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*Religion and “secular” social science:
The neglected epistemological influences of Catholic discourses on sociology in
Mexico*

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Declaration

This is to certify that that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed:

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Abstract

Inspired by the Enlightenment's principles of rationality, positivistic ideologies as well as the nascent modern-industrial state, sociology since its inception in Europe was conceived as a fundamentally secular enterprise. Whereas positivistic streams have been rather left aside, secularism in sociology still remains as a cornerstone of the discipline's identity. However, is sociology in the 21st-century really 'secular'? In this dissertation I present to the reader an empirical research about the epistemological influences of Catholicism upon sociology in Mexico, a constitutionally secular state since the 19th century. Theoretically, I draw from authors who have put forward the epistemological influences of Christianity upon western social science. I argue that these authors have unintentionally re-stated, with interesting additions, Durkheim's rather neglected theses about the socio-religious origin of our 'categories of thought' –'classification' and 'causality' in particular. Although I will not attempt to trace the origins of sociological classifications and causalities back to Catholicism in Mexico, I will argue that it is possible to find salient similarities between both knowledge fields in terms of these categories and other discursive characteristics. By analysing these resemblances in a (neo)Durkheimian-Weberian frame, I will explain how Catholic discourses in Mexico, combined with the Mexican state's teleological discourses on democracy, modernisation and progress, influence sociological discourses not through Durkheim's 'imitative rites' and a priori 'necessary connections', but through a series of 'bridge' institutions and particular cultural-ideological structures. Individuals' own religious beliefs and their deliberate and unintended interactions with these elements and their emergent properties turn apparently parochial Catholic discourses into a series of 'discursive offensives' which subtly yet pervasively shape common sense in society at large and also *predispose* sociology practitioners to adopt and develop i) 'mono-causal' and 'power-over' interpretations of social phenomena, ii) implicit and explicit dichotomistic logics as well as iii) normative-prescriptive sociological stances.

In arguing this, I account for how Weberian *authority models* and Weberian-Mertonian *religious values* are not only key 'background factors', but also constitute actual *cognitive devices* in the production of sociological knowledge. I also offer empirical evidence about the role that individuals' *religious beliefs* play in the conception of sociological models of power and causality and, by extension, in the construction of scientific reason or *scientific beliefs*. These accounts support the view of contemporary religions as plastic discourses whose ideological powers permeate, under certain historical conditions, the knowledge produced in scientific domains whose secularity has been mistakenly taken for granted. And this, I conclude, strongly suggests the need to revise the secularist foundations of sociologies of science and scientific knowledge, of sociology in general as well as current monolithic theories and paradigms of secularism and science-religion dualistic debates.

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Introduction

In 2010 one of the Church of England's dioceses – Lichfield – reportedly issued a memorandum in which the diocese's parishes were advised against inviting candidates from the British National Party (BNP) to the hustings organised by the Church in preparation for the 2010 General Elections in the United Kingdom (BBC News 2010a, 2010b). The decision was motivated by what the diocese called the BNP's political practices of “fear and hatred” (BBC News 2010a). A similar reaction from religious institutions would have probably happened in Mexico as well, although differently. Churches in Mexico, mostly Catholic, do not call running political candidates for hustings, it is the running candidates who book appointments to meet with the Mexican Catholic clergy (Jimenez 2012; Gomez 2012). I am not pointing out here a mere variation in political etiquette. In 2010 the four separate meetings between Mexican bishops and presidential runners represented not an occasion for bishops ‘to be informed’ about the candidates’ aspirations and development plans. The meetings were rather both a common campaign strategy as well as the opportunity, relatively customary, for the Catholic clergy to “scrutinise” the candidates, as a journalistic source described the occasion (Jimenez 2012). The four running candidates to the Mexican ‘presidential chair’ sought actively the public legitimation that the Catholic Church in Mexico is able to grant –whether appreciated eventually by the voters in the polls or not. Such is the political and ideological weight of the Catholic Church in a country where nearly 93 million individuals, i.e., 83% of the total population, are nominally Catholic (INEGI 2011a) and where, on the other hand, a paradigm of secularism, which I will qualify in due course as an exclusively *political* secularism, has been a firm constitutional principle applied to the state's practices since the 19th century¹.

The reader will find in this dissertation, however, scarce mentions of Catholic Churches and their ‘political power’ (Poggi 2001). A couple of years ago I received in my electronic mail

¹ Secularism as a constitutional precept has been safeguarded and applied with great zeal by state ideologues and in state practices (including public education) since the *political* separation between the Catholic Church and State was gradually passed by the Mexican parliament in 1850s-1860s. I will expand on this historical-constitutional context in chapter 3.

address two particular mails from the state institution that sponsored me during my five years of postgraduate studies². The first e-mail was signed by one of the divisional heads. It was a Christmas postcard sent to all the scholarship holders. The message in the postcard did not contain explicit Christian or Catholic messages, it was in that sense relatively neutral in its wording; it referred to wishes of “prosperity”, “affection” and “bliss” to be enjoyed “in our families”. The second e-mail was more peculiar. It was also a Christmas postcard sent to all the postgraduate students and researchers sponsored by the institution; the sender was the very head of the institution. Although the postcard included a quote from Charles Dickens – on “Christmas sentiments” of “care”, “forgiveness” and “love”– and the sender’s wishes of “renewing the happiness” brought by “the adventure of life”, its most striking yet subtle peculiarity was not in these messages *per se* but in the background image that decorated them –a painting. Three grey-haired bearded men and a younger male on the left form the ‘outer circle’ of this painting. A fourth bearded man lies on the left as well, with his hands put together. A female figure in the centre leans with slightly open arms towards the painting’s focal point: a baby, lying awake in a wooden crib, with golden pale beams radiating shyly from his head. The image in the postcard has no signature or title, yet it is clearly one of the several representations of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem. In this dissertation I will analyse empirically the ‘ideological powers’ (Poggi 2001; Hearn 2012) and Christian/Catholic discourses that subtly yet persistently flow not necessarily within but rather *outside* the Catholic Church as part of the Mexican society/ies’ various Catholicisms.

In will analyse such religious ‘powers’ and discourses in relation to what seems, at first glance, an odd subject: sociology itself. In an edited volume Legorreta (2010a) presents a series of essays by Latin American theologians who assess the contributions of social science, mostly sociology, to the different theological streams and schools adopted or developed in Latin America, e.g., ‘mission theology’ (Sota 2010), ‘intercultural theology’ (Cervera 2010), ‘liberation theology’ (Legorreta 2010b). In the doctoral research I present in this dissertation I reverse the enquiry. My main research questions are: *what are the epistemological*

² The Mexican Council for Science and Technology. The administrative-scientific goals and political agenda of this institution do not inform the content or aims of this dissertation.

influences of Catholicism over sociology in Mexico? In what follows the reader will find a non-reductionist answer to this certainly counter-intuitive, perhaps awkward, question, that is, an account of how *Catholic discourses*, by means of subtle yet pervasive causal mechanisms, and together with the ideological influences from the ‘*politically secular*’ modern Mexican state, shape the epistemological bases of *sociological discourses* in Mexico.

One of the main general assumptions upon which this research is based is a basic sociology-of-knowledge/science tenet: knowledge and scientific knowledge are fundamentally social. In the following chapters I take for granted that scientific knowledge, including sociological discourses in Mexico and elsewhere, cannot be fully analysed and explained without taking into account the social and cultural contexts in which they are embedded and flow constantly across. Such a broad assumption certainly requires further refinement. My position in this research is ‘not-Mannheimian’ (Bloor 1976:8; Swidler and Arditì 1994: 305-6; cf. Pels 1996), that is, my analysis of how Catholicism shapes sociology in Mexico is not anchored upon a normative stance on how ‘true’ sociological knowledge ‘ought to be’ socially constructed. My position could be framed as part of the Edinburgh’s strong programme (Bloor 1976; Yearley 2005:21-8) since I am interested in analysing sociological discourses in Mexico regardless of their ‘truth’ or falsity’ (Bloor 1976:5, 8-10; Yearley 2005:22). The reader can also find in this dissertation a particular interest in “causal accounts” and a “reflexive” sociology-of-sociology exercise³ (Bloor 1976:4-17). My position, however, may also be interpreted as departing from this strong programme, or at least from Bloor’s original version, for my ‘impartial stance’ will not be free of ‘teleologies’ entirely.

