

SOCIOLOGY GETS EXPELLED FROM SCHOOL: the Capanema Reform of 1942 and the disputes of the Catholics over the subject in Brazil

A sociologia sai da escola: a Reforma Capanema de 1942
e as disputas dos católicos em torno da disciplina no Brasil

La sociología es expulsada de la escuela: la Reforma de Capanema de 1942
y las disputas de los católicos en torno a la disciplina em Brasil

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Abstract: The article analyzes, from a historical perspective, the intellectual and political context in which sociology was excluded as a mandatory subject from the secondary school curriculum following the Capanema Reform of 1942. Starting from the interpretations that crystallized around this key episode for the history of social sciences in Brazil, it seeks to nuance and complicate current readings by considering the available primary sources, especially those present in the Gustavo Capanema Archive. As it is argued, the exclusion of sociology from schools was closely linked to the disputes surrounding its scientificity waged by Catholics, an important fraction of the support base of the *Estado Novo*. As can be seen from the opinions of Catholic intellectuals who opposed the permanence of sociology as a school subject, the criticism pointed to the secularist and anti-clerical views that that science could convey. In this sense, political and ideological reasons, and not just pragmatic and operational ones, were at the root of its exclusion from the curriculum.

Keywords: secondary education reform; catholic sociology; Gustavo Capanema; history of sociology teaching in Brazil.

Resumo: O artigo analisa, de uma perspectiva histórica, o contexto intelectual e político em que se operou, a partir da Reforma Capanema de 1942, a exclusão da sociologia como disciplina obrigatória do currículo das escolas secundárias. Partindo das interpretações que se cristalizaram em torno desse episódio-chave para a história das ciências sociais no Brasil, busca complexificar as leituras correntes à luz do exame das fontes primárias disponíveis, em especial daqueles presentes no Arquivo Gustavo Capanema. Conforme argumenta, a saída da sociologia das escolas esteve intimamente ligada às disputas em torno de sua cientificidade travadas pelos católicos, fração importante da base de apoio do Estado Novo. Como é possível depreender dos pareceres de intelectuais católicos contrários à permanência da sociologia como disciplina escolar, a crítica apontava para as visões secularistas e anticlericais que aquela ciência poderia veicular. Nesse sentido, razões políticas e ideológicas, e não apenas pragmáticas e operacionais, estiveram na raiz de sua exclusão da grade curricular.

Palavras-chave: reforma do ensino secundário; sociologia católica; Gustavo Capanema; história do ensino da sociologia no Brasil.

Resumen: El artículo analiza, desde una perspectiva histórica, el contexto intelectual y político en el que la sociología fue excluida como materia obligatoria del currículo de la escuela secundaria con la Reforma Capanema de 1942. A partir de las interpretaciones que cristalizaron en torno a este episodio clave para la historia de las sociedades ciencias en Brasil, busca matizar y complicar las lecturas actuales considerando las fuentes primarias disponibles, especialmente las presentes en el Archivo Gustavo Capanema. Como sostiene, el alejamiento de la sociología de las escuelas estuvo estrechamente vinculado a las disputas en torno a su cientificidad libradas por los católicos, una fracción importante de la base de apoyo del Estado Novo. Como se desprende de las opiniones de los intelectuales católicos que estaban en contra de la permanencia de la sociología como materia escolar, las críticas apuntaban a las visiones secularistas y anticlericales que esa ciencia podía transmitir. En este sentido, razones políticas e ideológicas, y no sólo pragmáticas y operativas, estuvieron en la raíz de su exclusión del plan de estudios.

Palabras clave: reforma de la educación secundaria; sociología católica; Gustavo Capanema; historia de la enseñanza de la sociología en Brasil.

INTRODUCTION

The old secondary and normal schools constituted important spaces to house and transmit types of sociological knowledge in Brazil in the 1920s and 1930s. Likewise, the manuals produced for teachers and students in this context ended up contributing to the construction and legitimization of a place for sociology in the Brazilian cultural and intellectual scene (Meucci, 2011).

The academic area concerned with the teaching of Sociology in Brazil has been prolific in the production of studies, especially overall reviews, on the presence and absence of the subject in schools throughout the 20th century (Machado, 1987; Guelfi, 2001; Carvalho, 2004; Moraes, 2011; Oliveira, 2013). The re-entry of sociology into the Brazilian basic education at the beginning of the 21st century, as well as the adversities recently encountered in its institutionalization process at the secondary level of education, seem to have revived the interest of scholars in its history. Researchers started to exam the conditions that favored sociology as a school subject in the past as well as the obstacles it had to face¹.

It is difficult to understand, however, the lack of studies on school sociology in the bibliography, which has expanded in recent decades, on the history of social sciences in Brazil carried out by researchers interested in their routinization as a scientific and academic practice². This absence can be, at best, explained sociologically if we consider the persistent tendency towards differentiation and hierarchization of forms of knowledge among the practitioners of the discipline. While universities are traditionally seen as the locus par excellence of knowledge production and empirical research, schools, on the other hand, tend to be perceived as the place dedicated to the “translation”, “adaption”, and “transposition” of that knowledge into less complex forms.

Even if this is the case, there is no reason for keeping the study of school sociology’s past apart from the task of examining its development as an academic field. As we are reminded by contemporary and classical debates on the History and Historiography of Science (Fleck, 2010), the examination of teaching and dissemination activities carried out in the past, such as the production of teaching manuals, is as relevant as the analysis of theoretical propositions and basic research work if we wish to obtain a proper understanding of how different forms of scientific

¹ In the books organized by Handfas & Oliveira (2008); Handfas et al. (2015); and Silva and Gonçalves (2017), there are not only analyzes about sociology as a school subject at the beginning of the 21st century, but also evaluations and studies on its occurrence in the past. The interest aroused by the teaching of sociology as a research topic, within the scope of postgraduate programs in social sciences, after the more recent introduction of the subject in Brazilian high school in 2008 was examined, among others, by Bodart and Cigales (2017) and Oliveira and Melchiorretto (2020).

² See, for example, the volumes organized by Miceli (1995, 2001), which constitute an important reference for these discussions.

knowledge developed and were sustained. Those activities contribute, after all, to the circulation of knowledge produced “internally” in the academy, boosting its broader social legitimation and its crystallization in the form of assumptions and shared ways of seeing reality. These, in turn, can constitute relevant starting points as established knowledge for the socialization of new generations of scholars and scientists.

In Brazil, the history of sociology as a specific field of scientific knowledge and inquiry was, at first, closely linked to secondary education and normal schools³. Such had been the relevance of basic education in making room for sociological knowledge in Brazilian society that the end of the mandatory subject in the school curriculum with the Capanema Reform of 1942 produced significant repercussions, not yet fully investigated, on the professional activities, career perspectives, and social identity of the first generations of sociologists graduated from the country's philosophy faculties⁴. Although the reform is a key episode for the history of social sciences in Brazil – and not just for the history of its school modalities –, the circumstances that presided over it and, above all, the role that Catholic intellectuals played in this process remain unclear. In this article, we seek to gather, from archival research, some clues capable of broadening our understanding of the intellectual and political context in which sociology was excluded from Brazilian secondary courses.

