

Toward an Integral Social Science: A History of Science Approach

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Abstract

Catholic social sciences and sociology have long struggled with the challenges of institutionalizing themselves in the professions and in higher education. It is suggested here that a satisfying strategy for addressing this challenge is found in the work of Edward A. Tiryakian. Particularly those that address hegemonic theory schools and the roles they played in the development of American and European Sociology. The Tiryakian variant of a theory school is explicated here and followed by a discussion, and suggestion for next steps to be taken in order to advance the intellectual and institutional changes required to establish a theory school and move the mission of Catholic social sciences forward.

This work is a thought experiment. That is, an imaginative investigation and exploration into the dynamics of discipline building in the social sciences. Successful traditions of scholarly work are woven from three strands. These are: a mainframe of powerful and compelling ideas; an organized group of theoreticians and researchers who test the ideas; and reasonable access to the means of intellectual production i.e., a solid department in an institution of higher learning, with reasonably good access to journal editors, foundations, publishers and professional organizations (Tiryakian 1979; 1986; Wiley 1979). Once this structure is in place scholars can vigorously pursue their theoretical goals and compete for voice in their disciplines.

This exercise unfolds in the form of a narrative focused on Sociology as an exemplary case, but intended as a general model for the social sciences. We begin with Edward A. Tiryakian's model of theory schools and apply it briefly to the illustrative case of Harvard Sociology. Next the theoretical format of "normal science" is contrasted with that of "Integral science" drawing on the work of the sociologist Pitirim Sorokin. This is followed by a preliminary discussion of the obstacles to and contours of a Catholic social science. The goal of the exercise is to

promote a dialog that clarifies the elements of a strategic plan for advancing the mission of the Society of Catholic Social Scientist.

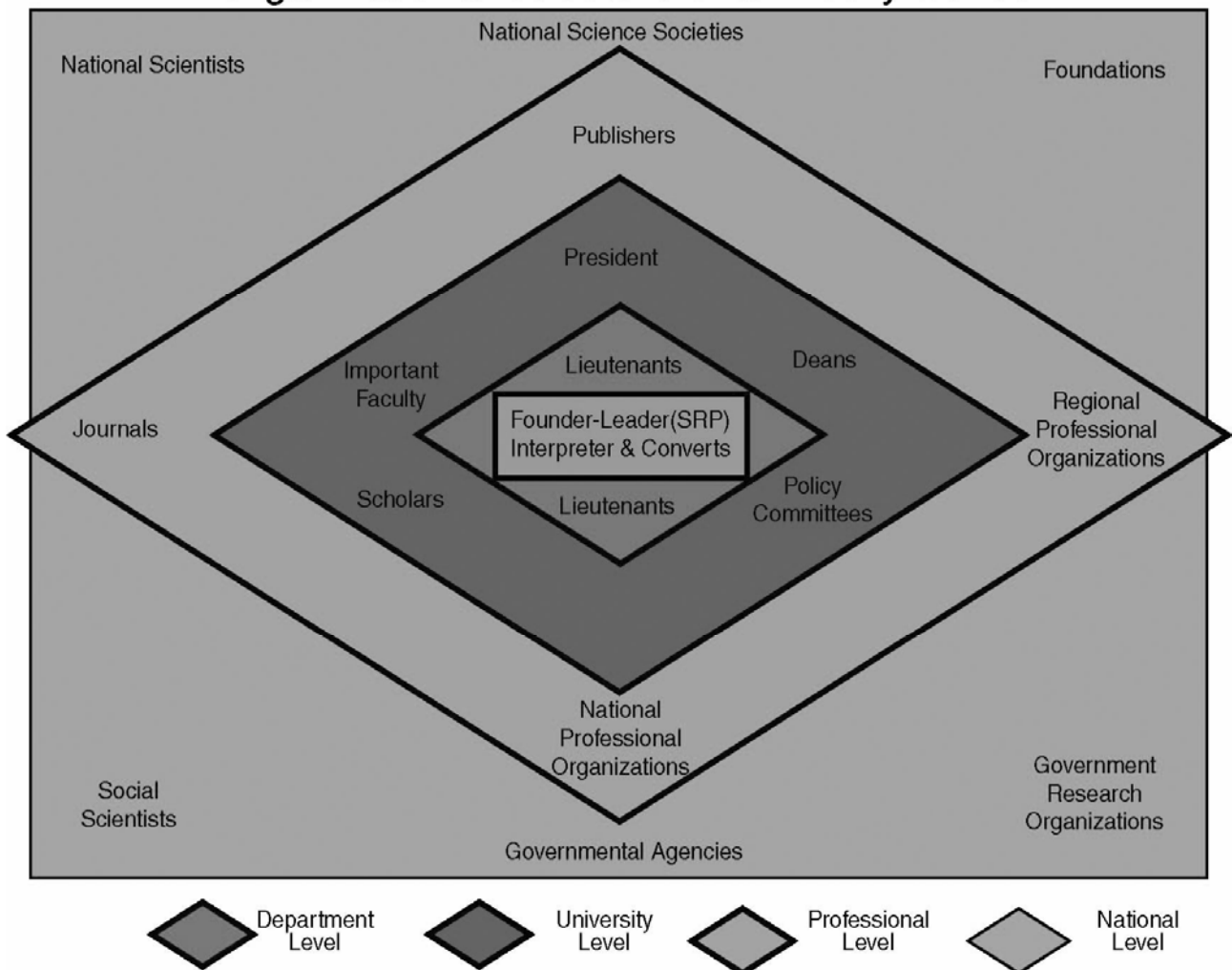
The Structure of Theory Schools and the Development of Sociology