³ The reader may catalogue this dissertation as an instance of “meta-sociology” (Ritzer 1988) in which I, the ‘sociology practitioner’, look at fellow practitioners and de-construct them and account for them with the very sociological ‘tools’ I acquired from sociology. This meta-sociological label is both misleading and adequate. My ‘sociological imagination’ did not really develop in Mexico. My contact with sociology in this country was rather short-lived –in an undergraduate university course I attended and whose content I soon forgot. My sociological thinking developed later, in territories across the Atlantic, in two broad stages. Firstly, in a Spanish university I attended as part of an international student exchange programme and, secondly, in the context of the United Kingdom, since my arrival to the University of Edinburgh in 2007 as a master student. In this dissertation, therefore, I am not dissecting ‘fellow practitioners’ in *sensu stricto* but rather a group of professionals and kind individuals whose disciplinary milieu I began to explore consistently only until my first year of my doctoral programme in 2009. Having said that, my dissertation is still, in a sense, a meta-sociological analysis, i.e., a sociological account of a group of sociologists and their sociological discourses.

In this dissertation I also assume particular political-epistemological aims. Firstly, I want to advocate the ‘ontological status’ of the sociologies the reader will find dissected here –an ontological status that seems at times, and rather unsurprisingly, ignored abroad, amid the complexity of the discipline, of social science and of ever-changing ‘global’ phenomena. I want to bring these sociologies to the light of academic debates outside Mexican and Latin American audiences. And this takes me to my second aim. I want to present the sociologies in this research not as ‘the others’, not as the ‘subaltern’ (Spivak 1988) sociological discourses and sociologists whose distant colonial background and ‘developing-world’ stamp would make them the object of merely polite sympathy or sterile notice. I want to present these sociologies outside their borders as sociologies made by colleagues, by profession-mates, by *peers*, even if these peers and their sociologies are called “impostors”. Let me explain briefly. In his (very short) introduction to sociology, Steve Bruce (2000) argues that despite both some of sociology’s founders⁴ and some of the early European sociology faculties⁵ working on clear “reformist” agendas, the sociological discipline today “must be distinguished from social reform” (2000:83). In Bruce’s view, “a productive dialogue between sociologists” takes place only if they adequately distinguish “between the values necessary to the discipline” and “extra-disciplinary concerns that should be laid to one side” and left to “utopians” and “impostor” sociologies (2000:84). The sociological discourses that constitute my study object, which I will describe precisely as normative, prescriptive and interventionist, would certainly disappoint Bruce and those who share his views⁶. However, if Bruce and other western-centric scholars want to label the sociologies I will present here as “impostors”, then so be it. In such case, and however sceptically, visibility would be gained, the ontological status of these sociologies may thus be acknowledged and two-ways discussions about whether such “impostors” carry out epistemologically consistent sociologies or not might then begin, among peers across the two sides of the Atlantic. As I

⁴ E.g. Marx

⁵ E.g. The London School of Economics through its links with the founders of the Fabian Society

⁶ It was the ‘reformist’ or ‘interventionist’ tones and nuances of the sociological discourses in Mexico, and the striking degree of similarity between them and religious discourses, what actually caught my attention. Yet unlike Bruce, and not without a painstaking and long process of personal reflections in which I have questioned my own Western-centric beliefs, I do not take those nuances and other ‘extra-disciplinary’ elements as ‘pollutants’ of sociological knowledge, but rather as relevant phenomena to be sociologically analysed or at least brought to conversation –instead of sanctioned automatically.

stated previously, I will not engage particularly in such discussions⁷, yet I would strongly encourage others to do so, specially if the field of “global” sociology is becoming as crucial, (and marketable) as their western adherents (e.g., Macionis and Plummer 2008) claim.

It is only by granting this ontological status –and epistemological (in)consistencies– to the sociologies the reader will meet soon that one of the key contributions of this dissertation may be fully appreciated and taken into account. In the following chapters I will gradually account for the reasons why the Enlightenment-inspired model of ‘secular science/social science’ cannot be taken for granted, even in constitutionally-secular ‘modern’ societies of the very 21st century. Having said this I must explicitly state that my position towards both ‘secular’ science/social science and ‘religions’ will not be exegetic. I personally advocate neither normative paradigms of ‘secularism’ (Asad 1993; Casanova 2009; Calhoun et al. 2011) nor any public or private form of religion. What I will advocate in this dissertation is the thorough study of *religious discourses*, their neglected ‘plastic’ properties, their complex interactions with non-religious elements and their epistemological impacts on sociological domains. I will do this by presenting to the reader the final results of the empirical research that I carried out in Edinburgh and some regions in Mexico.

In the first chapter the reader may find the theoretical and conceptual frame I adopt and the particular theses I will analyse empirically. Some of the main authors I refer to in this chapter are not only sociologists but also anthropologists and theologians who have discussed Christianity’s effects over western social science. One of the core references in this chapter is Durkheim and what I argue is a neglected series of Durkheimian theses: the *socio-religious* origins of the ‘categories of thought’ or what I call the *religion/society-knowledge-science* theses –regarding ‘causality’ and ‘classifications’ in particular. In this chapter, however, I go beyond Durkheim’s causal arguments and note, tentatively, different

⁷ I will argue briefly (chapter 7, section IV) that the sociologies the reader will find here show an epistemological coherence that seems to fit neatly into the discursive dimensions of Mexican/Latin American societies overall. Such epistemological consistency, however, seems to decrease significantly if these sociologies are extracted from their social contexts and compared to, for instance, the sociologies by Northern European scholars and institutions. I will not make such comparisons here, but I would certainly encourage others to make them

explanans for an alternative causal account of religion-science influences. In chapter 2 I present the methodological framework of the research, which includes a brief account of my critical-realist/social-constructivist stance, the technical details about my ‘case study’ research design, and my data collection activities in two theoretically-opposite locations in Mexico. Consonant with my critical-realist/social-constructivist approach, I also present to the reader a justification of my data-analysis general strategy, i.e., both contextual analyses of social structures ‘out there’ and interpretive analyses of individuals’ actions and their own meaning-making activities. As part of the former, the reader may find in chapter 3 a historical overview of the Catholic Church and Catholicism in Mexico. Here I will also counter the argument offered by some of the main respondents (sociology lecturers) I interviewed, who stated the impossibility of sociology being shaped by Catholicism given the legally-secular character of public education in Mexico. My counter-argument is based on documentary evidence that suggests that the passing of secular laws by the Mexican parliament in the 1850s-1860s comprised, exclusively, the removal of the Catholic Church from its public-administrative roles and not from its unique cultural-ideological position in society. In this chapter I also present a key report of the current religious beliefs and Catholic discourses I found during my fieldwork, including a series of discursive features I will constantly refer to in the following chapters. In chapter 4 I describe the beginnings of sociology in Mexico and its institutionalisation processes. I include two instances of early sociological thought in Mexico that represent the first cases of religious imprints in this discipline. I also offer a picture of the current sociological, university and social-research fields as experienced by the set of sociology lecturers I interviewed. I conclude by pointing out the underlying *prescriptive-interventionist* rationale of current sociologies in Mexico and the *professional moral sensitivities* of their practitioners.

Although all the chapters in this dissertation add up gradually to my causal account of Catholicism’s influences upon sociology, chapters 5 and 6 are particularly related. In chapter 5 I present qualitative data about the religious background and current religious profiles of the sociology lecturers I interviewed and conclude that their current religious beliefs and practices do not appear totally detached from the Catholic discourses these individuals were

once socialised into or deliberately interacted with. In chapter 6 I present the confirmatory, cautious and/or oppositional comments by the sociology lecturers about my research question. I conclude this chapter by analysing and refining the Weberian values-related influence that some respondents suggested as feasible. Yet before rushing into premature conclusions I will offer in chapter 7 an analysis of the actual sociologies produced by the main respondents in this research, as representative ‘samples’ of sociological discourses in Mexico. Here I note the resemblances between these sociologies, or sociological discourses, and the Catholic discourses discussed in chapter 3. Once these parallels are located I move on in chapter 8 to an account of such resemblances as actual instances of Catholic discourses’ influences. In this (neo)Durkheimian-Weberian causal account the reader will not find a conclusive and definitive explanation but a carefully constructed approximation to the *individuals’ actions, institutions and structures* whose emergent properties and complex relationships eventually deliver Catholic discourses’ epistemological influences to sociology practitioners and their sociological discourses. In the ‘Final conclusions’ the reader may find the specific contributions of my work to the fields of sociology of science and scientific knowledge, sociology of religion, theories of power, and science-religion debates.

Chapter 1

Literature review: secularism, religion, science and social scientists

This opening chapter comprises four related ‘clusters’ of scholarly literature. In the first section I offer to the reader an outline of my theoretical approach by drawing from literature on secularism, sociology of religion and science-religion debates. In the second section I present a group of authors who have put forward the epistemological effects of Christianity upon sociology and anthropology in the West. After this I offer a third section based on Durkheim’s theses (1915), rather forgotten and neglected, on the ‘socio-*religious* origin’ of lay and scientific ‘classifications’ and lay and scientific notions of power/force and causality. These theses, I argue, adequately summarise the scholarly arguments in section II. The last ‘cluster’ includes authors whose theoretical propositions and research findings provide what I regard to be more plausible accounts of causal links between religion and science/social science – more plausible than the ‘imitative rites’ and Kantian *a priori* ‘necessary connections’ that Durkheim advocated.

