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**ON PITIRIM SOROKIN, CIVILIZATIONAL THEORY, AND CREATIVE ALTRUISM****KYCHKYRUK T. V.**, PhD in Philosophy,Associate Professor of the Department of Philosophy and International  
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**Abstract.** *Among a wide variety of approaches to civilizational interactions, a special place belongs to the legacy of Pitirim Sorokin – the renowned Harvard sociologist who contributed greatly to macrosociology, philosophy of history, theory and history of civilizations. A deep study of the legacy of the great sociologist and humanist Pitirim Sorokin can provide us with intellectual resources and brilliant insights we need to outline new ways for human development. The paper aims to explore the civilizational theory of Pitirim Sorokin. The authors used cultural-historical and integrative approaches.*

**Key words:** *Pitirim Sorokin; civilizations; socio-cultural fluctuations; social and cultural dynamics; ideational, sensate, idealistic(integral) orders.*

**Introduction.**

Nowadays, civilizational approach to the history of humankind is becoming one of the most fruitful tools to examine our past and present and to make assumptions about our future [3; 9; 10; 11]. As T. Danylova emphasizes, “this approach has a number of advantages. It gives a new perspective of the multidimensional vision of history. According to this approach, world history appears to us as a colorful spectrum of the options for the development of humanity. Each of them has its advantages and disadvantages, and none is perfect” [3, p. 57]. Among a wide variety of approaches to civilizational interactions, a special place belongs to the legacy of Pitirim Sorokin – the renowned Harvard sociologist from the Russian emigration. The edition of the fundamental four-volume work “Social and Cultural Dynamics. A Study of Change in Major Systems of Art, Truth, Ethics, Law and Social Relationships” is, in fact, a major research on the history and theory of

civilizations (mostly ancient Mediterranean and European) [17]. For the first time, quantitative methods of measuring various aspects of social and cultural dynamics of civilizations over the two and a half millennia have been widely used. Sorokin contributed greatly to macrosociology, philosophy of history, theory and history of civilizations. He justified the periodic change of socio-cultural systems – ideational, sensate, idealistic (later called integral), and mixed. Sorokin coined the term socio-cultural fluctuations, i.e., processes that are being repeated from time to time in social and cultural life and in human history. He explored the cyclical trajectory of social and cultural dynamics in time and space: historical and social processes are constantly undergoing new variations of old themes. Thus, they are full of surprises and not very predictable. In this sense, history as a whole never repeats itself.

**Analysis of recent researches and publications.** Sorokin’s legacy has

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attracted attention for decades. V. Jeffries identified Sorokin's integral ontology and epistemology as sources of the distinctive characteristics of his system of thought [7]. An interesting research on Sorokin's emphasis on values, his sensate culture, ideas on the family and his vision for moral revival is conducted by D. Uzlaner and K. Stoeckl [18]. The main Sorokin's contributions to the sociological thought were examined by R. L. Simpson [12]. A wake-up call for a critical re-engagement with Sorokin's ideas on altruism was made by B. V. Johnston in his research "Pitirim A. Sorokin and Sociological Theory for the Twenty-First Century" [8]. But still now many of Sorokin's amazing insights are ignored or neglected.

The purpose of the study. The paper aims to explore the civilizational theory of Pitirim Sorokin.

**Methods.** The authors used cultural-historical and integrative approaches.

**Results.** Using the rich historical material, Pitirim Sorokin studied the fluctuations of ideational, sensate and idealistic forms in the cyclical dynamics of different spheres of social life. He investigated the field of art using the examples of Greco-Roman and Western European civilizations and showing the peculiarities of the fluctuations of the main styles of art. Exploring the systems of knowledge, Sorokin examined various directions of truth search, scientific discoveries and technical inventions, basic categories of thinking, scientific theories including theories of cyclic, wavy course of historical process, paradigm shift in social sciences and humanities including culture and civilization.

Sorokin also studied the fluctuations of various forms of ethics and law, systems of social relations, cycles of strengthening and weakening of the government control – from absolute totalitarianism to absolute *laissez-faire*. Government intervention, coercion and regulation increase in the situation of the social crisis, and when the crisis passes –

it decreases. The study of the dynamics of economic conditions show the presence of short-term and long-term fluctuations, periods of ups and downs. The types of economic relations are modified by changes in socio-cultural system.