Focusing on the Capanema Reform, we explore the hypothesis that the disputes undertaken by Catholics in the field of social sciences constituted a decisive element in the context that led to the withdrawal of sociology from schools and the consequent change in the direction of its institutionalization in Brazil. We argue that the positions taken by representatives of that confessional group amid the debates on the scientific character of sociology and the efforts to define its disciplinary boundaries, as well as the ascendancy they exercised over high-ranking officials in the Vargas government, need to be better understood if we wish to achieve a historically dense and nuanced interpretation of this critical event in the history of social sciences in the country.

³ In his analyzes of the development of sociology in Brazil, Fernando de Azevedo, referring to the Escolanovistas (those who advocated New School methods in Brazil) observes the impulse given to the social sciences “[...] by the educators and reformers who saw in the scientific studies of society the starting point and the solid basis for rational transformations of institutions and school systems, in their structure and purposes” (original quotation in Portuguese: “[...] pelos educadores e reformadores que viam nos estudos científicos da sociedade o ponto de partida e a base sólida para transformações racionais das instituições e dos sistemas escolares, em sua estrutura e em suas finalidades”) (Azevedo, 1955, p. 381). Azevedo also highlights that the teaching of sociology in basic education and in normal schools preceded its offering as an element in the curriculum of social sciences undergraduate schools (Azevedo, 1967).

⁴ The Philosophy Faculties (‘Faculdades de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras’) were among the first institutions in Brazil to offer full undergraduate degrees in the social sciences (which included Sociology, Political Science, and Political Economy). As Luiz de Aguiar Costa Pinto observes, the Social Science undergraduate programs at these institutions – for which the courses at the *Faculdade Nacional de Filosofia da Universidade do Brasil* (FNFi), started in 1939, was supposed to function as a model – had as a one of its main purposes to offer teacher training for secondary schools, where sociology was a mandatory subject at the time (Costa Pinto, 1949).

In this case, we move away from the predominant studies on the trajectory of sociology in the basic education, which tend to opt for broad approaches in the form of overall reviews, covering different moments in contemporary Brazil. Although this is certainly a valuable approach that allows us a panoramic view of the paths and deviations of school sociology in the past, it tends to leave aside the detailed investigation of key moments of its history. Despite covering long periods, these studies also usually lack a robust set of primary sources capable of supporting the analysis.

Taking as basis different types of publication by the Catholic circles, as well as newspaper reports, decree-laws and the archive material contained in Gustavo Capanema Papers, we conducted a focused and vertical examination of the episode in question. A particularly relevant source was the magazine *A Ordem*, the main periodical for the engaged Catholic intellectuals in Brazil. We also considered the publications by Alceu Amoroso Lima, prominent representative of this group and author of *Preparation for Sociology* (1931). A content analysis of these texts was carried out in order to clarify the meaning the Catholics attributed to sociology as a science and the positions they took regarding its presence as a school subject in Brazilian secondary education. In the case of the Capanema Papers, we examined the occurrences of the term “sociology” in the folder containing the materials on the 1942 Reform.⁵

We approach the Catholics' conceptions and debates on the scientificity of sociology from a History of Science perspective. Contemporary scholars in this field have examined scientific activity in its historicity, conceiving it as a set of practices and ideas, of variable meaning, implemented by social actors and collectivities situated in time and space.⁶ In this case, instead of judging the epistemic validity of the kind of sociology the Catholics proposed based on supposedly fixed and timeless criteria standing for the so-called “scientific method”, we analyze their efforts to define the boundaries of that discipline as part of a cognitive and social process that can only be fully understood in the light of the intellectual and political disputes in which they were involved. The discussions about sociology as a science triggered by these actors are fundamental, as we will indicate, for understanding the strategies they adopted when dealing with it as a school subject.

Initially, we consider the readings that have solidified around the reform. Then, after analyzing the intellectual and political context in which it unfolded, we re-examine such interpretations based on primary sources that remain largely unexplored by the literature.

⁵ See Folder GC g 1936.03.24/1, Series “Ministério da Educação e Saúde – Educação e Cultura”, *Arquivo Gustavo Capanema, Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil, Fundação Getúlio Vargas*, Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Brazil.

⁶ See, among others, Shapin (2013). This approach is not very different from the concern showed by scholars in the history of school sociology regarding the multiple and different meanings attached to the subject in the past (Meucci, 2015).

INTERPRETATIONS ABOUT THE REFORM

In the best-known assessments of the historical trajectory of sociology in Brazilian schools, marked by intermittences, advances and setbacks, the Secondary Education Reform instituted during the *Estado Novo* by the Minister of Education and Health of Vargas, Gustavo Capanema, constitutes a relevant chronological marker. It inaugurates the long period of its absence as a mandatory subject in basic education after a brief experience, in the 1920s and 1930s, as a curricular component of the final years of the secondary education system, linked to complementary courses for the universities' entrance exams (Machado, 1987; Santos, 2002; Moraes, 2003)⁷.

It is known that the Capanema Reform structured secondary school into two cycles (junior high and high school), and divided the latter into classical and scientific, in an effort to confer a particular identity and function to this level of education, previously seen only as a preparatory stage for the entry into higher education courses (Montalvão, 2021). The reasons that led to the exclusion of sociology from the new curriculum model are not so clear though and remain open to discussion.

The idea that the decision to exclude the subject, made by an authoritarian and nationalist regime full of prejudices of an ideological nature, would have been motivated by the potential threat to the *status quo* represented by a critical and defiant kind of knowledge is rejected as simplistic and anachronistic, especially by Moraes (2011). The author sees more pragmatic and operational motivations in the suppression of sociology from the curriculum, linked both to the new teaching structure and to the incipient development of sociology as a science. Pointing out that the changes undertaken by Capanema did not target that subject in particular, the author argues that the Reform merely instituted a curricular proposal within which sociology, still lacking a proper definition of its contents and a consistent cognitive identity, would hardly fit. That is, sociology could neither be identified as part of the classical and humanist training – mainly due to its own efforts to differentiate itself from Literature – nor profile alongside the properly scientific subjects devoted to the study of the natural world since its scientificity remained undeveloped at that time. Moraes' reading has been endorsed by different authors (Oliveira, 2013; Souza, 2017; Rodrigues, 2018). It problematizes, above all, the automatic association between the absence of sociology in the school curriculum and the repressive character of authoritarian governments.

Without explicitly differing from Moraes, Meucci (2015) seeks to add a level of understanding of the episode based on a more strictly sociological interpretation. Amid the crisis of the oligarchic pact of the First Republic, the entry of sociology into

⁷ It should be noted, however, as Fraga (2020) indicated, that sociological ideas and points of view were, nevertheless, conveyed in alternative formats, as part of the content of other subjects in secondary education, or in institutional spaces different from that of the school.

schools in the mid-1920 had an intimate connection, as the author argues, with the growing dissatisfaction of upper- and middle-class segments regarding the mismatch between the liberal political order and the country's deep social and cultural realities. In this context, accurate knowledge of society became an object of increasing concern among elites interested in managing it “rationally” and “scientifically”. The exclusion of sociology from the school curriculum in 1942 would, in turn, reflect the exhaustion of the *Estado Novo* project, whose agents saw in that science a foundation for their proposal for an anti-liberal organization of the nation (Meucci, 2015). As the author reminds us, sociology did not have a univocal meaning at the time, but lent itself to varied definitions which, in turn, were linked to different understandings of its object – the “social” – and, consequently, to distinct political projects for the reordering of society (Meucci, 2015).

