PITIRIM SOROKIN'S 'UNBORN IR OFFSPRING': SOCIOCULTURAL CRISIS, CREATIVE ALTRUISM, AND THE INTELLECTUAL ÉMIGRÉ CONTEXT IN THE US

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Abstract

Amidst the disciplinary identity crisis of International Relations (IR), attempts to provide alternative accounts of the discipline's history have made significant strides in overcoming traditionally instrumentalised parochial genealogies, such as the 'Great Debates.' Yet such attempts still obscure significant strands of thought pertinent to the field of IR in its nascent state. Drawing from Vineet Thakur and Karen Smith's framework on the "multiple births of IR," the "new sociology of ideas" as illustrated by Charles Camic and Neil Gross, and Patrick Baert's "positioning theory," this study aims to offer an expanded perspective into the history and sociology of IR. The thesis's focus lies in presenting the concealed 'birth' of IR within Pitirim Sorokin's international political thought, which will be examined in a comparative setting alongside the ideas of Hans J. Morgenthau. By providing a comprehensive account of the intellectual underpinnings and experiences that shaped the conceptions of Sorokin and Morgenthau, the study exposes the significance of the 'émigré experience' for the formulation of their theories and their perception of American social science. The thesis ultimately illustrates that institutional and socio-political factors have served as the catalyst drivers that have either set obstacles or have provided support for certain theories in assuming the role of 'IR theory.'

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Introduction: towards an expansion of the history and sociology of IR

Merely four years ago, in 2019, the discipline 'celebrated' its centennial anniversary, marking a hundred years since the establishment of the field's first academic chair in Aberystwyth, Wales (Booth 2019; Bain 2019). Amidst the discipline's identity crisis caused by the very question of what IR is and what it is not, IR scholarship has traditionally striven to provide a self-referential genealogy through instrumentalised constructs such as the "Great Debates" (Hamati-Ataya 2018, 16). Rather than providing a comprehensive, all-encompassing account of how the discipline came to be, however, such narratives promulgate exclusionary effects. From the perspective of the IR reader, the view of the field's lineage is significantly limited and mispresented. Traditionally, the narratives of the discipline's evolution have not provided illuminating, holistic perspectives that elucidate what IR *actually* entails. Instead, the Great Debates and several other constructs used to trace the field's landmark breakthroughs, such as the various "turns," deliver a narrow, parochial version of IR knowledge-production and the social, institutional, and political factors involved in it (Levine and Barder 2018, 296). Moreover, the binary logic of the Great Debates, not only fashions the vanquish of the Great Debates but also obscures other forms of IR knowledge that did not participate in the debates and hence remained on the margins of scholarly attention (Çapan and Zarakol 2018, 124). Thus, this thesis aims to provide a contribution to the efforts that attempt to make sense of not only what renders ideas as 'IR,' but also what deeper developments and mechanisms contribute to the institution of such ideas as clearly identifiable, and widely agreed upon theories of IR.

As a solution to this misrepresentation of the discipline it is imperative that we seek to expand our knowledge on the various origins of IR that have hitherto been neglected. In this regard, scholars in the field of history of IR have provided an illuminating account of the impact

of European émigré thought in the creation and development of the field, most notably in the case of Felix Rösch's (2014) book *Émigré Scholars and the genesis of international relations: A European discipline in America?*. Yet there were other experiences that shaped IR as we know it. The focus is often directed towards the German and Jewish exiles and refugees who established themselves as intellectuals in the US during the interwar and after the Second World War (as also observed in the accounts of Neacsu 2009; Lebow 2016a; Sylvester 1999). The émigrés that left the Russian Empire due to the Bolshevik Revolution have remained on the margins of the discipline's historiography. Nevertheless, the profuse international political thought of figures such as, Pitirim Sorokin, Nicholas Timasheff, and Georges Gurvitch, who re-established themselves in the West, maintains significant perspectives that should not be overlooked.

This study aims to contribute to this expansion of our knowledge of the discipline by providing a historical and sociological account of IR through the case of the Russian American sociologist, Pitirim Sorokin. To establish the links necessary for this endeavour, I will be drawing from Vineet Thakur and Karen Smith's (2021) calls for researching the multiple disciplinary histories dubbed as the "multiple births" of IR. The contributions of their Special Issue of *The Review of International Studies* introduce the idea that novel ways of theorising IR may be located in seemingly unlikely sources as demonstrated by the article of Thomas Kwasi Tieku (2021) on the 'Legon School of International Relations' in Ghana. Therefore, the framework of the "multiple births" transpires as an alluring prospect for original research projects that endeavour to exhume previously obscured knowledge. This thesis seeks to demonstrate how Sorokin's premature systematic ideas on sociocultural change and creative altruism offer an insightful perspective into the nascent stage of IR's development. Moreover, considering that IR scholars have not exploited this body of knowledge, this study additionally

aims to examine the noteworthy pertinence of Sorokin's theories for the field as an "unborn IR offspring."

"Sorokin […] was a giant on the twentieth-century stage. He debated with Trotsky, exchanged ideas with Pavlov, and received a personal invitation to meet with President Masaryk of Czechoslovakia. He was […] a scholar among statesmen and a statesman among scholars" (Ford 2018, ix). However, despite being widely heralded as one of the pioneers of American sociology his academic standing and legacy have suffered severe fluctuations (Johnston 1987, 103). Even though his works often served as the backbone of major disciplinary contributions throughout the twentieth century, they remained mostly uncited due to his controversial status as an academic "pariah," a portrayal largely stemming from his works on altruism and love (Mangone 2018, 4). Nevertheless, "[t]o ignore him is to risk parochialism. To acknowledge his stature, on the other hand, is to exhibit the ecumenism that we consider a hallmark of our Society" (Ford 2018, ix).

One of the most striking initial observations regarding Sorokin's theses relates to the seemingly incommensurable nature of his views to the ideas of the wave of European émigré intellectuals that arrived in the US during the first half of the twentieth century. Upon a more perceptive assessment, however, Sorokin's ideas align with the conceptions reverberated by many other expatriates as well. As such, whilst preserving the focus largely within the sphere of IR, I aim to conduct a comparative analysis between the thought of Pitirim Sorokin and Hans J. Morgenthau. To untangle the intricacies of their conceptions, I additionally seek to uncover their intellectual underpinnings as a means for elucidating the underlying processes that shaped their ideas. Apart from the ideational factors that influenced their conceptions though, I seek to highlight how Sorokin's and Morgenthau's 'American Experience' differed markedly due to their status as émigrés of Russian Orthodox and Jewish origin, respectively. To be sure, as

Sorokin remains the focal point of the thesis, in contrast to the case of Morgenthau, the analysis will delve deeper into the biographical aspects of Sorokin's life.

The thesis will additionally inquire the converging views that the two figures held in relation to the state of liberalism as well as their assessments of their respective discipline in the US, ultimately leading to an examination of the stark differences between the normative considerations of their theories. To avoid an epidermic engagement with the development of their ideas, throughout my exploration of their intellectual development and professional occupation in the US, I additionally seek to explore the reception of their intellectual contributions and the direct effects of this reception vis-à-vis their treatment by academic, institutional, governmental, or administrative agents as well as the public.

By undertaking an investigation in Pitirim Sorokin's theoretical contributions made in the form of a grand narrative theory of sociocultural change and an applied sociological framework based on altruism, I directly seek to underline the IR-related significance of his thought. Thus, drawing from Sorokin's extensive writings on the crises, calamities, and challenges which humanity will be called to confront, I will provide a concise, clarifying account of his theory of social and cultural change. In this regard, I will also provide a revealing perspective into the institutional IR-related motivation for the publication of his major work *The Social and Cultural Dynamics*. This realm of his intellectual contribution will be compared with other major theories of civilisation change which—in contrast to Sorokin—garnered attention within the field of IR.

Ultimately, I aim to provide an insightful perspective regarding the most controversial aspect of his entire academic career spanning six decades: his theory of altruisation. By focusing on Sorokin's normative considerations permeating his theory of amity, aptly labelled as 'amitology,' I seek to place it in the context of 1950s IR theory and provide a discerning

overview of the institutional factors that permit or prevent a text from assuming a canonical or at least somewhat of a position within the field. As such, by illuminating the intellectual and institutional context in which Sorokin developed his theories on sociocultural change and altruism, I seek to provide valuable insights into how scholars come to be appreciated or neglected within the field of IR.

Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, and Methodological Outline

Whither Sorokin (in IR)?

