, singularism) determinism is slightly errant, but all eight follow the same basic path, especially in centuries since the tenth.<sup>28</sup> This latter point is significant inasmuch as data for more recent times are more plentiful, and this has the obvious effect of closing the

---

<sup>26</sup>Dynamics, II, p. 591.

<sup>27</sup>See Appendix, p. 188.

<sup>28</sup>See Appendix, p. 187.

curves for different attributes.

The third and final volume of Sorokin's substantive inquiry consists of four parts. The first deals with fluctuations in social relationships, the second with the frequency of war over the centuries, the third with revolution (internal disturbances), and the fourth with personality and conduct. The section on social relationships discusses fluctuations in the dominance of "familistic," contractual, and compulsory social relationships; fluctuations in theocratic as opposed to secular forms of government; of ideational as opposed to sensate understandings of liberty; of the number of social bonds which hold a society together, and, finally, of the material standards enjoyed by various classes in different epochs. Of these only the last is substantiated by data of any sort, and even this is of dubious value.

According to Sorokin, meaningful interaction between individuals distinguishes members of a social group from a mere conglomeration of individuals.<sup>29</sup> Social relationships may be familistic (embracing all activities, completely socializing individuals, enduring, and completely satisfying the aspirations of all members), contractual (all aspects specified by understanding or contract), or compulsory (antagonistic relationship with one-sided satisfaction).

From this survey he concludes:

---

<sup>29</sup>This became a cornerstone of Sorokin's conception of sociology; see, for example, Society Culture and Personality, pp. 39 et seq.

We see that the period of the domination of the Ideational culture, from the eighth to the twelfth century, is marked by a domination of the familistic relationships, plus the compulsory relationship as subsidiary. The period of Idealistic culture--from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries--is marked by a mixture of the familistic with a greater proportion of the contractual and the compulsory. The period of a rapid ascendance of the Sensate culture--the sixteenth, seventeenth, and the first part of the eighteenth centuries--by a proportionate rise of the compulsory relationship with some increase of the contractual ones, at the cost of the familistic. Finally the period of the ripe and well-developed Sensate culture, the nineteenth century, is marked by an unusual increase of the contractual bonds. The twentieth century, which, as we have seen, is marked in many compartments of culture by a sudden revolt against the Sensate forms, is also marked by a sudden decline of contractualism. In other words, the more Ideational is the period, the more conspicuous are the familistic relationships; the more Sensate is the culture, the more either compulsory or especially contractual becomes the texture of the network of social relationships of a given society.<sup>30</sup>

When Sorokin turns to study fluctuations in theocratic and secular forms of government, he simply argues that leaders in ideational cultures must be bearers of that culture, just as leaders in sensate cultures ". . . are the bearers, creators, organizers of the most important sensate values. . . ." <sup>31</sup> He then proceeds to illustrate these arguments with examples of contemporary and historical societies.

His treatment of the notion of liberty is essentially a return to an idea first set up in his definitions of sensate and ideational: the first mentality satisfies desires by modifying the external environment; the second controls desires by modifying the environment

---

<sup>30</sup> Dynamics, III, p. 132.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

within.

Sorokin's discussion of the direction and number of social bonds (increases and decreases in central control; the "migration" of control from one sort of authority to another) need not detain us. Basically he tells us that what people regard as totalitarian depends upon their concept of liberty, that control passes to religious authorities in ideational times and to secular authorities in sensate times, and that increases in the number of regulations tend to coincide with periods of crisis.

When Sorokin turns to examine living standards, he does so with the express intention of elucidating ". . . the relationship between the fluctuation of the Ideational and Sensate types of culture and that of economic conditions."<sup>32</sup>

Although this portion of Sorokin's inquiry is portrayed in graph form, it is much more subjective than his earlier "quantitative" studies in which even assigned values were determined by some sort of external data. On the basis of such graphs and discussion, Sorokin simply concludes that ". . . the dominantly Ideational societies tend to exist in economic conditions which are on a lower level (judged from the Sensate standpoint) than those of primarily Sensate cultures."<sup>33</sup>

Sorokin next looks at war and revolution in terms of their frequency over the centuries. His calculations for war are based upon

---

<sup>32</sup>Dynamics, III, p. 219.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

such factors as the length of the war, the number of combatants and the number of casualties. In relation to his central thesis, Sorokin concludes that war is not especially connected with the dominance of either ideational or sensate mentality; these merely influence the motives of war. Periods of transition, however, do show ". . . a notable increase of war activities and war magnitude."<sup>34</sup>

Measuring the intensity of internal disturbances such as revolution and civil war is obviously more fraught with difficulties than was calculating statistics for war. Undeterred, Sorokin systematically quantified disturbances in eight modern states and three ancient empires, as well as for Europe as a whole. He finds that, on the average, the nations studied experience about one year of significant social disturbance for every five that are peaceful.<sup>35</sup> Curves for internal disturbances, however, show no consistent correlation, positive or negative, with those for war. Points of greatest frequency for both nonetheless do tend to cluster in centuries of transition between ideational and sensate cultural values and social relationships.<sup>36</sup>

The final study in Sorokin's substantive inquiry concerns the relationship of personality and conduct with the great movements of sensate and ideational mentality which his surveys seem to have

---

<sup>34</sup>Dynamics, III, p. 375.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 473.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 496-97.

confirmed. This consists of classifying historically prominent persons according to whether their recorded ideas were predominantly sensate, predominantly ideational or "mixed." This study provides evidence ". . . that historically there is an association between the type of dominant culture and the frequency of the type of conduct and personality."<sup>37</sup> No century was without representatives of each, however. Studies of popes and kings, studies of those engaged in business as opposed to religion--despite obvious occupational proclivities toward sensate or ideational--nevertheless show ". . . a notable agreement with the rise and decline of the waves of Ideational and Sensate culture from 800 B.C. to our time."<sup>38</sup>

Sorokin provided no general summary of his substantive inquiry. He had no need to. Virtually every chapter drove home the same basic message: in the course of Graeco-Roman and Western European history there had been no overall linear trend towards the positivist outlook; in many compartments of culture there was even evidence that the sensate mentality characteristic of that outlook had recently begun to decline. Accumulated evidence not only repeatedly reinforced these conclusions from chapter to chapter, but also pointed to one other conclusion: with the exception of a few lags and leads in particular compartments or sub-compartments of culture at certain periods, the entire field of sociocultural phenomena seemed to fluctuate in unison. From being

---

<sup>37</sup>Dynamics, III, p. 521.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 528.

predominantly sensate it entered a period of confusion during which the sensate outlook slowly lost ground to the ideational. The ideational then became dominant and the sensate began again to rise. When the two were about even, the idealistic outlook, a synthesis of the others, outdistanced both extremes and became dominant for a few centuries. But the sensate outlook continued to ascend until it once again predominated. The entire process had occurred twice: once in Graeco-Roman and once in Western European history.

Sorokin published these three volumes in 1937. Dynamics was nevertheless still incomplete, because Sorokin had yet to produce the theoretical volume which promised, among other things, to present a new Règles de la méthode sociologique.<sup>39</sup> That same year, however, Sorokin's colleague and sometime protégé,<sup>40</sup> Talcott Parsons, did publish a volume of theory.

---

<sup>39</sup>Dynamics, I, p. xi.

<sup>40</sup>See infra, p. 94.

## CHAPTER VI

## SOROKIN AND PARSONS

Pitirim Sorokin and Talcott Parsons apparently first met in 1929 when Sorokin visited Harvard University as a guest lecturer. Parsons at that time was an instructor in the department of economics. It was under the aegis of this same department that Sorokin chose to establish the newly created chair in sociology which Harvard offered him shortly thereafter. Late in 1930 when a special interdisciplinary committee had drawn up proposals for expanding that chair into a department, Sorokin recalls being surprised that all proposals were acceptable--with one exception: "they refused to approve the appointment of Talcott Parsons as the department's faculty instructor."<sup>1</sup> According to Sorokin, he had gained a favourable impression of Parsons and was therefore not satisfied with leaving the matter alone. He inquired into the reasons why the request might have been refused, organized a lobby, and, with the backing of the committee and the economics department, succeeded in obtaining Parsons' appointment on grounds that he ". . . probably would do much better work in sociology than in economics," since it was apparently in sociology that his real interests lay.<sup>2</sup>

Talcott Parsons recalls the same period in terms of "difficulties

---

<sup>1</sup>Sorokin, Long Journey, pp. 243-44.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 244.

of status" professionally. He spent four years in economics and five in sociology as an instructor aspiring to professorship, but suffered ". . . the misfortune of serving under unsympathetic chairmen--in economics the late H. H. Burbank, in sociology P. A. Sorokin."<sup>3</sup>

Both sets of recollections are undoubtedly coloured by the desire of each man to demonstrate that he was not the source of the aversion which arose between them. In terms of the present study, however, these recollections give some indication of the tensions which already prevailed in Harvard's sociology department prior to 1937, the year of publication of both Sorokin's Dynamics (I-III) and Parsons' Structure of Social Action.

The entire eight-hundred-odd pages of Parsons' Structure deal almost exclusively with sociological theory. Yet his basic theoretical assertions are easily summarized. According to Parsons, all social action is analysable into four elements: ends, means, conditions, and norms. "It is impossible to have a meaningful description of an act without specifying all four."<sup>4</sup> A fifth element, effort, is also periodically mentioned<sup>5</sup> but does not win a place among the "analytical elements" of Parsons' action schema. Norms, the "ultimate-value

---

<sup>3</sup>Talcott Parsons, "On Building Social System Theory: A Personal History," Daedalus, vol. 99 (1970), p. 832. [It was also the "late" Pitirim Sorokin at the time the article was published.]

<sup>4</sup>Talcott Parsons, The Structure of Social Action: A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1937), p. 732.

<sup>5</sup>For example, see Structure, pp. 396-97 and 732.

element," receive by far the greatest attention in his study. Norms govern the choice of ends and influence the choice of means to achieve the desired end. There is a normative orientation to all action. "Action must always be thought of as involving a state of tension . . ." between norms and conditions.<sup>6</sup> "Action is a process in time," ". . . the process of alteration of the conditional elements in the direction of conformity with norms."<sup>7</sup> This "action frame of reference" which Parsons proposes is subjective in that "the normative elements can be conceived of as 'existing' only in the mind of the actor."<sup>8</sup> The existence of social order nevertheless presupposes that some of these "value-attitudes" be to some degree shared by members of any given society.<sup>9</sup> Parsons' "discovery" and investigation of these concepts in 1937 constituted the first instalment in what was to become a series of more elaborate theoretical analyses, categorical assertions and reformulations of his ideas which, under the labels "action theory" and "systems theory," became a major influence in American social scientific theorizing during the 1950s and later. Here, however, we shall be concerned with the way in which Parsons initially presented his thought--rather than with the ideas he developed later.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>Structure, p. 732.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 733.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 669-70 et passim.

<sup>10</sup>Perhaps the most readable summary of Parsons' ideas in their developed form is Edward C. Devereux, "Parsons' Sociological Theory,"

The analytical concepts outlined above are basic to Parsons' ideas as expressed in Structure, but these do not account for either its bulk or for its intellectual impact. It is substantively a study in the history of sociological ideas. In Structure Parsons traces the rise of utilitarian thought, analyses its inherent "logical" shortcomings, and characterizes the kinds of attempts by which eighteenth and nineteenth-century thinkers in the positivist tradition tried unsuccessfully to get around these difficulties. He then embarks upon a more detailed examination of the thought of a nineteenth-century economist, Alfred Marshall, of Vilfredo Pareto and Emile Durkheim, endorsing them as thinkers who, to some extent, recognized and attempted to deal with the problems posed by traditional social theory within the utilitarian-positivist framework. The resulting new theoretical framework, which Parsons largely credits Pareto and Durkheim with having discovered, is what he calls the "voluntaristic theory of action." This is said to have all the advantages and none of the shortcomings associated with utilitarian and positivistic theories of action. Parsons then turns his attention to the German idealistic school of social philosophy which arose from the thought of Kant and Hegel and, in this context, discusses the sociological theories of Karl Marx and, especially, Max Weber.

---

in Max Black, ed., The Social Theories of Talcott Parsons (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), pp. 1-63. Parsons' own most complete statement is probably "An outline of the Social System," in Talcott Parsons et al., eds., Theories of Society (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), Vol. I, pp. 30-79. Sorokin's polemical account of these same theories in relation to his own is to be found in Pitirim A. Sorokin, Sociological Theories of Today (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) pp. 403-40.

Parsons analyses Weber's thought as disclosed in the latter's writings on methodology and religion, concluding that Weber too had reached much the same theoretical position as had Durkheim and Pareto. (Parsons' four "analytical elements"--ends, means, conditions and norms--all find counterparts in the sociological writings of Weber). Hence, Parsons concludes, both idealistic and positivistic traditions of thought are found to "converge" towards his "voluntaristic theory of action." This plodding yet brilliant history of sociological ideas accounts for the sheer bulk of Structure. It does not, however, wholly account for its impact.

The individual thinkers whom Parsons studies had not always been fully aware of the implications of their theoretical and empirical observations, nor had they always thought through their ideas with sufficient "logical" rigour. It therefore fell upon Parsons himself to provide the necessary finishing touches, minor corrections and missing ingredients. These additions, Parsons' overall interpretations, and above all, his discovery of "convergence" towards a "voluntaristic theory of action" combine to make Structure much more than a history of ideas. The study of ideas is clearly secondary to Parsons' stated "principal object," to demonstrate "convergence."<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Parsons does not depict earlier thinkers simply as forerunners who inspired him to reach his own conclusions. What he refers to as "the working hypothesis" of Structure is that there is "an 'immanent' development

---

<sup>11</sup>Structure, p. 682.

within the body of social theory. . . ."12 His ideas are thus portrayed as the inevitable outcome of processes beyond his control: over the centuries social science has been groping its way towards a voluntaristic theory of action; past theory has been a potential deductive system in search of closure, an equation which, until recently, held too many unknowns: Parsons has simply grasped its significance and completed the equation. He is not, he asserts, foisting any new scheme on social science:

To advocate the use of this scheme . . . is not to lay down a Utopian program. . . . It is, on the contrary, to take the position that what has proved useful in the past and has greatly contributed to the attainment of important empirical results is likely to continue to do so in the course of its future use and development.13

A sense of inevitability, of finality and of historical necessity thus pervades Parsons' book. Although he explicitly denies that his theory is final, he nonetheless depicts it as a door through which all must pass if they wish to participate in the advancement of social knowledge.

It cannot be maintained either that . . . this theoretical system is complete, or that it will not with the further

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 5. The word "immanent" is used also by Sorokin to describe changes within well integrated empirical social and cultural systems when these changes cannot be explained as responses to external factors. Parsons uses it with respect to ". . . the body of social theory and knowledge of empirical fact. . . ." The reader may judge to what extent there exists such a "body" of theory and knowledge, to what extent it is integrated and to what extent it is insulated from external influences.

<sup>13</sup>Structure, p. 725.

development of the social sciences, be superseded by one as radically different from it as it is from the systems from which it has emerged. But . . . it is quite safe to say that if and when it is superseded it will have left a substantial permanently valid precipitate of knowledge which, with appropriate restatement, it will be possible to incorporate into the future broader statement.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly, the main intellectual impact of Parsons' Structure lies neither in his "analytical elements" nor in his history of ideas as such, but rather in his patently historicist view of the convergence of those ideas towards the "voluntaristic theory of action" of which he is simply the discoverer and promoter.

Many different qualities in fact combine to create the overall powerful effect of Parsons' Structure. Notwithstanding his unfortunate prose style, his study is well organized and closely integrated around its central themes. Even if we regard his theoretical formulations as sheer scholasticism,<sup>15</sup> we must recognize that Parsons' apparent strong belief in the significance of his "analytical elements" makes his entire presentation quite compelling. We may likewise have good reason to disagree with Parsons' interpretations of the sociologists he examines,<sup>16</sup> yet we must acknowledge that, for their time, these studies were among

---

<sup>14</sup>Structure, pp. 756-57.

<sup>15</sup>Don Martindale, "Talcott Parsons' Summa Sociologica, pp. 416-18 in Sociological Quarterly (Summer 1970) reprinted in part in Don Martindale, Prominent Sociologists Since World War II (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1975), pp. 141-42.

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, Whitney Pope, Jere Cohen and Lawrence E. Hazelrigg, "On the Divergence of Weber and Durkheim: A Critique of Parsons' Convergence Thesis," American Sociological Review, 1975, vol. 40, pp. 417-27; Jere Cohen, Lawrence E. Hazelrigg and Whitney Pope,

the most searching available in English. We may object to the historicism which informs the entire work and which, I have suggested above, largely accounts for its impact, yet we must nevertheless credit Parsons with clear insights into the history of Western European thought.

There is, moreover, a "public relations" aspect of the whole work which is important to appreciate: Parsons seldom criticizes other thinkers in a straightforward manner. The polemics are all there, but they are "underground." His critique of positivist and idealist stances are submerged in his expositions and interpretations of earlier thinkers' works, as well as in the assumption which regards all other points of view as culminating in his own. Rarely does he make an explicit attack. If his subtle attacks sometimes amount to "invidious,"<sup>17</sup> we must still grant that his theoretical arguments are not blatantly interrupted, as Sorokin's often are, by outbursts against those with whom he disagrees. His frequent use of the passive voice likewise helps Parsons to avoid identifying himself with his own more controversial assertions. Finally, his repeated use of words like "action," "concrete" and "empirical" in connection with his ideas conveys an

---

"DeParsonizing Weber: a critique of Parsons' interpretation of Weber's sociology," *ibid.*, pp. 229-41 and Whitney Pope, "Classic on classic: Parsons' interpretation of Durkheim," *ibid.*, 1973, vol. 38, pp. 399-415.