Despite its differences, the interpretative model outlined by Meucci, which seeks to understand the successes and misfortunes of sociology in schools by situating them within the general trends of Brazilian society and politics, seems to have Luiz de Aguiar Costa Pinto as one of its first formulators (Costa Pinto, 1949; Costa Pinto & Carneiro, 2012). Costa Pinto sees what he calls an “outbreak of social sciences” in Brazil in the 1930s, including the reinforcement of sociology as an element of the school curriculum by the Francisco Campos Reform of 1931, as a reflection, on the cultural level, of the socio-economic transformations that had been shaking the country and culminated in the 1930 Revolution.

Conceiving sociology as the cultural product of a period of societal crisis, Costa Pinto argues that it had emerged in Brazil, as elsewhere, as part of society's efforts to scientifically examine and address the problems stemming from the overwhelming modernizing changes following urbanization and industrialization. By favoring sociology, the country's elites believed they could guide themselves amid these transformations and, ultimately, conduct them rationally. The author considers the removal of the subject from the school curriculum a decade later as a clear sign of the setbacks suffered by sociology, itself part of an intricate process of social change, marked by impasses and contradictions. From Costa Pinto's perspective, modernizing changes in countries like Brazil, far from presenting a linear course, would be trapped in an ambivalent dynamic. Neither the traditional standards and archaisms arising from the past nor the modern principles and values that erupted within Brazilian society would have sufficient strength in themselves to prevail over the set of transformations taking place. The country remained, therefore, in a position of “structural marginality”⁸.

⁸ With this concept, the sociologist had in mind a type of social structure that, in the process of change, perpetuated itself as hybrid, no longer exclusively “traditional”, but neither capable of carrying out its full modernization in a capitalist sense. Studies on the centrality of this concept in Costa Pinto's work can be found in Maio & Villas Bôas (1999). For a detailed analysis of Costa Pinto's assessment of the history of social sciences in Brazil, see Brasil Jr. (2012).

Not surprisingly, Costa Pinto identifies the exclusion of sociology operated by the Capanema Reform as reflecting, on the cultural realm, the setbacks suffered by the revolutionary process from 1935 onwards, with the gradual closure of the regime that brought to the world, two years later, the *Estado Novo* and the containment of the renewing political forces unleashed in 1930. The contradictory result of this situation, according to Costa Pinto, was the boom in the use of the term “social” in the country’s cultural and intellectual life (“social legislation”, “social literature”, “social assistance”, “social policy” etc.) during the *Estado Novo*, accompanied, however, by the belief that it would be “dangerous” to study the social scientifically (Costa Pinto & Carneiro, 2012). Thus, within a decade, the “educational ideology” of the ruling elites had abandoned the interest in providing students with the tools necessary for the rational understanding of a social order in constant change in favor of an obscurantist attitude, averse to science and concerned with defending the establishment (Costa Pinto & Carneiro, 2012). Since it threatened to reveal the foundations of the *status quo*, uncovering the contradictions and dynamic factors capable of leading to change, the teaching of sociology became “taboo” (Costa Pinto & Carneiro, 2012).

Regardless of the explanatory validity of Costa Pinto's reading, which assumes, like the others, a specific interpretation of the political events in Brazil in the 1930s, it has the merit of not losing sight of the intertwining between the institutionalization of school sociology and the institutionalization of sociology as a teaching and research practice in academia. In other words, the author considers the adversities faced by sociology in its secondary education trajectory as fundamental for understanding its development as a science and a professional activity in the country (Costa Pinto & Carneiro, 2012). Costa Pinto's analysis is equally valuable because it was produced by an actor directly involved in the efforts to institutionalize the social sciences. He took part in this process first as an undergraduate student and then as an assistant professor to the sociology chair at the *Faculdade Nacional de Filosofia* (FNFi) in Rio de Janeiro (Maio & Lopes, 2015)⁹.

Despite its undeniable value, Costa Pinto's reading, like the others, does not focus on the specific intellectual context in which the exclusion from sociology took place. This seems to point to a more complex picture than that suggested by current

⁹ The relevance that Costa Pinto attributed to the presence of sociology as a subject in the school curriculum, which he did not dissociate, as we previously indicated, from the fate of sociology as a scientific discipline in the country, can also be gauged from the thesis he wrote while applying for a Lecturer position (*livre docência*) at FNFi in September 1947. The results were later published in the journal *Sociologia* (Costa Pinto, 1947a, 1949).

interpretations, involving fierce debates, fueled particularly by the Catholic intellectuals, about the scientificity of sociology and the nature of its object¹⁰.

In order to contribute to a clarification of the issue, we next look at the interest of Catholic intellectuals and educators in sociology as well as their involvement with theoretical and institutional disputes around the subject in Brazil. The focus on the Catholics is justified once we remember that this confessional group, mainly through Alceu Amoroso Lima, closely collaborated with Gustavo Capanema, who served as Minister of Education and Health of Vargas from July 1934 until the end of the *Estado Novo*. Archival sources, which have so far been little explored in the literature, also highlight the role of these circles in the exclusion of sociology as a subject from the school curriculum.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE REFORM

The Organic Law on Secondary Education [*Lei Orgânica do Ensino Secundário*] was established by Decree-Law No. 4,244, of April 9, 1942, in full force of the authoritarian regime, and lasted until the restructuring of the school system implemented by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education of 1961 [*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*]. It was part of an ambitious project by the minister of Vargas, which sought to provide unity, homogeneity, and greater control, on the part of the central administration, to the country's education, in line with the centralizing political tendencies of the period and the expectations of the intellectual elites, who evaluated the role of educational institutions in shaping future nationality as central (Saviani, 2011). Since assuming the ministry, Capanema had been seeking

¹⁰ Although he does not explicitly refer to the Catholics in his analysis of the “obscurantist reaction” of the ruling elites in the educational field during the *Estado Novo* (Costa Pinto & Carneiro, 2012), Costa Pinto recognizes the weight that these groups had in the debates about sociology and its scientificity in Brazil. In his well-known text “Sociology and social change”, he qualifies the sociology proposed by the Catholics not as a legitimate science of society but as a “normative utopia” concerned with providing a “repository of ‘rules of good living’”, and observes: “It is worth the consolation that, from a theoretical point of view, the offense they direct against the scientific method, against what they refer to as the ‘so-called science’, is very weak and does not constitute a serious threat. Even in Brazil, where for so long only this type of sociology was known, the verification of its lamentable poverty – and the distrust of everything else – was one of the factors behind the exclusion of social sciences from the secondary school curriculum” (original quotation in Portuguese: “Vale o consolo de que, do ponto de vista teórico, a ofensiva que dirigem contra o método científico, contra o que chamam a ‘chamada ciência’, é muito débil e não constitui ameaça séria. Mesmo no Brasil, onde por tanto tempo só se conheceu esse tipo de sociologia, foi a verificação de sua pobreza lamentável – e a desconfiança em relação a tudo mais – um dos fatores da exclusão das ciências sociais do currículo da escola secundária”) (Costa Pinto, 1947b, p. 323, emphasis added). In the third section of this article, we will have the opportunity to carefully examine the Catholics' views on the scientificity of sociology.

to restructure the different levels of education, tying them to a nation project, as seen in the discussions surrounding the National Education Plan (Horta, 2010).