The story of American Sociology provides many examples for exploring the dynamics of theory building and change within scholarly communities. Sociology's history has been written as one of competing intellectual traditions, (e.g., functionalism, conflict theory, and interactionism), and of key historical and contemporary figures (Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Parsons, Merton, Randall Collins et. al.). Most recently it has been told as one of theoretically grounded programs or to use Imre Lakatos' (1974) more felicitous phrase "Scientific Research Program". Examples are those in Affect States and Social Status; Alienation; Networks and Exchanges; Social Movements and Revolutions. (Berger and Zelditch; 2002: 3-15). To these historiographies and substantive approaches Edward A. Tiryakian (1979:211-234) contributed a sociology of sociology model to broaden our understandings of the dynamics and organizational dimensions of discipline building in social science. Tiryakian, first grounds the process of theory development in their national settings then carefully distinguishes each from those found in other nations. In the process he is attentive to the social and historical context of the times and how it impacts the systematics or contents of social theory.

To the above macrosociological and historical concerns, Tiryakian adds a set of fine-grained insights into the social structure, dynamics, and organization of successful theory schools. For him a school minimally embodies an innovation in style, methods or ideas, and is organized and identified with the work of an intellectually charismatic founder-leader. It starts small, with a dozen or so members bonded in an ethos of brotherhood. Internal solidarity is enhanced on the inside and from the outside by the school's commitment to ideas at variance with the standard theorizing of the discipline. These innovative ideas flow from the work of

the founder-leader and are typically expressed in a theoretical exemplar. Such a work(s) constitutes a theoretical umbrella under which participants toil, and sets a research agenda for further testing, modification and development of the theory. Classic examples of great sociological schools and their exemplars would include the Durkheimian school and Rules of the Sociological Method, and/or Suicide, Park and Burgess' text An Introduction to the Science of Sociology (1921) for the Chicago School, and Talcott Parsons The Structure of Social Action (1937) and later the collective Toward a General Theory of Action (1951) as a mission statement for the Harvard Department of Social Relations. The organizational structure of a theory school is depicted below.