<sup>17</sup>Pope *et al.*, "Divergence," *A.S.R.*, vol. 40, 471, n. 1.; we shall presently examine Structure as a sustained polemic against Sorokin.

impression of reality and solidity to statements which might otherwise be regarded as entirely speculative or irrelevantly abstract. Parsons' sense of historical mission, his clever analyses, deep erudition, subtle polemics and astute choice of catchwords combined to make Structure a formidably persuasive treatise in sociological theory, and the keystone of Parsons' career.

Parsons' preoccupation with the "normative" element of action is essentially the same as Sorokin's insistence on inclusion of the "meaningful" aspect of sociocultural phenomena.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, both

---

<sup>18</sup>Near the beginning of Structure, Parsons asserts that ". . . the discrimination of various possible modes of normative orientation is one of the most important questions with which this study will deal." [ibid., p. 45]. He likewise states that the ". . . inclusion of meanings in the realm of experimental facts or observable phenomena is perhaps the most important thing to note about Pareto's concept of fact. [. . .] Though he nowhere makes the inclusion explicit, most of his sociology would entirely fail to make sense without it." [ibid., pp. 182-83]. The "ends" of a society, Parsons says ". . . form part of the same teleological meaningful system." [ibid., p. 232]. "The only way in which such a concept of the end of a society can be given meaning . . . is by the theorem that it is an end common to the members of the society. . . . The different systems of ends of the different members of the society are not only 'rendered homogenous' to a degree . . . but, in addition, certain aspects of those individual systems may be said to be held in common by the members. In so far as this is true the end systems may be said to be integrated." [ibid., p. 247]. ". . . The ultimate ends of individual action systems are integrated to form a single common system of ultimate ends which is the culminating element of unity holding the whole structure together." [ibid., p. 249; Parsons' emphasis]. "The integration of a social group consists in the common recognition on the part of its members of a single integrated body of norms as carrying moral authority. [ibid., p. 389]. ". . . The existence of an indefinite plurality of such systems in the same community . . . would be incompatible with social order--would be the war of all against all." [ibid., p. 391]. What individuals in a society share, Parsons argues, is not simply common behaviour patterns, because "back of this and in part explaining it is the sharing of common ideals and norms of which the common behaviour is

intended to furnish sociology with a comprehensive methodology that would avoid the shortcomings of the extreme positivist and Verstehen positions. It is therefore not surprising that Sorokin and Parsons, working in the same university's sociology department, should have attempted similar theoretical projects at the same time. What does require explanation is how such convergent analyses, interests and aims were made to appear unrelated--even entirely irreconcilable. I believe that Parsons' Structure helps to explain this peculiarity too. For it can be read at another level: that of a sustained polemic against Sorokin, and as a manifesto of Parsons' professional aspirations.

Over the years, descriptions of Sorokin's 1937 ideas have tended to be couched in peculiar terms. These terms do not appear from Sorokin's own works, and the descriptions amount to complete distortions of the ideas they purport to describe. As recently as 1963, Robert K. Merton and Bernard Barber assert that "Sorokin has explicitly adopted an idealistic and emanationist theory of the sociology of knowledge," and that Sorokin's theory tries to derive every aspect of knowledge from

---

at best a partial actualization." [ibid., p. 399]. "Given the existence of a system of 'knowledge' of the nonempirical . . . it is quite comprehensible that this should become the basis of systems in action. . . ." [ibid., p. 432]. Analysis, he suggests, ". . . will not issue in one ultimate uniform system of general concepts but in as many systems as there are value points of view. . . ." [ibid., p. 593]. These and many similar assertions, viewed in isolation, could reasonably be construed as endorsements of the sort of theoretical and empirical study which was the focus of Sorokin's Dynamics.

underlying 'cultural mentalities.'"<sup>19</sup> The key words here are "idealistic," "emanationist," and "derived." Merton and Barber dare to cite Warner Stark in support of their contention that, in Sorokin's system, all culture ". . . proceeds and emanates . . ." from his ideational, idealistic and sensate culture-mentalities. Merton's own influential Social Theory and Social Structure (1949 and 1957) was, however, one primary vehicle for disseminating this misleading characterization of Sorokin's sociology.<sup>20</sup> As early as 1937, however, Talcott Parsons was already employing the catchy words "idealistic and emanationist" in order to discredit a type of sociology which he characterized as being incompatible with scientific method and as being diametrically opposed to his "voluntaristic theory of action."

While the voluntaristic type of theory involves a process of interaction between normative and conditional elements, at the idealistic pole the role of conditional elements disappears. . . . In an idealistic theory "action" becomes a process of "emanation", of "self-expression" of ideal or normative factors. Spaciotemporal phenomena become related to action only as symbolic "modes of expression" or "embodiments" of "meanings." The scientific standard of rationality becomes irrelevant to the subjective aspect of action. The means-end schema gives way to a meaning-expression schema. Non-normative elements cannot "condition" action, they can only be more or less "integrated" with a meaningful system.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>Robert K. Merton and Bernard Barber, "Sorokin's Formulations in the Sociology of Science," pp. 332-68 in Philip J. Allen, ed., Pitirim A. Sorokin in Review (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1963), p. 334.

<sup>20</sup>Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe: Free Press of Glencoe, 1957), p. 466: ". . . Sorokin's idealistic and emanationist theory, which seeks to derive every aspect of knowledge, not from an existential social basis, but from varying 'culture mentalities.'"

<sup>21</sup>Parsons, Structure, p. 82.

Certain words which repeatedly occur in Dynamics are here (as elsewhere in Structure) interwoven with concepts quite foreign to Sorokin's thought. Distinctions, Parsons tells us, between ". . . different types of voluntaristic and idealistic systems . . ." are unimportant for his study.<sup>22</sup> In Dynamics, of course, Sorokin makes considerable use of the word "idealistic" to describe one of his three categories of meaningfully integrated culture; moreover, he ". . . intentionally takes the standpoint of this Idealistic form of mentality" on the grounds that "this permits him to understand both of the opposite types of culture mentality. . . ."<sup>23</sup> But what is readily apparent to anyone even casually familiar with Dynamics is that this particular use of the word "idealistic" is quite unrelated to philosophical idealism.<sup>24</sup> Blurring this distinction held polemical significance for Parsons. It is significant not only for discrediting Sorokin by innuendo, but also for creating the illusion that Parsons himself offers something very different and original. In Parsons' language, "the positivistic theory of action" had suffered a "definite internal breakdown" inasmuch as Pareto and Durkheim had both ". . . emerged with the conception of a common system of ultimate values as a vital element in concrete social

---

<sup>22</sup>Structure, p. 82.

<sup>23</sup>Dynamics, I, p. 75, n. 10.

<sup>24</sup>Philosophical idealism relates to the "ideational" mentality, in Sorokin's unhappy choice of labels, not to his "idealistic." Critics faulted him for this.

life."<sup>25</sup> "But what," he asks,

what is to be built on the ruins? Two alternatives can be seen emerging--an idealistic theory and a theory which would group a number of analytical sciences under a voluntaristic concept of action.<sup>26</sup>

Overtly this passage simple marks the transition from Parsons' discussion of Durkheim and Pareto to his subsequent discussion of idealism, and Weber. However, I believe it had additional clear meanings for Parsons, Merton, Barber and others who participated in the "informal discussion group" in Parsons' study during the mid-thirties.<sup>27</sup> It meant that sociology must choose between Sorokin and Parsons, and even foreshadowed the "Social Relations experiment,"<sup>28</sup> by promising to "group" various sciences under one "concept."

Parsons' polemic against Sorokin resumes with his treatment of German idealism and Max Weber. For the most part it continues "underground." For example, several paragraphs of Parsons' introduction<sup>29</sup> characterize German idealism in terms which might appear to have been selected from the first volume of Dynamics. The selection is astute because they effectively characterize idealism and evoke Dynamics. Words and phrases--even quotations from a German author whom

---

<sup>25</sup>Structure, pp. 469-70.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 470.

<sup>27</sup>Parsons, "On Building . . ." Daedalus, vol. 99, p. 833.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Structure, pp. 482-83.

Sorokin also quotes--are presented in a context quite different from that in which Sorokin himself presents them. Once again, this tactic serves the twofold polemical purpose noted above: on the one hand Sorokin is damned by association with an outmoded social philosophy; on the other, by innuendo, he is made out to have said nothing new. In Parsons' "Note on the Role of Ideas," he once again makes an unexplained sally to the effect that one of his arguments is ". . . quite sufficient to disprove a naïve 'emanationist' view. . . ." <sup>30</sup> As these chapters unfold, however, he becomes increasingly explicit. At one point he vehemently takes issue with Sorokin's evaluation of Weber and asserts that ". . . such an interpretation is directly opposed to Weber's whole fundamental position in sociology, which as will be seen is a voluntaristic theory of action and not an idealistic theory of emanation." <sup>31</sup> Later, in the course of interpreting Weber's "usage" (Brauch) category as "matters of taste," Parsons makes his single overt allusion to Dynamics. <sup>32</sup> He relates Weber's "usage" to Sorokin's "logico-meaningful integration" and alludes to ". . . the grain of truth in the intuitionist-emanationist social theories." <sup>33</sup>

There is something distinctly unpleasant about these and similar

---

<sup>30</sup>Structure, pp. 482-83.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 576; Parsons reference is to Contemporary Sociological Theories, pp. 678, 680 and 682.

<sup>32</sup>Structure, p. 680.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 681.

polemical asides that sprinkle the pages of Structure. They refer not so much to Sorokin's thought as to a caricature of it. They thus resemble the sort of backbiting which alludes to someone's infamous reputation, in full awareness that the reputation itself is the product of backbiting. It is quite possible that Sorokin himself did not realize at the time that he was the butt of this polemic.<sup>34</sup> In the course of Structure Parsons observed that ". . . to the great majority of sociologists Durkheim is still regarded as the leading holder of the 'unsound' 'group mind' theory. It would be difficult to discover a more striking example of the way in which preconceived conceptual schemes can prevent the dissemination of important ideas."<sup>35</sup> There is bitter irony in this passage.<sup>36</sup> For Structure itself, subtly but systematically, purveyed the notion that Sorokin was the holder of the "unsound" "emanationist" theory, and Parsons' own conceptual scheme became instrumental in preventing the dissemination of Sorokin's ideas.

Other equally polemical though somewhat less insidious aspects of Structure deserve to be noted. Sorokin's Dynamics had emphasized the word "culture." In his view, the empirical objects of social scientific research were "sociocultural phenomena," all the observable, tangible,

---

<sup>34</sup>At least I find no explicit rejection of these epithets "idealistic" and "emanationist" until 1963 [see Pitirim A. Sorokin "Reply to My Critics" in Allen, ed., Pitirim A. Sorokin in Review, pp. 479-82].

<sup>35</sup>Structure, pp. 462-63.

<sup>36</sup>Dare one suggest, perhaps even conscious irony? Is it possible that Parsons' awareness of the misrepresentation of Durkheim even inspired his own distortion of Sorokin?

describable, classifiable social and cultural products of human thought and action. And he sought to make scientific sense of these diverse empirical phenomena by classifying them according to categories he called "culture mentalities." Toward the end of Structure Parsons fulfills his promise to "group" various sciences under his "concept." He asserts that ". . . It is possible to see emerging out of this study as a whole a division into three great classes of theoretical systems. They may be spoken of as the systems of nature, action and culture."<sup>37</sup> The sciences of "action" are economics, political science, sociology, psychology, "technologies" ("concerned with unit act and concrete end") and history.<sup>38</sup> Cultural facts relate to action sciences much as the physical facts of nature do: "They constitute unproblematic data, knowledge of which is essential to the solution of concrete problems."<sup>39</sup> "Culture," a concept which figured prominently in Sorokin's study is thus made to appear entirely peripheral to social science (or to the "sciences of action" as Parsons chose to rename them). The polemical message is clear: "action" and Parsons are social science, "culture" and Sorokin are not.

In concluding his study, Parsons once more observes that,

On an idealistic basis . . . the facts of value integration were clearly seen, but the inherent tendency was to assimilate

---

<sup>37</sup>Structure, p. 762.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 768-71.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 764.

them to culture systems . . . and thus to end up in some kind of emanationist theory.<sup>40</sup>

He then adds "one final word" regarding "a strong current of pessimism" which occurs especially in the thought of "those who call themselves sociologists." This "encourages irrationalism which lets go of scientific standards altogether." Parsons is here speaking of the view "that there are as many systems of sociological theory as there are sociologists, that there is no common basis, that all is arbitrary and subjective."<sup>41</sup> However,

. . . if the interpretation of the nature of scientific development here formulated be accepted . . . another conclusion follows. What has been traced is not merely a movement of thought of major proportions; it is scientific progress; indeed, notable scientific progress.<sup>42</sup>

Structure is thus easily read on four different levels: the historical, the historicist, the theoretical and the polemical. Moreover, since the polemic adds nothing to Parsons' overt arguments, and since the overt arguments conveniently reinforce the polemic, it is reasonable to suggest that Parsons' theoretical motives for publishing Structure were in fact subsidiary to some personal motive.

Is it possible that Structure in its entirety was basically an astute professional manoeuvre, and only incidentally a treatise on

---

<sup>40</sup>Structure, p. 774.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 775.

sociological theory? If so, then Parsons' subtle polemic might simply have been part of a larger plan to discredit Sorokin and to succeed him as Department head. Whether planned or not, both these things transpired. Parsons also had other, personal advantages. He was a young man and a native son, whereas Sorokin was older and East European. Socially, Parsons had become the centre of a fraternity that met regularly in his study, and which involved some of the Department's brightest graduate students and junior faculty members. Academically, he was regarded as a leading authority on Weber and--with the publication of Structure--on Pareto and Durkheim as well. It was also in this context that Parsons outlined his plan to create an umbrella Department of Social Relations, thus holding aloft the intriguing prospect of unity among the social sciences. The readiness with which his admirers accepted his notions of science, his disdain for Sorokin, and his views on sociology doubtless had much to do with their desire to regard sociology as scientific. Parsons' ultimatum--to the effect that sociology had to choose between ". . . an idealistic theory and a theory which would group a number of analytical sciences under the voluntaristic concept of action"<sup>43</sup>--was thus astutely calculated to respond both to the desire for a scientific sociology, and the desire for unity in social science.

It was not until 1942 that Sorokin finally managed to divest himself of the chairmanship of a department that had long since

---

<sup>43</sup>Structure, p. 470.

transferred its primary allegiance to Parsons.<sup>44</sup> Parsons at last claimed the power he regarded as rightfully his, and wasted little time in fulfilling his plans for a Department of Social Relations.

Martindale asserts that "Parsons was an in-fighter: in his department and in his university, in the official society, in the cliques of contemporary sociology. One of his long-time associates has described him as 'the most masterful politician of contemporary sociology.'"<sup>45</sup>

If, as I suspect, Parsons' ideas ultimately prove to have been useless, and possibly even a hindrance, to the establishment of a scientific sociology, there is still no reason to suspect that he and those who followed him were not sincere in placing a high value on those ideas.

The important point is that Parsons actively operated on both fronts, on the one hand astutely elaborating and adjusting his theories, on the other skilfully manipulating and manoeuvring to help those who accepted his authority and to undermine those whom he considered adversaries.<sup>46</sup>

During the 1930s Sorokin held the unenviable distinction of becoming Parsons' main adversary.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup>Sorokin, Long Journey, p. 251.

<sup>45</sup>Martindale, Prominent Sociologists, p. 68.

<sup>46</sup>In practice the two are not necessarily separate. Devious intent may even account for the apparent complexity of Parsons' theoretical writing.

<sup>47</sup>In North America sociological circles one frequently encounters a blanket refusal to take seriously any of Sorokin's work. To what extent this grew in reaction to Sorokin's own posturing, and to what extent it stems from Parsons' antipathy and influence would be hard to assess, but such outright rejection of Sorokin does not seem common elsewhere.

---

Raymond Boudon provides an interesting example of one European who has recently made a favourable evaluation of "early" Sorokin, and of the revision which such an evaluation can undergo when it crosses the Atlantic. Boudon himself has made some interesting observations and suggestions within the context of the positivist search for a scientific sociology [Raymond Boudon, La crise de la sociologie (Paris/Geneva: Droz, 1971)], and been instrumental in introducing and sympathetically explaining the thought of Americans, including Merton, Parsons, and especially Lazarsfeld, to French-speaking sociologists. He has also taken, as one particular area of research, the field of social mobility, which coincides with one of Sorokin's main interests during the 1920s. Although Boudon expresses appreciation for certain aspects of functionalism and formalism [*ibid.*, pp. 205-14, 225-46], and takes exception to Sorokin's dissimilar views [*ibid.*, pp. 225 and 285], he nonetheless asserts that "even though theories [in a strictly positivist sense] are not frequent in sociology, a certain number can nevertheless be cited. For example one finds several theories of this sort in Sorokin's Social Mobility . . ." [*ibid.*, p. 16]; for similar appreciations see also pp. 16, 17, 65, 307 and 310]. In other passages Boudon links the names of Sorokin and Durkheim, Social Mobility and Suicide, as examples of authors and works which demonstrate that sociology can be truly scientific [*ibid.*, pp. 65, 70 and 73]. He even refers to the "great theoretical questions, already posed by Plato, to which Sorokin tried to apply scientific method [un traitement scientifique], but which the "empirical" sociology of recent years has forgotten . . ." [*ibid.*, p. 310].