In its general lines, the Reform was in continuity with that instituted a decade earlier by Francisco Campos, who sought to provide secondary education with its own physiognomy and establish minimum national norms and standards to be followed by the country's educational establishments, which began to receive federal inspection¹¹. The law on secondary education established by Capanema reinforced the prevailing understanding that this type of education was of a superior nature, destined to the elites, and, therefore, distinct from agricultural, industrial, and commercial education, which prepared the student immediately for the labor market. It organized a basic set of knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that should be part of the first training cycle, the gymnasium, and should last four years. Both who sought to enter into professional courses and those preparing to enter universities (in practice, the upper class youth) could be enrolled in this cycle (Schwartzman et al., 2000). If a higher form of education was the main goal after the secondary one, the student should opt for either classical or scientific education when finishing gymnasium, depending on the desired university course.

If the secondary education curriculum instituted by Francisco Campos expanded the range of subjects offered until then, giving a prominent role to the sciences in the training of students, the Capanema Reform opened space for classical humanities, such as Greek and, mainly, Latin, which became compulsory subject in the four grades of the gymnasium and in the three grades of the classical course¹². In an introductory text to the reform project addressed to Vargas, Capanema observes that secondary education, focusing on the “preparation of leading individualities” (namely, the country's future elites), should have as its specific purpose the formation of the “patriotic consciousness” and the “humanistic consciousness” of teenagers. As he argued, if science constituted an important source of guidance in the modern world, dominated by machines and technical-scientific rationality, education could not neglect the classical heritage, which constituted one of the pillars of Brazilian

¹¹ Like Capanema, Francisco Campos came from the political groups in Minas Gerais that, in the midst of the Washington Luís government's succession crisis, supported the movement that triggered the so-called Revolution of 1930. In Minas Gerais, he had been Secretara of Interior in the Antônio Carlos government (1926 -1930), implementing a modernizing educational reform, inspired by *Escola Nova* ideals, which projected its name nationally. With the Revolution, Campos took over the Ministry of Education and Public Health created by the provisional government at the end of 1930, remaining there until 1932 (Malin, 2015).

¹² While the natural sciences were part of the elementary program established by the Francisco Campos Reform – in the first two grades, as “physical and natural sciences”, and in the last three series, as “Physics”, “Chemistry” and “Natural History” –, they no longer appeared in the first two grades of the basic cycle of the secondary school introduced by the Capanema Reform. See *Decreto* No. 19,890 (1931); *Decreto-lei* No. 4,244 (1942).

“national culture” (Capanema, 1942). Latin, in particular, was the “foundation and structure of the national language” (Capanema, 1942).

Although Capanema sought to tie the teaching of classical humanities to the fiery nationalist rhetoric typical of the *Estado Novo* regime, this was also part of the Catholics’ educational agenda. For them, the teaching of classical letters was central. The defense of Latin, after all the official language of the Church, as a component of the school curriculum for the education of the country’s future elites, was a common topic in the pages of *A Ordem*, the main Catholic magazine (Azzi, 1929; Van Acker, 1933). In 1940, two years before the Reform, Alceu Amoroso Lima, the influential intellectual leader in the Catholic lay circles, had used a disapproving tone to express his dissatisfaction with the “[...] abandonment of the humanist sense in the formation of the Brazilian man [...]” after the advent of the Republic in the late 19th century (Lima, 1940a, p. 465). According to his evaluation, education, under a positivist influence, had adopted a utilitarian and professionalizing orientation, overemphasizing disciplinary contents related to science and technical skills to the detriment of classical humanities (Lima, 1940a, p. 465).

The wide space given to classical letters in the new curriculum allows us to glimpse the ascendancy of the Catholics over the Capanema Reform. Representatives of this confessional group, which occupied, as we will see in the next section, prominent positions in the educational debates of the 1920s and 1930s, constituted Capanema's key collaborators during the *Estado Novo*.

The suppression of sociology from secondary education must also be understood, as we argue, in the light of these connections. In the Capanema Papers, among the documents on the Reform, there are three assessments on the reform from Catholics which take a position against the permanence of the subject in schools. They are part of a set of reactions by educators on the preliminary project of the Organic Law on Secondary Education that Capanema sought to gather before forwarding the plan to Vargas¹⁵.

One of the assessments was authored by Alceu Amoroso Lima. Educator, literary critic, and prolific writer, known by the pseudonym Tristão de Ataíde, Amoroso Lima was, as previously indicated, one of the most expressive leaders of the Catholic laity in the country. In the 1930s, he engaged in fierce disputes with representatives of the *Escola Nova* in the educational field (Daros, 2013). Alongside Capanema, Amoroso Lima also played a major role in setting up the courses and recruiting professors for the *Faculdade Nacional de Filosofia* (FNFfi), founded in 1939 after the dissolution of the former *Universidade do Distrito Federal* (UDF), where he had

¹⁵ Horta (2010) drew attention to the existence of these assessments, even though his focus, different from ours and more general, is on the implications of Capanema’s ties with the Catholics for the educational policies in the period.

served as dean between 1937 and 1938 (Oliveira, 1995; Almeida, 2001)¹⁴. In his appraisal of the new secondary education proposal, Amoroso Lima remarked that the second cycle was “exaggeratedly overloaded” with subjects. Following this observation, he proposed the exclusion of Literature as a subject and the absorption of its contents by the Portuguese course. Regarding Sociology, he asserts: “I also strongly suggest the suppression of the ‘Sociology’ chair, which, under no circumstances, should be a secondary school chair and only a higher education one” (Lima, nd., p. 5, emphasis in the original). Later, we will have the opportunity to examine the grounds on which Amoroso Lima sought to justify his opinion on the appropriate institutional space for sociology. Let us note, for now, that his suggestion is presented as a measure capable of making the school curriculum leaner.

Another assessment, by the Jesuit priest Leonel Franca, states: “I am inclined to believe that sociology is not taught with great benefit in secondary schools” (Franca, nd., p. 2). Like Amoroso Lima, Franca points out that the curriculum proposed by the reform would be “overloaded with subjects”: “Dispersion and superficiality will inexorably lead to encyclopedism and memorization of knowledge [...]” (Franca, nd., p. 1)¹⁵. In this case, Sociology does not seem to be the only target, but also the History of Arts, Crafts and Literature. The contents of this last subject, as suggested by Franca, equally approached Amoroso Lima's vision: they could be included in the last two years of the Portuguese, Latin and Modern Languages programs (Franca, nd.). Close to Cardinal Sebastião Leme, Franca played a key role, alongside Amoroso Lima, in defending religious teaching in basic education, a topic that mobilized Catholic groups in the constituent assembly discussions of the 1930s. He also worked, since that period, in the construction of the religious oriented higher education institutions that, in 1946, would become the *Pontifícia Universidade Católica* (PUC) in Rio de Janeiro (Oliveira, 2021).

A third assessment was written by fellow Jesuit priest Arlindo Vieira. Although not as well-known as those mentioned above, his name is part of the debates, held in the 1930s, on how secondary education should be conceived and structured in Brazil, a subject about which he wrote the books *O problema do ensino secundário* (1936) and *O ensino das humanidades* (1936), in addition to articles in newspapers, always in a controversial tone (Rocha, 2005). Vieira not only had the support of Amoroso Lima in

¹⁴ The UDF project, linked to the administration of Pedro Ernesto in the then capital of the country, was suspended by Vargas amid the growing and tense political polarization that led to the removal of one of its main creators, the *Escola Nova* educator Anísio Teixeira, accused of collaboration with the communist uprising of 1935 and target of fierce criticism from the Catholics (Schwartzman et al., 2000). Anti-communism was not a negligible element in the construction of Catholic criticism of the *Escola Nova* and the “new sciences of man” (such as sociology) to which these educators resorted to support their educational proposals. As we will indicate, anti-communism also informed the position of the Catholics in favor of the suppression of the subject in the secondary school curriculum.