From Poggi’s Weberian point of view, religion is the chief manifestation of the “ideological/normative” form of *power* and the Christian Church would represent one of the main “institutional embodiments” (2001: 97) of this power form. Echoing Weber, Poggi argues that there was a time when the Christian Church possessed a monopoly over the generation of meanings, norms and aesthetic practices. This monopoly was gradually taken over by scientists, lawyers and artists who, respectively, became the guardians and makers of ‘new’ meanings, norms and aesthetic practices. After this, and this time echoing Durkheim, Poggi states that the Church and intellectuals would cohabitate, not necessarily amicably, by each focusing on their respective ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ domains. However, Poggi also argues that there are “reminders, in the activities of profane suppliers of meaning, norms and aesthetic experience, of the original religious matrix and context of those activities” (2001:

100). I will begin my exploration of these possible “reminders” with a brief review of the literature on secularism, sociology of religion and science-religion debates.

I. Theoretical positioning and conceptual introduction

The secular/ism/isation paradigms

The idea of *the secular* is reportedly older than the institutions that represented it in the post-Enlightenment and ‘modern’ societies of the West. Calhoun et al. (2011: 8) state the term *saeculum* represented a unit of time among the ancient Etruscans. The term was adopted by the Romans afterwards who used it as synonym of “a century”. In the Middle Ages, the term referred to the clergy members working in “worldly, local parishes” as opposed to those working within religious orders. Salvatore (2005:9), citing Talal Asad, similarly states that it the term *saeculum* was used in medieval times to refer to the religious “external” life as opposed to the monastic enclosed life. Bremer (2008) argues the noun ‘secularisation’ as such emerged in 16th century France and meant “the transfer of goods from the possession of the Church into that of the world” and by the 17th century, the term implied the transfer of the Church’s goods to “the world of the lay people” (2008:433). This would be Asad’s view as well, for him the initial meaning of secularisation was the handing over of the Church’s properties into “private hands and market circulation” (cited by Salvatore 2005:9). In Germany, according to Bremer, the term was used basically in this sense and became part of the laws of the German empire⁸ in the early 1800s –an adaptation of a concept and practice that, without easy manoeuvres, took place in Mexico’s post-independence state context in the 1800s as well (chapter 3). After recalling Marx’s and Dilthey’s occasional use of the term in secondary statements, Bremer suggests it was with Sombart, Weber and Troeltsch in the early 20th century “that a new era in the usage of *Säkularisation* gradually becomes visible” (2008: 434). Rather overlooking Comte’s positivistic separation of “temporal” and

⁸ Namely, the term was used to describe the compensation the German emperor was entitled to receive for the loss of one portion of the Rhine to Napoleon –a compensation constituted by the then German Church’s assets (Bremer 2008:434).

“spiritual” powers ([1848]1865: 92), Salvatore points Asad’s statement on Durkheim’s sacred-profane separation, which reinforced the “insulation of religion” (2005:9) in social science discourses and debates on secularism. Kateb (2009) suggests an even earlier “secular disposition”, which may be found in both Plato and John Locke. According to Kateb, John Locke’s secular disposition is evident in his defence of a morality that does not have to be overshadowed by religion but represents the end of it. Thus Locke would uphold “the supremacy of morality over all values”, and this, for Kateb, suggests “the commitment of any mature secular society” (2009: 1006). Moving on from the scholarly debates about the genealogy of ‘the secular’ and ‘secularisation’, what is the secular, secularisation and secularism today?

From a normative yet apparently customary stance Kateb (2009) addresses the term ‘secularism’ and, acknowledging variants and exceptions, defines this term as a “disentanglement of politics and religion”; as the state’s tolerance of “all or nearly all religions”; as an absence of religious “concepts and mandates” in political discourses; as a “general decline” of religions’ influence over society and individuals, and as “the even more marked decline of religious influence in intellectual life” (2009:1002). Reflecting on the complexity of secular/ity practices. Casanova (2009) distinguishes between the empirically-related concepts of ‘the secular’, ‘secularisation’ and ‘secularism’ as follows. Firstly, ‘the secular’ refers to a set of realities, and their empirical constituents, that are essentially opposed to ‘the religious’; scholarly debates around these concepts would focus on the “legitimacy and “autonomy” of each field (2009:1049). Secondly, ‘secularisation’ for Casanova represents the “empirical-historical patterns of transformation and differentiation” (2009:1050) in, and between, the religious (e.g., ecclesiastical institutions) and the secular fields⁹, (e.g., the state). These social transformations, according to Casanova, are the focal point of a ‘theory of secularisation’ and its theses on the decline and/or privatisation of

⁹ Casanova (2011:60) also distinguishes three modes of “being secular”: the “mere secularity”, or the “experience of living in a secular world [...] where being religious may be a normal viable option”; the “self-sufficient and exclusive secularity” or the “experience of living without religion as a normal [...] taken-for-granted condition” and the “secularist secularity”, that is, the “experience [...] of being [...] liberated from religion as a condition of human autonomy and human flourishing”

religion, a theoretical view Casanova finds essentially Eurocentric –see also Salvatore¹⁰ (2005). Thirdly, the term ‘secularism’ refers to

a whole range of modern secular worldviews and ideologies that may be consciously held and explicitly elaborated into philosophies of history and normative-ideological state projects, into projects of modernity and cultural programs¹¹ (Casanova 2009:1051)

Casanova then offers a perspective of modern secularism which my data and my data analyses, as I will show later on, support. Arguing explicitly what Salvatore (2005) suggests implicitly, and what Kateb (2009) and other ‘secular secularists’ would rather refute, Casanova states that *modern secularism* may alternatively be interpreted

as an epistemic knowledge regime that may be unreflexively held and phenomenologically assumed as the taken-for-granted normal structure of modern reality, as a modern doxa or as an ‘unthought’ [which] also comes in multiple historical forms, in terms of different normative models of legal-constitutional separation of the secular state and religion, or in terms of the different types of cognitive differentiation between science, philosophy, and theology [...]. (2009: 1051; emphasis added)

Calhoun et al. (2011) distinguish as well between secular-related terms, that is, between “processes of ‘secularisation’, the practices of ‘the secular’ and the political ethic of ‘secularism’” (2011:3). What I want to highlight from these authors, as I did with Casanova, is their assertion that the “dominant modes” of secularism could be rather seen as “multiple forms” (2011:4) that would have to be carefully analysed for they could conceal a rigid or “mythic” understanding of state-religion relations. Such a downplaying of religion, the authors argue, would not be consistent with actual contemporary demonstrations of religions’ public relevance, e.g., the 9-11 episodes in United States in 2001. This revision of secularism is necessary because the ideological separation of church-state informed not only the “relative autonomy of state, economy and civil society” but also the view of these three

¹⁰Salvatore (2005) defines “secularisation” similarly as “a social process of differentiation of a religious sphere, linked to modernization” (2005:8). He finds as well a parallel ethnocentrism in contemporary uses of the term “secularity” as an Enlightenment-period outcome that is a “typically European construct” embedded in “concrete life forms and modes of governance” (2005:9).

¹¹ Similarly Salvatore also acknowledges the operation of a “secularism” that usually boils down to a “merely ideological and normative school” (2005:9)

fields “as separate from the proper domain of religion” (2011:4). In a statement that is consonant with Casanova’s above, Calhoun et al. state that this principle of separation spread and motivated the division between social science and humanities faculties in the late 19th century university context and was echoed in the then objectivity-based, positivist scientific discourses. Furthermore Calhoun et al. state that the assumed natural link between secularism and modernisation has become a “model of secular modernization that many newly emerged non-Western nations attempted to emulate in the latter half of the nineteenth century” (2011: 6). The authors include as an example the case of independent India and its first prime minister’s remarks on the “prejudices and superstitions” of religion as obstacles for the country’s modernisation. In this particular sense, the case of Mexico is not necessarily different. According to Staples (1986:122-3), the secularisation measures taken by the Mexican state in the 19th century, after independence from Spain, were aimed at “modernising society” and putting “the modern state” above the Catholic Church, its “old rival”. I will expand on this topic in chapter 3.

The suggestion by Calhoun et al. (2011:6), certainly shared by Casanova (2001, 2009, 2011) and a significant number of scholars too, is clear: in an era where religion is all but forgotten (Weigert 1974; Sherkat and Ellison 1999; Sahlins 1996; Hervieu-Léger 2000; Stark and Finke 2000; Cannell 2005, 2006; Davie 2007; Cipriani 2001, 2003, 2011), in an era where religion, not necessarily as an institution but as a “discursive reality”, has turned into “an indisputable global social fact” (Casanova 2011: 62), it is urgent to rethink the concepts of religion and secularism. Now, if ‘the secular’ is defined in tandem with ‘the religious’, what is ‘religion’?