Boudon's favourable estimate of Sorokin seems to have arisen in connection with his own interest in social mobility. In the twelve-page introduction to Boudon's work on this subject [Raymond Boudon, L'inégalité des chances: la mobilité dans les sociétés industrielles (Paris: Armand Colin, 1973)], three pages are devoted to a consideration of Sorokin's ideas ["Un prototype de théorie systemique: La théorie de la mobilité sociale de Sorokin," *ibid.*, pp. 15-18]; moreover the index to that work contains thirteen references under "Sorokin," all but three of which indicate passages of text dealing explicitly with Sorokin's ideas, some in considerable detail. However, when an English-language version of the same study appeared the following year [Raymond Boudon, Education, Opportunity, and Social Inequality: Changing Prospects in Western Society (New York/Toronto: John Wiley, 1974)], the text had been ". . . revised and reorganized by the author [*ibid.*, p. iv]. Boudon's introduction, which had devoted more space to Sorokin than to any other individual, was conspicuous by its absence; moreover, the thirteen index references in the original had been replaced by two, neither of which refers to more than the mere mention of Sorokin's name.

## CHAPTER VII

## SOROKIN: THEORETICAL WRITINGS

The theoretical writings which Pitirim Sorokin regarded as an integral part of his system occur, for the most part, in the fourth volume of Social and Cultural Dynamics (1941) and in Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time (1943). These writings relate for the most part to the theoretical preliminaries with which Sorokin introduced the first volume of Dynamics. Compared with those preliminaries, however, Sorokin's theoretical volumes seem rather rambling and weak. It will nevertheless be worthwhile to examine them briefly, in order to draw attention to some salient differences in the content and presentation of these volumes compared with his 1937 ideas, and also to discuss Sorokin's handling of one significant question which does emerge from his substantive inquiry.

Before entering upon a discussion of Sorokin's ideas, however, some attempt should be made to describe these two publications in general terms, because they differ markedly from the 1937 volumes. Their predominantly abstract and discursive character probably accounts for much of this difference: only one of seventeen chapters in Volume IV presents new statistical data of any sort, and Causality contains none at all. Repetitiveness is another general feature, and it is not simply repetition resulting from accumulated argument and research data, such as we encounter in the first three volumes. Little in either new volume

has not already been stated or implied in Volumes I-III; Volume IV and Causality are also both repetitive internally, and much of Causality is explicitly a recapitulation of the fourth volume of Dynamics.

Another general difference concerns Sorokin's polemics. Fully a third of Volume IV and a good half of Causality are devoted to summarizing countless "inadequate" theories, systems and methodologies. These are coupled with diatribes that aim to demonstrate the weakness of others' theories and to convince readers that only Sorokin's own "logico-meaningful method," social-change theory and "integralist system of sociology" are satisfactory. The style is familiar from Contemporary Sociological Theories, but there Sorokin seemed to be searching for what was promising or valuable in the ideas of others. Criticism and demolition of various theories were blatant features of that 1928 work, but there they appeared to serve the constructive purpose of purging an infant sociology of its amateurish and speculative past. The style is also familiar from the 1937 volumes where criticism played a role in clearing the way for Sorokin's own findings. What is remarkable about such passages in the later volumes is not their style, which is pure Sorokin, but their insistent, strident, repetitive nature. Sorokin is no longer quietly discounting a large number of speculative theories or even confidently establishing his own. Even when he attacks, he is clearly on the defensive. He is desperately striving to discover some additional argument that will enable others to perceive the value and validity of what he has already said with ample clarity.

When we turn to a consideration of Sorokin's ideas, one specific

but pervasive difference is noteworthy: this concerns the status he claims for his methodology. In discussing Sorokin's preliminaries<sup>1</sup> I dealt primarily with his sketch of a methodology and with his three main categories of culture mentality. In Sorokin's presentation those merge into one: "logico-meaningful integration" implies logico-meaningful interpretation which in turn implies a search for major premises of culture and leads to the discovery of various "culture mentalities," and three of these provide the main categories in terms of which he conducts his substantive inquiry. According to Sorokin this amounted to a "logico-meaningful method" of conducting sociological investigations, one he regarded as "heuristic" for his inquiry.<sup>2</sup> However, when he resumes this topic in Volume IV, the "logico-meaningful method" is no longer claimed to be merely heuristic for one study of sociocultural change; Sorokin now regards it as of "paramount importance" for social science:

Throughout the whole work the paramount importance of the logico-meaningful method, and of the meaningful aspect of sociocultural phenomena, is shown again and again. It is hoped that no intelligent scholar will fail, after reading this volume, to see the real nature of this method and its paramount importance for the social sciences.<sup>3</sup>

Sorokin thus also links recognition of his "method" to the more acceptable demand that social science have more regard for the

---

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter IV above.

<sup>2</sup>Dynamics, I, pp. 151 and 505.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. vii.

meaningful aspect of phenomena.

Despite this inflated claim, however, Sorokin has ceased to regard "logico-meaningful" integration as something separate from "causal-functional" integration. There are, he argues, purely causal systems, such as those we encounter in the natural sciences. There are likewise pure systems of meaning, such as those we encounter in philosophy. Neither of those, however, occurs independently in the sociocultural universe. Institutions, patterns of human interaction, configurations of culture which are integrated meaningfully are also integrated causally, and vice versa. "As soon as [any abstract] system of meanings is 'objectified' and 'socialized' or grounded in empirical sociocultural reality, it turns into a causal system as well."<sup>4</sup> If we want to discover causal connections of an empirical sociocultural system, we must consult the system of meanings which it objectifies. This collapse of two separate methodologies into one is confirmed throughout his theoretical volumes where he repeatedly describes sociocultural systems as "meaningful plus causal" or "meaningful-causal." Yet this corresponds with what he called "causal-functional" in the first volume of Dynamics--with the additional assumption that the clue of meanings has been used to discover the limits of systems that can be legitimately construed in causal-functional terms. Therefore, in spite of the fact that Sorokin elevates his "logico-meaningful method" from "heuristic" status, in Volume I, to a method of "paramount importance

---

<sup>4</sup>Dynamics, IV, p. 34.

for the social sciences," in Volume IV, he seems to have reduced its role to one of helping social scientists to identify legitimate causal (or causal-functional) relationships.

Sorokin also analyses sociocultural phenomena into three basic "elements" or "components."<sup>5</sup> All sociocultural phenomena involve what Sorokin calls meanings, vehicles, and agents:

Any empirical sociocultural phenomenon consists of three components: (1) immaterial, spaceless, and timeless meanings; (2) material (physicochemical and biological) vehicles that "materialize, externalize, or objectify" the meanings; and (3) human agents that bear, use, and operate the meanings with the help of the material vehicles.<sup>6</sup>

These elements are always involved, but stand in no fixed relationship with one another. (Discussions in recent years tend to speak of "medium" and "message" where Sorokin used "vehicle" and "meaning"). Different vehicles can be used to express the same meaning, and the same vehicle can convey a variety of meanings. In the process, each affects the other. Similarly, meanings transform people (agents), and people transform the systems of meaning they adopt.<sup>7</sup> This kind of reasoning makes sense, and doubtless reflects the complex interplay of forces that do continually operate in the empirical sociocultural universe. With these arguments, however, Sorokin has entered the world of

---

<sup>5</sup>Causality, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

inconsequential sociological generalizations inhabited by Parsons.<sup>8</sup>

Sorokin's real argument is the ever-recurring one, that meanings must be considered in sociological studies. The methodological question regarding how this can be done does not receive further answers here.

The reason why Sorokin attaches such importance to meanings is simply that he sees them as providing answers to a problem he views as fundamental to social scientific research. He argues that we encounter a methodological dilemma if we set out to examine sociocultural phenomena without first distinguishing between "systems" and "congeries." Without such a distinction we must arbitrarily choose to treat all the social forms and cultural productions of an area as systematically related, or else we must regard all sociocultural phenomena as coexisting accidentally, and thus construable only by statistical methods. In other words, if we do not distinguish systems from congeries, we tend to treat all as systems or all as congeries. If we are able to make this distinction accurately--as he claims we can do through the clue of meanings--we are then in a position to choose whichever approach is really suited to the objects of our inquiry.

Apart from these methodological concerns, Sorokin also repeats and develops other ideas originally set forth as part of his theoretical preliminaries, ideas which have not been explicitly dealt with in this study, although I alluded to some of these in the course of describing

---

<sup>8</sup>In this case we should accord as much importance to Sorokin's analysis as we might to an earth scientist who would observe that winds, oceans and continents all affect one another.

his substantive inquiry. These consist primarily of abstract dissertations on the possible configurations of sociocultural change. In the context of this discussion Sorokin concluded that sociocultural process is not linear or cyclical, but "variable-recurrent." It is cyclical to the extent that some elements do repeat themselves and linear inasmuch as portions of a given process may endure for long periods.<sup>9</sup> It "stresses the existence of limits" inherent in any such process, and it implies a principle of "immanent causation" or self-regulation.<sup>10</sup> ". . . Any given direction of a process produces its own end and replacement by a different direction."<sup>11</sup> Sorokin displayed these thoughts in the garb of hypotheses whose accuracy was to be demonstrated by the substantive inquiry. In Sorokin's view the first three volumes supplied the facts ". . . the groundwork of the theory of sociocultural change and part of its frame. . . ."<sup>12</sup> The main task of the fourth volume was therefore to provide a statement of ". . . a systematic theory of sociocultural change. . . ."<sup>13</sup> The bulk of this new volume thus consists of an expansion and elaboration of the very analysis of process that has received only marginal attention in the

---

<sup>9</sup>Dynamics, I, p. 187.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 187 and 188; emphasis omitted.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>12</sup>Dynamics, IV, p. vi.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

course of the present study. To some extent it furthers our understanding of what Sorokin regarded as sociological theory, but it relates only peripherally to the central interest of this study-- Sorokin's place in the history of attempts to found a scientific sociology. Therefore, despite the preponderance of this subject in the fourth volume of Dynamics, for present purposes it warrants cursory description only.

In the fourth volume of Dynamics, Sorokin is, above all, concerned with sociocultural systems. The methodological ideas, outlined earlier in this chapter, are part of his argument to demonstrate the existence of meaningful-causal systems as major constituents of sociocultural reality. His analysis of meanings, vehicles and agents is a continuation of that reasoning, and the beginning of his lengthy treatise on the "properties" of sociocultural systems.<sup>14</sup> He argues that changes in one part of a system affect the entire system, but certain changes are more vital than others. ". . . Any empirical sociocultural system is a self-changing and self-directing unity that bears in itself the reason for its change, the nature of its functions, the phases of its unfolding, and the essentials of its destiny. As such it has always a margin of autonomy from all the forces external to it."<sup>15</sup> It is also selective, taking in what seems congenial and consistent with it, and rejecting what seems incongruent

---

<sup>14</sup>Dynamics, IV, pp. 45-95, summarized in point form in Causality, pp. 25-27.

<sup>15</sup>Dynamics, IV, p. 73.

or inconsistent. Systems emerge, grow, decline and disappear, their life-spans varying greatly. Some are passing fads while others are enduring mathematical, scientific, philosophical and religious systems.

Total culture is a multitude of congeries, systems and super-systems. They are, however, manageable because for the most part they stand in hierarchical relations with one another.<sup>16</sup> The basic cultural (not social) systems are the systems of language, science, religion, fine arts and ethics. Economic, political and philosophical systems are said to be "mixed" or derivative products of these five. The individuality of families, states, political parties, businesses and other social systems is likewise said to result from the various combinations of these five they incorporate. However, cutting across these, are the vast supersystems of sensate, idealistic and ideational culture mentality. These supersystems unite the primary and derivative systems of culture and characteristic social systems into even greater entities which embrace most of the systems in the sociocultural universe. Individual systems and vast supersystems all change "in togetherness" as demonstrated in the first three volumes of Dynamics.

Sorokin then undertakes a lengthy exploration into how cultural change occurs. He argues that "no culture of a given area or society is

---

<sup>16</sup>By this I refer to Sorokin's idea that systems are subordinated one to another [Dynamics, IV, p. 107 et seq.]; he gives examples, such as the fact that arithmetic, algebra, geometry and calculus form subsystems of mathematics [ibid.], but does not try to develop this.

in its totality integrated into one . . . system";<sup>17</sup> that "change proceeds differently in sociocultural systems and congeries; and that in systems all compartments change together in any important movement."<sup>18</sup> This togetherness is less than uniformity, and there is no validity in theories which postulate uniform periodicity, lead, or lag in cultural change. There is a tendency for meanings to change first, but no more than a tendency. The rhythms and tempos of change are shorter and faster in subsystems than they are in supersystems, and change is slower in the ideational supersystem than in the sensate. Sociocultural systems change in consequence of external and internal factors, but the more integrated the system, the less vulnerable it is to external (social, biological and cosmic) influences, and the more important become the inherent forces of immanent change. Since it is precisely these highly integrated systems which tend to persist the longest and to exert the greatest influence upon mankind, immanent processes of change have far greater significance for the study of sociocultural systems.<sup>19</sup> A "principle of limits" operates in all immanent processes of change, dictating the bounds beyond which change cannot proceed without contributing to the breakdown of the system. Processes of change in well integrated systems therefore tend either to reverse themselves or to weaken the system. Sociocultural processes are consequently never

---

<sup>17</sup>Dynamics, IV, p. 195.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 613.

linear, cyclical, circular or ever-new. Thus ". . . we come to the conclusions already given in the first volume of Dynamics: that the most general pattern of . . . sociocultural change is that of incessantly varying recurrent processes."<sup>20</sup>

Despite the brevity of the foregoing résumé, it adequately reflects the main thrust of Sorokin's fourth volume. In page after page Sorokin rehearses his first-volume preliminaries, repeatedly takes to task the authors of various "atomistic," "dichotomic," and other "totalitarian integrationist" schemes (principally because they failed to distinguish between systems and congeries), and leads the reader from generalization to generalization and ultimately back to the assertions and "proofs" of the first three volumes.

In so doing Sorokin seems to be trying to conform to the hypothetico-deductive model of scientific procedure. Viewed in this light, his preliminaries state the hypotheses, his substantive inquiry demonstrates their validity, and his fourth volume formally presents his substantiated theories together with a statement of their implications for our understanding of the phenomenal world which it purports to explain.

On a superficial level Sorokin has conformed to this model, up to the point where he attempts to demonstrate the implications of his theories. Here, however, in the absence of any agreed-upon body of fundamentals constituting sociological knowledge and requiring revision

---

<sup>20</sup>Dynamics, IV, p. 731, referring to ibid., I, pp. 181 ff.

in the light of newly substantiated theories, Sorokin proceeds to demonstrate the implications his ideas have for every other theory. This he does in a cavalier manner that must certainly have alienated a good many sociologists whose pet theories and favourite theorists he categorically condemns.<sup>21</sup> What is worth noting, however, is that most of Sorokin's polemics and categorical assertions about others' theories stem from one rather slender methodological insight to which he attached undue importance: his contention that sociological phenomena do not consist entirely of systems or entirely of congeries, and his belief that his "method" permitted these distinctions to be readily made. The failing of others was to ignore this insight, as well as the meaningful aspect of sociocultural phenomena.

If the empirical sociocultural universe does consist of a mixture of accidental conglomerations and systematically interrelated phenomena, then Sorokin is undoubtedly right in suggesting that it is nonsense to treat all as systems or all as congeries. Moreover, we need no lengthy demonstrations to convince us that activities and events which share some historical configuration of meanings are indeed interrelated. Yet Sorokin's theoretical writings are devoted almost entirely to illustrating these two points.

Only towards the end of Dynamics (IV) does Sorokin turn his

---

<sup>21</sup>One of those attacked, R. R. MacIver, whose name Sorokin also consistently misspells throughout Volume IV, was chosen to review that volume for the American Sociological Review [A.S.R., VI, pp. 904-7]. Quite understandably, he showed no sympathy whatever for Sorokin.

attention to an important question which does arise out of his substantive inquiry. That inquiry demonstrates the alternating predominance of what he called ideational, idealistic and sensate outlooks over the course of Graeco-Roman and Western European history. (In the abstract language of the fourth volume this becomes the "super-rhythm of the supersystems"). Given this fact, it seems reasonable to ask why those outlooks come and go, win and lose adherents, displace one another in the course of ages. Moreover, given Sorokin's theoretical position, which asserts that change in sociocultural systems is very largely "immanent," and that there are therefore inherent limitations to the possibility of change in any system, it is understandable that he seeks his explanation in factors internal to the "vast supersystems" whose observed fluctuations he wishes to explain. He therefore turns back to the various notions of truth typical of these three outlooks (ideational truth of faith, idealistic truth of reason, and sensate truth of the senses). He reasons that all three notions of truth must be to some extent "inadequate": each must be at least partly true or it could not successfully guide the lives and command the respect of large numbers of adherents over vast periods of time; "still less could each of these systems re-emerge and become dominant again and again."<sup>22</sup> Each must also be at least partly false, for if any were entirely true it could "be expected to live forever, without any rhythm of rise and decline of Ideational-Idealistic-Sensate forms."<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup>Dynamics, IV, p. 745.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 741.

Each of these three main systems of truth and reality contains, according to Sorokin, vital truths, and thus gives "to its human bearers the possibility of adapting to their milieu--cosmic, organic, and social; gives them a minimum of real experience to meet their needs; and serves as a foundation for their social life and culture." Simultaneously, however, each also leads them ". . . away from reality, gives them pseudo-knowledge . . . and hinders their adaptation and the satisfaction of . . . [other] needs."<sup>24</sup>

When such a system of truth and reality ascends, grows, and becomes monopolistically dominant, its false part tends to grow while its valid part tends to decrease. [. . .] The net result . . . is that as the domination of the system increases, it becomes more and more inadequate. [. . .] The moment comes when the false part of the system begins to outweigh its valid part. [. . .] In this way the dominant system prepares its own downfall and paves the way for the ascendance and domination of one of the rival systems of truth and reality. . . .<sup>25</sup>

The important point to note about this particular line of reasoning is that it does involve empirically based problems that arise from Sorokin's substantive inquiry. For this reason it differs markedly from Sorokin's other theoretical writings.