Organizational Structure of a Theory School



The inner circle is made up of the founder-leader, an interpreter, and a number of converts. The founder-leader is an intellectually charismatic figure who develops the group's mainframe of ideas and shapes the contours of its scientific research program (SRP). This is usually done in a key work or works like those mentioned above. The interpreter is a senior and accomplished scholar who is close to the founder-leader, and has deep insights into the exemplar, and mission of the school. In the case of Harvard and the Parsonsian school there were exemplary scholars like Robert K. Merton and Edward Shils who made significant independent contributions, extensions or innovations to the development of the Parsonsian exemplars. To a lesser degree, there were also lieutenants. That is a group of young graduate students who learned this model early in their careers, took appointments at other institutions where they taught the perspectives to undergraduates, but gave more attention to graduate students. They often wrote popular textbooks that brought Parsonsian functionalism to wider student audiences. Robin Williams's *American Society*, Kingsley Davis's *Human Society*, Marion Levy's *The Structure of Society*, and Harry M Johnson's *Sociology: A Systematic Introduction* are cases in point. These scholars were not only interpreters who spread the word, but they also contributed to the paradigm. It is important to note, that the relationships between the inner circle of the founder leader and the graduate students (lieutenants) is a close one. Collaboration was encouraged and students were treated as colleagues; junior colleagues to be sure, but colleagues nonetheless. Thus, they became stakeholders in the paradigm.

The above discussion completes the description of the inner circle, but a school will grow only if nurtured in its institutional context. This requires the support of key faculty, and campus groups, as well as scholarly, policy, and grants committees, Deans, the Provost and the President. With this support a theory school, particularly if housed in a major university and in an urban center, has a sound foundation from

which to recruit promising graduate students, and spread its ideas to the wider academic and disciplinary communities.

The next step is being heard by the profession in ways that encourage other professionals to engage with the exemplar and the scientific research program of the developing school. An emerging school makes its presence known by publications and presentations in regional and national professional organizations. A successful school typically maintains a privileged relationship with one or more publishers and journals. Talcott Parsons did this through Jeremiah Kaplan and the Free Press, and through his participation, and that of many of his students, in the American Sociological Association. As a result several of his own works and those that he inspired found their way into the mainstream of the discipline.

A successful school receives recognition from colleagues in other areas of specialization including other social sciences, the natural sciences and the humanities. Such prestige often brings competitive advantage when seeking support and acknowledgement from key governmental research organizations, agencies, and private foundations. These recognitions also promote the school's position within its discipline, university, and the broader academic community.

Significant Factors for a School to Achieve Identity and Prominence

Tiryakian (1979: 229-234) also specifies a number of contributing conditions for a school to achieve identity and prominence. Some of these are products of history and others are elements of choice and selection. The first falls into the former category and Tiryakian observes that successful schools often emerge when a discipline is without a hegemonic paradigm or dominant tradition to guide theory and research. This is often a fertile time for an innovator to appear with new ideas drawn from in or outside of their discipline. A state of theoretical anomie has been

characteristic of contemporary sociology for sometime (e.g., Johnston, 1998: 1-23; Bell, 1996; Levine, 1995; Lemert, 1995; Wrong, 1993). Thus the field today is ripe for the introduction of new perspectives. To the degree that such a state exists in other disciplines, they too may be more open to new ideas.

The time is also ripe for a charismatic leaders with unshakeable faith in their ideas, and a willingness to be a voice crying in the desert of professional orthodoxy. Leaders must be willing to have students work closely with them and contribute to the development of the SRP. Students frequently have important substantive ideas for the extension and direction of the research program and paradigm. No students then no school! This is what happened to Pitirim Sorokin at Harvard on the one hand and lead to the success of Talcott Parsons on the other (Johnston, 1986 and 1995)

A successful school also needs an institutional affiliation, journal, and an exemplar. Such schools have typically been rooted in academic sites with a history of excellence, and in a metropolitan area, with a communication and recruitment network that attracts talented students from which the leader can select. Hence, the location and recruitment network of an institutional site is more than a convenience or quality of life concern. Commitment to a journal, and the presence of or wiliness to hire needed colleagues and collaborators are also factors that should be taken into account, when one commits to an institution.