Religion as cultural phenomena, practices, discourses.

In this section I will review scholarly definitions of religion and will outline what I think is the perspective that fits better into the aim of this dissertation: religion as culture and cultural discourses. Davie (2007) and Cipriani (2001) review the two general categories scholars’

definitions of religion usually fall into. On the one hand there are *substantive* definitions of religions that pay attention to what religions *are* (Davie 2007:19) and so stress the *contents* of religions – e.g., beliefs, practices, rituals, discourses, institutions. On the other hand there are *functional* perspectives that highlight what religion *does* and therefore discuss the functions or effects religions exert in society, e.g., social cohesion. Durkheim’s classic analysis of religion, for instance, may be interpreted as falling into both analytical approaches (Cipriani 2001). Whereas he explicitly defined religion as a system of beliefs, practices, sacred and profane things, church and churchgoers (Durkheim 1915: 47), he emphasised as well the role of religion, or of “the sacred” in particular (Davie 2007: 30), as promoter of “moral unity and cohesion” (Durkheim 1915:400). Davie (2007:20) warns about the weaknesses of both views. Substantive approaches can restrict the analysis of religions if they take as compulsory the elements in their definition and therefore overlook individual or collective activities that, lacking supernatural or institutional elements for example, could be otherwise properly analysed as religious phenomena. Functional approaches, on the other hand, could overextend the analysis of religions by taking as religious phenomena a varied range of activities and events that would not necessarily fall into the spectrum of substantive definitions -this is, for example, Weigert’s (1974) complain about Luckmann and his all-encompassing ‘forms of religion’¹² (1974: 183). To overcome these gaps, Hervieu-Léger (2000:97-99) proposes three elements to account for in a religion “the expression of believing, the memory of continuity and the legitimising reference to [...] a tradition”. This implies that not all traditions in modern societies are related to believing, therefore not all traditions are religious, and *vice versa*, not all acts of believing refer to a tradition therefore not all acts of believing are religious.

Here I want to emphasise religion’s relations to an element that does not seem to be explicit in synthetic definitions of this concept: culture. For Davie (2007) it is “the principle” of Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic* that is above all significant, that is, the possibility of religions

¹² Which, according to Weigert’s (1974) reading of Luckmann, range from vague ‘universal-anthropological’ processes by which individuals transcend their biological nature, to other vague ‘universal forms’ such as ‘worldviews’ and ‘identity’ as well as institutionalised forms of religion, e.g. churches.

engendering “forms of action that have an important impact in everyday life, including the economic sphere” (2007:29), and, I would add, the *cultural sphere* as well. Weber’s contribution to the understandings of religions’ cultural influence is undoubtedly paradigmatic (Kippenberg 2009; Ter Borg 2009; Waggoner 2009). According to Waggoner, Weber reversed Marxist reductionisms of religion to socio-economic conditions and element of the State’s dominion and proposed instead the analysis of religion rather as an ‘enabler’ of those socio-economic contexts. Thus, as part of his discussion of religions’ effects on economic spheres, Weber carefully addressed how a particular Christian religion “enabled the *ideological atmosphere* in which capitalism could and did thrive in Europe” (Waggoner 2009:216; emphasis added) –a thesis Robert Merton (1938) would later on apply to the field of science. Similarly, Waggoner argues that religion is not “subjectively imagined” but actually grounded “beyond brains and bodies, beyond myth and performance [...] in something like a culture or a social system [...] in discourses of truth and subjectivity”. Waggoner proposes a study of religion whose analysis departs from the individual or collective consciousness and focuses instead on “another locus exterior to one or more subjects”¹³ (2009: 220).

Italian scholar Cipriani and his “diffused religion” (2001, 2003, 2011) *via* particular ‘channels of socialisation’ and ‘structures of values’ might be an instance of just the ‘exterior locus’ Waggoner suggests. Cipriani proposes the term ‘diffused religion’ as an account of Catholic religious phenomena in Italy that surpass the limits of the institutional Catholic Church, and run deep into society as a historic-cultural outcome. Being neither Bellah’s civil society¹⁴ (Cipriani 2011) nor one of Luckmann’s invisible religions (Cipriani 2003), this type

¹³ In the next chapter I offer a brief account of my personal critical realist-social constructionist stance from which I assume both the existence and operation of social structures ‘out there’ as well as their socially-constructed character.

¹⁴ Although Cipriani detaches his “diffused” religion from Rousseau’s or Bellah’s ‘civil religions’, he acknowledges that the former functions as an “adequate space for wide-spectrum critical reflections as regards the state and politics, and the entire civil society” (2011:3-4). Both diffused religion and civil society would work as allies against the State and would share their “use of the family and its socializing action”, which “induces new generations to acquire a particular vision of the world, a decisional autonomy in ethical choices, a critical ability, a conscious orientation [...]”. Moreover, Cipriani concludes that the tradition of civil society in Italy “was not born by coincidence, but is rooted in the presence of a dominating religious form, Catholicism, which since centuries has shown a particular attention to this sector” (2011: 4)

of religion is “diffused”, Cipriani explains, for it extends to “vast sections of the Italian population”, goes “beyond the simple limits of church religion”, usually “in open contrast” with it, and “has proved to be a historical and cultural result of the almost bi-millennial presence of the Catholic institution in Italy”. (2011:2). This type of religion

is both diffused ‘in’ (through) many channels of socialization and education (mainly in schools and universities) and diffused ‘by’ (thanks to) specific structures and actions of values proposals (2011:2)

Although Cipriani sees an Italian society that goes astray from the values of the Catholic Church and favours “ethic pluralism”, he sees as well an Italian society whose “system of values” is “not so very different as regards the Catholic social doctrine” (2011:2). Despite research results showing the diverse levels of Catholics’ religiosity¹⁵ and the different types of organised religions in Italy¹⁶, Cipriani argues that the evidence shows as well the “Italian society’s standard values” being “somehow stable”, that is, youth’s values embedding “the same hierarchy of values of their fathers”; as well as a series of “family values” and “religious and social engagement” still operational in society, along with “a marked individualization of the religious feeling” and a deep-rooted “pro-social activity”¹⁷ (2011:9). Thus Cipriani concludes:

Even in case of scandals, protests [or] abandonments, religion – whether in church form or other – maintains its own incisive public function, at least as a parameter for value reference, in close continuity with the past (2011:10)

According to Davie, modernisation – and corresponding ‘modern secularism’ paradigms – “need not bring with it the marginalization of religion to the private sphere” (2007:3). The view of religions as a *cultural result* (Cipriani), a *cultural system* (Waggoner) or *cultural-ideological phenomena* (Weber, Merton) may both sustain such a claim and advance the understanding of its implications. This is not all. In Talal Asad’s view (1993), Western

¹⁵ “Integrated”, “individualists”, “secularized” and “distant” Catholics; or, “militant”, “critical”, “peripheral” believers and “non-believers.” (2011:8).

¹⁶ “Oriented” or “hetero-directed” church religions, “reflexive” or “self-directed” church religions, “Modal primary” diffused religions, “Modal intermediary” diffused religions, “Modal perimetric” diffused religions’ and “Non-religions.” (2011:8).

¹⁷ Altruism, assistance and voluntary work.

definitions of religion such as Clifford Geertz's¹⁸ eventually "define religion (like any essence) as a transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon" and neglect the fundamental relation between power and religion (see also Hearn 2012: 163-4). This type of definition ends up supporting "the liberal [post-Reformation] demand in our time that it [religion] be kept quite separate from politics, law and science" (1993:28). Asad rejects "universal definitions of religion" and suggests the study of "particular religions" as "different kinds of practice and discourse [whose] possibility and [...] authoritative status are to be explained as products of historically distinctive [social] disciplines and forces" (1993: 53-4; see also Asad 1983: 252; cf. Hearn 2012:164). Unlike Asad and his critique of Geertzian meanings and religious symbols, I will not downplay the cognitive dimensions of religion. However, I will side with Asad's advocacy of the study of 'particular religions' and particular religious (Foucauldian) discourses and practices –in short, with non-universalist and non-Western-centric approaches to religions.

Now, what does the literature that deals more closely with the relations between religion and science tell us about the interplays between these two fields? Does this literature assume Calhoun et al.'s 'mythic' (2011) versions of secularism, Casanova's (2009) 'unreflexive epistemic regime' or Asad's (1983,1993) 'universalist' definitions of religion?

Science and religion literature

Barbour (1998) outlined what Bainbridge (2009:304) calls "[p]erhaps the most influential scholarly typology of relations between science and religion". According to the former, there are four types of relationships "between the methods of science and those of religion" (1998:77): *conflict*, *independence*, *dialogue* and *integration*. The conflict or 'warfare' view, frequently illustrated with the case of Darwin and his theological opponents, includes

¹⁸ As a "(1) system of symbols which act to (2) establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (cited by Asad 1993: 29-30).