It also raises some very real theoretical problems common to general sociologies and sociologies of knowledge, and it does so with particular clarity.<sup>26</sup> Neither Sorokin nor Jacques Maquet<sup>27</sup> explicitly

---

<sup>24</sup>Dynamics, IV, pp. 742-43.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 743.

<sup>26</sup>Discussed infra, p. 162-168.

confronts these problems. That Sorokin was vaguely aware of them is suggested by the fact that he hit upon a line of thought that managed completely to evade them. From his postulate that all three "systems of truth" are partly true and partly false, Sorokin leapt to the somewhat surprising conclusion that there must be a fourth "integral system of truth" which ". . . is nearer to the absolute truth than [is] any one-sided truth. . . ." <sup>28</sup> These assertions and their defence occur in the course of the same short chapter <sup>29</sup> of Dynamics in which Sorokin also explained the successive displacement of each dominant outlook by another. Yet very near the beginning of Causality Sorokin recapitulates much of his fourth volume under the heading of "Rules Governing . . . Integralist Analysis" and remarks that "the term integralist denotes the author's system of sociology." <sup>30</sup> Later in the same book, Sorokin tells us that ". . . the integralist sociology rests upon the integralist conception of sociocultural reality and the integralist system of truth as developed in Dynamics." <sup>31</sup> A few pages later this same concept is

---

<sup>27</sup>Who does a fine job of summarizing one aspect of Sorokin's thought [Jacques J. Maquet, The Sociology of Knowledge, Its Structure and Its Relation to the Philosophy of Knowledge: A Critical Analysis of the Systems of Karl Mannheim and Pitirim A. Sorokin, English translation by John F. Locke (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951)].

<sup>28</sup>Dynamics, IV, p. 763.

<sup>29</sup>The last but one. Sorokin's final chapter is given over to his ". . . last glance at the tragic scenery of the twilight of the Sensate phase of our culture" [ibid., p. 774].

<sup>30</sup>Causality, p. 79 and ibid., n. 44.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

extended to include the whole of Dynamics:

The preceding chapters [all of Causality], supplemented by the four volumes of Dynamics, give a sufficiently clear idea of what the integralist theory is and what it should be.<sup>32</sup>

The concept of "integralism," which, in its initial formulation, bore every mark of being a hastily contrived, last-minute attempt to evade certain epistemological problems, is thus extended to embrace all four volumes of Dynamics, and to constitute a "system of sociology" which "organically reconciles"<sup>33</sup> various aspects of the--by definition--irreconcilable sensate, idealistic and ideational "sociologies" of the past.

Consequently, Sorokin's prescription for doing "integralist" sociology is simply to distinguish congeries from systems; to decide whether phenomena are meanings, vehicles or agents, and whether they belong to the system of language, science, religion, ethics or fine arts; and to classify them as sensate, ideational or idealistic.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 236; see also ibid., p. 96: "The essential features of the integralist theory . . . are uniformly applied throughout my Dynamics."

<sup>33</sup>Causality, p. 234.

<sup>34</sup>This is the gist of Causality's positive assertions. The work actually says much more about what social science is not, and contains frequent lengthy digressions to prove the obvious. His first chapter stresses the inadequacy of natural scientific methods for dealing with meanings, and argues the need for a distinctive methodology. The second chapter recapitulates many of the generalizations of Volume IV, and arrives at the familiar conclusion that meanings provide the clue to causal connections. "Sociocultural Space" and "Sociocultural Time," the third and fourth chapters deal primarily with conceptions of space and time which Sorokin understands to operate in other sciences. The task

That, in essence is the "methodology" he propounds. According to this formula, the social scientist need only make a succession of classificatory decisions with respect to the phenomena he wishes to explore. The fruitfulness of such an apparently futile procedure is, Sorokin believed, amply demonstrated by his own substantive inquiry.<sup>35</sup>

---

of "locating" phenomena in sociocultural space consists, he believes, in deciding whether to class them as meanings, vehicles or agents, and whether they belong to one of the five cultural systems (language, science, religion, ethics, fine arts) or to a "derivative" system. ". . . Any attempt to solve the problem must take as its starting point the universe of the main systems of meanings and use them as the main co-ordinates" [*ibid.*, p. 156]. The crux of his treatment of time harks back to the differences between rates of change in societies dominated by sensate, idealistic or ideational culture: "The fundamental trait of sociocultural time is that it does not flow evenly. . . ." [*ibid.*, p. 172]. Social time has a peculiar three-plane structure" [*ibid.*], aeternitas, aevum and tempus, corresponding to the ideational, idealistic and sensate outlooks. "Quite unexpectedly," he finds, the ultimate coordinates of sociocultural space and sociocultural time turn out to be one and the same: ". . . the referential system is made up of one or of several of the vastest sociocultural systems and of the supersystems" [*ibid.*, p. 223].

<sup>35</sup>Causality, p. 237.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE SEARCH FOR A SCIENTIFIC SOCIOLOGY

Preceding chapters presented and discussed Sorokin's Social and Cultural Dynamics, with an emphasis on ideas and findings that pertain to his search for a scientific sociology; similar but much briefer treatment was accorded to the better known ideas of Durkheim, Pareto and Weber, as well as those set forth by Parsons in his Structure of Social Action. The present chapter discusses Sorokin's categories, substantive study, ideas of science and methodology in relation both to the ideas of the other four, and to the overall quest for a scientific knowledge of sociocultural phenomena.

The methodological ideas with which Sorokin begins Dynamics attempt to develop objective foundations for a sociology embracing the meaning element which both Sorokin and Weber found so important. Sorokin, however, was concerned with the meanings or basic premises underlying empirical sociocultural reality, not with the meanings or motives of the researcher or with those which the researcher might wilfully impute to the objects of his study. Weber's "ideal types" were the work of the social scientist. They might be cultural outlooks, personal viewpoints, or completely arbitrary constructs. Sorokin characterizes such constructs as ". . . stainless ideal virgins . . ." which ". . . remain in the realm of pure thought, without being married to any of the systems of culture that have had empirical being. We can

admire such ideal classifications, but we cannot use them fruitfully. . . ." <sup>1</sup> Weber's ideal types need not be internally logical, whereas, for Sorokin, logical coherence distinguishes meaningful configurations from simple congeries. The former are open to logico-meaningful analysis (discovery of basic premises); the latter to statistical correlation only. Weber's ideal types are conceived to cover both "correct" and "incorrect" thinking. For Sorokin "correctness" depends on the basic premises of a culture. For Weber, "objectivity" is a relative notion which hinges on the explicitness of the researcher's assumptions and criteria. For Sorokin a truly objective knowledge of meaning is possible because any trained mind can figure out the basic premises of a given configuration of culture, and can discover which (if any) coherent outlook prevails in a given society. It is thus reasonable to construe Sorokin's sensate, ideational and idealistic categories as Weberian ideal types inasmuch as they do represent different cultural outlooks, but identification stops with definition: the outlooks which Sorokin postulates are intended to be objective in a way that Weber considered impossible.

Sorokin's emphasis on "meaningful" aspects of sociocultural reality is understandable inasmuch as he seems to be attempting to convince positivistically oriented readers to accept categories which he construes in terms of meanings. This makes obvious the historical connections between his ideas and Weber's. Less obvious, but more

---

<sup>1</sup>Dynamics, I, p. 67.

pervasive is the relationship between the thought of Sorokin and Pareto.<sup>2</sup>

Sorokin's categories of culture mentality and Pareto's classes of residue serve rather similar purposes within their respective substantive studies. Moreover, there is something of a parallel between Sorokin's "sensate mentality" and Pareto's "instinct for combinations," between the former's "ideational mentality" and the latter's "persistence of aggregates";<sup>3</sup> and these are the principal dyads in terms of which they examine the patterns of the sociocultural past. With this similarity in mind, it therefore becomes important to consider some of the fundamental differences between their classifications.

Pareto's Classes are explicitly psychological classifications, and, as such, give rise to conceptual problems which typically undermine attempts to create an orderly system of social science. Many classifications used by social scientists and social philosophers

---

<sup>2</sup>Dynamics and Social Mobility strike me in part as attempts by Sorokin to redo or examine statistically what Pareto had dealt with discursively.

<sup>3</sup>Although Pareto's Classes are very different by definition the fluctuations of Class I and II residues are said to be the basis for "derivations" which produce ". . . what can crudely be expressed as periods of 'faith' alternating with periods of 'scepticism'" [Finer, Pareto, p. 62]. Moreover, individuals dominated by Class I residues will tend to view the ideas of those dominated by Class II residues as ". . . outworn prejudices, and will strive to destroy and then supplant them by what they think are scientifically grounded and logical theories and programs. They will see this as making 'faith and prejudice' give way to 'reason.' In societies dominated by these now triumphant pseudo-intellectual theories a counter trend will arise. . . . These pseudo-intellectual theories will begin to seem at odds with realities. [. . .] Thus anti-intellectualist or mystical theories or species of intuitionism arise, to displace the old positivistic or rational theories" [ibid., p. 63].

have been arbitrary in the sense that they can easily be replaced by other classifications of the same order. Innovative/traditionalist can be replaced by introvert/extrovert; brachycephalic/dolichocephalic by curly-haired/straight-haired; the ages of gods, heroes and men by those of theology, metaphysics and science; proletarian, bourgeois and aristocratic classes by rentiers and speculators; and so on. The possibilities are endless and the choice is contingent only on the preference of the classifier. Many such classifications entail additional problems: for example, whether subjective and objective classifications coincide, and, when they do, to what extent individuals so classified identify with whatever tendencies may be ascribed to a class. Generalizations erected on foundations such as these are usually rejected simply because other thinkers hold other viewpoints or because, as individuals, they do not identify themselves and those they know with any particular category or with all the qualities attributed to membership in it.

Sorokin's categories are interesting because they avoid these particular problems. Despite the fact that he calls them "culture mentalities" they are ontological rather than psychological entities. As such, they exhaust all possibilities, and constitute the only three empirically discoverable or intellectually conceivable consistent views of reality.<sup>4</sup> Each also logically entails discrete sets of values and

---

<sup>4</sup>Apart from nihilism and scepticism which respectively constitute denials of reality and of the possibility of knowing it.

goals. The social scientist who perceives no advantage in such a classificatory system still has every reason to choose another, but if he considers that ontological categories embracing all notions of reality, goals and values are significant to social science, he is constrained to use these three only--whatever he chooses to label them. Moreover, the very stability of Sorokin's categories, coupled with their inherent logicity, avoids the likelihood of differing objective and subjective evaluations becoming a problem.<sup>5</sup> Although these advantages are encountered in limited classificatory devices such as Ferdinand Toennies' Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, no previous attempt to classify all sociocultural phenomena displays the same degree of stability and inherent logicity that Sorokin's categories do.

The relationship between Durkheim's concept of "social milieu" and Sorokin's notion of "culture mentality" is also worth exploring. In his methodological preliminaries, Sorokin distinguishes two kinds of strictly sociological interpretation, corresponding to his two "higher" forms of integration. The first, the "causal-functional reading" describes the kind of reasoning employed in Durkheim's Suicide:

Many persons may not be aware . . . that there is a causal relationship between their activities and those of their contemporaries. . . . It is the privilege of the social scientist to discover and demonstrate [the existence of such relationships].<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>Except, perhaps, when the researcher decides that an individual is logically inconsistent--for example, expressing belief in the absolute primacy of spiritual reality, goals and values while manifestly concerning himself with exclusively material pursuits.

<sup>6</sup>Dynamics, I, p. 60.

The second is the "logical" reading which Sorokin supposes to be the basis of his "logico-meaningful" method. As we have seen, however, he did not continue to make this distinction: the two "higher" forms of integration and interpretation eventually merge into one "causal-meaningful" or "meaningful-causal" form.<sup>7</sup> In this connection Sorokin also explicitly credits Durkheim with having been the first to offer explanations of a strictly sociological nature:

Before Durkheim's research, many an important study ascribed the cause of suicide to climate, race, mental disease, poverty, poor health or other factors external to social life and social organization as such. Durkheim has shown, however, that all such studies . . . overlooked the principal factors of suicide immanent in a given type of social system, such as excessive psychosocial isolation, excessive submergence of the individual in the collectivity, or anomic disorganization of the system.<sup>8</sup>

Still later, Sorokin expands upon this theme,<sup>9</sup> and interprets Durkheim's findings exclusively in terms of suicide arising from a want of integration in society.<sup>10</sup> Now the important point is that Sorokin never

---

<sup>7</sup>Pitirim A. Sorokin, Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964 [Durham, N.C.: Duke University]), p. 13, 25 et passim.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 70-71.

<sup>9</sup>Pitirim A. Sorokin, Society, Culture, and Personality: Their Structure and Dynamics. A System of General Sociology (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1969/Harper & Brothers, 1947), pp. 8-13.

<sup>10</sup>Durkheim actually argues that suicides occur for four different sociological reasons: Lack of integration (egoistic), extreme integration (altruistic), lack of regulation (anomic), and excessive regulation (fatalistic) [Emile Durkheim, Suicide: A Study in Sociology, John A. Spaulding and George Simpson trans. (New York: Free Press, 1951), p. 776]. Sorokin is not alone in reducing these two scales to one, nor

drew attention to the fact that Durkheim understood society to be integrated with respect to the "social milieu" whereas he himself viewed integration in terms of what he designated "dominant culture mentality." Although these concepts are similar in some respects, it is important to note several differences.

One difference is that milieu by itself implies nothing about the characteristic beliefs, goals and values espoused by a society. "Dominant culture mentality" implies a threefold classification of milieux.

Another difference is that milieu, viewed as the sum of a society's general and constraining influences upon its members, implies a unitary conflux of such influences impinging upon all. "Dominant culture mentality" implies that a society is capable of being dominated by any one of three basically distinct, coherent outlooks, while simultaneously harbouring the others in subsidiary positions.

In order to account for the fact that milieux differ from one society to another and alter over time, Durkheim sketched his typology of "social species," classifying societies according to the degree of developmental complexity he supposed they had attained. In Sorokin's system, varying proportions of sensate, ideational and idealistic mentality can account for some differences between societies; the fact that these outlooks compete for dominance and succeed one another over

---

in ignoring altruistic and fatalistic forms in general discussion. [See for example, Barclay D. Johnson, "Durkheim's One Cause of Suicide," A.S.R., vol. 30, No. 6 (December 1965), pp. 875-86].

the course of centuries accounts for major changes in "dominant culture mentality."

A fourth difference arises in connection with Sorokin's tendency to view culture mentalities as configurations of meaning. He was therefore understandably disinclined to ascribe to them any specifically causative role such as Durkheim attributed to the social milieu. Although this difference would seem to dissolve in the face of Sorokin's later decision to merge the two "higher" forms of sociocultural integration (and corresponding modes of sociological explanation) into a single "meaningful-causal" form, Sorokin did not in that context re-examine his concept of "culture mentality."

Sorokin's use of these "culture mentalities" to classify data in the course of his substantive inquiry is not without difficulty for him and his readers. For Sorokin the main difficulties seem to have been to adhere to these classifications, to adapt other (traditional) classifications to these, and to find suitable corresponding categories to embrace purely social (as opposed to cultural) organization. For the reader the main difficulty concerns the somewhat tautological nature of arguments arising from the classificatory process, and the resulting repetitiveness of the work as a whole.

Repetitiveness is a feature of Sorokin's inquiry, not in terms of substance, but in terms of his general arguments. With the exception of a few areas where he discovers slight non-conformity, and with the exception of his studies on crime, war and revolution, where he found no basic correspondence or correlation with dominant mentality, the

the conclusions of each study reinforce those of preceding ones. The effect of repetition, reinforcement and the accumulation of arguments is undoubtedly the single most compelling feature of his inquiry.

Validity, however, cannot be supposed to rest on forceful argumentation alone. After all, comparably forceful argument and compelling repetition also characterize the systems of others including Comte, Spencer, Marx, Pareto and Toynbee.

Sorokin's main claim to greater validity for his system of viewing the past lies in his use of quantitative data to arrive at his conclusions. However, the quantitative demonstration which he promised in his preface to Volume I characterizes, at best, only half of his studies. This is a far cry from the entirely descriptive approaches used by Sorokin's predecessors and contemporaries in the field, and historically it marks a breakthrough in interpretations of mankind's sociocultural past. Ideally, of course (in order for Sorokin to have stringently proved his point) all compartments of culture should have been quantitatively assessed to determine what proportions of cultural productions in any period fall into one or another of his three categories. Ideally, also, none of his attempts to quantify should be open to serious criticism. Sorokin falls well short of both ideals. Many of his chapters are purely descriptive and several of his quantitative treatments are based on scant documentation or on highly subjective interpretation. Yet even supposing only his well substantiated figures for fluctuations in painting and sculpture, in systems of truth and knowledge, in discoveries and inventions and in seven of his

sets of philosophical and sociological "first principles"--supposing only this one-third of Sorokin's study to be substantiated, would this alone not serve to confirm the trends which his study purports to discover? I see no reason to doubt that Sorokin in fact does present a strong case for his basic interpretation of the past and that he has given adequate quantitative demonstration that the major assumptions of positivist historicism are valid only for the period since the sixteenth century. The contention was not new. It was very similar to Pareto's. However the quantitative method of substantiating that contention was first used by Sorokin in Dynamics.

