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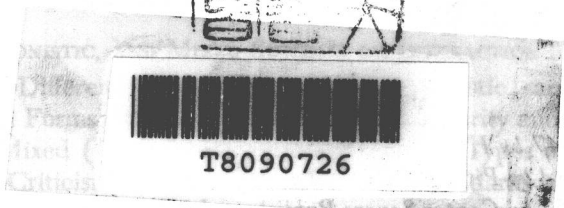
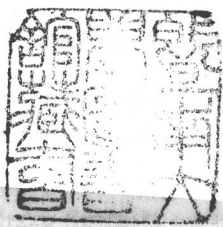
# SOCIETY, CULTURE, AND PERSONALITY:

*Their Structure and Dynamics*

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A SYSTEM OF GENERAL SOCIOLOGY

By PITIRIM A. SOROKIN



COOPER SQUARE PUBLISHERS, INC.

New York

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SOCIETY, CULTURE,  
AND PERSONALITY

# Foreword

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Since its original edition this volume has been published in Spanish, Portuguese and Hindi translations. For the last few years its American edition has been out of print. Now, like my *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, and *Social Mobility*, it is re-issued by the Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., to whom I bring my thanks for this service.

The new edition is a reprint of the original edition of this work. Of course, if I were younger and were not interested more in writing new works than in revising the old ones, I could have "freshened" it by adding bibliography of the works that appeared after its publication and, perhaps, by changing here and there informational material of this or that chapter. However, these superficial alterations would not have changed anything important in the system of general sociology with its main propositions and generalizations developed and—logically and empirically—corroborated in the book.

The system, propositions and generalizations have seemingly stood well the acid test of time—what among other things is witnessed by some forty-two translations of my volumes into all main languages of humanity and by an already large and rapidly growing literature—books about my books, Ph.D. theses, and multitude of articles—devoted to an analysis, evaluation, and criticism of my theories. As the central cognitive value of any science, and especially of the generalizing sciences, like sociology, consists exactly in the validity of their conceptual system and its propositions and generalizations, these symptomatic facts are a sufficient justification for reprint of this volume.

PITIRIM A. SOROKIN

Winchester, Mass.  
July, 1962



# Preface

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So much fact-finding sociological work has been done during the past few decades that the greatest need of contemporary sociology is not so much a further collection of facts as assimilating the existing data, presenting them in a sound, logical order, and rebuilding the framework of sociology as a systematic science. Otherwise we are in danger of being lost in a maze of intractable facts.

In a modest and imperfect way this work endeavors to meet this need. It attempts to present a system of sociology as a generalizing science of sociocultural phenomena possessing its own set of referential principles, its own meaningful-causal method, and its own special task among the other social and humanistic disciplines. The work unfolds a systematic theory of the structure and dynamics of social, cultural, and personality systems. It is little concerned with physical, biological, and other "presociological" problems; instead it confines itself to a study of sociocultural phenomena in their structural and dynamic aspects.

It remains faithful to the general principles of science, but it modifies these principles to fit the peculiar nature of sociocultural phenomena. Its meaningful-causal method, and the logic of sociocultural systems as contrasted with that of congeries, are examples of such a modification.

In harmony with the generalizing nature of sociology, the bulk of the empirical propositions consists of more or less generalized formulae of meaningful-causal uniformities (structural and dynamic), of the main types of sociocultural systems, or of the typical ways in which social, cultural, and personality systems emerge, function, change, and decline. A

description of specific, nontypical cases is omitted. The concrete corroboration and illustration of the general formulae can be supplied by any intelligent teacher, student, or reader.

The generalizing propositions do not aim to be precise, but only to be approximately valid. At the present stage of our knowledge of the complex constellations of sociocultural systems and congeries absolute exactness is hardly attainable. When it is attempted, the result is ordinarily a misleading preciseness acquired at the expense of approximate validity.

The tentative generalizations are based upon the existing body of empirical evidence: experimental, semi-experimental, statistical, historical, and clinical, and on other observational data. For the sake of economy the work does not reproduce the concrete data and procedures of the enormous body of empirical studies utilized. Instead, it simply takes their results, critically analyzes and compares them, and derives from their totality what seems to be the soundest conclusion. A minimum of empirical evidence is given in the text; the bulk of it may be found in the works referred to in the footnotes. For the same reason—that of economy—the literature cited in the footnotes is intentionally reduced to a minimum.