Despite the undisputable contributions of Pitirim Sorokin to the discipline of sociology, the term 'pariah' has been used to describe his standing within the field (Johnston 1996). As such, it is not surprising that efforts aiming to reinstate Sorokin as a crucial figure within the discipline have remained relatively slight. One of the most prominent, recent exceptions to this rule, is Emiliana Mangone's (2018) attempt to provide a reappraisal of Sorokin's *magnum opus*: *The Social and Cultural Dynamics*. Perhaps the only book to celebrate the half-century anniversary since Sorokin's death in 1968, her contribution seeks to offer a detailed and critical assessment of his major work (Mangone 2018, 1). Interest in Sorokin has followed a fluctuating course and, as such, publications most often appear unanticipatedly. Alternatively, works appear on occasions of certain anniversaries, as is the case with the volume edited by Joseph B. Ford (2018), which was initially developed as a centennial celebration and includes extensive contributions on his life, participation in institutional politics, methodology, and theory.[1]

One of the most well-covered facets of Sorokin's figure pertains to his life's experiences. A series of seminal contributions have been made by Barry V. Johnston (1995; 1987; 1996) as well as Lawrence T. Nichols (2012; 2019), who have provided insightful perspectives into the (trans)formative encounters and experiences which shaped Sorokin's scholarly output and academic standing. However, perhaps the most prominent sources for comprehending Sorokin's life may be found in his own autobiographical accounts in *The Long*

[1] Most prominently, amongst the contributors, Sorokin's former student, Robert K. Merton authored a chapter on their correspondence of the years 1933-34.

Journey (1963) that covers his entire academic career and life in Russia, as well as his *Leaves from a Russian Diary* (1950b) that offers a primary account to his first-hand experiences during the early stages of the USSR's establishment.

Amongst the various novel conceptions proposed by Sorokin, his preoccupation with 'creative altruism' is a standout example that signifies the endpoint of his intellectual journey's progression (Mangone 2018, 5)**.** Despite the concept's novelty, the scholarly attention it has garnered has remained startlingly minor. Amongst the small number of contributions focusing on Sorokin's theories of altruisation, Jay Weinstein's (2000) article *Creative Altruism: Restoring Sorokin's Applied Sociology* offers a noteworthy attempt to reinvigorate the discourse surrounding creative altruism's potential as an applied form of sociology. The most recent exemplar of this body of literature was published by Mangone and Dolgov (2020) in their study on the pertinence of Sorokin's 'amitology' as an applied science of altruism, seeking to illuminate the significance of his proposed epistemological reorientation of sociology towards 'positive' phenomena rather than the traditional focus on society's 'negative' pathologies (2020, 6–7).

In contrast to the English-speaking world, the attention attributed to Sorokin, and specifically his ideas surrounding 'love,' is significantly greater within Russian academia (Krotov 2012). Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, his works were discovered anew as they were translated to Russian, leading eventually to a widespread scholarly interest focusing on the entire spectrum of Sorokin's contributions (e.g., Tiryakian 1999; Anikin 2011; Zherebtsov 2012; Popkov and Tyugashev 2013). Moreover, an intellectual revival has also taken place in his birthplace in the Komi Republic, where, amongst other manifestations of his legacy, the university of the Republic's capital was renamed after Sorokin in 2015 (Nichols 2012, 377; Kravchenko and Pokrovsky 2001; Lomonosova 2015, 147)**.**

Considering the limited number of contributions on his main sociological theories—primarily due to his informal ostracisation from the field of sociology in the US—it is foreseeable that within the realm of IR literature, no effort has been made to transplant Sorokin's ideas to a nuanced research framework. Despite the emergence of the profound 'cultural turn' in IR (e.g., Lebow 2008; Katzenstein 2018), this body of works does not refer to Sorokin. Nevertheless, few connections have been made between the significance of his international thought and the emergence of the twentieth century field of 'Peace Research Studies,' on the basis of the significance of Sorokin's proposed research focus on 'positive' rather than 'negative' phenomena (notably in Western academia: Eckhardt 1983; Singer 1970 and in the Russian-speaking world: Mentyukova et al. 2009). Additionally, his son, Sergei Sorokin (2016), has authored a concise article that, amongst others, reflects on some contemporary IR problems through a reconsideration of his father's book *Power and Morality* (Sorokin 1959). Despite the unmistakable association of Sorokin's 'creative altruism' with the 'international,' few works have explored this connection. One of these contributions was published by his former student Edward A. Tiryakian, (2009; as well as by Dolgov 2015 in Russian). These works, however, provide a largely descriptive account, which as Tiryakian (2009, 424) admits, necessitates the emergence of normative contributions.

Furthermore, even though a large body of works focusing on the contributions of émigré intellectuals in the US has long been present (amongst others: Moser, Voena, and Waldinger 2014; Drachman and Halberstadt 1992; Navari 2017), accounts of Sorokin's seminal thought within the broader context of this milieu are largely absent. As such, it is anticipated that despite the similarity and occasional polar divergence of the scope and range of his works with those of Hans J. Morgenthau, no studies have explored the potential interplay between his *Social and Cultural Dynamics* and *Scientific Man vs Power Politics*. Even though Morgenthau's lecturing stints at Harvard (1951, 1959, 1960) coincided with Sorokin's tenure

at the university, we have no evidence of any correspondence between them; by contrast, during that time, Morgenthau became a close friend with Talcott Parsons, Sorokin's main intellectual opponent (Thompson 2020, chap. 31, para. 114). Both scholars boast an impressively extensive number of contributions and the only junctions between their works may be found in their respective chapters in the book *Toynbee and history: critical essays and reviews* (Montagu 1956, chapters 18 and 19) as well as their corresponding commentaries in response to Erich Fromm's essay *War Within Man: A Psychological Enquiry Into The Roots of Destructiveness* (1963, 34–35, 42–43). Thus, amongst others, one of the aims of this thesis lies in highlighting the parallel and divergent aspects found across the works of both figures.

Theory and methodology

The development of this thesis is guided by the proposed framework by Thakur and Smith on the discovery of the multiple, unanticipated origins of IR, an approach that primarily focuses on parts of the world located outside the West (2021, 573). Yet, significant underexplored geneses might still be uncovered within western contexts as revealed by the piece of Alexander E. Davis (2021) on the creation of a "settler colonial IR" in Australia, included in Thakur and Smith's special issue. Concurrently, the "multiple births" framework encourages the exposure of foundational thought on IR that transcends the discipline's traditional association to political science (Thakur and Smith 2021, 575). Therefore, shifting the lens to the case of Pitirim Sorokin not only aligns with their pleas for the unearthing of overlooked "births" of IR but also provides an insightful perspective into the voice of an émigré intellectual whose ideas on sociological theory and (international) politics originally emerged in the Russian Empire. As his contributions to a bourgeoning form of IR have remained undiscovered by IR scholarship

and simultaneously unintegrated into policymaking, rather than a materialised "birth," his promising international thought will be treated and portrayed as an "unborn IR offspring."

For the European émigrés, the American Experience posed the problem of translation. During the first half of the twentieth century, they were called to adapt to a series of bizarre intellectual challenges (Behr and Sigwart 2018, 30). Within the new and unfamiliar socio-political setting they entered, they were called to work out novel ways of expressing their ideas, to identify their newfound role, and to effectively assert their position within the scholarly discourse (Behr and Sigwart 2018, 30). Sorokin and Morgenthau also faced comparable unfamiliar challenges that informed their views. As this thesis is a study in the history and sociology of intellectuals, to illuminate the trajectory of their thought and career I will be resorting to methods derived from the sociology of ideas. Namely, I will be drawing from the "new sociology of ideas" most notably presented by Charles Camic and Neil Gross (2004, 243), to explain how Morgenthau and Sorokin "came to hold the ideas they d[id]." As such, I will be following most of the tenets of this approach. Explicitly, *contextualism* figures prominently in my analysis, for I seek to provide an ample contextual examination with an increased emphasis on *localism* by reconstructing the ideas of their 'European experience' in contrast to their 'American experience' before eventually turning to their "struggles for intellectual position" (Camic and Gross 2004, 245–48).

However, to eschew some of the drawbacks of this approach, specifically the need for the adoption of "a vocabulary of intentions," I seek to infuse their framework with Patrick Baert's 'Positioning Theory' (2012; 2015; 2018) Similarly to the "Cambridge School of Intellectual History," in Patrick Baert's positioning theory, intellectual interventions are treated as 'speech-acts' or deeds (Baert 2012, 315–16; 2015, 163–64). However, rather than recovering the author's intentions as proposed by the Cambridge School and the new sociology of ideas,

Baert adopts a vocabulary of "effects," thus setting forth his concept of "positioning" (2012, 318). All modes of intellectual intervention (ranging from articles and books to speeches) as well as the manner according to which they are framed constitute an assumption of a certain position within the broader intellectual field (Baert 2012, 316; 2018, 229). Positioning constitutes a relational practice, therefore, the intellectual places himself either in opposition to, or in coalition with, their intellectual opponents or allies, respectively (Baert 2012, 311). The effect of their intellectual contribution is accordingly decided by their intellectual milieu but also the major institutional players, the prevailing socio-political context, and the intellectual products dominating the discourse (Baert 2012, 313–14).

As illustrated in the following sections, upon Sorokin's arrival in the US, his earliest intellectual contributions in the country placed him at the centre of the sociological discourse of the 1920s and 1930s. Sorokin's reputation as an established scholar increased the likelihood of his success within American sociology. However, his attempt to reposition himself within the field through the reorientation of his academic focus was accompanied by adverse effects that impacted his standing. Thus, it is essential to also examine the interplay between the various fields that impact "positioning:" from intellectual allies to opponents, audiences, institutions, and other "networks" of intellectuals (Baert 2012, 315–16).