Closely related to the overall pattern which emerges from Sorokin's study is his interpretation of these same facts and figures for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For that period many of Sorokin's compartments of culture reflect a "revolt," a reversal of the upward sensate trend which had prevailed since the sixteenth century. Support for that interpretation was less than for trends in earlier centuries. For example, Sorokin's index for ontological materialism continues to rise unabated. Other compartments such as scientific discovery and technological inventions continue to mount at reduced rates. Compartments which most clearly show some kind of reversal include art, systems of truth and knowledge, and systems of social relationships. On the basis of data for these, two interpretations were possible. A very unspectacular interpretation would have been to view these divergent patterns simply as a recurrence of the "minor fluctuations" which were evident in all compartments of culture

throughout the centuries covered by his study. Sorokin, however, chose to draw what was perhaps an equally reasonable, but far more spectacular conclusion: the glorious sensate day was coming to an end; the western world was entering another era of social confusion and changing values; sensate culture and mentality would gradually cede dominance to ideational, or possibly--hopefully--idealistic, ways of life and thought.

Sorokin's general interpretation of historical trends was simply a corrective to erroneous but popular positivistic assumptions regarding the past. It might also have served as something of a reminder to positivists and other proponents of materialism that their basic assumptions about life and knowledge had twice formerly prevailed during the history of Greece, Rome and the West, and that it had been superseded: with the obvious implication that the same kind of thing might happen again. Sorokin's special interpretation of recent trends, however, amounted to a declaration that positive science and all associated doctrines of progress had, once again, run their course. It was on this theme that Sorokin chose to write his "Postscript" to Volume III.

There was certainly something ironical about Sorokin's use of positivistic methods to refute positivist historicism, but this also had something to do with the changing meaning of positivism during the interwar period. The inductivist and empiricist stance which had been adopted by nineteenth-century positivists was retained, but the historicist and evolutionist emphases were being gradually abandoned. Moreover, the sociological use of surveys, census data and quantitative

techniques (pioneered in the previous century by Adolphe Quételet and Frédéric Le Play but ignored and even repudiated by most positivists) had come to be regarded as indispensable tools of positive science. It was these tools which Sorokin employed in an effort to discredit the basic historicist assumption. Sorokin himself had been an outspoken proponent of the new trend, arguing that empirical correlational studies are ". . . highly valuable because of their factual quantitative, and experimental character," and that

The data of these researches accumulating, they more and more compose the foundation of a real inductive sociology. For the last few decades the progress of sociology has been due principally to this type of study.<sup>11</sup>

However, whereas others were by and large content merely to de-emphasize the historicist assumptions, Sorokin, like Pareto before him, attempted to refute them. Sorokin, however, distinguished himself by making considerable use of quantitative techniques, and by employing researchers who were purposely kept unaware of the ends for which their data-gathering was intended.

There is no doubt that historicist assumptions persisted (as they still persist) in positivist circles: Sorokin's "disproof" might therefore seem warrantable, but this is, in fact, doubtful. The new positivism found its most outspoken and "radical" interpreters in the "Vienna Circle" of logical (also logistic or neo-) positivists; the

---

<sup>11</sup>Pitirim A. Sorokin, Contemporary Sociological Theories Through the First Quarter of the Twentieth Century (New York: Harper and Row, 1964 [1928]), p. 712.

early writings of Otto Neurath, the most prominent sociologist in that group, clearly demonstrate the persistence of the historicist assumption that science progressively displaces religion. In a single article, for example, he refers to "residues of theology," to those "dualistic habits of mind originating in theology," and to "the great expenditure on logical deductions that was, so to speak, squandered on a worthless object [ethics] even though, historically, it prepared the way for the coming logicizing period of science."<sup>12</sup> One basic Comtean assumption was obviously alive and well during the 1930s. However, whether this assumption should be considered true or false, and whether Sorokin may be said to have proved or disproved it depends entirely on what Neurath and others have understood by it. For Sorokin's statistics clearly support what no modern positivist or other representative of the "sensate" outlook would be inclined to deny: that that outlook has in fact increasingly predominated during recent centuries. In a limited sense, therefore, Sorokin simply proved the positive historicist assumption. Dynamics constituted a disproof only in the broader context which considers Graeco-Roman culture, and which demonstrates, among other things, the displacement of sensate Roman civilization by ideational Christian civilization--a fact so well known that one cannot conceive of any important thinker who would want to deny it. We must

---

<sup>12</sup>Otto Neurath, "Sociology and Physicalism," a translation of "Soziologie im Physikalismus," first published in *Erkenntnis*, Vol. II (1931-32) and printed in A. J. Ayer, ed., Logical Positivism (Glencoe: Ill.: Free Press, 1959), pp. 297, 304 and 305.

thus, I believe, credit most of those who speak of science displacing religion with confining their arguments to the modern period. On one count, therefore, Sorokin disproved that which was not usually explicitly contended by any positivist, and which only a naive positivist would be inclined to maintain.

Sorokin's second main conclusion does, however, clearly contradict positivist assumptions. His less well substantiated conclusion, to the effect that the modern sensate wave had already crested, and that the figures demonstrated scientific, materialistic Western civilization had already begun to decline, confronted an implicit prediction of positive historicism: the eventual extinction of metaphysical and religious thought from the world. Sorokin's second main conclusion clearly has a predictive element in it, and this became increasingly thematic in some of his later writings. It was based on an interpretation of short-term trends. Not all measured trends confirmed his diagnosis, and not all were arrived at quantitatively. The rejection of his interpretation and related prediction is probably as reasonable as its acceptance, or more reasonable if we consider caution a merit in science.

But what has been overlooked by critics of Sorokin's prediction is that it contradicts the even less well founded and far more dogmatic prediction assumed but seldom explicitly stated by positive historicism. Inasmuch as such assumptions and implied predictions continue to inform positivist thought, Sorokin's contrary interpretation and prediction still constitute something of a challenge. For, despite their weakness,

Sorokin has attempted to build them on a foundation of statistical evidence, rather than on gratuitous assumptions. As the above citations from Neurath clearly indicate, such assumptions still flourished in neo-positivist circles during the 1930s. Sorokin's challenge to those assumptions was thus not only original and elaborately researched, but also timely. To the extent that positivist social scientists today merely regard the methods of science as limited in applicability to the realm of observable behaviour, they need have no truck with Sorokin's predictions; however, to the extent that they themselves harbour contrary predictions, they must confront Sorokin on his own terms. These terms include not only the prediction and the statistics on which it is based, but also the overall pattern of the past which his researches seem to disclose.

This twice-repeated pattern of successively predominant ideational, idealistic and sensate outlooks, which Sorokin claims to discover, was the source of some confusion both for Sorokin and for his critics. On the one hand, Dynamics is rightly credited with demonstrating that the various cyclical and linear conceptions of historical change are gross simplifications. That Sorokin does repeatedly assert the fallacy of such conceptions is, in any case, apparent to anyone who skims these volumes. On the other hand, that Sorokin's prediction of a return to a phase of "ideational" predominance patently contradicts these assertions understandably encourages the view that his own system represents a kind of long-term cyclical interpretation of history. Without doubt, it does. This is why Sorokin, even

though he expresses a personal preference for the "idealistic" synthesis of sensate and ideational extremes, fears that the present decline of sensate predominance will lead to a long period of confusion such as experienced by the Roman Empire during the rise of Christianity. He thus takes his findings seriously even when they are contrary to his preferences. How seriously they deserve to be taken hinges not only on the quality of Sorokin's research but also on two other questions.

In the first place, it must be asked whether two cycles are a sufficient basis for generalization. This question is not, I think, soluble on any theoretical grounds whatever. Sorokin's facts and figures indicate a sequence, twice repeated in the course of Graeco-Roman and Western history: sensate predominance followed by ideational, then by idealistic, then by sensate. The ideational-idealistic-sensate sequence is characterized by fairly smooth transitions, but the passage from sensate to ideational is marked by prolonged confusion and considerable social upheaval. Obviously the discovery of two such sequences could be either significant or trivial.<sup>13</sup> Yet it seems equally obvious that generalization on the basis of Sorokin's two sequences is unwarrantable for the simple reason that there remain accessible units of civilization which might be analyzed in order to test the generalizability of Sorokin's patterns empirically.

The second question concerns prediction in the socio-historical

---

<sup>13</sup>As significant as would be the discovery of four-limbed, five digit, binocular, vertebrate life in an alien solar system, or as trivial as the discovery of parallel voting patterns in two neighbouring states.

sciences. Short-term predictions made on the basis of measurable trends and policy changes are nowadays common practice in political and economic circles, and, like meteorological predictions, they have proved increasingly reliable during the twentieth century. The basis for most such predictions is quantification, and the method for arriving at them is by extrapolation. It relies on overall systemic stability and, hence, tends to be reliable for short-term predictions, and to decrease in value for long-term forecasts. The time element in prediction is thus a limiting factor, but scope is not: forecasting national wheat production is, if anything, more reliable than forecasting for any one locality. The scope of predictions entertained by Marx, Spengler, Sorokin, Toynbee and by positive historicists from Comte to Neurath is enormous. They countenance fundamental social change over long periods. But it is Sorokin's use of quantitative data which distinguishes him from these speculators and which, to some extent, justifies his predictions. It does so, however, only to a very limited degree: whatever validity Sorokin's predictions may have held in the 1930s has certainly dwindled with the passage of time.

Sorokin's "refutation" of positivist historicist assumptions is thus open to assessment in at least two ways. The "pattern" element in his predictions can be tested by studies of other civilizations.<sup>14</sup> The

---

<sup>14</sup>Such studies would not, of course, disclose any sustained sensate culture such as positivists and Marxists predict for the present scientific era, but any basic departure from the sequence of changes Sorokin observed would nullify the predictive value of the patterns he perceived. The discovery of similar patterns would tend to confirm his interpretations.

"extrapolation" element can also be tested by anyone wishing to assemble up-to-date quantitative data. Observed trends (and new extrapolations from these) would make clear whether or not Sorokin's interpretations of data for the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were accurate. Mere assertion of historicist assumptions, however, does nothing to weaken Sorokin's predictions. His data and his interpretations thereof doubtless fall far short of perfection, but they are nonetheless infinitely more compelling than are assertions supported by no data at all.

Sorokin nevertheless did choose the more sensational of two possible interpretations of data for recent sociocultural trends. Many compartments of culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries showed signs of reversal or fatigue: the upward trend of some sensate indicators had abated and some had begun to decline. This could have been interpreted as "minor fluctuations" (a term used by Sorokin to describe aberrations in otherwise consistent patterns for earlier centuries). Sorokin's choice, however, was to interpret this as the onset of a decline in the currently dominant sensate phase of culture. I suggest that either viewpoint could reasonably have been argued from Sorokin's data.<sup>15</sup> Extra-scientific explanations for his choice therefore deserve to be explored.

A number of factors might have disposed Sorokin to favour a

---

<sup>15</sup>Although for different reasons I am also inclined to favour Sorokin's radical interpretation of the data, this is not, I think, warranted on the basis of his facts alone.

radical interpretation of his data. First, consider again the history of his personal Weltanschauungen and crises. He had experienced both the ideational and sensate extremes, had rejected both as inadequate and had consciously begun to search for some coherent alternative. A little unconscious projection from these experiences could have inclined him to favour the view that Western civilization as a whole was likewise in the process of rejecting the sensate outlook which he had personally found wanting. Secondly, consider the well known psychological impact of the 1914-1918 war and of the successful Bolshevik revolution. During the inter-war period, the feeling that an era had ended was commonplace, whether its passing was lamented or joyfully acclaimed. Sorokin's European background and his experience of finding himself on the losing side of the Bolshevik revolution inclined him to the more "pessimistic" appraisal. By simple transference this "end of an era" feeling could also have predisposed him to interpret his data as he did. Oswald Spengler had made a similar choice on the basis of no data at all; Arnold Toynbee was discursively arriving at similar conclusions during the same period. Whereas Sorokin's quantitative analysis of the past does distinguish him from the speculators, his preferred interpretation of the present brings him close--in terms of both substance and method--to the subjective historicists whom he criticized. A third factor to consider is the status of Dynamics itself. Sorokin (as well as his assistants) spent a great deal of time and effort assembling materials for these three volumes. What of significance did they discover? Supposing Sorokin had not concluded that the era of sensate dominance

was passing. What would seven years' labour have then produced? As we have seen, even Sorokin's disproof of positive historicism becomes trite without his discovery of the onset of sensate decline. No matter how revolutionary his methods, no matter how valid his conclusions regarding the past, the bearing of his findings on the present would largely decide what importance to accord to Dynamics. Sorokin, I suggest, was convinced from the outset that the researches undertaken for Dynamics would disclose some kind of world-shattering truths. It was therefore not surprising that, when his data permitted, he chose the more startling of two possible conclusions.

The intrusion of any such extra-scientific influences into Sorokin's choice does not, however, undermine his conclusions. (After all, Nicholas Copernicus' thought also led him to some startling unsubstantiated conclusions which contradicted the "common sense" of his own day; and it was not till a hundred and fifty years later that his interpretation began to find convincing empirical support and, thereby, general acceptance). The confirmation or disconfirmation of Sorokin's findings still awaits further research.

In the context of historical sociology, Sorokin's substantive inquiry remains an isolated work. Its scope and its reliance on statistical method make it so. As Robert Merton observes,

Studies in historical sociology have only begun to quarry the rich ore available in comprehensive collections of biography and other historical evidence. Although statistical analyses of such materials cannot stand in place of detailed qualitative analyses of the historical evidence, they afford a systematic basis for new findings and, often, for correction

of received assumptions. At least this has been my own experience in undertaking statistical analyses . . . [of certain subjects and periods]. The most extensive use of such statistical analyses is found in P. A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics. . . .<sup>16</sup>

Quantitative analysis and statistical methods have, of course, found continually increased application in sociology during the last forty years, especially with the introduction and proliferation of computers, and the development of programmes suited to social scientific research. Moreover, in recent years historians interested in past trade, population and voting patterns (together with economists, demographers and political scientists of historical bent) have given rise to what is called "interdisciplinary" or "quantitative" history, a specialization with its own journals and literature concerning methods and substantive research. These provide striking contrast with the persistence of certain kinds of speculative historical sociology in the traditions of Marx and Weber, and with the prevalence of untested historicist assumptions which continue to pervade much positivist thought. At the same time, Sorokin's pioneering effort to displace speculation and untested assumption by what he called "more adequate and more difficult methods" have been increasingly ignored by sociology. Yet, ironically, techniques comparable to those used by Sorokin have been applied in other sciences to provide a satisfactory general framework for understanding and a

---

<sup>16</sup>Robert Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe: Ill.: Free Press, 1957), p. 599, n. Also cited in Robert K. Merton and Bernard Barber, "Sorokin's Formulations in the Sociology of Science," in Philip J. Allen, ed., Pitirim A. Sorokin in Review (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1963), p. 350.

basis for consensus.

The concept of evolution, in its broadest sense, implies that the universe, the solar system, the earth, the heavy atoms, complex molecules and life-forms on earth, the human race, society and culture as we now know them have all developed from simpler or more primitive forms. To some extent all evolutionary interpretation is historicist in the sense used in the present study; however, those sciences which have achieved agreement on a basic sequence of associated phenomena and events, and thus confine speculation to the frontiers of inquiry, can be distinguished from those which are mainly speculative. Cosmology is rather like historical sociology in that it remains almost entirely a speculative business: for example, big-bang and steady-state theories simply construe the same astronomical facts in different ways.<sup>17</sup> By contrast archeology, geohistory and paleontology tend to operate against a background of agreed-upon fundamentals; anomalous findings can be easily identified, and testable hypotheses--rather than speculations in vacuo--can be advanced to explain them. This was not always the case, however. In geology, for example, historicist doctrines and partisan polemics formerly prevailed as they still do in historical sociology. The arguments for and against "Neptunism," "Vulcanism," "Uniformitarianism," and "Catastrophism,"<sup>18</sup> aroused a great deal of interest in the

---

<sup>17</sup>See, for example, W. H. McCrae, "Cosmology after Half a Century" in Science, vol. 160, no. 3834 (21 June 1968), pp. 1295-99.

<sup>18</sup>Eighteenth and nineteenth-century attempts to explain the earth's origin and history, without recourse to supernatural causes, relied on various "Key" processes. Most had some empirical relationship with pre-scientific views. The "Neptunists" were those who argued that

geological sciences, and contributed many valuable empirical observations, but it was the gradual consolidation of painstakingly accumulated knowledge in stratigraphy, in dating techniques, and in the identification, interpretation, classification and statistical analysis of fossil remains that ultimately led to the high degree of substantial consensus which geohistory and paleontology enjoy today.<sup>19</sup>

---

continents originated from the oceans (because fossil marine species were found on continental mountains). They were opposed by the "Vulcanists" or "plutonists" who explained continental forms in terms of igneous extrusion by large-scale volcanic action. The "Uniformitarians" who argued that the present laws of physics and chemistry had always prevailed, also held that modern conditions and rates of change also uniformly operated in the past. The "Catastrophists" who opposed them argued that such processes as mountain folding could not be explained by uniformitarian concepts, that fossil records indicated abrupt discontinuities and that the law of entropy implied that the earth was now dissipating energy at a lower rate than formerly. The dispute between uniformitarians and catastrophists survives only in an unproductive debate concerning which party historically came nearer the truth. There is, I think, a tendency for English-speaking geologists to favour their predominantly English-speaking uniformitarian predecessors. But see George Gaylord Simpson, "Uniformitarianism. An Inquiry into Principle, Theory and Method in Geohistory and Biohistory," pp. 43-96 in Essays in Evolution and Genetics in Honor of Theodosius Dobzhansky, M. K. Hecht and W. C. Steere, eds. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), and Rijkman Hooykaas, "Catastrophism in Geology, Its Scientific Character in Relation to Actualism and Uniformitarianism," pp. 271-316 in Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde, Med. (n.r.), vol. 33, no. 7 (1970), both reprinted in Claude C. Albritton, Jr., ed., Philosophy of Geohistory: 1785-1970 (Stroudsburg, Penn.: Dowden, Hutchinson & Ross, 1975), pp. 256-356.