¹⁵ T. N.: “Dispersão e superficialidade levarão inexoravelmente ao enciclopedismo e à memorização de conhecimentos [...]”.

publicizing his works (Vieira, 1943), but he also served, at the time, as principal of *Colégio Santo Inácio*, an institution founded by the Jesuits that achieved renown among the private schools attended by Rio de Janeiro's upper class children. His position within the educational institutions of Rio de Janeiro helps us understand the communication channel he managed to build with Capanema, whose office he visited often (Montalvão, 2021). In his assessment, Arlindo Vieira notes, like the others, what he considers to be an excess of subjects in the curriculum, defending a reduction in the weekly workload dedicated to the study of scientific disciplines. For the last two years of secondary school, he suggests, in accordance with the other assessments, the dilution of Literature content in the Portuguese Language subject. Regarding the point that interests us, he writes:

Sociology, introduced in France in the past for sectarian purposes, is not part of secondary education programs in Europe. It's a subject for a higher education course. / Here, this experience in the complementary school program was disastrous. In almost all nonreligious schools' programs, this subject has become a chair for subversive propaganda. We are fully aware of this through the class notes presented to us by our former students and others. The poor boys, without the intellectual maturity to judge the value of the doctrines of conscienceless teachers, easily allow themselves to be carried away by these remarks made out of pure demagoguery. It would therefore be convenient to remove this subject from secondary schools (Vieira, 1941, p. 5)¹⁶.

Arlindo Vieira's opinion shares with the others the perspective that sociology was among the subjects that could be eliminated from the extensive and heavy secondary education curriculum, which should avoid encyclopedic teaching. The reference to "encyclopedism" had become a common point in the Catholic criticism of the Francisco Campos Reform. As it can be seen from the pages of *A Ordem*, the expression indicated the Catholic disapproval of the emphasis given by modern education to scientific subjects, considered as excessive¹⁷.

¹⁶ T. N.: "A sociologia, introduzida na França, outrora, por fins sectários, não faz parte dos programas de ensino secundário da Europa. É matéria de um curso superior. / Aqui essa experiência no curso complementar foi desastrosa. Em quase todos os cursos de colégios leigos, essa disciplina se converteu em cátedra de propaganda subversiva. Disso temos pleno conhecimento, mediante as notas de aula que nos foram apresentadas por nossos antigos alunos e outros. Os pobres rapazes, sem madureza intelectual para ajuizar do valor das doutrinas de mestres sem consciência, facilmente se deixam levar por essas tiradas de pura demagogia. Seria, pois, conveniente suprimir essa disciplina do curso secundário".

¹⁷ In Brazil, according to the Catholic perspective, the pedagogical emphasis on science had its origins in the positivism of the First Republic. In the words of Leonardo Van Acker, professor of Philosophy at the Faculty of São Bento in São Paulo, the Republic had adopted an educational approach marked by "[...] an unnamable

Father Vieira's comment is particularly relevant for our analysis as it openly expresses the fear that sociology classes would surreptitiously become a space for the dissemination of anti-clerical and secularist world views opposed by the Church, especially those materialist philosophies represented by positivism and communism. By stating that, in Europe, the subject was only included in the higher education curriculum, and not in the secondary education, Vieira also aligned himself with the argument put forward by Amoroso Lima. As we will see in the next section, the exclusion of sociology from schools was justified due to the lack of maturity of the students, who would not know how to evaluate, from a metatheoretical point of view, the relative merit of the currents and theories in dispute within that science, seen as incipient. The result could be nothing but a heterogeneous and confusing amalgamation of the most different authors, theories, and concepts.

The assessments by the Catholics constitute valuable sources that help us clarify the current interpretations involving the suppression of the subject by the Capanema Reform. However, before investigating in more detail the intellectual positions that these documents reflect, which only acquire meaning when we consider the Catholics' incursion in the field of the "new sciences of man", it is worth examining how the place of sociology had been previously conceived in the plans for the new secondary education program outlined by Capanema. This issue is important since, instead of expressing the position taken by the *Estado Novo* as a whole, the removal of sociology from the school curriculum seems to reflect pressures from specific groups with which Vargas Administration had to bargain for political support¹⁸.

A careful reading of the documentation relating to the reform maintained by Capanema reveals that sociology was included in the new curricular model envisioned by the minister who, in drafts of the decree-law on secondary education, foresaw its inclusion in the third grade of the second cycle – for both classical and scientific classes (Capanema, nd., 1941a). That is, the subject seemed to constitute an essential ingredient both for humanistic training (in which the study of ancient letters predominated) and for that centered on the teaching of mathematics and natural sciences. In speeches drafted to announce the new model, Sociology, alongside History, Geography and Philosophy, were mentioned by Capanema as one of the

mystiforium, made of verbalist baccalaureate and utilitarian scientism" (original quotation in Portuguese: "[...] um mistifório inominável, feito de bacharelise verbalista e cientismo utilitário") (Van Acker, 1933, p. 738).

¹⁸ In addition to these, there is at least one more assessment, by an unidentified author, which suggests the elimination of the course from the school curriculum. Based on the content of the text, it is assumed that it comes from an educational institution of the armed forces that espoused a positivist conception of science: "With regard to Sociology, it has already been eliminated from the Military School course, which is indisputably superior to the classical or scientific, in appreciation. Furthermore, how can you teach Sociology to someone who doesn't need it and hasn't studied Biology?" (original quotation in Portuguese: "No tocante à Sociologia, já foi ela eliminada do curso da Escola Militar que é indiscutivelmente superior ao clássico ou científico, em apreço. Além do mais, como ensinar Sociologia a quem não precisa nem estudou Biologia?") (Secondary Education Law, n.d.).

fundamental subjects for the training of future citizens. In the words of the minister, in a statement to the press published in several newspapers across the country:

If, in ancient times, many Brazilians knew Latin and mathematics, if many knew how to write with finesse and discretion, how many, how numerous are, today, our still young fellow countrymen, who speak and write Latin, who know in depth the history, geography and sociology, who are masters in other sciences, who have an admirable knowledge of philosophical subjects and who know how to write exemplarily (Capanema, 1941b)¹⁹.

The sources from the Capanema Papers reinforce the hypothesis that the position of the Catholics in relation to sociology was decisive for the absence of the subject in the final version of the decree-law that established the new secondary education system. As his personal documents suggest, Capanema himself did not seem to have any doubts about the place of sociology in the school curriculum. In the absence of sources that clarify the minister's positions regarding sociology, we can assume that, on his part, the teaching of the subject would not initially be problematic because it could assume a meaning and content in tune with the *Estado Novo*' nation-building project or, in the worst case scenario, would not represent a serious threat to such plans.

The hypothesis that Capanema did not present particular reasons to oppose the presence of sociology in secondary education leads us to believe that the exclusion of the subject was the product of an accommodative effort characteristic of Vargas's political style, representing, above all, a concession made to a demand from the Catholics, seen as important allies. In this case, the source of the most intransigent opposition to the teaching of sociology seems to move from the high ranks of Vargas Administration to the Church and its lay representatives, leaving us to understand why the latter took such a categorical position against that science as a mandatory subject in schools.