“scientific materialism” from the science’s trench and “biblical literalism” from the religious legions. Both, says Barbour, claim that scientific knowledge and theological knowledge offer “rival literal statements about the same domain”, that is “the history of nature”. Barbour notices that the scientific-materialist forces end up “making broad philosophical claims” and the biblical-literalist opponents making “claims about scientific matters” (1998:78). The ‘independence’ perspectives see rather science and religion having self-sufficient and distinct domains, methods and languages that must be kept apart from each other (1998:84-90). The ‘dialogue’ perspectives recognize the limitations of both science and religion and the contributions that one can make to fill the gaps of the other. Some ontological questions, for example, reportedly unanswerable by science, would be left to religious insights. ‘Dialogue’ perspectives take into account as well common methodological instruments between science and religion and the role the concept of nature plays in both sides (1998:90-8). ‘Integration’ views are those of authors who hold “that some sort of integration is possible between the content of theology and the content of science”. These views consider a closer relation between theological doctrines and particular scientific theories. Barbour sees three versions of integration: that of a “natural theology”, which holds “that the existence of god can be inferred from the evidence of design in nature”; that of “a theology of nature” which accept that “the main sources of theology lie outside science, but scientific theories may affect the reformulation of certain doctrines”; and the systematic-synthesis version which regards science and religion as contributing “to the development of an inclusive metaphysics such as that of process philosophy” (1998:98). Interestingly, in the four types of views Barbour outlines, religion is unequivocally presented as a separate construct – either as institution or mere collection of instruments and knowledge – that produces (prohibited, undesirable, potential, or actual) *distinct* contributions clearly differentiated from those of science. Even in the ‘integration’ views, science is thought of as a field that contributes with discrete and independent inputs to either theology or ‘an inclusive metaphysics’¹⁹. As I will suggest below, such a science-religion separation may not be as clear-cut as it is assumed.

¹⁹ Such independent-contributions scenario, Bainbridge argues sceptically, would actually be more feasible in the minds of “young people” than “among the intelligentsia” (2009:315-6)

Evans and Evans (2008) discuss this taken for granted notion in the science-religion literature as well: the assumption of an inherent epistemological separation, and epistemological conflict, between science and religion. These authors review the science and religion literature and divide it into two types: symbolic analyses and social-institutional analyses. The authors subdivide 'symbolic analyses' into those based on epistemological-conflict assumptions and those based on 'directional influences'. Symbolic analyses on epistemological conflicts tend to consider religion as systems of ideas, beliefs and discourses that compete with the ideas and discourses of science; Weber's thesis on the increasing rationalisation of religion and its replacement by "calculation and technical means" being one of the earliest examples (2008:91). More examples of epistemological-conflict analyses would be found in the secularisation literature that focuses on what Evans and Evans call "macro" phenomena –e.g., institutional separation of religion and other social institutions, and the secularisation literature that analyses "micro" events and patterns –e.g., changes in individuals' religious beliefs and practices. An example of the latter is the literature that analyses "how religious scientists are" and how scientific religious people are. This literature reportedly assumes that individuals "who are the most expert in science or religion should then exhibit the least adherence to the opposing symbolic system" (2008:92). Evans and Evans note, however, that recent research results show that

scientific discipline is a less useful predictor of the religiosity of scientists than are many other variables, including age, marital status, and childhood religious background (2008:93).

The second variant of symbolic analyses of religion and science, the 'directional-influence' analyses, would leave aside the epistemological-conflict assumption and focuses instead on "how other aspects of the religious symbol system influence the symbol system of science" (2008:94). This type of literature would be represented by Merton's Weberian thesis on Puritanism contributing to the rise of scientific research in 17th-century England. In Merton's thesis, (1938:419) it is not the Puritan theology but the "sentiments and values which

permeated the thought and action of [Puritan] believers”²⁰ what contributed to the ideological atmosphere suitable to the rise of British science. In Evans and Evans’ (2008) view, the disputed relations between Islam, science and whether the former fostered or inhibited ‘Islamic science’ would constitute another example of ‘directional-influence’ literature –as I will explain later, my research does not address “positive” or “negative” influences of religion in sociology in Mexico, yet I will focus on both the influence of religion on social values in Mexico overall, and the former’s epistemological impact on “scientific knowledge” as well. The second type of science and religion literature according to Evans and Evans, the ‘social-institutional conflict studies’, puts aside “the truth or falsity of religion or science” and rather studies the “authority or the power to determine truth between science and religion” and the corresponding “power-inflected discursive struggles” (2008:97).

Evans and Evans (2008) notice that in the ‘social-institutional’ and ‘directional-influence’ types of literature the assumed epistemological conflict between science and religion is not addressed but bracketed out. The authors’ recommendation is not to take for granted the epistemological conflict model, but rather “leave the question of conflict over truth open” (2008:101). And that is precisely the question that drives the research I present in these pages. If religion constitutes in certain societies a pervasive ‘cultural result’ which may be ‘diffused through’ families, schools and universities (Cipriani 2001, 2003, 2011; Waggoner 2009), are there not possibilities of religion and social science – or sociology in particular – *sharing* epistemological bases? Furthermore, are there not possibilities of the epistemological bases of religion *influencing* those of the social science –an influence that secularists under their ‘secular epistemic regime’ (Casanova 2009, 2011) would rather reject automatically? Evans and Evans note that anthropologists Sahlins (1996) and Cannell (2006) have indicated “important ways that anthropology’s own classifications and conceptual apparatus are tied to specifically Western versions of Christianity” (2008:96). It is precisely this type of religion-social science *epistemological influences* that this research is aimed at. In the next sections I will present a series of authors who address this particular topic.

²⁰ Values such as a “blessed reason” to appreciate God’s work, or the glorification of God by material-practical acts, and by following one’s vocation through high-esteemed education (Merton 1938: 419-30).

In order to offer a fair review of the whole range of scholarly voices, I will present and discuss next one author from the ‘theological literature’ Evans and Evans decided not to include in their review –for this literature, they paradoxically assert²¹, is “outside of the interest of most sociologists” (Evans and Evans 2008:90). Although my position in this research is far from an exegetic religious stance, I do think no harm is done if we at least have a look at what theologians have argued, and anthropologists such as Cannell (2005, 2006) do refer to²².

II. Epistemological influences

Theological methods and metaphysics in social science.

Milbank’s (2006) *Theology and social theory* is a collection of four sub-treatises that put forward a clear theological agenda: the validity, acknowledgement and ‘use’ of a Catholic harmonic “ontological peace” as a way to overcome violence and nihilism and, in the process, reinaugurate theology as “the queen of the science” (2006: 382-442). In order to sustain such a proposal²³, Milbank reviews in each sub-treatise what he considers are the very origins of political science, positivism, sociology and Hegelian and Marxist dialectics.

²¹ What I wonder is whether Evans and Evans’ exclusion of theological literature on the grounds of an unaccounted ‘academic indifference’ is precisely evidence of sociologists assuming *a priori* the uselessness of such scholar field and therefore getting unavoidably close to the rigid secularist position that not only Calhoun et al. warn about but Evans and Evans themselves try to overcome. If scholars’ exclusionist views of religion and theological knowledge are an intellectual habit, it would be far more resilient, and probably more unconscious, than social scientists – even those in the ‘soft-secularism’ or ‘plural’ streams – would admit.

²² See also Asad’s (1993: 43) brief comment on Geertz insisting “on the primacy of meaning” and so, apparently, “taking up the standpoint of theology”.

²³ Trying to relate science and religion epistemologically would not be a ‘one-man battle’, especially not among the religious scholars. American theologian Roy Clouser (2005) argues that scientific theorising is necessarily shaped by religious world-views and the belief on a divinity. Scripture would not shape scientific theories by explicitly addressing all the theoretical issues and topics the latter comprises. Scripture would shape theories by means of the presuppositions on the divine that all theories, according to Clouser, include explicitly or implicitly (Cooper 1995). This theologian presents individual cases of thinkers in the mathematics, physics and psychology fields and the way they would embed in their theories such presuppositions on the divine. In this section, however, I will not present Clouser’s, but John Milbank’s arguments on the theological origin of the academic disciplines this research addresses, that is the theological origin of social science and sociology in particular.

These chapters provide the reader with a dense and rich recollection of philosophical-scientific arguments and conjectures that, the author claims, were originated from Christian theology *via* Catholic or Protestant thinkers. This “archaeology” of ideas aims at tracing “the main forms of secular reason in such a fashion as to unearth the arbitrary moments in the construction of their logic” (2006:3). Next I will present only a selection of the dozens of connections Milbank draws between theology and social science. I will focus in particular in his sub-treatise on theology and sociology, and from it I will present only a set of statements - which would not be enough to explain in full Milbank’s propositions but would be at least illustrative and could offer a partial background to what non-religious scholars, e.g. Cannell²⁴ (2005, 2006), would draw from Milbank as well.