A biographical sketch of Pitirim Sorokin

"On a grey afternoon, September 23, 1922, the first group of exiles gathered at the Moscow railway station. […] [M]y wife and I were in this first group" (Sorokin 1950b, 307). Roughly a year later, aboard the *Martha Washington,* a small Italian ship, Sorokin would embark on the last phase of his long journey to his new home across the Atlantic (Sorokin 1963, 202). Amongst his Russian émigré co-passengers "a vivacious lady, made herself conspicuous by playing cards, frequenting the bar, and liberally flirting with the fellow passengers. *With this sort of conduct she is bound to have some trouble in the puritanical United States*" Sorokin thought to himself (1963, 202–3; emphasis added). However, shortly after his arrival in the US, he would realise the irony of his mistaken notion, and, thus, the ostensible moral bankruptcy brought upon by the "sensate" cultural premises of society would become one of the central subjects of inquiry throughout Sorokin's extensive body of works (Sorokin 1963, 203).

Before his seminal emigration to the US though, roughly the first three decades of Sorokin's life were distinctly Russian. In a vicinity untouched by civilisation, covered in lush forests and only disturbed by the flow of the Vychegda and Pechora rivers, Pitirim Aleksandrovich Sorokin was born in 1889 in the small village of Turya (Sorokin 1963, 11). Home to the native population of the Komi people, the northern Vologda province comprised a unique community that influenced young Sorokin's beliefs, moral principles, perception of the (super)natural, and subsequently, his future works (Sorokin 1963, 15; Johnston 1995, 21). Spent in constant transit, as he accompanied his father on his travels in search of work as a craftsman repairing churches, Sorokin's semi-nomadic childhood was marked not only by the pagan traditions of the Komi but also the teachings of the Orthodox clergymen that he encountered (Johnston 1995, 3–4; Sorokin 1998b, 3). Sorokin's father, Alexander, was a "wonderful [and loving] man;" he was prone, however, to the trouble of alcoholism, and, hence,

his frequent violent eruptions ultimately led to Pitirim's premature 'emancipation' at the age of ten (Allen 1963, 4–5).

Until the age of eleven, Sorokin did not formally attend school, but gained access to knowledge through the teachings of local priests; but in 1900, he was able to showcase his intellect and begin his formal education after winning a scholarship to study at an advanced elementary school, before eventually completing his secondary education at an Orthodox teacher's training school where he befriended the renowned economist-to-be Nikolay Kondratiev (Nieli 2006, 280; Nichols 2019, 117). Soon after, Sorokin moved away to the empire's capital where he would read sociology at the Psycho-Neurological Institute, and law at the University of St. Petersburg (Allen 1963, 8). Despite his young age, this period was highly fruitful in terms of his academic endeavours, for whilst working under the mentorship of the sociologist Maksim M. Kovalevsky and the legal expert Lev I. Petrazhitsky, he published roughly fifty academic papers before graduating (Margolis 2020, 234).

Nevertheless, apart from his time at the university, this period of Sorokin's life was marked by persecution as he would go on to encounter his first troubles with the government due to his engaged political activity. As a dissident in the eyes of both the imperial state and the communist leadership, due to his association with the Socialist Revolutionary Party, and thereafter, his opposition to the Bolsheviks, Sorokin was imprisoned on six separate occasions, three times by each governing authority respectively (Johnston 1989, 1; Jaworski 1993, 63). Amongst these imprisonments, perhaps the most pivotal took place in 1918 when Sorokin was sentenced to death by the Vologda communist government for allegedly conspiring to assassinate Lenin (Johnston 1995, 3). He anticipated his execution for a period of six weeks, but Sorokin was eventually freed after significant political figures convinced Lenin to pardon him, and as such, he was able to return to his academic position at the University of St.

Petersburg (Johnston 1990, 98; Mangone 2018, 3). Sorokin later recalled that it was during these six weeks, spent in constant anguish whilst witnessing the death of his friends and fellow inmates, that he came to the realisation that "cruelty, hatred, violence, and injustice never can and never will be able to create a mental, moral, or material millennium. The only way toward it is the royal road of *all-giving creative love*" (Sorokin 1954, vii; emphasis added). In 1922, he was imprisoned once again—albeit for the last time—and was subsequently sentenced to exile (Sorokin 1963, 196). Having left the Soviet Union for Berlin during the first wave of the infamous 'philosophers' ship' expulsions targeting the intelligentsia, he was personally invited to Prague by his friend and first President of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš G. Masaryk (Johnston 1995, 19).

In contrast to most intellectuals in "Russia Abroad," Sorokin realised that the Soviet state was a stable structure to remain for decades, and as such, did not envision an imminent return to Russia (Johnston 1995, 20; Eliaeson 2016, 203). Instead, he began looking for opportunities in the United States (Nichols 1996a, 138). Thanks to the assistance of Edward A. Ross of the University of Wisconsin, who invited him to present a series of lectures on the Bolshevik Revolution, Sorokin was eventually able to continue his life's journey, which would begin by boarding the *Martha Washington* (Nichols 1996a, 139). After a long and exhausting search for stable employment, Pitirim's efforts were ultimately greeted by success when he eventually managed to secure a position as Professor of Sociology at the University of Minnesota (Sorokin 1963, 217). During his six years in Minneapolis he published six books, and, especially through his discipline-defining contributions on social mobility, rural sociology, and sociological theory, Sorokin firmly established himself in American academia (Johnston 1996, 231). In light of this success, in 1929, convinced of Sorokin's potential to boost Harvard's standing in sociology, Abbott Lawrence Lowell, the university's president,

extended a personal invitation to Sorokin to serve as the founding chair of the Department of Sociology (Johnston 1995, 55–56; 1996, 231).

Thus, in 1930, the department of Sociology was formally established; Sorokin's popularity and reputation peaked during his first years at Harvard, and during this period, he became preoccupied with the completion of his *magnum opus*, the four volumes of the *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, the first three of which were published in 1937 (Johnston 1987, 106–7). His work, though, received both criticism and praise, rendering him a highly polarising intellectual, and, thus, marking the start of his academic isolation (Mangone 2018, 4). Whilst the department was shifting towards a course that diverged from Sorokin's interests, the eminent sociologist Talcott Parsons effectively led the administrative efforts that relegated the Sociology Department in 1946 to a mere sub-division of the newly established Department of Social Relations (Ford 2018, 10). Subsequently, in 1950, Sorokin established the 'Harvard Research Centre for Creative Love.' Its objective was the promotion of a research agenda centred on love and altruism, which reified the axioms that Sorokin proclaimed during his imprisonment and arranged—yet unmaterialised—execution in 1918 (Sorokin 1954, vii–viii).

This preoccupation with creative altruism, though, amplified the voices that viewed Sorokin as a "prophet," rather than a renowned scholar (Mangone 2018, 5). Especially during the 1950s, Sorokin remained mostly on the margins of the discipline (Johnston 1987, 117). Since the early 1990s, however, his status as an eminent public intellectual received significant appreciation both in the US and Russia, especially within conservative circles (Uzlaner and Stoeckl 2018, 134). His *American Sex Revolution* (1956b) has not only attracted the interest of pro-family activists across the globe but has also been cited by prominent conservatives across the world, most notoriously by the 48th Vice President of the US, Mike Pence, during one of his speeches in Congress against the legalisation of same-sex marriage back in 2006 (Uzlaner

and Stoeckl 2018, 137–38). Despite his election as the president of the American Sociological Association in 1963, apart from the widespread recognition of Sorokin's views within contemporary movements of moral conservatism, his legacy, his theory of sociocultural change, and his "creative altruism" remain underappreciated (Johnston 1987).

Tracing the intellectual roots and trajectory of Pitirim Sorokin and Hans J. Morgenthau

The following excerpt from a 1959 lecture, wherein Sorokin proclaims the need for a serious study of the energy he called "creative altruism/love" reflects the last stage of his philosophy's development:

> "The unforgettable lesson given by the catastrophes of this century convincingly shows that without increased production, accumulation, and circulation of the energy of unselfish love, none of the other means can prevent future suicidal wars nor can they establish a harmonious order in the human universe. The mysterious forces of history seem to have given man an ultimatum: perish by your own hands or rise to a higher moral level through the grace of creative love!" (Sorokin 2012, sc. 9:35-10:30).

The quote aptly reflects his aspirations that his proposed science of "amitology," which he perceived as "an applied science of amity and unselfish love," would become a most important field of research in the future (Sorokin 1951a, 277–79). Upon inspecting Sorokin's previous contributions, this fixation on altruism appears as his suggested solution for society's "calamities" (Sorokin [1942] 2010), the answer to the pessimistic picture he painted of society's state in his *Social & Cultural Dynamics* (Sorokin [1957] 1970). His creative altruism, however, constitutes perhaps the most original, yet vehemently criticised body of his works, especially if examined within its intellectual context.