<sup>19</sup>So solid is this consensus that even Harry Hess's now confirmed hypothesis of earth-mantle flow from mid-ocean ridges (substantiating earlier continental-drift speculations and revolutionizing earth science as completely as relativity theory revolutionized physics) entails extensive revision and readjustment but no abandonment of basic geological and paleontological understandings.

No doubt much could be learned generally from comparative studies in the history and philosophy of the various historical sciences, but my purpose here is more limited. What I wish to point out is the considerable similarity between the methods Sorokin used to interpret the history of sociocultural phenomena and the methods which ultimately provided a firm basis for geology and biology. The manner in which Sorokin analysed biographical data and other historical material, classified, tabulated and plotted it in graph form is, for example, similar at every stage to the techniques used by paleontologists to analyze the evolution, distribution, proliferation and extinction of various life forms. The application of such methods in the geological sciences helped to emancipate them from historicist preconceptions (or at least rendered these doctrines superfluous), and provided a firm basis for studying the evolution of our planet and of life forms on it. What would prevent such methods performing a similar service for historical sociology?

Sorokin's study provides at least part of the answer to this question also. His categories and his entire inquiry were geared to demonstrate the untenability of historicist assumptions. Even though his use of quantitative and statistical techniques made his study somewhat sounder than the doctrines he criticized, his inquiry was nevertheless conducted at the same polemical level. Thus, although Sorokin's methods are comparable to those successfully employed in geological science, he fell short of laying the foundations for a general historical science of sociology because polemical motives

restricted his vision and limited the usefulness of his research. He was engaged in refuting historicism, not in discovering the patterns of sociocultural evolution which might render all speculative historicism superfluous.

The very idea of evolution, however, was one which Sorokin regarded as concomitant with sensate culture.<sup>20</sup> He thought of it simply as one brand of linear historicism, inseparably linked with the very doctrines which Dynamics set out to discredit. Sorokin was sure of his findings: this sensate, positivistic, linear way of thinking had come and gone in the past and was once more on its way out. He made no distinction between speculative historicism and the clearer demonstrations of evolutionary science.

Sorokin's categories and substantive study place him clearly within the tradition that sought the basis of a scientific sociology in various key elements or organizing principles among sociocultural phenomena. Despite the fact that Parsons shared Sorokin's concern with meanings, values, norms and their role in social integration; and despite his heavy reliance on the sociologies of Durkheim, Pareto and Weber, Parsons advanced a conception of science quite different from those of the other four thinkers. Unlike Weber, Parsons believed that a general science of society was possible. Unlike Durkheim, Pareto and Sorokin, however, Parsons envisaged such a science in entirely rationalistic terms.

---

<sup>20</sup>Dynamics, II, pp. 375 ff.

Fundamental to Parsons' idea of social science was his belief that the studies of prominent thinkers such as Durkheim, Weber and Pareto already constituted an empirical science of society, or as Parsons called it, "action." Philosophers, at least since the time of Hobbes, had been working on the same basic problems, but had somehow been prevented from grasping the unitary nature of social reality because most had confined their thinking within the utilitarian or positive action schemata, without considering the importance of values, the normative element which is a necessary constituent of every unit act. Marshall, Pareto, Durkheim and Weber had brought social science forward by emphasizing the role of "activities," "meanings," "non-rational" action, values, and so on. Parsons' privilege was to perceive the unity underlying their different approaches, and to explain how the observations of Durkheim, Weber and Pareto were all reducible to the four elements of a "voluntaristic action schema": means, ends conditions and norms. As Parsons rightly observes, Kant had provided a credible epistemology for natural science by reversing the traditional philosophical question, "... by stating first: It is a fact that we have such valid empirical knowledge. And only then he asked, How is this possible?"<sup>21</sup> Parsons likewise reversed the usual general theoretical question of sociology. Whereas Durkheim, Pareto and Sorokin had each attempted to answer the question "How is a science of sociology possible?" Parsons assumed that valid knowledge of society already

---

<sup>21</sup>Structure, p. 24.

existed, and that systematic theory was the only thing needed to transform that knowledge into science. He therefore went to great length to demonstrate that the studies of his illustrious predecessors had all dealt with "action" and that their observations of empirical sociocultural reality were all reducible to the four terms of a "voluntaristic theory of action." Parsons and those who followed him into this particular avenue of thinking began to pursue a kind of sociological theorizing which was concerned primarily with elaboration of this schema and with demonstrations of its relevance to all social scientific thought.

Parsons expected that this method of attaining a scientific sociology would prove fruitful because his view of science was extremely rationalistic. He regarded science as possible only because the empirical universe it studies is characterized by a factual order ". . . which is, in some sense, congruent with the order of human logic."<sup>22</sup> Given this view of science, such congruence would conceivably permit scientific discovery to proceed either from logical extrapolations at the conceptual level or from further discoveries at the empirical factual level. A conceptual framework which represented empirical reality with fair accuracy could thus--through logical elaboration alone--lead to further knowledge of empirical reality or, possibly,<sup>23</sup> to the discovery that the conceptual framework must itself

---

<sup>22</sup>Structure, p. 753.

<sup>23</sup>And rarely: see Structure, pp. 756-57.

be modified to overcome some discrepancy or other between the logical extensions of theory and the knowledge of empirical fact.

In the history of attempts to lay theoretical foundations for a scientific sociology, Parsons' Structure was also unique in another way. He made no attempt to base his thought on an analysis of the socio-cultural substructure, such as Durkheim and Sorokin had done. Neither had he searched among superficial phenomena for some "key" element or class of activity such as most other thinkers had done. Parsons was not directly concerned with empirical sociocultural reality at all. The empirical referents of his system were the studies of earlier scholars. In Parsons' own words, ". . . the phenomena with which the study [i.e. Structure] has been concerned, happen to be the theories that certain writers have held about other [i.e. sociocultural] phenomena. . . ." <sup>24</sup> Parsons thus studied theories, not empirical reality itself. It is therefore not in the least surprising that Parsons' 1937 ideas became the basis for an elaborate set of interrelated concepts which wrought some degree of order in social scientific terminology, but which demonstrated little or no potential for fostering new insights into empirical sociocultural reality. The charge of "scholasticism," so often levelled at Parsonian theory, is not without foundation. However, when we consider the sheer irreconcilability of the many theories and philosophies of society scanned by Sorokin in his influential Contemporary Sociological Theories, we can readily perceive one reason

---

<sup>24</sup>Structure, p. 697.

why Parsons' unusual views of science (and consequent theorizing at an entirely conceptual level) were destined to become prominent in American theoretical sociology. Viewed as a whole, past theorizing presented the student of sociology with a chaos every bit as baffling as the sociocultural universe it purported to explain. Parsons' theorizing appeared to reduce both sets of chaos to orderly language. If it had no scientific merit whatever, it nonetheless bore this hallmark of science.

When we turn to consider Sorokin's theoretical writings, perhaps the single, most important general point to note is just how little they depend upon his substantive inquiry. On the many occasions when Sorokin invokes that inquiry to "prove" his theoretical generalizations and methodological prescriptions, it constitutes at best a single instance, illustrative of his assertions, but hardly demonstrative of their validity. This tenuous relationship is entirely comparable to that described in connection with Parsons' history of ideas and the "action schema" which he purported to derive from that history. Parsons' categories of ends, means, conditions and norms could as easily have been developed on the basis of a survey of Cervantes, Shakespeare and Goethe. The same might be said for much of Sorokin's thought: for example, his analysis of sociocultural reality into "elements" designated as meanings, vehicles and agents; or of sociocultural systems into meaningful plus causal systems. In no case is the accuracy of such observations brought into question by recognition of this fact. What becomes questionable is their supposed reliance upon the respective studies, and therewith their significance as tools for dealing with

sociocultural reality and their value as schemes for advancing the scientific study of that reality.

Sorokin's theoretical preliminaries contain most of the seeds which flourished into Volume IV and Causality--including his promise to provide a new "règles de la méthode." It would therefore be entirely unwarranted to suppose that Parsons' Structure and his growing prestige at Harvard were in any fundamental way responsible for the content of Sorokin's theoretical volumes. It is also quite obvious from the 1937 publications of both authors that each hoped that his own study would become the cornerstone of sociological science, that his ideas would provide the framework for its future development and that his insights would win universal acceptance and acclaim. Thus Sorokin's assertion that "in order to be truly scientific" studies of sociocultural phenomena "must conform to the canons of the integralist school"<sup>25</sup> was not necessarily a response to Parsons' similar claims on behalf of his "action schema."<sup>26</sup> In his later volumes Sorokin also tends to focus analysis at the purely conceptual level, to elaborate theory with theory, and to inflate trivial insights into major scientific postulates. By so doing he clearly shares the same scholastic world inhabited by Parsons. Yet there is little to suggest that Sorokin's 1937 notions of theory had been very different from Parsons'; indeed, the fourth chapter of his preliminaries, "Sociocultural Fluctuations,"

---

<sup>25</sup>Causality, p. 237.

<sup>26</sup>Structure, pp. 756-57.

can be understood as a foretaste of the abstract kind of reasoning he intended his fourth volume to contain.

Perhaps the strongest indication that Sorokin is responding to Parsons is his furious insistence on the importance of identifying and dealing with systems. In the fourth volume of Dynamics no word (not even "meaning" and its cognates) occurs so frequently as the word "system." He deals with systems, subsystems, sub-subsystems, super-systems, systems of meanings, sociocultural systems, five basic cultural systems, plus derivative cultural systems, social systems, systems of truth and knowledge, and so on. This emphasis is significant because it later became apparent that Sorokin regarded Parsons' 1937 "action schema" as weak because it was inherently unsuitable for dealing with empirical sociocultural systems.<sup>27</sup> Closely allied to this emphasis, and polemically related to Parsons' exclusion of culture from "action science," is Sorokin's contrary assertion to the effect that cultural systems provide the basis for understanding all interrelationships between sociocultural phenomena, and that a knowledge of them is therefore indispensable for the advancement of social science. It is significant that the only disagreement Sorokin openly expresses with Parsons' ideas is in two notes in Causality where he questions Parsons' interpretation of Marx, and takes issue with his view of Weber (as well as with Merton's support of Weber's Protestant thesis). The latter is clearly a reaction to the only overt objection to Sorokin's thought

---

<sup>27</sup>Sorokin, Sociological Theories of Today, p. 432.

expressed by Parsons in the course of Structure. To these obvious reactions others of a "psychological" nature might also be added if we assume that such factors as loss of prestige and, ultimately, the chairmanship of the department at Harvard were affecting Sorokin. His strident tone, his defensiveness, his belligerent railing at all ideas other than his own, his more fatuous claims--in short, his excesses--can be construed as psychological responses to the changing circumstances in which he found himself.

Most of Sorokin's fourth volume simply elaborates, develops and polemically defends his preliminaries, and thus constitutes an extension of what is here regarded as the justificatory portion of Dynamics. In this respect Dynamics is typical of the kind of theoretical sociology that devotes a great deal of effort towards establishing and justifying various explanatory contexts, the choice of which--in the absence of any unified research tradition--is invariably arbitrary.

However, on the one occasion when Sorokin did attempt to deal with a problem posed by his substantive inquiry, his treatment is brief, superficial, evasive, and unnecessarily arbitrary. I refer to his idea that the proportion of "falsity" tends to increase as any particular culture mentality becomes dominant. This is an intriguing idea, familiar in the notion that "power corrupts," but nonetheless entirely gratuitous inasmuch as Sorokin gives no demonstration that such is indeed the case. This kind of arbitrary explanation is completely within the researcher's power to avoid. Moreover, this was precisely the point where Sorokin might conceivably have demonstrated the

problem-solving power of his approach; it was also the only point where his theoretical writings bore a direct explanatory relation to his substantive study.

Ironically, although the value of Sorokin's theorizing and its relevance to his substantive inquiry are both further brought into question by his superficial explanation, the explanation itself survives as a weak but credible interpretation of the facts. His substantive study revealed that ideational, idealistic and sensate outlooks do rise alternately to positions of dominance, and successively replace one another. If the basic assumptions of each enable us to solve certain kinds of social, material and intellectual problems, but hinder us from solving others, this would explain why all three find individual adherents in virtually every age and region of the earth. Moreover, if the rise to dominance of any one outlook invariably leads to efforts to apply its basic assumptions to problem areas for which it is ill-suited, this could conceivably result in gradually discrediting that outlook and thus contributing to its ultimate decline. The most pressing unsolved social, material and intellectual problems would then presumably dictate which of the other two outlooks would next meet with success.<sup>28</sup> Thus restated, it is clear that Sorokin's explanation of his empirical findings does rest on two major assumptions (the "if" clauses), but that it does nonetheless make sense.

---

<sup>28</sup>Viewed in this light, the particular order (ideational-idealistic-sensate) observed by Sorokin may be more than "a purely empirical consideration" [see Dynamics, IV, pp. 770 et seq.].

The main difficulty with this explanation is that it highlights, but leaves unresolved, epistemological problems which underlie Sorokin's entire study. The very idea that there are three irreconcilable "systems of truth, knowledge and reality" suggests that the pursuit of knowledge (including scientific and social-scientific knowledge) is entirely a relative matter. Each of these systems implies a distinctive epistemology; and scientific study under the aegis of any of them develops a characteristic methodology. The terms of one system are not readily convertible into those of another.

The two main difficulties engendered by Sorokin's trichotomy are similar to those raised by various sociologies of knowledge which explain knowledge entirely in terms of social factors and leave no room for socially unconditioned cognitive progress.<sup>29</sup> The first difficulty concerns the status of knowledge in general. If the pursuit of knowledge is entirely dependent upon the dominant milieu or upon such factors as an individual's social status or economic interest, then that pursuit is at best a relatively and at worst a totally irrational pastime. As analysed in Dynamics, there is no "knowledge" which is not sensate or ideational or idealistic knowledge (or some incohesive mixture of two or more of these). There is no inherent weakness in viewpoints such as this: they simply run counter to the widespread assumption that, at very least in the natural sciences, "objective" knowledge is possible.

---

<sup>29</sup>See Larry Laudan, Progress and Its Problems, pp. 196-222 et passim.

The second difficulty, however, concerns the status of studies which purport to reveal such "facts." This can be illustrated by taking an extreme example: if knowledge is "nothing but" a consequence of certain social factors, then studies which claim that this is true must themselves be the mere consequence of these same factors. (We are, as it were, faced with the man from Thebes who assures us that all Thebans are liars). In the case of Sorokin's Dynamics the paradox is not so great, but we do have every reason to wonder whether his own study is conducted under the aegis of sensate, ideational or idealistic notions of truth.

When Sorokin first defined his categories, primarily in terms of notions of reality, he noted that he had ". . . intentionally [taken] the standpoint of this Idealistic form of mentality" because "the one-sidedness of each of the opposite types would preclude the use of a common language by which both could be fairly interpreted."<sup>30</sup> Sensate belief in an exclusively material reality, and ideational belief in an exclusively spiritual reality are obviously combined in the idealistic belief in both. Sorokin's position was clear and no serious epistemological problems were posed. However, when he subsequently paired each of these categories with a "system of truth" (ideational truth of faith, idealistic truth of reason, and sensate truth of the senses) the idealistic stance could no longer purport to embrace the other two. The consequent relativity of truth and knowledge thus posed

---

<sup>30</sup>Dynamics, I, p. 75, n. 10.

problems, not only for the status of knowledge, generally, and for the status of Sorokin's own study, but also for the very idea of a unified science of society. For if there were in fact several irreconcilable "systems of truth, knowledge, and reality," none inherently more valid than the other, there would be absolutely no possibility of establishing a generally acceptable framework for construing sociocultural phenomena. This problem becomes particularly clear in the context of Sorokin's Dynamics, because his simple threefold classification makes it so obvious. There is, however, a contradiction inherent in any scheme which attempts to classify or explain human knowledge entirely in terms of non-cognitive criteria, because logical consistency requires that any such scheme must itself submit to the very criteria it postulates.

Sorokin's difficulties began, I believe, when he designated the "truth of reason" as characteristic of the idealist outlook. Had he followed more closely upon his earlier line of thinking, he might have considered that "truth of faith" and "truth of the senses" were simply conjoined in the idealistic outlook (as were belief in both spiritual and material realities). The preponderance of rationalism and the emphasis on reason (which, his study showed, were characteristic of societies dominated by idealism) might then have been understood as arising from attempts to reconcile these opposite viewpoints. Sorokin could thus have continued "intentionally" adopting the "idealistic" viewpoint on grounds that it was the only outlook of the three which embraced the other two. Had he done so, his categories would have been more consistent, and his own sociology would have been clearly located

within his general framework, thus avoiding the very real contradiction inherent in any general scheme which pretends to stand outside the sociocultural reality which it purports to schematize.