Milbank argues there are continuities in terms of both “method and metaphysical assumptions” between theology and sociology (2006: 52). He starts tracing these continuities from early-19th-century French philosophers Louis Gabrielle Ambroise de Bonald and Joseph de Maistre, whose works Milbank categorises as “secular theology” or “post-enlightenment” combinations of “empirical discussion of finite realities and invocation of the transcendent” (2006:55). In de Bonald’s and de Maistre’s secular-theological reasoning it was customary to attribute “power” and “cause” to human and divine “agents” and to “invoke the *divine presence* as an immediate *explanatory cause*” (2006:55; emphasis added). These French thinkers would as well “associate God with the operation of arbitrary and material power” and would further suggest that it is not “any old mythos of power” which would hold society together but “*a devotion* to a particular mythos”. As a consequence the legitimation of “real, factual” power does not lie in its formal properties, i.e. formal ownership, but in its very internal self-foundation, its “self-establishment through mythical inscription” (2006:55-6). Yet individual will is still powerless and does require mediating instances that confer powers on it. “Thus throughout the cosmic and the political order runs a universal triadic logic of *faits sociales* which are ‘general’, ‘external’ and ‘visible’” and function as power mediators, that is, “the universal ratio *pouvoir/ministre/sujet*” which is

²⁴ Anthropologist Cannell seems to agree with Milbank and acknowledges his idea of the theological origins of social science, including anthropology. Cannell refers to the theologian’s statements briefly, mostly in footnotes (2006: 3, 46, 49).

further “expressed as I/you/he, father/mother/child, sovereign/executive/subject and God/priest/faithful” (2006:56). De Bonald then argues that societies’ conservation requires, prior even to political institutions, such a triadic power-logic. For Milbank this appeal to treble social entities is evidence of de Bonald’s ‘sociologization’ of the idea of natural law. De Bonald and de Maistre would share the Malebrancheian idea on creations being necessary God’s work and not only language, but also writing, the family and political sovereignty being all revealed institutions. Yet, unlike Malebranche, de Bonald would place the departure point not on the individual, but on the group of individuals, the collectivity.

It is only human beings in relationship who have access to the realm of ‘general ideas’, which [...] is to be regarded as the direct conserving presence of God – so that, indeed, society is literally a ‘part of’ God (2006:57)

Following the same rationale, this French thinker would argue that “‘general ideas’”, and not particular ideas, would be “equally and immediately, general ‘social facts’”. From this “strict dualism” it follows that “genuine scientific generalizations” are necessarily based on “more basic observations” of particular ideas that portray “the general facts about society”. This is the backbone of positivism, Milbank argues, and it is “firmly in place in de Bonald” (2006:59). Milbank then states what a sociologist would have seen coming from the outset - that de Bonald’s proto-positivist theorisations are to be found in Comte and then in Durkheim. Comte would put forward his ‘social physics’ as the study and promotion of the life of the spirit, a companion to his division between temporal and spiritual powers (section above), where the supremacy is granted to the latter and to law as well. Just as de Bonald theorised, Comte argued that such supremacy is not granted by the individual but by society. Comte would then reproduce “both a dualism of irreducible social whole over against particular constituent parts, and the association of the former totality with religion” (2006:62). Comte would not be the only one reproducing what Milbank claims are de-Bonaldian theological dualisms. Despite Durkheim’s sociology sharing “neo-Kantian liberalism and republican socialism” precepts, he would reproduce as well de Bonald’s metaphysics through Comte and would end up manufacturing “a new and perverse theology” (2006:63-8). The link between French Catholic theologians and Durkheim would not be

evident simply because the latter would not cite the former. However, it was not only the Kantian dualism of categorical universal-empirical intuition, but also de-Bonaldian and Comtean separation between general categorical ideas (“faits sociaux”) and particular facts that made Durkheim see “an intensified dualism which governs all aspects of human existence”. The sacred-profane vital opposition in religions being just one instance. After offering an interpretation of the theological foundations in Durkheim’s theorisations on ‘sacrifice’, Milbank addresses the ruptures and continuations between the theological metaphysics in the French positivist sociology and early German sociology. The author summarises these continuations as follows

the association of ‘the social’ with given, permanent categories; a dualistic conception of humanity as caught between ‘real’ nature and ‘spiritual’ values; an identification of ‘the religious’ with irrational and arbitrary forces which are irreducible and unexplainable; the importance still given to functional causality; an empiricist attitude to ‘facts’, and a historical narrative which compares the postreligious stage to the stage of primitive religion (2006:75)

What Milbank wants to demonstrate as well is that whereas Durkheimian sociology regarded the social and the religious as equals, early German sociology did the opposite: it regarded both as separated realms. Therefore the Weberian view of the ideological and the social-economic as irreducible to each other, and the view of irrational religious values as opposed to instrumental reason, would unsurprisingly take place.

Milbank’s fundamental theological agenda - summarised in the first lines of this section - is indeed an intention that did not go without critiques from other theologians, e.g., Roberts²⁵ 1993. I will not attempt to discuss that debate though. I will suggest, however, that Milbank’s essay constitutes an exceptional ‘archaeological’ interpretation of sociology’s epistemological foundations that nonetheless overlooks, as many other theological analyses would, both the non-intellectual institutions (i.e. political regimes, educational contexts, family backgrounds) in the biographies and actual social interactions among the philosophers

²⁵ Robert reviews Milbank’s first edition of *Theology and social theory*, published in 1990

and scholars he discusses²⁶, as well as the very religious personal backgrounds of such a set of thinkers. However, and regardless of his theological agenda and his exclusively intellectualist archaeology, I want to highlight Milbank's references to dualistic theological schemes and 'triadic power logics'. 'Classifications' and 'dichotomistic classifications' are topics I will return to constantly in this dissertation. Next I will review the work of a non-religious author that proposes a likewise ambitious set of relations between Christianity and social science: cultural anthropologist Marshall Sahlins and his essay on the Christian cosmological traces in Western social science.

The effects of Christian 'long-term native cultural structures' in social science.

Sahlins advises from the outset that his essay (1996) should not be read as a comprehensive catalogue of Christian theology or history of ideas. This essay may be read instead as an extension of Sahlins' agenda (1976) to give 'cultural reason', as opposed to utilitarian/materialist reason, a more central role in the understanding of human social behaviour for, among other things, "it is culture which constitute utility" (1976:viii). Similar to Milbank's 'archaeological' analysis, Sahlins's genealogical view dissects a series of relentless religious notions that would have a remarkable capacity to penetrate *into non-religious intellectual fields. Sahlins focuses on what he calls one of the Western "native cultural structures of the long term" (1996: 395): Adam and Eve's original sin, or the creational "wickedness of humanity" (1996:396, 424). This biblical passage, variously interpreted²⁷, would cut humans away from God, paradise, nature and from themselves and

²⁶ See for example Collins (1998). Based on a social-conflict perspective this author offers an extensive historical study on 'networks' of philosophers and their 'interaction rituals', which are affected by 'macro social conditions', from ancient to contemporary times.

²⁷ It can be found in the book of Genesis' chapter 3. The woman created by God, tricked by a serpent, eats a fruit from the prohibited tree "in the middle of the garden" and then offers the fruit to her husband, who eats the fruit as well. According to the Catholic Bible, when God confronts the disobedient couple "[t]o the woman he said, 'I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' And to the man he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it, cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you [...]' (The Holy See, n.d.). This biblical passage has been interpreted differently by both Catholic and Protestant theologians through the centuries (Wiley 2002).

became, Sahlins argue, the foundation of further theological dogmas, e.g., “[...] the possibility of salvation, [...] the ontological distinctions of Heaven and Earth, body and soul, humanity, nature and divinity” (1996:424). Adam and Eve’s original sin expelled humanity from eternal life and infinite wisdom and condemned human kind to a “world of thorns and thistles”, pains and death (1996:396) and, more importantly, to a world of human imperfection and incompleteness. Sahlins argues it was the theologian and bishop of Hippo, Saint Augustine, who would be one of the main spokespersons of the original sin. Like Milbank’s transmittable theological metaphysics, this myth and its corresponding notions of human imperfection went beyond the religious sphere too. They were taken up by classic political philosophers, economists, classic social theorists and contemporary social thinkers.