Pitirim Sorokin demonstrates cyclical fluctuations in the history of wars, for example, military conflicts in ancient Greece and Rome, China, and European countries, internal unrest resorting to quantitative measurements: the percentage of war years, the relative size of the armed forces and losses. The study failed to show a clear rhythm there. This led Sorokin to the idea that the nature of wars in ideational and sensate types of culture was different. He also found that when these types have been changed, military activity has been increased. The same trend is observed in the dynamics of social upheavals.

A study of all aspects of the development of civilizations led Pitirim Sorokin to the conclusion that modern society was in the deepest crisis that covered all major aspects of economic, political, social and cultural life of the Western society. Though Pitirim Sorokin emphasized that his concept had little to do with the theories of the life cycles, according to which culture and society went through the stages of childhood, adulthood, old age and death, in fact, his work convincingly showed that the life cycle prevailing in the Western sensate culture came to its end. It should be replaced by an idealistic (integral) socio-cultural system. Sorokin emphasized the predictive value of his concept.

Thus, the main work of Pitirim Sorokin may be seen as a holistic picture of cyclical fluctuations in the dynamics of socio-cultural order of great historical epochs. Although not all the provisions of this doctrine are indisputable, Sorokin's contribution to the theory of the dynamics of civilizations cannot be overestimated.

In his book "Contemporary Sociological Theories" [13], Pitirim Sorokin turned to analysis, comparison, and

evaluation of the major sociological theories. Sorokin analyzed macro-sociological theories that considered the functioning of large cultural and social systems estimating them as the great achievement of modern sociology and related sciences. Some of these theories contradict each other, however, as the great scientist stated, “the complex nature of social phenomena makes rather necessary a variety of the approaches and methods of study. Attacking them with various methods and from various scientifically sound standpoints we have more chances to know them than by attacking with only one standardized method and from one standardized standpoint” [13, p. 757].

Going deeper into the exploration of civilizations, Sorokin defined the general principles for a civilizational theory. Civilizations are huge cultural supersystems that are functioning as a real unity, they are not the same as states, nations or any other social groups. Knowledge of the principles of the structure and functions of the supersystem provides us with macro-categories for the analysis of the entire cultural space. Supersystems determine most of the changes taking place on the surface of the socio-cultural life including historical events and activities that are part of small socio-cultural units, i.e., their ideology, behavior, material culture, way of life. The total number of supersystems in human history is small, but the number of small cultural systems is almost limitless. Each supersystem is based on the ultimate value that civilization generates, develops and realizes during its life path. Each supersystem retains its identity despite changes in its components. The life path of the supersystems and humanity as a whole undergoes changes and at the same time ensures the preservation of continuity. There are similar phases in the life cycles of all civilizations. Civilizations in the process of their life follow their own course passing through the stages of birth, growth, prosperity, decline, death,

and rebirth. According to Sorokin, modernity is marked by a deep crisis that symbolized the end of the era of the predominance of sensate culture and the transition to an integral type of civilization.

Pitirim Sorokin highlighted the nuances of his approach to the study of local civilizations. He understood them not as cultural, but rather as social systems formed on the basis of cultural meanings, values, norms, or interests. Civilizations belong to different types of social systems. For him, an organized community with its inherent central cultural system is the core of these civilizations, as well as the basis for their existence. Besides, each civilization has one or more third-party groups with their own culture, different from the common culture, which means that civilizations are heterogeneous. Each of them interacts with several external groups and their cultures that exist there as clusters.

Pitirim Sorokin opposes the claims about the standard way of the development of civilizations. He argues that their way of life is extremely multivariate – because of origin, stages of development, and the duration of existence. Some go through only one cycle of origin (existence – death), while others go through several waves of growth and decline, and some temporarily disintegrate to be reborn later. In fact, every civilization has creative achievements in different spheres of culture in different periods of their existence.