Such an approach would also have had the virtue of withholding what Sorokin called "the truth of reason" from classification within his categories of culture mentality--those three outlooks whose fluctuating popularity he plotted in the course of his substantive inquiry. I call this a "virtue" because the search for a scientific sociology implies that human knowledge is not entirely explainable in sociocultural terms; implies, in fact, that science knows some court of appeal higher than tradition, intuition or experience. For there is another contradiction, almost the opposite of that described above, implied in any general sociology or sociology of knowledge which, on the one hand, makes statements regarding all of human knowledge, and which, on the other, aspires to be "scientific." Without recourse to some super-sociological criterion, such as reason or cognitive progress,<sup>31</sup> the entire enterprise tends to bog down in sociocultural relativism and philosophical irrationalism. In terms of Dynamics, even had Sorokin consistently maintained his initial "idealistic" stance, the resulting study could not reasonably have claimed the status of science, pure and simple. For in Sorokin's own scheme of things it would have been idealistic science only, as opposed to ideational or sensate science. This was because his system implied not the single, universally acceptable science which he

---

<sup>31</sup>This term is used in the sense developed by Larry Laudan in Progress and Its Problems, p. 7 et passim.

himself envisaged for sociology, but three separate sciences irreconcilably divided by ontology. Had reason and science not been so thoroughly subordinated to his categories, he might conceivably have found some graceful way of exiting from his idealistic stance in order to deal with the methodological questions which he had promised, since 1937, to answer.

Sorokin's intention to provide a new Règles de la méthode sociologique had been linked to his conviction that he was making a very significant breakthrough that would at last enable sociology to become scientific. By the time he published Causality it should have been obvious to him that he had not succeeded. His fatuous claims that "integralism" amounted to such a science and that Causality constituted its methodology bordered on the absurd, and betoken, I believe, a disturbed state of mind. In fact both theoretical volumes seem to reflect a growing desperation in their author, and a retreat from reason into beligerent and confused thought. These qualities, added to the more extravagant claims, prophecies and promises published in his earlier volumes helps to explain, and to some extent to justify, the lack of interest subsequently shown in the sane and serious portions of Dynamics.

## CHAPTER IX

## CONCLUSIONS

During the 1930s, both Pitirim Sorokin and Talcott Parsons strove to provide sociology with scientific credentials by means of developing appropriate theoretical frameworks. Dynamics and Structure show that Sorokin and Parsons shared a methodological concern to somehow include consideration of "meanings" or "values" in the scientific study of sociocultural phenomena. Both sought to relate this element to positivistic methodologies: Parsons by postulating that the positivistic and idealistic traditions of sociology had somehow "converged" towards a conceptual framework that necessarily involved discussion of means, ends, conditions and norms; Sorokin by concocting a sort of super-methodology that embraced probabilistic, external-causal, causal-functional and "logico-meaningful" forms of integration. Both men argued compellingly that the consideration of meanings-values-norms was basic to any serious social scientific study. However, neither provided any satisfactory demonstration of the usefulness of his framework for explaining social phenomena.

Parsons' overt concern throughout Structure is to demonstrate "convergence," the historical necessity of using his conceptual framework. The reader gains the impression that Parsons began with the framework in mind and proceeded to "prove" it by showing that it had slowly been extruded by force of the inherent logic of developing social

scientific thought. Implied in this historicist vision is Parsons' rationalistic conception of science. Also implied, however, is the imperialistic conclusion that all reasoning must either conform to Parsons' conceptual scheme or fall beyond the pale of social science. Thus not only sociology and social theory but the whole of social science became narrowly defined in terms of Parsons' "action frame of reference." The problem of construing the chaos of empirical social phenomena was replaced by the intellectually demanding but far more straightforward problem of analysing empirical studies and recasting them in Parsonian language.

Parsons and Sorokin disagreed about most things, but apparently not about the value of conceptual-analytical reasoning as a foundation for social science. Parsons went to considerable lengths to justify his approach and outlined his rationalistic conception of science to support it. Sorokin seems to have simply taken it for granted. Parsons invoked the Kantian example of "reversing the traditional question," assumed that a scientific knowledge of society already existed, and postulated means, ends, conditions and norms as categories through which we necessarily organize that knowledge; he simply ignored the fact that Kant had built his categories (which, in any case, were not instrumental in advancing science)<sup>1</sup> on the basis of universally acclaimed Newtonian

---

<sup>1</sup>They were helpful to Kant only in establishing a credible philosophy of science in opposition to Humean scepticism.

science.<sup>2</sup> Sorokin set out to be his own Newton and his own Kant: he defined universal "culture mentalities" and conducted what was for the time an impressive substantive study in terms of these. In the fourth volume of Dynamics, however, he largely ignored this accomplishment and the interesting empirical, theoretical, and epistemological problems posed by that study. Instead, he undertook to elaborate upon his justificatory and abstract preliminaries and to describe analytically the procedures he employed in his substantive study: the result he regarded as a "systematic theory of sociocultural change." Finally, in Causality, he transmutes description into prescription, recapitulating Volume IV as a "methodology," and establishing the "referential principles" of sociology in terms of three Kantian categories, causality, space and time. The first of these he connected with his concept of meaningful-causal relationship; the last two he identified, rather artificially and superficially, with "locating" sociocultural phenomena according to their ideational, idealistic or sensate content.

There was every reason for social scientists to reject both Parsonian and Sorokian theoretical systems. Yet under the influence of these two, American theoretical sociology subsequently became preoccupied with building, elaborating, belittling, comparing, attacking and defending a variety of arid conceptual schemes. One result of this pastime was that it tended to divert attention from the very problem

---

<sup>2</sup>Harold J. Bershady, Ideology and Social Knowledge (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), p. 80.

which Parsonian and Sorokian theory had initially set out to solve--the problem of discovering adequate foundations for a scientific sociology. If sociology does eventually become scientific Sorokin and Parsons will likely be remembered as two thinkers who helped keep alive the notion that this could be achieved by appropriate theorizing. It is therefore somewhat ironical that they must also be credited with contributing to the neglect of that search because of the position that each took in insisting that his own system had somehow already laid the foundations for such a science.

Another result was that Sorokin's involvement in theoretical disputes tended to emphasize the least valuable part of his own work, consequently diverting attention both from his earlier works and from the first three volumes of Dynamics, which demonstrate very real efforts to improve (some would say very real improvements) upon the insights of his predecessors.

In the course of the present study, I have described the categories Sorokin purports to arrive at through theoretical reasoning. While conceding that Sorokin's theorizing does constitute an interesting and original attempt to reconcile positivist and Verstehen methodologies, I have nonetheless argued that his categories arose from personal experience of communities dominated by "ideational" and "sensate" mentalities. I have further argued that the real purpose of Sorokin's methodological preliminaries was to try to justify using these categories which he himself understood to be configurations of meaning. This understanding led Sorokin to echo much of Weber's thought regarding

the "meaningful" aspect of sociocultural phenomena, but this superficial resemblance is offset by the fact that Sorokin was concerned with meanings and systems of meaning which are unchanging, logically consistent, independent of the observer, and rooted in sociocultural reality. I have shown that, despite certain general similarities between Pareto's and Sorokin's studies of sociocultural change, Sorokin's use of ontological categories enabled him to avoid some of the problems that prevent universal acceptance of Pareto's classes and of most general classifications in social science. I have also suggested that whenever one of Sorokin's three ontological positions becomes the "dominant culture mentality" of any society, it then constitutes the equivalent of what Durkheim called the "social milieu." The fact that Sorokin depicts his three outlooks as vying for allegiance and succeeding one another in dominance is able to account for differences between milieux without recourse to arbitrary constructs; however, the fact that Sorokin construed these outlooks as configurations of meaning withheld him from assigning to them the role of constraint which characterized Durkheim's concept of milieu. Sorokin did not recognize this equivalence because, when he first postulated his categories, he was convinced that there were two distinct "higher" levels of sociological integration (causal-functional and logico-meaningful) with corresponding modes of explanation; later, when these two had become merged in his thinking, Sorokin continued to emphasize the importance of Durkheim's view of social integration, identifying it with his own, but failed to relate the latter's milieu to his own

concept of "dominant culture mentality," even though these constituted the bases of integration in their respective systems.

In his substantive inquiry, Sorokin surveys virtually all fields of sociocultural activity in terms of the proportions of sensate, ideational and idealistic content they display from century to century throughout the course of Graeco-Roman and Western European history. Approximately half of these studies make use of statistical methods, enabling Sorokin to tabulate data by periods of twenty to a hundred years, and to plot the resulting figures in graph form. A twice-repeated pattern of successively dominant ideational, idealistic and sensate outlooks emerges from these studies, and the various "compartments" of sociocultural life tend to fluctuate together. Other compartments he examined discursively and interpreted as participating in the same trends. In some compartments the current phase of predominantly sensate culture also shows signs of "fatigue" or decline. Sorokin regarded his findings as proof that various speculative interpretations of history are unsound and, particularly, that positivist historicism was mistaken in assuming a linear trend towards science and away from metaphysics and religion: not only had the sensate outlook previously predominated, and then been superseded, but it also appeared to be entering once again a phase of decline. Sorokin's expectation of a decline in the sensate culture was based on past patterns of change and on the irregularities displayed by some compartments of culture since the middle of the last century. Evidence for this conclusion is weak, but it has never been confronted by quantitatively substantiated

evidence to the contrary. Sorokin, in fact, pioneered the use of quantitative methods in the field of historical sociology, and he is unique in having applied them on so vast a scale. His methods of analyzing and displaying data resemble those which have enabled other historical sciences to outgrow historicism and find a basis for consensus.

Sorokin's own study was, however, suited only to refute historicism, not to replace it. His stance was "anti-evolutionist" inasmuch as he associated evolutionary theory with positivist historicism, but the pattern of the past which he discovered is simply "non-evolutionary." Its focus is upon the recurrent and repeated,<sup>3</sup> rather than upon the irreversible. It discloses basic fluctuations in the only three ontological outlooks theoretically possible or empirically discernible in human history. It can be likened to a biological survey which calculates fluctuations in the number of species which "choose" aquatic, land-based, or amphibious ways of life in different geological periods. The categories with which Sorokin began his inquiry inevitably led to a non-developmental view of the

---

<sup>3</sup>At least as early as 1928, Sorokin suggested that a study of the ". . . repetitions of social phenomena [was] . . . one of the most important tasks of sociology." This was for three reasons: . . . In the first place only where cyclical or rhythmic repetition . . . exists may we grasp . . . interrelationships and formulate "sociological laws." [. . .] In the second place, the field of repeated . . . phenomena is more convenient for a study of correlative dependence and interdependence . . . . In the third place, the field of repeated social phenomena seems to be one of the most convenient for a quantitative study, which is the final purpose of any generalizing science. [P. A. Sorokin, Contemporary Sociological Theories (New York: Harper & Row, 1928), p. 740].

sociocultural past: in no generation was there anywhere to "go" except back and forth. What irreversible changes caused or accompanied these fluctuations in the outlooks of large numbers of people? To what events or circumstances did such long-term trends prove adaptive? To these and other such "evolutionary" questions Sorokin's substantive inquiry seeks no answers. His study in no way precludes the possibility of a historical sociology set in evolutionary terms, however, and it demonstrates the possibility of using statistical methods. I see no reason to doubt that these methods are among the most valuable we possess for establishing the foundations of scientific consensus, and for elevating science above the polemical realm of speculation and gratuitous assumption. One of Sorokin's greatest accomplishments was his extensive use of these methods in the field of historical sociology.

However, Sorokin's failure to distinguish between speculative evolutionary doctrines and those substantiated by the very methods he himself employed limited the value of his study in two ways. First, his disproof of naive historicist doctrines was considerably weakened because he linked these with the better-established doctrines of evolutionary science. Secondly, his identification of all evolutionary thought with the sensate "progress cult"<sup>4</sup> meant that he himself sought no developmental pattern in the history of sociocultural phenomena. Nevertheless, if historical sociology aspires to escape from speculation into science, it seems likely that it will do so by employing methods

---

<sup>4</sup>Dynamics, III, p. 535.

similar to those pioneered by Sorokin in his substantive inquiry. And if such a science wished to discover the crucial events--the cleavages which mark the strata as it were--of human sociocultural development, it might find no better way to begin than to re-examine closely the turning points in the fluctuations so laboriously plotted by Sorokin more than forty years ago.

For two centuries now, the ideas of Hume and Kant have provided the framework for most philosophical discussions concerning the foundations of science and the nature of knowledge.<sup>5</sup> It is important to note, however, what little bearing these discussions have had on the actual conduct of the natural sciences. The very opposite has been true of social science. Philosophical descriptions of science have usually been read, and have often been promulgated, as prescriptions for social science. Social scientists naturally want to learn from well established natural sciences. Conceivably, a satisfactory analysis of scientific activity might facilitate or even stimulate progress in both spheres. However, the difficulty for social science in learning from natural science arises not from what natural scientists do, but from philosophical attempts to analyse what they do.

For all their differences, Durkheim, Pareto, Weber, Sorokin and Parsons shared a common concern to refute, and if possible to supplant,

---

<sup>5</sup>Two recent, interesting and very different attempts to escape these traditions are Roy Bhasker, A Realist Theory of Science (Leeds: Leeds Books, 1975), and Larry Laudan, Progress and Its Problems: Toward a Theory of Scientific Growth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

various aspects of the sociological evolutionism, historicism and materialism described in Chapter II of the present study. All but Weber were convinced that it was possible to build a sociology that would be as cognitively respectable and as universally acceptable as any natural science (and even Weber sought to make comparable improvements within the Verstehen tradition). Yet, ironically, only Durkheim and Pareto consistently regarded themselves as positivists.

Sorokin and Parsons took issue with positivist sociology, while at the same time attempting to develop the very kind of universally acceptable systems of sociology that only positivist philosophy deemed possible. They did so during the same period when Otto Neurath and the philosophers of the Vienna Circle were busily revamping positivism, and when Edmund Husserl was spending his closing years trying to show how phenomenology, his supposed remedy for the ills of divided philosophy, could be used to cure social science of a similar affliction. The philosophy of science and the definition of positivism were thus both in an acute state of flux when those two Harvard professors set out to change the face of sociology.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Allen, Philip J., ed. Pitirim A. Sorokin in Review. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1963.
- Aron, Raymond. Main Currents in Sociological Thought. New York: Basic Books, 1965.
- Becker, Carl L. The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.
- Becker, Ernest. The Lost Science of Man. New York: George Braziller, 1970.
- Bendix, Reinhard. Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait. New York: Doubleday, 1962.
- Bernal, J. D. Science in History. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1965.
- Bershady, Harold J. Ideology and Social Knowledge. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973.
- Bhasker, Roy. A Realist Theory of Science. Leeds: Leeds Books, 1975.
- Black, Max, ed. The Social Theories of Talcott Parsons. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961.
- Boudon, Raymond. La crise de la sociologie. Paris: Droz, 1962.
- . Education, Opportunity, and Social Inequality: Changing Prospects in Western Society. New York/Toronto: John Wiley.
- . L'inégalité des chances: la mobilité dans les sociétés industrielles. Paris: Armand Colin, 1973.
- Cassirer, Ernest. The Philosophy of the Enlightenment. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951.
- Comte, Auguste. System of Positive Polity or Treatise on Sociology, Instituting the Religion of Humanity. New York: Burt Franklin, 1966 (London: 1875-77) Vol. III.
- Durkheim, Emile. Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, trans. Joseph Ward Swain. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968 (1915).

- . Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education, trans. Everett K. Wilson and Herman Schnurer, ed. Everett K. Wilson. New York: Free Press, 1973.
- . The Rules of Sociological Method, trans. Sarah A. Solovay and John H. Mueller, ed. George E. G. Catlin. New York: Free Press, 1938.
- . Suicide: A Study in Sociology, trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson. New York: Free Press, 1951.
- Finer, S. E., ed. "Introduction" to Vilfredo Pareto, Sociological Writings. London: Pall Mall Press, 1966.
- Freund, Julien. Max Weber. Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1969.
- Gay, Peter. The Party of Humanity: Essays in the French Enlightenment. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1964.
- Gerth, H. H. and C. Wright Mills. From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.
- Greeley, Andrew. Unsecular Man: the Persistence of Religion. New York: Dell Publishing, 1972.
- Hume, David. A Treatise of Human Nature. London: Dent, 1974 (1911), Vol. I.
- Johnson, Barclay D. "Durkheim's One Cause of Suicide," American Sociological Review, Vol. 30, No. 6 (December 1965).
- Laudan, Larry. Progress and Its Problems: Toward a Theory of Scientific Growth. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.
- Luckman, Thomas. "Philosophy, Science and Everyday Life," Phenomenology and the Social Sciences, Maurice Natanson, ed., Vol. I. Evanston: Northwestern University, 1973.
- Mach, Ernst. Erkenntnis und Irrtum. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968.
- Maquet, Jacques. The Sociology of Knowledge: Its Structure and Its Relation to the Philosophy of Knowledge: A Critical Analysis of the Systems of Karl Mannheim and Pitirim A. Sorokin. Boston: Beacon Press, 1951.
- Martindale, Don. "Pitirim A. Sorokin, Soldier of Fortune," Sorokin and Sociology: Essay in Honour of Professor Pitirim A. Sorokin, ed. G. C. Hallen.