Upon contrasting his conception to the émigré milieu that arrived in the US during the interwar, these proclamations highly diverge from the stance taken by other eminent figures. Within the Russian émigré community in the US, philosopher Ayn Rand and her transplantation of Nikolay Chernyshevsky's "rational egoism" in the form of the "rational self-interest" stood in stark contrast to Sorokin's works (Rand 1964), whilst within the field of IR,

perhaps the most striking example of a polarly disparate view was put forth by Hans J. Morgenthau's realism (most prominently in: Morgenthau 1947; 1955).

Even though the émigrés "were hardly monolithic, there still is a striking uniformity across a broad spectrum of the émigré experience and perspective that was in sharp conflict with the values of American social science" (Gunnell 1993, 185 as cited in: Behr and Sigwart 2018, 30). This section aims to shed light on how Sorokin, the Christian Orthodox, and Morgenthau, the Jew, despite their highly similar backgrounds as émigrés fleeing authoritarian states in Europe, came to such seemingly diverse, yet on occasion similar in terms of their views of scientific positivism, conclusions on (international) politics. As such, to fully construe the interplay between their works, and their standing within academic and institutional circles, it is essential to simultaneously map both the intellectual underpinnings and the experiences that shaped the conceptions of the two figures.

Sorokin's intellectual pilgrimage and 'émigré position' within American sociology

In the case of Sorokin's altruism, the roots of his concept have multifaceted dimensions. In accordance with his own attempt to historicise his intellectual evolution, the first and amongst the most seminal influences for his views on altruism and love originated from his societal surrounding in the Komi Republic (Nichols 2012, 378; Sorokin 1963, 13–15). The communal structuring of the village families was largely characterised by mutual aid-giving (Sorokin 1963, 15). At the same time, Sorokin was familiarised with the texts and rituals of the Russian Orthodox Church (Johnston 1996, 230). Most of his childhood was spent around the clergy and, as such, the teachings of the priests that taught him shaped his philosophical outlook early on (Sorokin 1998b, 3; 1963, 41, 257–58). Moreover, his view on altruism was significantly

influenced by the plentiful realm of Russian religious philosophy. In his work *The ways and power of love: Techniques of Moral Transformation* published in 1954, Sorokin dedicates a substantial portion of the book's first chapter to the ontological aspect of love as expressed in the works of Vladimir Solov'ev, occasionally described as "the greatest Russian thinker" (Berdyaev 1925, para. 1; Sorokin 1954, 3–14). In Sorokin's interpretation of Solov'ev's writings, love was perceived as a counteracting force to the "dark evil that permeates the world of raw nature" (Sorokin 1954, 7). However, beyond its ontological conception, love is personified in the physical world as the force that unites and maintains the entirety of the physical cosmos (Sorokin 1954, 8–9).

Apart from the religious roots of his conception, pivotal for his thought were the formative years of his higher education; particularly the teachings of his professor at the University of St. Petersburg, Lev Petrazhitsky (Dziewanowski 1981, 11). Even though Sorokin himself does not attribute any credit to Petrazhitsky's influence in the formulation of any of his ideas relating to altruism, upon inspecting the work of his professor, there appears a clear alignment in terms of their outlook. Amongst the extensive list of works examining the significance of love for jurisprudence, in disagreement to the new German civil code of 1900, Petrazhitsky argued that social policy should create favourable conditions to higher moral impulses guided by "a rapprochement between law and love," thus providing an insightful glimpse into his understanding of law, and the consequent impact on Sorokin (Dziewanowski 1981, 10–11). Despite being criticised for proposing an overly utopian concept, Petrazhitsky considered this provision to be an undisputable axiom postulated by "the nature of man and the concept of progress and culture" (Korobova 2012, 153). In Petrazhitsky's eyes, law should be regarded as capable of directing the development of the people's psyche to the common good (Korobova 2012, 153–54). Moreover, Sorokin's viewpoint was also shaped by his professor M. Kovalevsky, who was personally acquainted with L. Tolstoy and played a seminal role in

transplanting his teachings to the young, at the time, Pitirim (Sobolev 2013, 22). Hence, already in 1914, Sorokin wrote on the ideas of Tolstoy in his article *Leo Tolstoy as a Philosopher* (Sorokin 1998a English translation) that "the history of the intelligentsia in Russia […] is a continuous self-sacrifice […] a constant bright love […] the entire history of Russian literature is continuous heroism, an unending sermon on the ideals of love and truth" (1998a; English translation, as cited in: Nichols 1996b, 108).

In addition to these formative intellectual influences, Sorokin's devotion to the significance of altruistic love may be depicted as an aftereffect of his experiences as a persecuted dissident of the Imperial and Soviet states. The preface of *The ways and power of love* is precisely dedicated to his imprisonment in 1918 and its significance for his notion on the establishment of an applied sociological research project based on altruism (Sorokin 1954, vii–ix). However, his conception of altruism—as a focal issue throughout his works—only appears thirty years after this transformative incarceration.[2]

Despite the centrality of Sorokin's Russian experiences to his preoccupation with the subject-matter though, this novel body of literature surfaced owing to his 'American experience' too. Sorokin's disenchantment with what he expected to be a 'puritanical' land could be compared with the first encounter of the members of the Frankfurt School with the consumerism of the American society after their arrival to the country (Behr 2016, 35; Marcuse 1964). Amidst this disillusionment, Sorokin authored several works that criticised the 'sensate' Western civilisation, but his critique was also extended to the narrow theoretical scope of Western science as well as its methodological assumptions (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 20–39, 226–83, 699–704). As such, his insistence on this centrality of love did not develop in a vacuum;

[2] Nevertheless, before the establishment of the Harvard Research Centre for Creative Altruism, a relevant concept, labelled as the 'solidaristic' conduct of human beings, is briefly mentioned in passing for the first time in 1928, in his *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (Sorokin 1928, 510).

rather, it signified the endpoint of his 'integralist' philosophy, which he initially formulated in his numerous works on 'society's crisis' (Sorokin 1942b; 1942a; Johnston 1999, 26), culminating into his extensive contribution: *The Social and Cultural Dynamics* (Sorokin [1942] 2010).[3]

The four volumes consisted of almost three thousand pages, and one of the expected objectives of the work was to provide valuable insights into the underexplored, at the time, realm of IR (Ford 2018, 39–40). In 1934, the Rockefeller Foundation funded the organisation of a cooperative research project focusing on IR that "would incorporate different points of view" without restricting the study to any specific field of inquiry (Ford 2018, 40). Even though a collaborative research venture at Harvard did not materialise, the Foundation allocated the funds to Sorokin for the completion of his *Social and Cultural Dynamics.* A research grant of 14.800 dollars—half of the entire funding distributed to the department of Sociology at Harvard by the Rockefeller Foundation—was conferred to Sorokin (Ford 2018, 40).[4] The resulting work was a broad inquiry that encompassed various fields, and amongst others, offered an entire chapter on the fluctuations of wars throughout a period of twenty-five centuries (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 534–71, abridged version). However, according to a Rockefeller assessment report, the Foundation was not satisfied with the eventual outcome of the project as Sorokin "examined issues situated in a very remote realm to contemporary problems" (Ford 2018, 40). His contribution was inadvertently accompanied by adverse effects that would impact his position within institutional politics.

[3] His works on crisis and calamity included, amongst others: *The Crisis of our Age* (1942b)*; Man and Society in Calamity* (1942a)*; Social Philosophies of an age of Crisis* (1952); *S.O.S.: The meaning of our crisis* (1951b)

[4] According to the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, the amount provided to Sorokin by the Rockefeller foundation, in the wake of the 1929 Wall Street Crash, would equal to roughly 340,000 US dollars, adjusted for inflation, in April, 2023 ('CPI Inflation Calculator' n.d.).

Apart from the dissatisfaction of the funding organisation, however, the work amassed harsh reviews and was seminal for Sorokin's second exile, this time not from a state, but rather from the intellectual field he was previously credited with pioneering (Mangone 2018, 4). In stark contrast to this outcome, during his first triumphant years in Minnesota and at Harvard, Sorokin initially held a stance firmly favourable towards the potential of the scientific method as a way to interpret and perceive reality. However, already in the early 1930s, his view of social science had changed drastically (Ford 2018, 6).

The approach of the American social sciences swiftly crystallised as one of the major problems for Sorokin and his views of his colleagues (Mangone 2018, 4). Not only was he unconvinced by the worth of American sociology but he did not hesitate to showcase his disdain for the discipline (Johnston 1987, 107). In Sorokin's eyes, the American social sciences were victim to underdeveloped theoretical frameworks which could not be included in his 'integral' conception of culture (Mangone 2018, 4). As such, it is not surprising that the criticism—targeted against all his colleagues across the country—amounted to academic suicide. At the same time, his constant insistence that a cultural change through an intensifying full-blown crisis was imminent, paved the way for the critics that mockingly labelled him as a 'preacher' or 'prophet,' a nickname towards which Sorokin was perhaps not entirely opposed, as his very attempt to position himself on the periphery of the discipline was a result of the sincere urgency in the events he foresaw (Johnston 1999, 30–31; Mangone 2018, 4–5).