Thus, Pitirim Sorokin significantly enriched the theory of civilizations revealing the complexity and heterogeneity of their structure, variety of types of their origin and ways of life, and the ambiguity of their destinies. In his book “The Basic Trends of Our Times” [16], Sorokin tried to identify trends and long-term forecast for the dynamics of civilizations in the late 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Emphasizing the differences between sensate, ideational and integral socio-cultural systems, the great

sociologist shows that sensate order, which had been emerged in the Western culture in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century and has been dominant since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, is in the process of decay and should be replaced by integral order, which promises to ensure the reunification of religion, philosophy, science, ethics and fine arts into one-unified whole based on core values such as Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

The first sprouts of this integral order are growing slowly. The epochal struggle between dying sensate and emerging integral orders is paramount; it is the deepest and greatest struggle of our time for the coming decades. Sorokin emphasized the role of supraconscious in discoveries and creativity. The new order will change the human personality. The new integral personality should be characterized by creative, unselfish love. This epochal struggle will affect all spheres of social life: philosophy, religion, ethics, politics, economics, social life.

At the same time, this does not mean the unification of civilizations: the integral order will have its peculiarities in the West and in the East. Pitirim Sorokin notes that the restructuring of the global civilization space will inevitably move the creative leadership of humankind from Europe and the European West, where it has been concentrated for the past five centuries, to a larger area of the Pacific and Atlantic, especially America, Asia, and Africa. European monopoly leadership can be considered almost complete. The future history of humankind is already presented on the much larger stage of the Asian-African-American-European cosmopolitan theater.

Nowadays, the voices of non-European civilizations in the world's theater are becoming clearer, which indicates that Sorokin's prediction is being realized. However, the doctrine of the creative power of altruistic love has not yet been mastered while it is the only way to oppose and eventually defeat hatred, terrorism, clash of different worldviews

and different civilizations. "At the present juncture of human history, a notable increase of an unselfish, creative love (goodness) in the superorganic world is the paramount need of humanity..."

In the twentieth century interhuman strife assumed the catastrophic proportions of two world wars and many other wars, of endless bloody revolutions and revolts, not to mention crimes and milder forms of the "struggle for existence". At present, due to the discovery of the intra-atomic secrets and to the invention of Apocalyptic means of destruction, this moral anarchy begins to threaten the survival of mankind and especially the continuation of its creative mission. The situation explains why a notable increase of unselfish, creative love in the total human universe is the paramount present need of humanity" [15, p. 184–185].

Pitirim Sorokin established The Harvard Center for Creative Altruism, where studies were conducted on how to make humans less selfish and more creative. The researcher came to the conclusion that humanity can be saved if human beings, social groups and cultural institutions become more altruistic, creative, and loving [6]. «A peaceful, harmonious, and creative society can exist only when its members possess at least a minimum of love, sympathy, and compassion ensuring mutual aid, co-operation, and fair treatment. Under these conditions its members are united in one collective 'we' in which the joys and sorrows of one member are shared by others. In such a group a member is not an isolated 'atom', but a vital part of a creative community» [14, p. 57].

**Discussion.** Under modern conditions, "individuals are necessarily lonely. Each step ahead cut them off from the other people, leaving face to face with their own mental abyss and the world full of catastrophic upheavals, the world that casts doubt on the faith in themselves, humanity, goodness, and justice" [4, p. 8]. The terrible social and political

cataclysms, ecological catastrophe, wars, disasters, clash of civilizations, identity crisis push humanity to the brink of survival [1; 2; 5]. A deep study of the legacy of the great sociologist and humanist Pitirim Sorokin can provide us with intellectual resources and brilliant insights we need to outline new ways for human development.

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## ПРО ПИТИРИМА СОРОКІНА, ЦИВІЛІЗАЦІЙНУ ТЕОРІЮ ТА ТВОРЧИЙ АЛЬТРУЇЗМ

Кичкирук Т. В., Салата Г. В.

**Анотація.** Серед найрізноманітніших підходів до цивілізаційних взаємодій особливе місце належить спадщині Питурима Сорокіна – відомого гарвардського соціолога, який зробив значний внесок у макросоціологію, філософію історії, теорію та історію цивілізацій. Глибоке вивчення спадщини великого соціолога і гуманіста Питурима Сорокіна може надати нам інтелектуальних ресурсів та блискучих ідей, необхідних для окреслення нових шляхів людського розвитку. Метою статті є дослідження цивілізаційної теорії Питурима Сорокіна. Автори використовували культурно-історичний та інтегративний підходи.

**Ключові слова:** Питурим Сорокін; цивілізація; соціокультурні коливання; соціальна та культурна динаміка; ідейні, чуттєві, ідеалістичні (інтегральні) порядки.