CATHOLIC SOCIOLOGY IN BRAZIL: WEAPON OF SYMBOLIC STRUGGLE OR SCIENTIFIC PROJECT?

Although it initially showed serious precautions about Vargas and the 1930 Revolution, the Catholic Church had been approaching the government and, over the

¹⁹ T. N.: "Se, em tempos remotos, muitos brasileiros souberam latim e matemática, se muitos souberam escrever com finura e critério, quantos, quão numerosos são, hoje em dia, os nossos patrícios ainda jovens, que falam e escrevem o latim, que conhecem a fundo a história, a geografia e a sociologia, que são mestres nas outras ciências, que possuem um conhecimento admirável das matérias filosóficas e que sabem escrever exemplarmente".

course of that decade, managed to ensure that some of its most important demands in the educational field were met, such as the permission for optional religious teaching in public schools, a possibility excluded by the republican and secularizing Constitution of 1891. Francisco Campos saw the Catholics as important allies in the effort to consolidate the new regime among institutions and society. While in charge of the Ministry of Education and Health in the early 1930s, he acted as one of the architects of the rapprochement between the government and the Church (Schwartzman et al., 2000; Horta, 2010). For our purposes, we should once more recall the close relationships that Capanema maintained with Alceu Amoroso Lima, a decisive connection for the modeling of educational institutions and projects in the period (Saviani, 2011).

The Catholic cultural and intellectual movement in Brazil gained strong momentum in the 1920s (Pierucci et al., 2007). In a scenario of political effervescence directly linked to the crisis of the oligarchic pact and the emergence of new social actors, linked to the urban middle sectors, the Church began to make efforts to recover its former ascendancy over society, hit by the establishment of the liberal Republic in Brazil, seen as anti-clerical (Pierucci et al., 2007). In 1921, Jackson de Figueiredo, an intellectual identified with the Catholic ranks, created the magazine *A Ordem*. In 1922, a year marked by artistic-cultural and political renewal movements, he combined this editorial initiative with the founding, in Rio de Janeiro, of the *Centro Dom Vital*, which became an important nucleus for Catholic intellectual life. The bases were laid for a type of religious activism that preached the “restitution” of the “moral order” of Brazilian society, whose values and institutions, originally shaped by Catholicism according to this view, were now threatened by modern individualism and secularism (Salem, 1982).

The issue of education was at the center of the Catholics’ agenda. Although it constituted a mandatory issue for reformers in general, who pointed to the need for national reconstruction based on the remodeling of teaching, education, mainly that linked to high schools and universities, was valued by the Catholics as a privileged channel for the re-Christianization of the country and the formation of a ruling class capable of bringing about the rapprochement among society, State and the Church. The *Centro Dom Vital* was an important space for coordinating efforts aimed at preparing Brazilian future elites according to this Christian worldview. Under the leadership of Amoroso Lima, who assumed its presidency after the death of Jackson de Figueiredo in 1928, the group's activities resulted in the founding of a series of organizations and educational institutions, such as the *Associação dos Universitários Católicos do Rio de Janeiro* (1928), the *Instituto Católico de Estudos Superiores* (1932), and the *Faculdades Católicas* (1941), which acquired a university status in 1946 (Salem, 1982).

Catholic intellectuals and educators also made their presence felt on the basic education arena, engaging in well-known disputes with the *Escola Nova* supporters in the 1930s (Cury, 1984). It remains largely unexamined, however, their efforts to

construct alternatives to the social sciences of French and US origin which were gaining ground in Brazil at the time, thanks in large part to the pedagogical concepts advocated by the *escolanovistas*, which favored a new kind of education based on the so-called 'new sciences of man' (biology, psychology, and sociology of education) (Consolim, 2021). Sociology, in its institutionalization, greatly benefited from these pedagogical trends, as we can see from the creation, in the 1920s, of chairs dedicated to the subject in normal schools by educators such as Fernando de Azevedo (Azevedo, 1955).

Faced with the progress that the *escolanovistas* seemed to obtain in conveying their ideas and in conquering institutional spaces, Brazilian Catholic intellectuals soon began to construct their own vision of sociology, which they called "Christian", explicitly basing it on philosophical-anthropological perspectives considered more compatible with the Church's worldview. This can be inferred from the reading of *Preparação à sociologia* (or "Preparation to Sociology"), a book by Alceu Amoroso Lima (1931) and one of the first tangible expressions of the type of sociology that would be sought by the Catholics. The volume reflected how Amoroso Lima attempted to position Catholic lay intellectuals vis-à-vis the growing dissemination of the discipline in Brazil in the 1920s through the secondary and normal schools. Such institutional place for sociology seemed to have been consolidated with the arrival of Vargas to power after the Francisco Campos Reform, which confirmed it as a mandatory subject in the complementary and normal school programs (*Decreto* No. 19,890, 1931).

The outline of a "Christian sociology" – also called "integral" by Alceu Amoroso Lima, as we will see – should make Catholics able to compete, in the marketplace of ideas, with sociologies of a naturalistic nature (materialist and positivist, as they were classified), introduced in the country mainly through the work of Durkheim. These sociological currents were seen as harmful cultural vectors because they were committed, from a Catholic perspective, to agnostic and atheistic worldviews, of an anticlerical nature, which should be combated at all costs²⁰.

Apparently, Catholics were not interested in attacking sociology as such even though its scientific status was sometimes doubted. In a movement that marked their involvement with the debates on the human sciences, they sought instead to claim their own positions within the intellectual trends of the time. In this case, they insisted, as Amoroso Lima stated, that sociology was a "science in the making"²¹, or even, a "[...] formless science"²², not fully developed (Lima, 1931, p. 8).

²⁰ This is what Amoroso Lima suggests when referring to "determinist sociology" and Marxism: "In the social reality of our days, as well as in sociological doctrine, the two great human poles are Rome and Moscow, the Vatican and the Kremlin" (original quotation in Portuguese: "Na realidade social de nossos dias, bem como na doutrina sociológica, os dois grandes polos humanos são Roma e Moscou, o Vaticano e o Kremlin") (Lima, 1931, p. 16).

²¹ T. N.: "[...] ciência em ser, em via de formação [...]".

²² T. N.: "[...] ciência informe".

By highlighting the embryonic character of sociology, Catholics intended to point out that, as a scientific discipline, it was still involved in philosophical disputes about its foundations (Lima, 1931). According to Amoroso Lima, even those intellectual schools that claimed to be based on a positive and exclusively empirical social science depended on metatheoretical assumptions and readings of reality that went beyond the observable universe (Lima, 1931). By making sociology depend on a priori postulates and definitions about reality and the human being, Catholics placed it at the level of metaphysical debates and controversies – a realm of discussion in which they could legitimately get involved since it was more akin to their own intellectual practices, based on philosophy and theology. That is, the insistence on the non-consensual nature of the scope of sociology and its object was part of the Catholics' effort to participate, “as Catholics”, in the intellectual discussion about its scientificity without being immediately rejected as unscientific. We will return to this point later as it helps us understand the strategies Catholics employed for criticizing sociology as a school subject.