However, beyond the explosive nature of his arguments, it was the stance that Sorokin himself took that further distanced him from the field and led to this devastating outcome. In his book review of the fourth volume of the *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, Floyd House aptly recapitulates Sorokin's "use of a great deal of space to review the theories of other writers, toward most of which he adopts a quite *cavalier* attitude" (House 1942, 994; emphasis added).

In addition to his problematic approach, Sorokin was also in opposition to a network known as the 'Henderson Circle' (Ford 2018, 39; Baert 2012, 315–16). As part of the institutional politics in which Harvard was submerged, the 'Circle' consisted of a group of Harvard elites that surrounded Lawrence Henderson, the director of the Social Sciences Division of the Rockefeller Foundation. As such, Sorokin's positioning was seminal not only in terms of the broad intellectual context but also regarding the intra-departmental political context, as he would also fall out of favour with the Harvard administration as a result of his critical works (Ford 2018, 40–42).

Almost a decade after his initial marginalisation, Sorokin would turn to his infamous preoccupation with the "mysterious energy of love," for which he would ultimately establish the 'Harvard Research Centre for Creative Love' later known as the 'Centre for Creative Altruism' (Sorokin 1963, 271). Its creation was accomplished owing to the generous funding of Eli Lilly Jr., an heir to a pharmaceutical industry who gave away much of his wealth for the "moral and mental regeneration…of [the] demoralised society" (Ford 2018, 10; Sorokin 1963, 274–76). Equipped with a total sum of 120,000 dollars in funding dispersed over a period of several years, Sorokin entered an engaged and productive altruism-centred period (Ford 2018, 57–58). As part of the Centre's research mandate, he published four separate works targeting the issue area of the significance of love, as well as an edited publication that included the contributions of a varied roster of natural and social scientists titled *Forms and Techniques of Altruistic and Spiritual Growth, a Symposium* (Sorokin 1963, 281–86).[5]

His reoriented focus on love and altruism through his involvement with the *Centre for Creative Altruism* distanced Sorokin even further from the sociological milieu. Many perceived

[5] His monographs included: *Social philosophies of an age of crisis* (1952), *Altruistic Love* (1950a), *S.O.S.: The meaning of our crisis* (1951b), *The ways and power of love* (1954), *The American Sex Revolution* (Sorokin 1956b), *and Power and Morality* (1959).

his new academic preoccupation as an irrational endeavour, whilst the renowned sociologist Lewis Coser—echoing the sentiment of many colleagues—argued that these studies "do not warrant analysis in a work devoted to sociological theory" (as cited in Johnston 1987, 108). This novel locus of interest distanced Sorokin to a point of no return. The 'position-takings' through his contributions on love signified an irreconcilable rupture and the 'prophet' had effectively become a 'pariah'(Johnston 1996). The gap between Sorokin and the 'American Culture' will never be bridged, whilst Sorokin did not hesitate to launch a scornful attack against most of the field with the publication of his *Fads and Foibles in Modern Sociology* (1956a), the scathing nature of which may be observed through its characterisation of Toynbee's, work as a "vast cultural dump" (Sorokin 1956a, 164) [6] Every intellectual contribution of this period is a 'position-taking' that distances him further from the rest of the discipline, and as Mangone argues, it is during this period that Sorokin's "rejection phase" commences: "he is ignored by the sociological literature controlled by some groups, his works on structural sociology remain at the foundation of the discipline but are no longer cited" (2018, 5).

Hans J. Morgenthau's Jewish and American experiences as catalysts for anti-positivism

Much like Sorokin, Morgenthau was led to a long journey across the Atlantic due to the unfavourable conditions he encountered in Europe. However, he was not conventionally persecuted by the German state; rather, he fell victim to the 'Jewish experience' that many of his contemporaries in Germany had to go through as well. Born in the small Bavarian town of

[6] Even more striking in terms of his explosive character was his attempt to publish a pamphlet that personally targeted Talcott Parsons for allegedly plagiarising his own work (Nichols 2012, 381).

Coburg, and son of a Jewish doctor, Hans Joachim Morgenthau was raised in an environment that would be comparable to "a small town in Alabama for an American Black" (Mollov 2000, 119). In an extensive autobiographical interview included in the form of a postscript in Kenneth Thompson's book *Truth and Tragedy: Tribute to Hans J. Morgenthau,* Morgenthau attests to an extensive sequence of traumatic experiences spanning from his formative childhood all the way to his first career steps in Germany (Thompson 2020, chap. 31).

The antisemitic fervour prevalent in the country largely diminished his prospects. Despite his excellent academic achievements, securing a job as an academician presented an almost impossible endeavour; "We have too many Jewish instructors already. We can't have any more" were the remarks that greeted some of his attempts to assume a professorship at universities across Germany (Thompson 2020, chap. 31, para. 57). Amidst the limited opportunities presented and the rise of the Nazi party, he left for Switzerland where in 1931 he found employment at the law department at the University of Geneva (Thompson 2020, chap. 31, para. 58). The only reason he was able to stay was due to the assistance of the jurist Hans Kelsen, without the aid of which, Morgenthau admits that his academic career would have been terminated hastily (Thompson 2020, chap. 31, para. 62). However, this was only the first stage of his journey as an émigré, for the problems he ran into did not subside. Morgenthau speculated that some of the German professors were perhaps Nazis, whilst some of his own students were potentially agents of the Gestapo (Thompson 2020, chap. 31, paras 62, 68). As a result, he searched for alternatives, and in 1935, he was eventually able to secure a job in Madrid, where despite his highly congenial experiences, the civil war would force him to wander away once again (Thompson 2020, chap. 31, paras 69, 73, 76).

Having lost all his possessions, he began a long quest to acquire a visa for the US. This task was also not without obstacles, as most of the consuls were antisemites, rendering the

objective of obtaining his travel documents all the more challenging. Nevertheless, in 1937, his efforts ultimately paid off and Morgenthau arrived in the US where the mission of securing employment persisted as a severe challenge. “We’ll make a try but we’ve never had a Jewish faculty member;” the answer received by Allegheny College aptly summarises the trying state of his predicament (Thompson 2020, chap. 31, para. 93). His first professorship was at the “terrible mess” of the University of Kansas City, as he characterised it. Despite his mistreatment by the administration, he worked tirelessly at his closet-sized office and was, nevertheless, able to complete a large portion of his first book, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (Thompson 2020, chap. 31, paras 96, 97). His professorial agony ultimately ended when the University of Chicago, in need of a swift replacement, commissioned Morgenthau to serve as visiting associate professor in the autumn of 1943, where he would spend most of his remaining years in academia (Thompson 2020, chap. 31, para. 98). However, the entire array of these defining events—from the childhood experiences to the struggles in Kansas city—marked Morgenthau’s worldview and diminished his confidence in human reason, leading to what was described by many of his critics, as an overly “pessimistic” conception of international politics (Lebow 2016a, 69; 2016b, 55).

Apart from his ontological assumptions on the international reality, Morgenthau held particularly strong views on the methodological state of the discipline. In this regard, apart from the struggles experienced, his intellectual influences were equally formative. Swayed by the writings of Hans Kelsen and Max Weber, Morgenthau’s viewpoint stood in stark contrast to the pragmatic American intellectual tradition (Thompson 2020, chap. 31, para. 130). As a first-hand witness of the collapse of the Weimar Republic, Morgenthau regarded positivism and scientism as incapable of dealing with humanity’s pressing political questions (Behr 2016, 34) Even before his emigration, he perceived the dominance of positivist science as a leading cause for the decline of the values both within academia and “the moral condition of mankind”

(Pin-Fat 2005, 227; Rösch 2018, 5). Upon his arrival to the US, "the faith in the scientific method" prevalent within the field of political science evoked images of the legal positivist tradition he opposed so fiercely back in Europe (Jackson 2017, 306).

As a result, his stark opposition to the positivistic behaviouralism that dominated all disciplines of social science at the time led to his first book in the US, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*: an attack against the fundamental philosophical assumptions of the American social sciences (Smith 1987, 197; Behr 2016, 34). Morgenthau aspired to challenge the American approach of dealing with existential and socio-political problems which assumes the existence of a universal, rational solution that must be found at any cost. As such, he sought to illuminate "the tragic character of political and social problems" that may not be dealt with the discovery of a technological or socio-political panacea (Neacsu 2009, 64). He was entirely cognizant of the controversial disposition of his urgings, therefore, his first US publication was a conscious attempt of 'self-positioning' against the prevailing trends within the discipline (Behr 2016, 34; Baert 2012, 312). To merely describe its reception as "cold" would be an understatement, for, amongst the book's numerous critics, *The American Political Science Review* dismissed the validity of his arguments labelling Morgenthau as "dogmatic, at times supercilious, and not infrequently sneering and flippant" (Gooch 1947, 336). As Morgenthau recalls, "I was fortunate that I had already received tenure a couple of weeks before that book came out, […] or else it would have been a very difficult task to obtain it" (Thompson 2020, chap. 31, para. 107).