- . Prominent Sociologists Since World War II. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1975.
- McCrae, W. H. "Cosmology After Half a Century," Science, Vol. 160, no. 3834. 21 June, 1968.
- Merton, Robert K. Social Theory and Social Structure. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957.
- Neurath, Otto. "Sociology and Physicalism," Logical Positivism, ed. A. J. Ayer. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1959.
- Oberschall, Anthony. The Establishment of Empirical Sociology: Studies in Continuity, Discontinuity and Institutionalization. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.
- Pareto, Vilfredo. Oeuvres Complètes, ed. Giovanni Busino. Geneva: Droz, 1964.
- Parsons, Talcott and others, eds. Theories of Society, Vol. 2. New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961.
- Parsons, Talcott. "On Building Social System Theory: A Personal History," Daedalus, Vol. 99. 1970.
- . The Structure of Social Action: A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers. New York: McGraw Hill, 1937.
- Pope, Whitney and others. "On the Divergence of Weber and Durkheim: A Critique of Parsons' Convergence Thesis," American Sociological Review, 1975, Vol. 40.
- Popkin, Richard. "Bible Criticism and Social Science," Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. XIV. Dordrecht/Boston: D. Reidel, 1974.
- . The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes. Assen-Holland: Van Gorcum, 1964.
- . "Scepticism, Theology and the Scientific Revolution in the Seventeenth Century," Problems in the Philosophy of Science. Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing, 1968.
- Roucek, Joseph S. and Raj. P. Mohan. "Contemporary Sociology in the Soviet Union," Handbook of Contemporary Development in World Sociology, eds. Raj. P. Mohan and Don Martindale. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975.

- Simpson, George Gaylord. "Uniformitarianism. An Inquiry into Principle, Theory and Method in Geohistory and Biohistory," Philosophy of Geohistory, 1785-1970, ed. Claude C. Albritton, Jr. Stroudsburg, Penn.: Dowden, Hutchinson & Ross, 1975.
- Skinner, Quentin. "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," History and Theory, Vol. VIII (1969).
- Sorokin, Elena P. "Prologue," to Pitirim A. Sorokin Hunger as a Factor in Human Affairs, trans. Elena P. Sorokin, ed. T. Lynn Smith. Gainesville: University of Florida, 1975.
- Sorokin, Pitirim A. Contemporary Sociological Theories Through the First Quarter of the Twentieth Century. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.
- . Leaves from a Russian Diary--and Thirty Years After. Boston: Beacon Press, 1950.
- . A Long Journey: The Autobiography of Pitirim A. Sorokin. New Haven: College and University Press, 1963.
- . Social and Cultural Dynamics, 4 Vols. New York: American Book Company, 1937-41.
- . Society, Culture, and Personality: Their Structure and Dynamics. A System of General Sociology. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1969/Harper & Brothers, 1947.
- . Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time. New York: Russell & Russell, 1964.
- . Sociological Theories of Today. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.
- . "Sociology of my Mental Life," Pitirim A. Sorokin in Review, ed. Philip J. Allen. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1963.
- Timasheff, Nicholas S. Sociological Theory, Its Nature and Growth. New York: Random House, 1967.
- Vucinich, Alexander. Social Thought in Tsarist Russia: The Quest for a General Science of Society, 1861-1917. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976.
- Weber, Max. The Methodology of the Social Sciences, eds. & trans. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch. New York: Free Press, 1949.

----- . The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, trans. and ed. Talcott Parsons. New York: Free Press, 1947.

Zimmerman, Carle C. Sociological Theories of Pitirim A. Sorokin. New York: Humanities Press, 1974.

APPENDIX

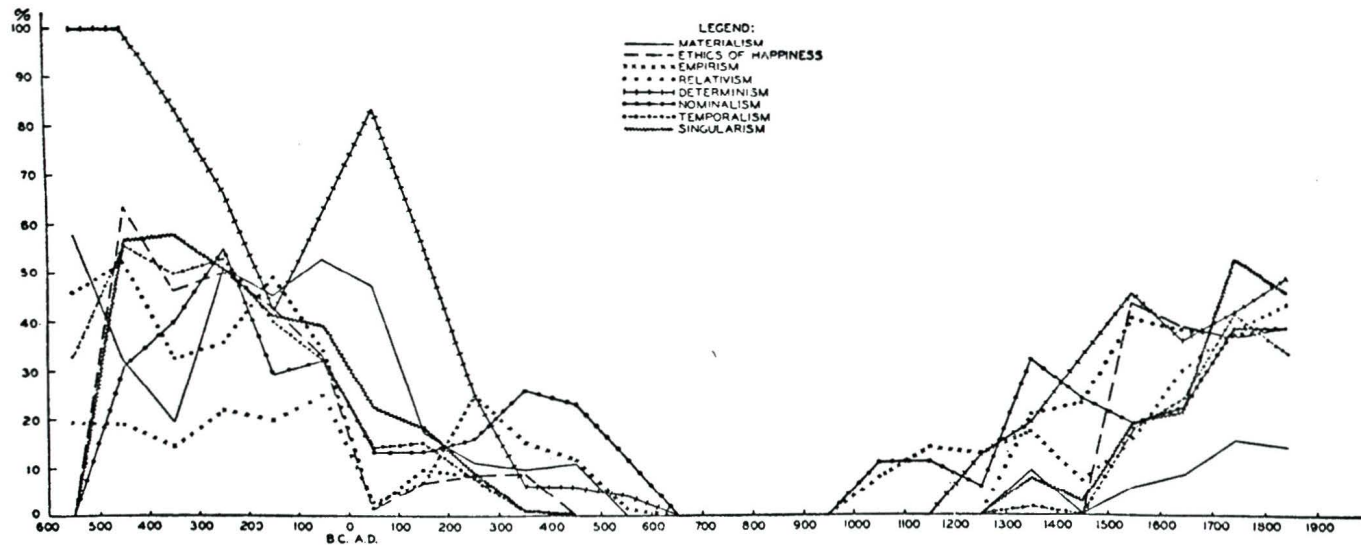
SAMPLES OF SOROKIN'S LISTS, TABLES AND GRAPHS

- 1320-1340 total 8  
 — Thomas (Sutton) 2, Siegbert (Beck) 2, Thomas Bradwardine 2, Ioannes (Baconthorp) 2
- 1340-1360 total 13  
 — Thomas (Sutton) 2, Robert Holkot 1, Thomas Bradw. 2, Ioannes (Baconth.) 2, Urban 1, Wicklif 3, Ioannes Assir. 2
- 1360-1380 total 6  
 — Wicklif 3, Brinkel 1, Albert de Sax. 2
- 1380-1400 total 5  
 — Wicklif 3, Albert de Sax. 2
- 1400-1420 total 2  
 — Paulus (Venetia) 2
- 1420-1440 total 2  
 — Paulus (Venetia) 2
- 1440-1460 total 2  
 — Cajetanus Thiaeneus 2
- 1460-1480 total 2  
 — Cajetanus Thiaeneus 2
- 1480-1500 total 7  
 — Nicoletto Vernias 1, Leonardo da Vinci 6
- 1500-1520 total 8  
 — Leonardo da Vinci 8
- 1520-1540 total 19  
 — Luther 8, Zwingli 6, Melanchthon 5
- 1540-1560 total 38  
 — Luther 8, Zwingli 6, Melanchthon 5, Calvin 6, Serveto 4, Nostradamus 4, Dolet 2, Leo Hebraeus 3
- 1560-1580 total 22  
 — Calvin 4, Sturm 2, Freigius 1, Camerarius 4, Fabricius 2, Schegk 1, P. Ramus 4, Chytraeus 1, Pfaffrad 1, Supolvedo 2
- 1580-1600 total 24  
 — Sturm 2, Camerarius 2, Schegk 1, Pfaffrad 1, Freigius 1, Ramus and his followers 4, Fabricius 2, G. Bruno 8, Scherbius 1, Hannequin 2
- 1600-1620 total 27  
 — Baco 7, Vanini 4, Keppler 8, Galilei 8
- 1620-1640 total 30  
 — Keppler 8, Galilei 8, Jansenius 6, Lemaitre 1, Baco 7
- 1640-1660 total 42  
 — Hobbes 8, Galileo 8, Keppler 8, Jansenius 6, Bengard 2, Brown 3, Pascal 7
- 1660-1680 total 38  
 — Brown 3, Pascal 7, Hobbes 8, Geulynx 6, Spinoza 8, Basso 2, Lemaitre 1, Morin 3 (*Astrologia Gallica*, 1661)
- 1680-1700 total 36  
 — Hobbes 8, Brown 3, Bekker 4, Spinoza 8 (1677), Toland 4, Boerhaave 3, Cuffcler 2, Rieuwertz 2, De Vries 1, Pordage 1
- 1700-1720 total 31  
 — Malebranche 7, Guyon 2, Toland 4, Mandeville 4, Boerhaave 3, Wollaston 2, Astrologers 2, Tschirnhausen 2, Leeuwenhoek 5
- 1720-1740 total 27  
 — Mandeville 4, D'Alembert 5, Bolingbroke 2, Voltaire 7, Boerhaave 2, Boulainvillier 1, Jean Meslier 3, Wollaston 2
- 1740-1760 total 40  
 — Tindale 2, Bolingbroke 2, Morgan 2, Lamettrie 5, Diderot 7, D'Alembert 5, Hume 8, Voltaire 7, Vaucanson 2
- 1760-1780 total 59  
 — Voltaire 7, Leroy 1, Hartley 4, Helvetius 6, Holbach 6, Priestley 6, Diderot 7, D'Alembert 5, Hume 8, Freret 3, Franklin 4, Morelli 2
- 1780-1800 total 52  
 — Diderot 7, Tetens 4, Leroy 1, Paine 4, Radischtschef 1, Kant 12, Priestley 6, Helvetius 6, Holbach 6, D. de Tracy 4, Lambert 1
- 1800-1820 total 79  
 — Volney 1, Lamarck 8, Beck 2, S. Maimon 4, Aenesidemus 2, Laplace 8, Fries 6, D. de Tracy 4, Schleiermacher 4, Broussais 2, Hegel 8, Schopenhauer 8, Lalande 2, James Mill 4, Herbart 7, Bentham 6
- 1820-1840 total 76  
 — Lamarck 8, Laplace 8, Hegel 8, Schopenhauer 8, Herbart 7, Bentham 7, J. Mill 6, A. Comte 8, L. Feuerbach 6, D. Strauss 4, Benecke 2, A. Ruge 4
- 1840-1860 total 100  
 — Carové 1, Biedermann 1, C. Baur 4, Feuerbach 6, K. Marx 8, Michelet 4, J. Erdmann 4, Br. Bauer 4, Fechner 7, A. Ruge 4, D. Strauss 6, Schopenhauer 8, Herzen 4, Fries 6, Herbart 7, A. Comte 8, H. Spencer 8, Engels 6, G. Grote 2, Vera 2
- 1860-1880 total 163  
 — K. Marx 8, Setschenoff 5, D. Strauss 6, Büchner 5, Kropotkin 4, Moleschott 4, K. Vogt 4, Haeckel 6, Zollner 4, Cournot 4, Wyrubov 4, Renan 6, Adickes 2, Ribot 7, Duchring 6, Pisarev 1, Bain 7, Poachet 1, Joly 1, A. Spir 4, Schopenhauer 8, F. Lange 7, H. Spencer 8, Fechner 7, Cl. Bernard 7, Taine 7, Littré 4, Galton 6, Černyševsky 3, Engels 6, L. Tolstoj 8, Turgenev 3
- 1880-1900 total 186  
 — H. Spitzer 2, Lesshaft 2, Bain 7, Jodl 4, Spir 4, Frauenstädt 2, Tolstoj 8, Ferri 4, Lombroso 4, Duchring 6, Kropotkin 4, Marx 8, Mantegazza 1, Plechanov 4, Engels 6, Schuppe 5, S. Soldern 4, Nordau 4, Mach 6, Rehmke 7, Avenarius 6, Penjon 4, Bradley 7, Büchner 5, Ribot 7, Taine 7, Spencer 8, Baldwin 5, Romanes 4, Fouiller 5, Guyau 5, Zichen 3, Ueberweg 5, Clifford 4, Riehl 6, Bunge 6, Meis 1

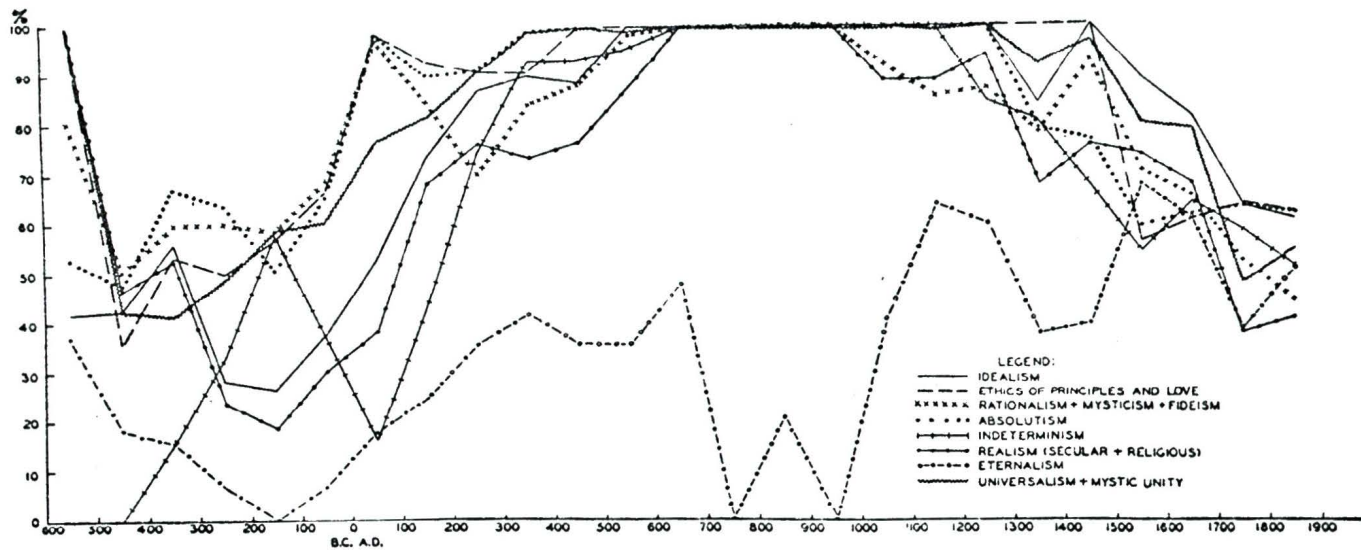
Part of Sorokin's list for "determinism."

MOVEMENT OF NOMINALISM, CONCEPTUALISM, AND REALISM  
FROM 540 B.C. TO A.D. 1920 BY 20-YEAR PERIODS — *continued*

PERIOD	Number of Representatives			Indicators of Weight			Comparative Weight in Percentages		
	Nominalism	Conceptualism	Realism	Nominalism	Conceptualism	Realism	Nominalism	Conceptualism	Realism
480-500 A.D.	1	0	3	1	0	13	7	0	93
500-520	1	0	6	1	0	21	5	0	95
520-540	2	0	6	5	0	28	15	0	85
540-560	1	0	5	4	0	16	20	0	80
560-580	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	100
580-600	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	100
600-620	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	100
620-640	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	100
640-660	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	100
660-680	0	0	2	0	0	8	0	0	100
680-700	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	100
700-720	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	100
720-740	0	0	2	0	0	8	0	0	100
740-760	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	100
760-780	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	100
780-800	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	100
800-820	0	0	2	0	0	6	0	0	100
820-840	0	0	2	0	0	6	0	0	100
840-860	0	0	2	0	0	12	0	0	100
860-880	0	0	2	0	0	11	0	0	100
880-900	0	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	100
900-920	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	100
920-940	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	100
940-960	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	100
960-980	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	100
980-1000	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	100
1000-1020	0	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	100
1020-1040	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	100
1040-1060	0	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	100
1060-1080	0	0	5	0	0	19	0	0	100
1080-1100	1	0	4	3	0	17	15	0	85
1100-1120	2	0	5	4	0	14	22	0	78
1120-1140	2	0	10	7	0	27	21	0	79
1140-1160	1	0	13	4	0	34	10.5	0	89.5
1160-1180	0	0	7	0	0	15	0	0	100
1180-1200	0	0	6	0	0	12	0	0	100
1200-1220	0	0	12	0	0	24	0	0	100
1220-1240	0	0	8	0	0	19	0	0	100
1240-1260	0	0	11	0	0	30	0	0	100
1260-1280	1	0	14	6	0	52	10	0	90
1280-1300	1	0	19	9	0	52	15	0	85
1300-1320	1	0	17	3	0	51	6	0	94
1320-1340	4	0	14	16	0	32	33	0	67
1340-1360	8	0	8	22	0	18	55	0	45
1360-1380	7	0	2	13	0	8	62	0	38
1380-1400	4	0	1	10	0	3	77	0	23
1400-1420	1	0	1	4	0	4	50	0	50
1420-1440	1	0	4	4	0	11	27	0	73
1440-1460	1	0	5	1	0	19	5	0	95
1460-1480	1	0	3	3	0	13	19	0	81
1480-1500	1	0	2	3	0	2	60	0	40



MOVEMENT OF EIGHT SENSATE VARIABLES



MOVEMENT OF EIGHT IDEATIONAL VARIABLES

VITA

Surname: BEAVERIDGE Given Names: STUART AUBREY

Place of Birth: REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN Date of Birth: June 4, 1934

Educational Institutions Attended, with Dates of Entering and Leaving:

VICTORIA COLLEGE 1951 to 1952

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA 1974 to 1982

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Degrees, Diplomas, Etc., Awarded, with Dates and Names of Institutions:

B.A. (with distinction) 1976 University of Victoria

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Honours and Awards:

Alliance Française Scholarship, 1975

Adeline Julienne Deloume Memorial Scholarship, 1975

The Honorable and Mrs. G. R. Pearkes Prize, 1975

University of Victoria Fellowship, 1976-1978.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Publications:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis or dissertation (the title of which is shown below) to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make *single copies only* for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis/Dissertation

\_\_\_\_\_  
THE SEARCH FOR A SCIENTIFIC SOCIOLOGY:

\_\_\_\_\_  
THE SOROKINIAN SYSTEM IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Author

  
*Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Stuart Aubrey Beaveridge

*Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
26 February, 1982

*Date*