In a typical move aiming to make sure Catholics were represented in the institutionalization of school sociology, Amoroso Lima decided to apply, in 1930, for a position as a sociology professor at the *Escola Normal do Distrito Federal*, the normal school in the capital city, without succeeding though. The selection process of a suitable candidate, suspended at the end of that year, caused a stir in the newspapers due to the participation, on the examining board, of Father Leonel Franca, a presence considered spurious by representatives of the *Escola Nova* (Souza, 2021). As previously indicated, the Francisco Campos Reform had not completely pleased the Catholics either, who saw in the substantial number of scientific subjects in the curriculum a dangerous secularist and atheist tendency (Sobral Pinto, 1931). Despite the defeats, the Catholics advanced amidst the rising tide of school sociology in the 1930s. They wrote and published introductory manuals to the subject (Cigales, 2019) and secured seats on the national commissions in charge of approving sociology textbooks (Ferreira, 2008). They also built their own institutional places to convey the forms of sociological knowledge they defended, such as the Sociology Course taught by Alceu Amoroso Lima in the early years of the *Instituto Católico de Estudos Superiores* (or “Catholic Institute of Higher Studies”), opened in 1932 as a result of the efforts put forward by the intelligentsia involved in the activities of *Centro Dom Vital* (A Ordem, 1936).

A relevant achievement for the Catholics in these disputes can be seen in the sociology program officially established by a decree of Capanema in March 1936. The program, which was expected to work as a national model for the secondary schools of the country, follows Amoroso Lima's metatheoretical conception of sociology and converges with the Catholic perspective on social life in fundamental points (Lima, 1931). That can be confirmed by noticing the program's concern with marking the difference between sociology and “sociologism” – a term used by the Catholics to classify what they considered to be the excesses of the Durkheimian approach (at least

as they interpreted it), which sought to reduce the individual, as well as institutions considered natural and timeless by the Church, such as the nuclear family and monogamy, to the mere effect of contingent social and historical forces (Brasil, 1936).

Similar to Amoroso Lima's perspective, the 1936 sociology program also highlighted how the subject was linked to “social philosophy” and “moral philosophy”, defined as “related sciences”. As a counterpoint to the “Durkheim School”, the program emphasized the existence of the “historical-cultural School” (Brazil, 1936). Readers of *A Ordem* were certainly familiar with that latter school. Based on the anthropological studies by Father Wilhelm Schmidt of Vienna, it claimed that the differences observed in the family institution throughout different societies and time periods should be understood as a reflection of deformations in its original and essential configuration (conceived as the monogamous conjugal union, as prescribed by the Church) caused by the social environment. This original family structure, as Father Schmidt and his followers argued, could still be identified in distinct “primitive groups” such as the Pygmies. That is, the different types of society acted on the family, favoring or hindering its “normal” functioning, but, contrary to what the Durkheimians believed, did not alter its fundamental characteristics, considered as perennial.

In the historiography of social sciences in Brazil, few scholars dedicated themselves to carefully examining the themes, theories and metatheoretical postulates of this Catholic sociology, which was linked to broader, supranational intellectual movements, prominent in countries such as France, home country of Jacques Maritain, a neo-Thomist thinker, and one of the main references for authors such as Alceu Amoroso Lima (Lima, 1931)²⁵. Recently, Cigales (2019) carried out careful work by analyzing Catholic-inspired sociology manuals adopted by Brazilian schools in the 1920s and 1930s, seeking to identify their features.

The methodological challenge faced by the historian of sociology – often a sociologist herself/himself – is to temporarily suspend their own conceptions about the scientificity of the discipline so as to be able to appreciate what it meant, in its own time, the effort to systematize a sociology that openly asserted itself as Christian or Catholic, claiming a conception of science that radically departs from those that became institutionalized in the long term.

Bodart and Cigales (2020) argue that the Catholic sociology must be understood as the result of a set of predispositions incorporated by Catholic intellectuals, a “conatus”, as they call it, based on Pierre Bourdieu's concept. In this case, it would not necessarily reflect a “project”, in the sense of a conscious and deliberate intention,

²⁵ Let us mention the works of Azevêdo (2006), Meucci (2011) and Brochier (2016) which, however, do not make Catholic sociology in Brazil the focus of their attention. Given the strong presence of Catholics in Brazilian normal and basic education, it is not surprising that, among scholars, those dedicated to the history of sociology as a school subject have shown, more than others, an interest in analyzing their sociological conceptions. See, for example, Silva & Bodart (2019); Bodart & Cigales (2020).

or a set of rationally planned actions, but part of a reaction, on a symbolic level, to the gradual loss of Catholic cultural ascendancy over society. In the context of the modernizing changes of the period, the defense of this sociology would express, as those authors maintain, the search of Catholics for a place in the incipient educational field from which they could transmit, to new generations, their Church-endorsed interpretation of the social world. Thus, if they seemed to make concessions to modernity, adhering to a subject seen as one of its typical intellectual products, such movement would represent, above all, the tendency of these intellectuals to position themselves in favor of the perpetuation of Catholic values and precepts, which distinguished them, amid the ongoing cultural transformations (Bodart & Cigales, 2020).

It really seems hasty to assume, based on the archival research carried out so far, that the distinct and varied actions of Catholics in favor of a “Christian sociology” (which included the publication of textbooks) responded to guidelines coordinated or orchestrated explicitly. In our view, however, one question remains, namely: whether Catholic sociology should be understood solely as an episode in the symbolic struggles within the emerging Brazilian educational field, a weapon either consciously or unconsciously wielded by religious forces to counter the secularist visions of the *Escola Nova* pedagogy that they opposed, or if its proponents, conceiving it as a valid intellectual endeavor in its own right, also pursued its institutionalization as a scientific practice grounded on its own set of rules and institutions.²⁴

In the magazine *A Ordem* we find elements that shed light on the problem. In a 1929 editorial, after announcing his new position as the magazine’s director, Alceu Amoroso Lima, summarized the ambitious plan of Catholic intellectuals to restore the cognitive dimension of religious faith. As he argued, religion had been reduced, with the advance of the secularization of the world in the modern era, to pure feeling and emotion and circumscribed to the sphere of subjectivity: “To those who despise Reason, it is necessary to show that Faith is an act of intelligence. Those who only believe in Reason must be shown that Faith is the final light of knowledge” (Lima, 1929, p. 5).

According to Amoroso Lima, the main objective of *A Ordem* was to show that Catholic thought also aspired to be a rational vision of the world without ceasing to be, “at the same time”, a moral and political compass for the turmoil represented by modernity. In other words, the mission of cognitively apprehending social reality should not be deprived of the equally important mission of intervening normatively

²⁴ This is a more comprehensive research problem, which is beyond the scope of this article. One way of approaching it, however, must consider the role of Catholic intellectuals at higher education levels, particularly in social science undergraduate schools at the country’s philosophy faculties, on which, especially at the Faculdade Nacional de Filosofia (FNFfi), they initially exerted, as it is known, a strong influence. An analysis of the classes of Jacques Lambert, the sociology professor attached to the French mission who worked at FNFfi in its early days, can be found in Lopes (2020), who highlighted his affinities with the Catholic thought.

on it. As he argued, Catholics intended to restore the unity lost with the growing specialization of scientific knowledge, a phenomenon analogous, on the intellectual field, to what was happening in social life, marked by the disruptive and dissolving forces of moral individualism and anarchy. The recovery of the epistemic validity of Catholicism, called into question by the intellectual movements of modernity, such as the Enlightenment, implied investment in the formation of an intellectuality capable of mobilizing not only religious sensitivity but also intelligence. For Amoroso Lima, it was necessary to dispute the latter against the naturalist and monist tendencies that, after the split between religion and science at the end of the Middle Ages, intended to be the only legitimate representatives of human rationality, dismissing Catholic thought as metaphysical (Lima, 1929).