It was only after the publication of his *Politics Among Nations* that Morgenthau gained an acclaimed reputation within both academia and American governmental agencies (Thompson 2020, chap. 31, para. 111). As it is rare for a single contribution to bring about the desired effects of the intellectual, it is not entirely surprising that Morgenthau's second

contribution eventually receive widespread recognition, especially considering the vast modifications applied to his arguments (Baert 2012, 315). Positioning, is highly relational, therefore, also vastly dependent upon the disciplinary context (Baert 2012, 313). However, the success of an act of positioning also rests upon networks (Baert 2012, 315–16). As such, amidst the disciplinary crisis that came as a result of the lack of a coherent theoretical framework of international politics, Morgenthau's contribution received recognition both from his intellectual milieu and the Rockefeller Foundation (Guilhot 2011, 79). Roughly two decades after Sorokin, Morgenthau was also endowed with the task of providing a significant contribution to the field of IR under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation (Guilhot 2011, 79–80). This time, however, the goal was the formulation of a theory, capable of alleviating the discipline's identity crisis (Guilhot 2011, 79). Having lost faith in the approaches that favoured a "legalist approach" centred on international law**,** the Rockefeller Foundation placed its bets on frameworks akin to Morgenthau's, focusing on power and conflict (Guilhot 2011, 81). Morgenthau assumed a leading role within the hallmark *1954 Conference on International Politics*, whilst his realist perspective successfully assisted in the disciplinary delineation of IR (Guilhot 2011, 90). Merely a year after the Conference, the opening sentence of the revised second edition of his *Politics Among Nations*, included the ambitious conviction that it aims "to present a theory of international politics" (Guilhot 2011, 90).

What is evident across both Sorokin's and Morgenthau's contributions is their clear self-positioning against their respective fields. Upon a preliminary inspection of their works, one may immediately point out the seeming disparity between the centrality of altruism and the primacy of self-interest, in their respective works. However, upon analysing their contributions more thoroughly, the apparent similarity of their arguments is unmistakable. Their critique of the methodological and epistemological assumptions plays an equally crucial role in their contributions. Apart from their common disapproval of the American social

sciences, they also provide an underlying attack against the liberal paradigm. Despite the much broader scope of Sorokin's analysis, the overarching theme of his works posits a comprehensive critique of the 'sensate' culture that impacts not only society but also academia, issues that permeate Morgenthau's confrontation with liberalism too. As such, the following section aims to shed light on the complementarity of, and the ultimate divergence between, Sorokin's and Morgenthau's theories within an IR-laden context.

Liberalism in crisis: towards power politics or integralism and creative altruism?

Sensate, Ideational and Idealistic Cultures

Before delving into the interrelation between Sorokin's theories and the views of Morgenthau, it is necessary to briefly elucidate the principal notions within Sorokin's conceptions. In the *Social and Cultural Dynamics,* Sorokin introduces two distinct systems of culture: the 'sensate' and the 'ideational' ([1957] 1970, 24–25). According to his analysis, the sensate mentality expresses a system which accepts the reality intelligible solely to the sensory organs; its focus lies in the maximisation of the physical needs and, as such, it ignores any nonmaterial or spiritual variables ([1957] 1970, 27–28). On the opposite end of the spectrum, Sorokin places the ideational system, which, conversely, pays attention to the 'nonsensate' facet of reality and strives towards the satisfaction of spiritual needs ([1957] 1970, 27). Naturally, pure types of cultural systems are a rare occurrence throughout history, and amalgamations are the most common type. Amongst these 'mixed types,' the only logically integrated, holistic culture—not to be confused with the ideational—is labelled as the 'idealistic,' wherein the superior material needs coexist with spiritual elements (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 25). However, what is more often the case, is that one of the mentalities asserts its primacy over the other, thus leading to the establishment of various poorly integrated mixed types permeated mostly by the negative facets of each system (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 28–29).

One of the primary attributes of cultures is their inherent variability and fluctuation. According to Sorokin's assessment, over the past twenty-five centuries, history has provided abundant exemplars of cultural transformation from the sensate to the ideational type and vice versa. However, this transition is hardly peaceful for it is carried out in the form of short- or long-term crises (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 530). As such, through crisis, unlike the theories of

Danilevsky, Spengler, or Toynbee, Sorokin does not envisage an end, but rather a turn, a transition that is, nevertheless, cruel and painful (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 628).[7] At the time of the original publication of the work's four volumes in 1941, Sorokin perceived the Western world to be dominated by sensate cultural premises. However, this dominance was under attack by a crisis which indicated a process of transition to the 'creative' ideational culture, accompanied by an increased rate of calamities such as wars, revolutions, and violent unrest across the globe (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 628). And it is within this crisis signifying the sensate culture's disintegration that Sorokin identifies the failures of liberal institutions and knowledge production mechanisms, thus, evoking a maxim akin to the one put forth by Morgenthau (Sorokin 1942a, 240).

Sorokin, the realist

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, contractual relationships served as the foundation of societal and interstate conduct (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 462; Morgenthau 1947, 98–99). However, following the First World War, the effectiveness of such forms saw a rapid decline (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 462). This deterioration is attributed to the classification of such relationships as a product of the sensory world, and, thus, as a victim of the transitory crisis, as illuminated by Sorokin ([1957] 1970, 463). Spanning both East and West, from Germany and Russia to China, and Japan, Sorokin distinguishes a relentless violation of international contracts, which has only increased amidst the Second World War ([1957] 1970, 466). Moreover, it is not only the international treaties that have been subjected to numerous breaches, but also "practically the whole of international law has been incessantly violated by

[7] Here, I refer to Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1926), Arnold Toynbee's *Study of History* (1959; 1987; abridged versions of vol. I-X), and Nikolay Danilevsky's *Russia and Europe (Rossiya i Evropa)* (1871).

all governments without exception" (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 466). In stark contrast to Kant's "democratic peace theory," Sorokin argued that democratic and dictatorial states are equally culpable for such breaches ([1957] 1970, 466). Therefore, he reverberates the idea prevalent in Morgenthau's thought, that any treaty merely constitutes a piece of paper, whilst it provides no binding obligations and is equally mistrusted by all signatory members (Sorokin [1957] 1970; Morgenthau 1947, 101). In accordance with Morgenthau's line of argumentation, in the era of the sensate culture's eclipse "[t]he contract—even a solemn international pact between members of the League or of the United Nations—has been reduced to precisely nothing" (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 466; Morgenthau 1947, 106).

"[T]he Sensate culture and contractualism [characteristic of international liberal thought] bear in themselves the seeds of their own destruction" (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 472). Amidst these failures of the sensate culture and its contractualism, Sorokin also identifies the rise of the period's 'isms'—from Fascism and Nazism to Communism and Socialism—that generate the regimes which promulgate society's calamities. Thus, once again, he echoes the words of Morgenthau, who claimed that the emergence of "fascism […] ought to have convinced us that the age of reason, of progress, and of peace, as we understood it from the teachings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had become a reminiscence of the past" (Morgenthau 1947, 13). It is, consequently, evident that they concur on the conclusion that these 'isms' did not constitute the crisis itself; rather, they presented the outcome of liberalism's (or—in the words of Sorokin—the sensate culture's contractualism's) own crisis (Morgenthau 1947, 12; Sorokin [1957] 1970, 465).

The results presented in Sorokin's analysis on the *Fluctuations of War*, attest to the inference that wars "happen in the periods of prosperity and depression; under both autocratic and democratic regimes; in the countries with prevalent illiteracy and literacy; in agricultural

and industrial societies; in the 'liberal' and 'conservative' nations[…] and so on and so forth" ([1957] 1970, 569). He thus clearly articulates the principal realist axiom that places power at the centre of IR, arguing that wars are a direct result of the disruption of the relative power between nations and, subsequently, any shift in the *status quo* or the *equilibrium* constitutes the fundamental condition producing interstate conflict (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 569).

Having reified the centrality of power and the simultaneous failure of liberal institutions (primarily of international legal frameworks) to prevent war, they both agree that it is the complete, blind faith in the effectivity of such institutions that inadvertently increases the conflicts of the era. However, what Sorokin's theory provides in addition to these like-minded assumptions, is the role of the transition of cultural systems that is the bearer of such increased violence, and the driver behind the ultimate inability of liberalism to deal with the progressively rising challenges that humanity is called to confront.

Sensate Man vs. Altruistic Politics

Within the context of their agreement on the decay and adverse effects of international liberal institutions and the philosophical suppositions attributing immense faith into them, the underlying assumptions of Sorokin and Morgenthau extend to the liberal philosophical principles of social science. One of Morgenthau's central convictions against the behavioural approaches to studying political phenomena lay in the nature of the 'scientific man': guided by the intellectual and political crisis rooted in liberalism's decay, the behaviouralist social scientist adopts a misconstrued view of the very nature of man and society (Morgenthau 1947, 12, 154). As such, the methods of natural science are utilised as an apparatus to explain and provide answers for society's pressing problems as if they were technological problems (Morgenthau 1947, 12–13, 79). Yet, Morgenthau argues that this approach is fundamentally

flawed, for it ignores the "biological, rational, and spiritual" facets of human nature, whilst the function of psychological emotions, amongst others, is almost entirely overlooked (1947, 20, 142).