Conflicting Images of Humanness in Normal and Integral Science

Normal and Integral social sciences are grounded in different models of humanness and epistemological orientations to the nature of reality and how one comes to know it. Empiricists accept a two dimensional mind-body model in which they intertwine through the nervous system and the senses and so experience the world. In their science true reality is one of physical objects, which are learned through the senses and their

extensions in thought and reason. That which is not perceptible through these capacities either does not exist or is scientifically insignificant.

For the Integralist the world is more complex and combines the truths of the senses, with the rational truths of reason and the super-rational truths of faith (Sorokin, 1941:762). It thus provides a more fine-grained, complex and exhaustive understanding of reality. In integral philosophy Sorokin brought together the spiritual, scientific and rational aspects of human culture and experience. Human cultures develop from and change out of a need for knowledge more adequate for dealing with the complexities and challenges of life in different historical epochs. Sensate knowledge provides us with science, technology and physical comforts. It equips us with major mechanisms for adaptation to our environments and the natural challenges of existence. Characteristically, it tells us little about moral action and spiritual development. The truths of faith address those needs and dominate in Ideational cultures. Their ultimate reality flows not from the senses, but from a nonmaterial everlasting Being. The prime needs of society and the individual are spiritual and attained by developing the soul of the individual, and the moral structure of the society. The third form is grounded in an Idealistic mentality and culture, which finds its moorings in the truths of reason and logic. As each type of culture seeks what is missing, they change. Integralism however binds the truth of science, reason and intuition, into a comprehensive whole. It is one's means of obtaining a satisfying framework to comprehend life, cosmos, and the role of humanity in each (Sorokin, 1941: 746-61). Sorokin felt that Integral philosophy, in a Sensate age, would be and is a hard sell. Modernity acknowledges mathematics and logic as fruits of reason, and natural science as the product of the senses. However, the truths of intuition, inspiration and revelation are more difficult to handle, open to doubt, and questionable. Sorokin addressed this barrier by pointing out the role of morality in other forms of knowledge. Drawing on histories of science, mathematics, technology, art and religion, he documented how

intuition operated in the process of discovery. Citing accounts by mathematicians like Poincare and Birkhoff; scientists such as Newton, Archimedes, and Galileo; creative artists such as Mozart and Beethoven; the philosophers Plato, Nietzsche, Kant; and religious leaders such as the Buddha, Mohammed, Zoroaster and St. Paul, Sorokin clearly demonstrated the role of intuition in their works and its spiritual presence throughout human history.

Sorokin saw contemporary sensate cultures as existing in a period of crisis and transition driven by more conflicts within and between societies. To manage such chaotic changes demanded a new hierarchy of values and view of the world. Many of his later works focused on how to manage and minimize conflict on the one hand and to make human beings better on the other (Sorokin: 1948; 1950; 1954). The last period of his career thus focused on the post-war crisis of modernity, and strategies for increasing altruism in individuals and their social actions. It is in these works that Sorokin deals more directly with manifestations of the soul and spirituality. Modern humanity must make these the foci of its existence if chaos and calamity are to be avoided. It is in the works on creative altruism that Sorokin tries to scientifically make human beings better, and to emphasize the role of love and compassion in the development of the spirit and conscience and the improvement of the human condition (Sorokin 1948; 1950; 1951).

More contemporaneous and faith based engagements with Integralism abound in the public writings and encyclicals of Pope John Paul II. At the bedrock of his and earlier works of others "...is the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas as the foundation for the synthesis of faith and reason" (Weigel 2001:841). This commitment to integral thinking and Aquinas found its way into sociology and the SCSS in a number of works. Included among them are those of Vincent Jeffries's (2001:25-40) on the foundational ideas of Aquinas, in the development of an Integral social science and sociology. In that piece Jeffries continues the

dialog by focusing on the contribution that St. Thomas's make to a distinctively Catholic tradition of Integralism. Indeed at this point the Integral concept of humanness is a key defining element of Catholic social science and differentiates it from secular social science. Given that intellectual core one can now shift their attention to other factors that may have inhibited and otherwise limited the establishment of Catholic social science.