For Sahlins the pervasive idea of human incompleteness or imperfection begot the idea of ‘human needs’, which would be conceived as a counterbalance to such an original-sin-inspired human incompleteness. This idea of ‘human need’ would not be contested but rather used as a foundational ideal for further political-economic ideologies. This idea would feed Bernard Mandeville’s ideas of the “Chaos of Evil” (396) and, later on, Mandeville’s colleague, Adam Smith, and his “Invisible Hand”, which “might well have been the wrathful hand of God, as it would create the wealth of the nation out of the feeling of privation it visited on the person” (1996:401). As a result, in the field of classic economics, “the Economic Man of modern times was still Adam [...] the same scarcity-driven creature of need” (1996:397). The Fall of man would not only end up underpinning the cosmology behind Smith’s invisible hand, it would aid as well a certain biological understanding of human nature, or an “anthropology of biology” (1996:400-4), that rests on a duality where the flesh is the natural “brute”, “animal”, part that corrupts the progress of the more reasonable human spirit. Sahlins then notices a parallel dichotomy in scholars’ references to “higher” and “lower” bodily parts and other associations such as bestial man-earth and spiritual man-heaven, as in Bakhtin’s references on Rabelais’ grotesqueries where the “lower” body,

links man to the earth and to birth and death, expressing his basic bestiality and sexuality, [whereas] [a]bove is the spirit or soul affiliating man with the angels and heavens (1996:401)

Durkheim would follow this binarism as well. Echoing Milbank (1996) indeed, Sahlins argues that the French sociologist “was fully aware that he was drawing on a long philosophical-cum-theological tradition”²⁸ when he literally stated that man is “double”: an organic individual being on one hand and, on the other, a social being that “represents the highest reality in the intellectual and moral order” (1996:402). One of the consequences of this dualism is that men, as ‘brute flesh’, devour one another, and this is the principle, Sahlins argues, in both Saint Augustine’s *The City of God* and Hobbes’ *Leviathan*. The result for Sahlins is an “anthropology of power” (1996:404-7) that takes for granted men’s need of control over themselves, men’s need of a power that watches and rules them. The concept of *society* as a controlling entity that stands “versus the individual” would then emerge in two variants: as the Hobbesian necessary Leviathan or as Adam Smith’s “unwanted imposition on personal freedom”. Whereas Sahlins compares Foucault’s oppressive, power-constituted society to Adam Smith’s, he notices, by citing Raymond Aaron, the Hobbesian assumption in Durkheim, who would see individuals “motivated by unlimited desires” and resembling,

the creature around whom Hobbes constructed his theory [...]. Since individual man is a man of desires, the first necessity of morality and society is discipline. Man needs to be disciplined by a superior force (1996:405)

Therefore Durkheim’s sociological conception of society’s coercive nature would be, in a sense, another derivative of the Judeo-Christian long-term set of ideas on human incompleteness and human needs. Furthermore, the risk of disobeying this cosmological principle was “chaos”, a pervasive underlying conjecture Sahlins says can be found in anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown and French and British anthropology in general, scholar fields that would be “specially disposed to the anxieties of anarchy and a corollary respect for order and power” (1996:406). French and British scholarly concepts of “civilization” and German analogous concepts of “culture” would represent, in Sahlins’ view, ideological

²⁸ Indeed, Durkheim introduces this dichotomy as a “well-known formula”, as “a duality of our nature” (Durkheim 1915:16).

companions to such a ‘naturally-human’ chaos. And then, “[e]verything happens as if we had been waiting for Foucault” (1996:407), who would turn upside down the Hobbesian principle of individuals constituting an omnipresent power, just to say, Sahlins argues, that an omnipresent power²⁹ constitutes individuals.

The six scholars who comments are included in Sahlins’s essay are critical of different arguments. One of the commentators criticises Sahlins for overlooking non-Augustinian Christian theologies that do not insist on the God-nature division. An Israel-based commentator argues that Sahlins ignores the ‘alterity’ of the West and the second chapter (second account of creation) of Genesis –which presents Adam’s classificatory approach towards God’s creatures. Another commentator points out Sahlins’ lack of answers to what anthropology is supposed to do today with its putative Judeo-Christian roots. Two commentators find further problems with Sahlins’s emphasis on continuation and non-rupture stories and his putting aside of difference and resistance accounts –to which Sahlins replies by stressing the similarity of the opposites, or “denials” of a “cultural order”, taking “their logic and meaning from this order” (1996: 424). However, except perhaps for the reviewer that leaves to expert scholars the assessment of Sahlins’ thesis, all the commentators seem to be convinced about the ideological links that Sahlins depicts between religious thinkers and their ‘unintentional’ successors. None of the commentators questioned the non-explicit causal assumptions – mere relations of ‘similarity/dissimilarity’³⁰ and temporal sequence – Sahlins draws from to connect, at a theoretical level and in genealogical terms exclusively, theologians, thinkers, scholars and their ideas. One of these reviewers explicitly states:

As Sahlins shows, the human sciences since the Age of Enlightenment have tried in vain to exorcise theology. Our ‘native Western anthropology’ is so imbued with basic Western Judeo-Christian ideas that the attempt to rid it of them is tantamount to abolishing anthropology itself (1996: 416).

²⁹ Sahlins also argues that natural law and theologies of the divine providence are connected, for “the ‘humanization’ of the Renaissance and the ‘secularisation’ of the Enlightenment” transferred “the attributes of an omnipotent Deity to a Nature at least as worthy of reverence”(1996:408). But it occurred so, Sahlins continues, because nature had been de-deified since ancient Hebrew religion, which distinguished and legitimised itself by brandishing a dogma opposed to paganism and its sun-gods: “God was not in the sun or stars, the rain or wind [...]”, therefore “the ancient bond between man and nature was destroyed” (1996:411).

³⁰ Different, for example, from “substantial” relations of actual interaction (Sayer 1992:88)

But is it really so? Is Western Anthropology still carrying Judeo-Christian imprints? Or does the statement above represent rather a group of scholars that were carried away by Sahlins' alluring genealogical analysis? Next I will present another anthropologist whose work is based on Milbank and Sahlins himself, and offers further conclusions anchored in research findings.

Christianity in anthropology

Anthropologist Fenella Cannell argues that (2006:50) Sahlins' critique of Western anthropology carries the same Christian traces the author himself is trying to exhibit. Although Cannell does not expand on this objection she further disagrees with Sahlins about his interpretation of Saint Augustine. In the former's view, the fall of man and the sinfulness of his flesh – as opposed to his soul - are not necessarily Augustine's statements but would belong to a "pessimistic", "post-Reformation" reading of the theologian (2005:353). However, Cannell states her ideas on the Christianity of anthropology are "often compatible" with those of Sahlins (2006: 33). Cannell (2005, 2006) adopts a Milbankian position about the *origins* of anthropology and social science in general. From her point of view, anthropological theory claims to be a secular enterprise, but this claim would be mistaken, "[a]s the theologian John Milbank has succinctly noted, this claim is a fiction: 'Once there was no 'secular' [...]' (2006:3). For Cannell it is clear that anthropological theory's original identity was defined in opposition to theology and,

since the theology it was repudiating was specifically Christian theology, anthropological theory has always carried within it ideas profoundly shaped by that act of rejection, from which there can therefore never be a complete separation (2006: 45)

Her views of sociology's origins are not different. For this author both sociology's and anthropology's claim of an "absolute break" with theology is "a misleading one". As for anthropology, its relationships with Christian theology are not evident today for they were

“increasingly backgrounded as time went on” and as a result anthropology ended up believing,

without much qualification its own claims to be a secular discipline, and failed to notice that it had in fact incorporated a version of Augustinian or ascetic thinking within its own theoretical apparatus (2005: 341)

What are, then, these Christian/ascetic ideas in anthropology’s theoretical frames? In one of her research articles Cannell suggests three Christian-theological derivatives. In her research on Mormon communities in United States Cannell finds that biblical genealogies are a key belief. Churchgoers are “religiously commanded not just to trace but to love” both their human and divine kin (2005: 346-9). This finding seems to make Cannell recall the genealogical methodology in early anthropology³¹. What Cannell wonders after this – perhaps having in mind Milbank’s ‘theological *methods*’ in social science³² (above) – is whether anthropologists have really reflected about “the crucial significance of Christianity in the making of the whole concept and methodology of genealogy in Europe”. Cannell argues the concept of genealogy and the method of tracing genealogical stories date back to the “royal and aristocratic genealogies drawn up and devised by clergy, specially monastics” whose prime model was the very genealogy of Christ (2005: 350). According to Cannell, this Christian background of genealogies was forgotten and the cause of this oblivion is yet another effect of Christian thinking in anthropology. In this author’s view, genealogies would be taken as accounts of the “pedigree” of human kind, and this was eventually considered as an unfair, inappropriate object of scientific inquiry. Yet this interpretation of genealogies was merely taking for granted the human body-spirit opposition which would actually “belong to the realm of the ‘ascetic’ Christianity of anthropology” (2005:350). So, genealogies as concept and methodology in early anthropology would be derivatives of Christian theology; and their oblivion by later anthropologists – based on the denial of the ‘body’ element within an *a priori* body-spirit folk-theological interpretation – would confirm further the link between Christian and anthropological logics.

³¹ A methodology that, Cannell says, languished as time went by but was recently brought up to light by scholars doing “some interesting excavations of its history”. (2005:348)

³² Cannell does not include here any explicit citation or quotation from Milbank.

