

An introduction to the presentation of Pitirim Sorokin's book: *The Power of Love*

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Many social and political scientists have encountered, in the course of their studies, the quotation in Pitirim Sorokin's work about altruistic love and have not been able to go beyond this same quotation. On the other hand, Sorokin has often been included, by many sociological critics, within that group of intellectuals who are inserted in a somewhat undefined disciplinary area, somewhere between social philosophy, emotional sociology and social psychology. Therefore, to delve into Sorokin's altruistic love meant moving out of the principal body of sociological reflection. Those who wished to and have actually read the English edition of this book were much less than the number this work deserves.

It is easy to realise that Sorokin's work is not the original act of an already famous and bored sociologist who had no arguments left in order to deceive time. Neither is it a simple senile whim, or an act of pride with the ultimate idea of finding a celebrity niche where the world of sociological studies seems to proceed towards a Parsonsian paradigm. Sorokin's work is much, much more than this. In order to be able to show the dimensions of this greatness we have invited professor Michele Colasanto, professor of general sociology and vice-rector at the Catholic University, and professor Tommaso Sorgi, ex-professor of Sociology at the University of Teramo, ex-member of parliament, one of the few who introduced Sorokin in Italy and probably the scholar who best delved into the part about altruistic Love (I remember his book "*La Sociologia del Profondo di Sorokin*" which was one of the most beautiful readings I did when I was still a student).

They will introduce us to the sociological books of Sorokin. Sorokinian sociology belongs to the stream of great sociological analysis which derives from universal history and is not satisfied in only explaining the phenomenon found in a specific historical or geographical event, but demands an explanation of the human system and its social relationships, as well as how these established civilisations and the great historical and social dynamics. He was, I must say, a sociologist in the classical sense of the term. Despite the era he lived in (mid-twentieth century), Sorokin may be well included amongst the classics of sociological thinking, for the wideness and the value of his reflection and for not allowing himself to be imprisoned by the artificial disciplinary constructions which today, in some cases, have broken down and divided excessively the sociological profession. The first question is in fact a classic: why does man produce a social and civil order? Another classic is the method used for elaborating an effective answer: the nature of a creative personality in its altruistic being.

Today it is possible to propose this question once again and ask ourselves if the improvement of our societies might bring about different answers to the classical ones based on scientific and technological progress, on the increase in the democratic content of political action, on the planning of balanced economies, on the creation of supranational organisms which are able to redeem global controversies, etc. Is it true that sociology cannot formulate an answer containing the spreading of love and altruism? One must realise that we are dealing with information that is readily available

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to every social actor, who is universal in his intercultural and inter-classical data, structurally independent of intellectual and professional profiles, independent with respect to personal, ideological, and cultural conditions and one may continue listing how much altruistic love is a constructive element in formulating a model of social and universal relationships. In Sorokin's times, on the social sciences scene there were no supporters of the effectiveness and capability of love to elevate itself to a sociological category and to become a means to provide solutions to current crises. Sorokin was truly a pioneer in affirming all this.

Today, the wind is blowing in the other direction. The publication of the Italian version of this book shows the work that social sciences are carrying out towards paradigms and theories which do not ignore this common, daily, wonderful force of our social nature. It is really worth aiming high in the elaboration of the profound meaning of sociological theory, re-assuming the concepts and categories on which societies built their own initial group, such as fraternity, friendship, altruistic love. The Sorokinian inspiration offers a precise horizon to the content of social relationships which will one day govern global, complex, strongly related societies. Half a century after the original edition of this book was published, Sorokin's figure may be given its rightful place in the scene of social sciences. In this way, the destiny of this sociologist of Russian origin is equal to that of many others whose greatness has only been recognized by history after a long time.