The analysis of each basic problem includes a critical survey of the existing theories in the field, followed by a constructive solution.

I am indebted to the Harvard Committee for Research in the Social Sciences for financial assistance in the preparation of the manuscript. To the American Book Company and E. P. Dutton & Co. I am indebted for permission to use some of the text matter and diagrams in my *Social and Cultural Dynamics and Crisis*

of *Our Age*. Grateful acknowledgment is due Professor F. S. Chapin for his editorial advice. From the English manuscript the work is being translated into Czech and Spanish. My sincere thanks are due all the firms who

ventured to publish it under the present difficult conditions attending the publication of large scholarly works.

PITIRIM A. SOROKIN

*Harvard University*

#### KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

- AA—*American Anthropologist*  
 AJS—*American Journal of Sociology*  
 ASR—*American Sociological Review*  
 JAOS—*Journal of the American Oriental Society*  
 LPS—*Journal of Legal and Political Sociology*  
 SF—*Social Forces*  
 SR—*Social Research*  
 SSR—*Sociology and Social Research*  
*Calamity* —P. A. Sorokin, *Man and Society in Calamity* (New York, 1942)  
*Crisis* —P. A. Sorokin, *Crisis of Our Age* (New York, 1941)  
*Dynamics*—P. A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics* (4 vols., New York, 1937-41)  
*Theories* —P. A. Sorokin, *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (New York, 1928)  
*Mobility* —P. A. Sorokin, *Social Mobility* (New York, 1927)

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## PART ONE

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# Sociology: Its Object, Method and Development

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# Chapter 1. Sociology as a Science

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## I. Sociology and Other Sciences

### 1. The Superorganic World

The physical sciences study inorganic phenomena; biology investigates the *organic* world; the social sciences are concerned with *superorganic* phenomena. As the presence of life distinguishes living structures and processes, so the presence of mind or thought in its developed form, differentiates the superorganic phenomena from the organic. Just as the vital phenomena are superimposed upon the inorganic, so the superorganic world is superimposed upon the organic. Just as only a small fraction of physical phenomena (plants and animals) display the phenomena of life, so only a small fraction of vital phenomena manifest mind in the developed form of science and philosophy, religion and ethics, the fine arts, technological inventions, and social institutions. Superorganic phenomena so developed are found only in man and the man-made world. Other species exhibit only rudimentary forms of the superorganic. Sociology and the other social sciences consider man and the man-made world only with reference to superorganic mind or thought.

The social and humanistic sciences do not analyze the chemical composition of human bodies, or of church buildings, airplanes, or any other part of the man-made world; this is the task of organic and inorganic chemistry. Likewise they do not study the physical prop-

erties of the human world; this is the concern of physics. Human anatomy and physiology belong to the realm of biology. Social scientists, to be sure, must know the conclusions of the physical and biological sciences concerning man; but these conclusions do not form an integral part of sociology or the social sciences. They are "presociology" or "presocial science." The task of sociology and social science begins where the physical and biological study of man and his world ends.<sup>1</sup>

Later on we shall see that the physicochemical and biological properties of man do indeed enter the field of social science, but only so far as they are inextricably connected with the superorganic, either as its instruments and vehicles or as factors that condition or are conditioned by the superorganic.

### 2. Delineation of the Superorganic

The superorganic is equivalent to mind in all its clearly developed manifestations. Superorganic phenomena embrace language; science and philosophy; religion; the fine arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, music, literature, and drama); law and ethics; mores and manners; technological inventions and processes from the simplest tools up to the most intricate machinery; road-making; building construction; the cultivation of fields and gardens; the domestication and training of animals, etc.; and

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the introductory texts in sociology are largely filled with such "presociological" information taken from mechanics, physics, chemistry, and especially biology. If for pedagogical purposes an insertion of "presociological" information is advisable, its enormous inflation at the cost of a

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strictly sociological study of man and the human world is hardly justifiable. In this work most of the "presociological" knowledge of man is assumed to be known; therefore, its insertion is reduced to the minimum.