For Morgenthau, the differentiation between 'scientific man' and 'power politics' is devised on the basis of the Aristotelian distinction between the issues tackled through the domain of the natural sciences (*physika*) and the political problems that may not be resolved by employing an objective, 'scientific' approach (*meta ta physika*) (Dunne 1959, 149). Thus, he opposes the portrayal of the scientist as "a priest and saviour" (Fitch 1958 as cited in Dunne 1959, 149). Necessary for the successful confrontation of major political challenges is the capable 'statesman' guided by his wisdom and intuition, rather than the scientific dogmatic 'engineer' (Morgenthau 1947, 187–88).

Sorokin's view attests to the same observation of the state of science, for during the transitionary period burdened with calamities, the oversaturation of sensate culture has overextended the engagement with, and utilisation of, sterile "matter-of-fact empiricist" and positivist approaches which carry the forthcoming risk of 'self-destruction' (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 190, 280). The crisis of the sensate system is accompanied by the framing of the natural sciences as "the most perfect, exact sciences, [which] are copied by philosophy and by even abortive pseudotheology which tries in the period of domination of the truth of senses to create 'scientific religion'" (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 228) in which the *sensate man*—the scientist of the sensate culture—assumes the role of a Morgenthau's *scientific man*.

Despite Sorokin's optimism regarding the potential outcomes of the crisis, as society is moving towards a renewed era of an ideational culture, dangers still loom large; humanity shall not remain dormant amidst these risks. Instead, Sorokin agrees with Morgenthau's proverb that "politics is an art and not a science" (Morgenthau 1947, 16), by clearly indicating his opposition

to the behaviourist approach to social science and the attainment of *truth*. Yet, this is the point where the similarities between their respective conceptions cease. For even though Sorokin attributes significant value to the metaphysical aspects of sociology, instead of a capable statesman, he envisions a much broader, and ambitious plan for dealing with the calamities of war and conflict. The resolution to *The Crisis of our Age* (1942b), would involve the complete reorientation of society's moral principles, mentality, and interpersonal conduct (1942b, 321).

In this regard, Sorokin adopts an organicist viewpoint that encompasses all the distinct systems of truth. The answer to the crisis is the development of an 'integral' culture that encompasses "the empirico-sensory […] given by the truth of the senses [*meaning*]; the rational aspect, by the truth of *reason*; the super-rational aspect by the truth of *faith*" (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 691; emphasis added). He essentially argues that it is precisely this theoretical methodology, this *truth* that is needed to restore a complete system of values that would prevent the one-sided interpretation of reality through excessive empiricism, thus giving way to the emergence of the *integral man* in the place of the *sensate/ideational man* (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 692; Mangone 2018, 39). Having gone through its crisis, Sorokin concludes his book by predicting the 'Catharsis' of the western society and culture, meaning its purification through self-destruction. As a result, the sensate culture will be replaced by the new ideational culture, which, guided by the integral system of truth, will arrive at the final stage of 'Charisma' and Resurrection,' a new era dominated by creative forces (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 701–2).

The focal reorientation towards an integral philosophy of knowledge though, did not remain as the final, satisfying remedy for humanity's calamities. Sorokin understood that the worldview, knowledge, and values of integralism would be inadequate unless incorporated into personal and collective action, and social organisation (Johnston 1990, 103). Thus, as Sorokin left his integralistic stage of philosophy and entered the 'altruistic era' of his scholarly works, 'creative altruism' became the vehicle of cultural transformation within Sorokin's proposed

course of development. (Johnston 1990, 103; Alalykin-Izvekov 2019, 73–74). To paraphrase Morgenthau's book title, *altruistic politics* would serve as the antithetical force to the *sensate man.* Shifting his focus to the activities of the Harvard Centre for Creative Altruism, Sorokin directed his attention towards the objective of promoting the personal, cultural, and social processes of altruisation through his proposed applied science of amity (Mangone and Dolgov 2020, 16).

The 'unborn IR offspring' of Pitirim Sorokin within its context

IR and grand narratives of the civilisational ebbs and flows

In contrast to prominent sociologists who have assumed a canonical position within the discipline of IR despite offering limited insights on international politics (most prominently Michel Foucault), Sorokin frequently addressed international concerns throughout his works (Fournier 2014, 1; Krotov and Sorokin 2009, 8). He was profoundly involved in the prevention of the wars he prophesied, a theme he investigated throughout the four volumes of his *Social and Cultural Dynamics*. But the international figured prominently throughout his later works on altruism too, which additionally provided a framework specifically devised for application (Johnston 1990, 102).

His theory of sociocultural change constitutes a key exemplar of historical grand narrative theories. One need not look hard to observe the similarities between his *Social and Cultural Dynamics* and Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1926), Arnold Toynbee's 12-volume *Study of History* (1959; 1987; abridged versions of vol. I-X), or even Nikolay Danilevsky's *Russia and Europe (Rossiya i Evropa)* (1871) and Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilisations* (2000). Grand narrative approaches that cover a macro-level perspective of civilisational and socio-political fluctuation throughout century-long intervals, have at times amassed widespread attention within IR, especially after the emergence of Huntington's theory (Kumar 2014, 817; Linklater 2009). Unlike Sorokin, in the case of Spengler, Toynbee, and Huntington all are found at the epicentre of various IR studies, having dominated—most often as subjects of critique—certain periods either during the middle of the 20th century or the 1990s (O'Hagan 2002, 59, 83, 157). Danilevsky's theory, despite its relative obscurity in the US, has garnered a profoundly wide interest in Russia, where IR scholars have even classified him as

the most important thinker regarding the development of a Russian theory of IR (Tsygankov and Tsygankov 2014, 104).

The major difference between their approach, however, lies in Sorokin's expected outcome of the crisis, for unlike the other thinkers cited, he does not refer to a doomed West on the brinks of extinction. Instead, he predicts a long period of unfathomed calamities, which, nevertheless, after the end of the crisis will give way to a new, more creative epoch:

> "And alas! the end is not yet in view. Each of these crises has been, as it were, a movement in a great terrifying symphony, and each has been remarkable for its magnitude and intensity […] [My theory] is optimistic, because it does not predict either the certain death or decay of the Western culture and society. If it points to the decline of the present Sensate phase and the probability of a grim transition, at the same time it indicates the possibility of the rise of a new magnificent Ideational or Idealistic culture, society, and man." (Sorokin [1957] 1970, 623, 628).

Despite the theory's divided reception within sociology, in the field of comparative civilisation theories, Sorokin, nevertheless received wide recognition, serving, amongst others, as the first president of the *International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilisations* (Ford 2018, viii). Despite his harsh critique of Toynbee's theory it was through this society that Sorokin and Toynbee became personally acquainted and established a friendship as seen through their personal correspondence (Krotov and Sorokin 2009, 134–41). Unlike Sorokin though, Toynbee was a much more appreciated within the nascent realm of IR. Amongst the most seminal of aspects of his influence to the developing field of IR was the case of Martin Wight, who drew from Toynbee's portrayal of the past as well as his historical methodological outlook (Hall 2003, 389).

Beyond his scholarly engagement with the deterrence of society's calamities, Sorokin attempted to provide palpable results as well. He actively tried to engage with the great

international political problems of his time by advocating for sociocultural reforms and peace throughout his attempts to influence both high-ranking officials and the public (Jaworski 1993, 70). Thus, considering the nature of his practical and theoretical engagement with the international, what were the credentials Sorokin was missing in comparison to the broader field? The next section seeks to answer exactly that, by claiming that his work's lack of success within social science and IR may not be traced to the content of his work, but rather to exogenous factors.

What makes IR, *actually* IR?

Despite the "epistemic myth" of the first chair of International Politics in Aberystwyth in the 'glorious' year of 1919, until the 1950s, the discipline was experiencing a profound identity crisis stemming from the lack of a theoretical framework applicable to the study of IR (Leira and de Carvalho 2018; Guilhot 2011, 79). As illustrated in the case of Morgenthau, the *1954 Conference on International Politics,* and his seminal role in the development of a theory of IR were sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation precisely for the purpose of resolving this crisis (Guilhot 2011, 79–80). However, the Rockefeller Foundation was concerned with the underdeveloped state of IR, long before the 1950s.

Back in the early 1930s, it had financially backed Sorokin for a co-operative venture that would potentially result in "a better rounded study of some important neglected field in international relations" (Ford 2018, 39–40). Sorokin's study though, left the Foundation discontent, thus, tarnishing his image within the major research sponsor of Harvard at the time (Ford 2018, 40–41). The negative reception of the *Social and Cultural Dynamics* by institutional agents was the impelling factor that 'expelled' Sorokin from the infamous 'Henderson Circle,' which through its control of finances, marginalised Sorokin increasingly

in years that followed (Ford 2018, 41–42). Amongst others, the institutional disapproval stemmed from the lack of trust in the applicability of his theory and its normative considerations (Ford 2018, 40). This expulsion, coupled with the successful 'insurgence' of the network surrounding Parsons to take over control of the department of Sociology through their newly established 'Social Relations' counterpart, removed Sorokin from the vanguard of Harvard and led to his isolation within his own university (Ford 2018, 31, 43, 56–57; Zafirovski 2001). Considering the institutional dynamics that impeded Sorokin's academic trajectory, the comparison to Morgenthau is once again instructive for illuminating the very factors that enable or prevent the adoption of certain ideas, for shedding light on what makes IR *actually* IR.