What was true for science in general was true for sociology. In his *Preparação à Sociologia*, Amoroso Lima argued that, in view of Comtian and Durkheimian reifying sociologies, which made the human personality an exclusive product of society, equating the latter with nature, it was necessary for Catholic intellectuals to underline the multifaceted character of the “person”, which could not be reduced to its empirical aspect since it also had an ultra-earthly dimension. Following Maritan, Amoroso Lima stated that, opposing those deterministic tendencies within sociological thought, there was an “integral sociology”, that is, one that recognized the existence of free personalities capable of moral life: “The individual exists for society, society exists for the person, the person exists for God – this is the complete social hierarchy, which we defend” (Lima, 1931, p. 78). The gnoseological scheme underlying Amoroso Lima’s perspective deliberately intended to oppose the hierarchy of sciences famously proposed by Comte by subordinating Sociology to Metaphysics, “the science of first principles”, and to Ethics (Lima, 1931). According to this scheme, philosophy, morality, and the social sciences would be closely associated, with the latter not being able to claim complete autonomy in the face of the former realms.

Even though Catholic intellectuals were building a robust intellectual and institutional arsenal to combat naturalistic social sciences – which was reflected in the construction of positions not only in secondary and normal education but also in the nascent university space –, this accumulation seemed not to be enough for freeing the teaching of sociology in schools from the suspicions that fell upon it. As we have seen, there was, on the part of Catholics, a concern to show that sociology included multiple and divergent metatheoretical definitions. As Amoroso Lima argued, such a cacophony, when taught at schools, could be detrimental to young students, inducing skeptical stances, not only epistemological, but also, what was more worrying, moral. The greatest fear of Catholics seemed to reside in the possibility that naturalist, Durkheimian and Marxist, views would end up prevailing in the routinization of the contents of the school subject, setting the tone for what would come to be understood as “sociology”. It was in this spirit that Amoroso Lima prefaced Amaral Fontoura's textbook, *Programa de Sociologia*:

[The author] is careful to expose, whenever the subject requires it, the various currents at play, without seeking, as it is so common in many textbooks, to deceive the reader by adopting a certain current, as if that was the only one and the real one. One of the dangers of Sociology taught at secondary level lies precisely in this double risk. Either one proceeds like the author of this book, honestly exposing the constant divergences of point of view, and in doing so can lead to confusion or skepticism in the brains of teenagers, or one does it, like so many others dishonestly, hiding the divergences and presenting as social science what is actually only a personal hypothesis or sectarian point of view. The so-called sociologism, so common among those who deal with these problems in our country and elsewhere, is typical of this dangerous subterfuge (Lima, 1940b, p. 13-14)²⁵.

The preface by Amoroso Lima, in addition to manifesting the stance against the teaching of sociology in secondary schools, highlights the Catholic strategy when it comes to discussions on the scientificity of the discipline. By insisting on the dissensions surrounding the definition of its object and its metatheoretical assumptions, these intellectuals hindered any attempt to establish the frontiers of the science of sociology on a relatively consensual basis. To show that sociology was maturing into a scientific discipline worth the name was precisely one of the main goals being pursued by social scientists attached to the incipient academic institutions in Brazil such as the *Escola de Sociologia e Política*, USP, and FNFⁱ (Meucci, 2006; Maio & Lopes, 2015)²⁶. By casting doubts on the constitution of sociology as science, and by insisting on the metatheoretical controversies still dividing it internally, Catholic intellectuals sought to bring the discipline closer to the philosophical and metaphysical quarrels, a terrain that was familiar to them, and in which they could act as authorized participants.

²⁵ T. N.: “[O autor] tem o cuidado de expor, sempre que o assunto o exige, as várias correntes em jogo, sem procurar, como é tão comum em muitos compêndios, iludir o leitor pela adoção de uma determinada corrente, como se essa fosse a única e a verdadeira. Um dos perigos da Sociologia ensinada em nível secundário está justamente nesse duplo escolho. Ou se procede como o autor deste compêndio, expondo honestamente as constantes divergências de ponto de vista, e com isso se pode levar a confusão ou o ceticismo ao cérebro dos adolescentes, ou se faz, como desonestamente tantos outros, escamoteando as divergências e apresentando como ciência social o que é apenas hipótese pessoal ou ponto de vista sectário. O chamado sociologismo, tão corrente entre os que nós e alhures se ocupam com esses problemas, é típico desse perigoso subterfúgio”.

²⁶ That was famously the case of US scholar Donald Pierson, a key actor in the institutionalization of social sciences in Brazil in the 1940s (Maio & Lopes, 2015). While Catholics insisted on the embryonic nature of Sociology, Pierson, a professor at *Escola de Sociologia e Política* in São Paulo, argued that it had already overcome the time of disputes among different schools concerning the definition of its scope. Moving away from philosophy, Sociology was on the verge of becoming a true science (Maio & Lopes, 2015).

FINAL REMARKS

The end of sociology as a mandatory secondary school subject, congruent with the Catholics perspective, represented, for students and professor at universities, especially for those struggling with its routinization as a science, a severe blow. This is what is suggested, for example, by a petition questioning the measure found in the Capanema Papers, which presents, among its first signatories, the name of Luiz de Aguiar Costa Pinto (Villas Boas et al., 1942), not only, as we have seen, an analyst of the initial trajectory of school sociology in the country, but also one of its combative defenders. The impacts of the reform on social scientists' efforts to institutionalize sociology in Brazil, including the immediate protest reactions it triggered, have not yet been fully appreciated by scholars. Among other consequences, it contributed to producing, according to a hypothesis put forward by Sarandy (2007), an academic insulation of the social sciences from the public debate and the educational agenda in the following decades. As the petition indicated, students of sociology at the philosophy faculties were left without a professional perspective, and this in turn contributed to a decrease in the search for higher education in the social sciences.

For the purposes of this article, it is important at this point to revisit some questions raised by current interpretations of the reform considering our incursion into the archives. If, according to Moraes (2011), the incipient development of sociology itself would help to explain its exclusion from the curriculum, with the subject lacking a cognitive identity that would allow it to appear in the scientific program of the final years of secondary education, we must not underestimate the fact that there were intellectual groups willing to fuel dissent in the Brazilian debates involving its construction as a science. For Capanema, as we have seen, sociology could be included as a curricular component of both classical and scientific cycles of the envisioned high school system, with Vargas' minister not demonstrating any particular objection to the subject. In fact, as Meucci (2015) reminds us, sociology also assumed meanings congruent with anti-liberal projects in the period. What the primary sources suggest, however, is that the school subject became the target of attack by important intellectual fractions of the *Estado Novo's* support base, the Catholics, given the secularist and anti-clerical views that it could entail. Even though the suggestion for the elimination of sociology contained in the Catholics' assessments to Capanema is justified on the grounds that "encyclopedic teaching" should be avoided, they do not hesitate to attribute risks of a political nature to the subject, as we can see in a more explicit way from the observations of the Jesuit Arlindo Vieira. In other words, as we sought to indicate, the presence of sociology in schools was seen as politically dangerous. In this sense, similar to what Costa Pinto (1949) argued, ideological motivations, and not just pragmatic and operational ones, were at the root of its exclusion from secondary education.

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