THE POSSIBLE RESTORATION OF A CATHOLIC SOCIAL SCIENCE

In the course of reviewing articles dealing with the possibility, desirability and reality of a Catholic sociology in particular or social science in general I was struck by the communalities in their descriptions. (Veracalli: 1987, 1991, 1996; Kelly, E., 1999; Kelly. J.R., 1998; Kugelman; 2000). A good number of these pieces framed the tension producing issues separating the Catholic faith and scientific sociology in language reminiscent of Robert Freidrick's (1970) distinction between priestly and prophetic sociology. Freidrick's is a useful source for summarizing the major tensions inherent in developing and practicing a Catholic social science or sociology. He has described the priestly sociologist as one who rigorously applies the natural science model to the study of social facts. They are committed to value neutrality, and very cautious about the use or worth of methods other than those of empirical social science. As a result their graduate training and professional careers are built around quantitative methods, mathematical models and a predictive understanding of the social world that emphasizes uniformities. Prophets advocate other forms of knowing while not necessarily abandoning those of the priestly practitioner. They go beyond scientific understanding to the improvement of society. They are value committed critics and activists who take the goals of science and sociology to be service to humankind and social improvement.

It seems clear that Catholic social sciences would indeed benefit by combining these roles in ways that furthers understanding of and improvements in the human condition. It is in this regard that a Catholic and Integral social science which promotes prosocial behaviors at the individual and institutional levels would be a major contribution. The devil is of course in the details and some of the key challenges are:

- 1. The need to craft an exemplar or identify a body of existing scholarships that can serve as a foundation for doing Catholic Sociology and other social sciences.**
- 2. A constructive extension of the exemplar to textbooks for teaching Catholic social sciences in undergraduate institutions.**
- 3. One must spread the message through the meetings and publications of their national and regional professional societies.**
- 4. One should identify and support publishers that are open to such innovations, and can introduce them to larger and more diverse audiences.**
- 5. It is important to identify sources, and seek grants to support Integral research projects that demonstrate the value of Integral Scientific Research Programs to larger audiences.**
- 6. Successful Catholic institutions are typically undergraduate colleges, but successful intellectual traditions are established at the graduate level. It is there that a founder-leader comes in contact with and cultivates future practitioners of the craft. The key to success for Integral social science is sequential cohorts of graduate students who graduate and carry the message to other institutions and promote it in their scholarship and teaching. Through them, new generations of converts come to toil and practice under the umbrella of the founder-leader's Scientific Research Program. Hence, to be successful, requires a base of**

influence in graduate education that will continue to exist for three or more generational cohorts of graduate students.

Even more striking, thought not surprising, is the lack of structural development along the lines suggested in Tiryakian's works. The model makes explicit many of the challenges inherent in institutionalizing a Catholic social science. Perhaps the greatest challenge is the emergence of an intellectually charismatic founder leader(s) who can resolve, in creative and scientifically productive ways, the tensions inherent in building and institutionalizing Integral sociology and social science. To this is added all the other challenges of creating a network of scholars at other significant institutions who can replicate the SRP, and utilize it in expanding the network. A school is successful and enduring when it establishes networks of communication and influence that include professional organizations, publishers and journals. When it reaches the professional level in the diagram it becomes a competitor for position within its discipline. The essential step to such a privileged perch is the establishment of successful graduate programs. Such programs educate successive cohorts of graduate students who take the message of Catholic social sciences to new generations of scholar-practioneers. It is through this process that continuity and creativity become institutionalized and can advance the mission of Catholic social sciences.

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