As illustrated previously, the two books of Sorokin and Morgenthau presented a highly convergent view of their field's state. Their diagnosis of liberalism's pathologies and its influence on the methodological approach of social science is strikingly similar. But beyond their conjunction based on philosophical assumptions, the difference between the *Social and Cultural Dynamics* and *Scientific Man vs Power Politics* lay in their varying normative conceptions, outlining further action in the form of a virtuous statesman on the one hand, and the restructuring of society's moral impulses through altruism on the other.

Despite the similar reception within their respective disciplines which obstructed the success of their contributions, the trajectory of their careers followed a diverging path following the contributions that succeeded the *Dynamics* and *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics.* The publication of Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* came shortly after his first 1946 US book, in 1948. It provided an attractive framework that served a very specific purpose: "theory is set against practice, realism is declared a theory, six definitive principles of realism are set forth" (Onuf 2018, 515). It was a concise model that could be utilised as a manual on how to manage the new US 'empire' that had arisen in the aftermath of the Second World War

(Bessner and Guilhot 2015, 92–93). Compared to his first work, Morgenthau had deviated substantially from his critique of American social science, for he essentially set forth certain "laws" to be followed, resembling the positivist truth he had hitherto critiqued so vehemently (Cristol 2009, 242).

Sorokin, on the other hand, remained loyal to his dispositions, which rendered his work on altruism equally unserviceable for such purposes as in the case of his *Dynamics*. The very contrast of their potential practicality for the "average policymaker" could be inferred from the sheer size of their contributions. On the one hand, Morgenthau had provided a guide of roughly 500 pages, whilst Sorokin's work developed a complex sociocultural history the length of which almost crossed the 3000-page threshold. The works on altruism that succeeded his integralist system philosophy, despite presenting a seemingly applicable framework, were too remote from the needs of the political and institutional agents. Following the Second World War, the military-industrial complex and the US's realisation of its hegemonic role resonated with the ideas set forth by Morgenthau on power the centrality of power and the national interest (Agnew 2015; Myers 1997), whilst the essence of Sorokin's ideas was overly remote to such axioms.

Despite the institutional marginalisation of Sorokin, however, his position within other positioning fields was markedly different. Undeniably, his peers in sociology had varying views on his conception but he was, nevertheless, widely regarded as a central disciplinary figure. One of the most prominent sociologists of the 20th century, and Sorokin's student, Robert K. Merton defended Sorokin's views, whilst Talcott Parsons, kept a portrait of Sorokin in his office cabinet after Sorokin's death in 1968 (Nichols 1996b, 108). The respect towards his figure is similarly evident in the massive campaign that elected him in 1963 as the President of the American Sociological Association with the largest hitherto margin of votes (Johnston

1987, 109). Sorokin also gained tremendous resources for his research centre, most notably by Eli Lilly Jr., and the archival holdings of his correspondence hold numerous letters from the public donating and expressing their appreciation for the Centre's cause (Sorokin Library n.d.). His books were at the same time popular amongst the public and translations were published to multiple languages (Sorokin [1957] 2017, xxi). Yet, despite the international nature of his normative considerations and the insightful conclusions of his research on wars, this knowledge remained untapped by IR, for these ideas were potentially destined to fail in the prevailing socio-political context of his contributions.

An insightful parallel pertinent to the case of Sorokin and Morgenthau may be drawn from Baert's exposition of Sartre's sudden rise in post-WWII France, which provides an account serviceable for understanding the multifaceted nature of the effects that positioning entails for intellectuals:

> "We should not forget that, by early 1944, Sartre was […] little known outside the small elite circle of Parisian intellectuals. Within 2 years he would become an international celebrity […] However compelling his philosophy as an intellectual enterprise, Sartre's rise to public recognition at that time relied at least […] on the way in which his intellectual approach helped sections of French society assimilate and come to terms with the traumatic recent past, whilst conceiving of the present as a potential discontinuity with the past. The purge of intellectuals and the discrediting of hitherto dominant ideas created an unprecedented space for new intellectual movements, and Sartre's key notions, such as the writer's responsibility, were both constitutive of and a reflection of the climate surrounding the epuration. [Moreover,] Sartre and his fellow-existentialists were unusually well connected to the "gatekeepers"—such as publishers and critics—who control the flow from the intra- to the public-intellectual arena." (Baert 2011, 640–41).

Despite the appreciation of Sorokin within the field of sociology, the vast funding he secured, and his popularity as a public intellectual, the socio-political and institutional context shaped the destiny of his works. Even though they held potential significance for IR, they were eventually left unexploited; they remained a site of international political thought which,

nonetheless, never amounted to being called ‘IR theory.’ On the other hand, despite the rocky start to his career as an intellectual in the US, Morgenthau’s *Politics Among Nations* flourished and assumed a canonical status within the context of the newly established US hegemony and the institutional support provided by the Rockefeller Foundation.

Conclusion

Labelling Pitirim Sorokin as an IR theorist would be an overstatement. Yet, I have attempted to illuminate that—both regarding his macrosocial theory of culture and his creative altruism—it would be parochial to obscure the nature of his insights as highly pertinent to the discipline of IR, at least in its mid-20th century nascent state. To disentangle the intricacies of the process through which he formulated his conceptions, I provide an enlightening inquiry into the formative experiences that shaped Sorokin's worldview. At the same time, I draw an insightful parallel between his thought and one of the most prominent IR scholars, Hans J. Morgenthau, contrasting their experiences as émigrés, and how their Christian Orthodox and Jewish backgrounds, respectively, shaped their trajectory. At the same time, this comparison seeks to unravel the state of the field of social science in the US during the interwar and the early post-WWII period. By illustrating how these two thinkers, amongst the vast number of intellectuals that arrived from Europe, attempted to redefine the prevailing American methodological and epistemological traditions within their respective fields. In this regard, despite the seeming disparity of their conceptions, I provide an insightful perspective that highlights the core of their similarities regarding their views on liberal institutions and the episteme.

Moreover, I provide a comprehensive account of how their intellectual contributions influenced their relative position of their reputation and subsequent legacy. By drawing from the "new sociology of ideas" and an analysis on positioning that transcends various, distinct spheres, as introduced by Patrick Baert, I provide an explanation of how their conscious and subconscious efforts resulted in unambiguous effects: meaning, the assumption of a certain standing within various contexts. I specifically shed light on how their major contributions assumed a particular position within their episteme and within the eyes of governmental agencies, which provides explanations for their standing and legacy, which ranged from an

establishment as a canonical figure in the case of Morgenthau to a relative neglect in the instance of Sorokin.

In the last section, my focus turns towards the specific aspects of Sorokin's thought that are highly pertinent to the study of IR. I further utilise positioning theory as an illuminating lens that explains how despite its similarity to its sociological milieu, the *Social and Cultural Dynamics* does not rise to prominence in Social Science or IR. As such, the project culminates in the portrayal of Sorokin's major work as a distinct product of the experiences and influences of its creator that are intimately tied to the sphere of the international, and thus, have a lot to provide for readers of IR. Examining his theory in the socio-political, intellectual, and institutional context, I showcase that the success of his theoretical framework is obstructed by external, institutional factors. As such, I expand upon existing scholarship on the multiple births of IR, by providing not only an unlikely source of significant IR-related conceptions, but also showcasing that the proliferation of such conceptions and their acceptance as IR theory rests not only upon their content but also the needs of certain epochs and its agents.

Having already experienced over a decade of relative neglect within his own discipline, Sorokin remarked on his potential legacy as a scholar: "If my works were significant, they eventually would come into their own; if they were valueless, they did not deserve any recognition. In either case the results would be fair and square, though not equally pleasant to me" (Sorokin 1963, 224). The revitalisation of the discourse on Sorokin within IR, or at least sociology, within the West seems rather unlikely. However, geographically specific canons, based on specific epistemic assumptions and practices are a major factor for an IR theory's acceptance by the discipline (Youde and Steele 2018, 209). In the forthcoming wake of the war in Ukraine that erupted in 2022, and the major upheavals that will likely impact all strata of Russian public and intellectual life, Sorokin presents a grand opportunity for the Russian IR

community. Russian IR is no stranger to igniting its contemporary discourse with major figures from its Imperial or Soviet past. Nikolay Danilevsky is a prominent example of this trend, whilst the émigré Eurasianists of the interwar served as the backbone of the most well-known manifestation of a largely polarising and perhaps dull, yet distinctly Russian theory of IR in the form of 'Eurasianism'(DeBlasio 2014, 84). Through his creative altruism, Sorokin, thus, offers a strikingly promising source of intellectual inspiration that could lead to a potential reinvention of Russian IR. Whether his 'unborn offspring' will ever be born, only remains to be seen.

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