The second element Cannell considers a theological derivative in anthropology is certain types of anthropological understandings of the concept of modernity and the time scale it is usually defined with. The Christian idea of the transcendent as a non-human, heaven-like sphere of the divine or as an “irreversible change in the nature of things” constitutes a “postulate of beyondness” that would be replicated in the “beyondness” between pre-modern and modern times and the sense of total rupture between them. Thus, modernity “is a postulate of ‘beyondness’ in social science as heaven is a postulate of beyondness in Christianity” (2005:351). In another publication Cannell (2006), based on ethnographic research findings, would draw the same parallel but this time between anthropological understandings of modernity and the Christian idea and practice of “conversion”. A “conversion” in Christian communities would depend “on a break in time”; it “changes the individual, and however much he might backslide, the event itself cannot be undone” (2006:38). From there Cannell draws the parallel, thus modernity,

[i]nsofar as it implies an irreversible break with the past, after which the world is utterly transformed in mysterious ways [...], is itself modelled on the Christian idea of conversion (2006:39)

The third element arises from Cannell’s experiences with scholars’ accounts of alternative Christianities. According to Cannell these scholarly accounts are based on Christian parameters. Firstly, the author notices that Mormon churchgoers, in their everyday life, do not take for granted the theological division between the mortal/ profane and the divine; they, for example, often imagine themselves doing in heaven what they used to do in earth and relating to the same people they relate to in their mortal lives. Hence, the Christian theological separation between heaven-earth, human-divine is not as clear-cut in certain Christian communities. Secondly, Cannell notices as well that certain scholarly accounts of religions would rather take for granted that all religions should somehow exhibit the heaven-earth, human-divine principle and, when this characteristic is not met, the scholars’ answer is to label those religions as instances of “local resistance” or “peripheral” variants of “real Christianity” (2005: 352). In the author’s view, these scholar labels would simply represent a

reification of a theological dichotomy that is taken for granted and used as a yardstick.

Cannell concludes

Anthropology is a discipline that is not always so 'secular' as it likes to think. Were it to become less ascetic in its understanding of religious experience, it might more often remember its own theological prehistory (2005:352)

Similar to Milbank's and Sahlin's, Cannell's genealogical analysis, understandably so, consist mostly of relations of external similarity (Sayer 1992:88-93) between Christian constructs and anthropological concepts, methods and criteria. For Cannell the resemblances between the biblical genealogies of Christ and churchgoers' worshipping of those genealogies resemble and may be traced back the concept/method and use of genealogies in early anthropology. Cannell traces as well the same similarity between the idea of modernity, as a total rupture with pre-modernity, and both the idea of the transcendent as an absolute human-divine separation and the notion of the irreversible Christian conversion. After such resemblances are noted, the causal connections between the Christian and the anthropological sets would be established by following the Milbankian thesis about the theological lineage of social science and its implied causal principle: causes always precede their effects chronologically. But, would this Milbankian statement suffice to link the mere resemblances that Cannell depicts between Christianity and anthropology? What if the anthropological elements that reportedly resemble those of Christian theology were taken from, or reinforced by, similar constructs from other knowledge fields or ideological realms? Even if we presuppose the pervasive theological roots of social science and social theory, how would early and contemporary social scientists – most, if not all, having a secular sensibility – end up with no choice but to reproduce the Christian notions identified by Milbank, Sahlin's and Cannell above? Neither Sahlin's nor Cannell – or Milbank, despite his lengthy archaeological analysis of Durkheimian sociology – seem to have in mind Durkheim and the series of theses he suggested on *religion/society-knowledge-science* relations. I will review these theses next.

III. Epistemological influences re-stated: Durkheim's theses.

Religion, causality and classifications

In his 'strong programme' manifesto David Bloor (1976) stated that Durkheim "dropped a number of hints as to how his findings might relate to the study of scientific knowledge"³³ (1976:2). I certainly agree. This section is a review of a particular fragment of Durkheim's sociology of religion-knowledge: his theses on the substantive relations between religion and two components of human cognition: causality and classifications –or "the two most important concepts from an epistemological standpoint", in Anne Rawls' words (1996:440). Next I will present Durkheim's arguments on 'causality' and 'classifications' and their, apparently forgotten, causal links with religion.

Religion, force/power and cause.

From the first pages of *The Elementary Forms*, Durkheim (1915:8-9) is explicit about his aims: exploring not the "very first beginning" of religion but its "most essential" representative in order to explain the formation of human knowledge –a quest that, Durkheim stated, had been the job of philosophers exclusively, since Aristotle's times. Philosophers would propose a set of universal properties of things and of the understanding called *categories*³⁴ –"time, space, class, number, cause, substance, personality, etc"³⁵ –

³³ Bloor finds useful Durkheim's division of the sacred and the profane and the derived idea of science as sacred. "The puzzling attitude towards science [as objective, independent, unquestionable knowledge] would be explicable if it were being treated as sacred" (1976:41).

³⁴ Schmauss (2004) reminds us that *The Elementary Forms* is not, however, the first publication by Durkheim about categories of thought. One of the first publications by Durkheim on the topic is his philosophy lectures at the Lycée de Sens, from 1884. There Durkheim holds the existence not of necessary universal but of necessary principles ruling the human mind. These principles would arise from the ideas of unity, order and simplicity as needs of the mind (2004: 112). Whereas dimensions of time and space order our experience locating things internally and externally respectively, the mind groups things and experiences assigning an "entity at the centre of each group": the substance. Further order is required by the mind, which arranges phenomena based on precedence and antecedence, so a phenomena that appears as a condition of another one is the cause; and the latter the effect. The five necessary principles in Durkheim's early theory of the categories are: space, time, substance, causality and final causality. In these early theorisations, Durkheim would follow the French "spiritualists" – like Cousin, who followed Kant's critics- and so would see no difference between "the forms of the intuition and the concepts of the understanding" (2004:113). Likewise Durkheim would support the apriorism of such a set of principles or categories. But even then Durkheim would disagree with the

which, Durkheim stated, are “*naturally found in religion*” and were “*born in religion and of religion*” (1915:9). In Durkheim’s view, religion has not only “enriched” people’s knowledge, but has “formed” the “intellect itself”³⁶ as well philosophy and science (1915:11, 237). After this introduction, Durkheim sets out to analyse two of the then mainstream perspectives on religion: animism and naturism. Once Durkheim dismisses the possibility of finding a “sacred character” inherent in the individuals’ dreams (animism) or in nature (naturism), he suggests totemism as a “more fundamental and more primitive” (1915:87-8) religion and therefore more plausible as source of sacredness and more suitable for his purposes. Durkheim then chooses his case studies: Australian tribes and their totemic religions.

idea of the categories originating in the individuals’ “introspective experience” and with Cousin’s proposition on the “divine” direct origin of the categories - an argument Cousin reportedly elaborated as a response to what he understood as the “sceptical implications of Kant’s theory of the categories” (Schmauss 2004:20). Durkheim distinguished by then two components of the categories, the universal-*a priori* and the particular-empirical. As for the category of causality, for example, there would be an universal *a priori* principle that makes individuals to conceive as a necessity the fact of phenomena having causal relations with other phenomena, and a principle of particular experience of causality that provides the empirical representation of the necessary causal relations: whereas the former provides the frame, the latter fills such a frame with concrete experiences (2004:116). In his later theorisations Durkheim, Schmauss argues, would rather dismiss the *a priori* principle of causality and would replace it with an “empirical, sociological account of the universality of the categories” (2004:117).

³⁵ Rawls (1996:434-5) states Durkheim analysed six categories in particular in *The Elementary Forms*: time, space, classification, force, causality and totality.

³⁶ Before and after Kant, Rawls (1996) argues, epistemological debates centred around a dualistic separation between human thought and reality, where reality was not perceived in itself but only through human categories of thought (1996: 431; see Sahlins’ anthropology of reality as well (1996)). Durkheim, Rawls states, tried to overcome the Humean empiricists’ individualistic perspectives – which promoted scepticism over individual realities seen as changing and unstable – the Kantian apriorists’ naturalistic views – which did not solve the problem of experience but rather just imposed the criteria of a apriorism – and Jamesian pragmatists’ positions – who did not offer explanations of the ways in which individual utility becomes a valid general utility (1996: 432-3). Social forces for Durkheim, on the other hand, could be perceived and shared collectively and could therefore provide a valid source for human categories of thought. The above, Rawls says, is why Durkheim replaced the individual by the social – *via* religion, I would add. Schmauss (2004) disagrees on the idea of Durkheim drawing from Hume directly. This author argues that the French sociologist was not familiar with Hume’s work directly, but only through French philosophers Élie Rabier and Paul Janet (2004:126, 164-5). From Schmauss’ view, Durkheim’s categories were developed from the “eclectic spiritualist tradition” of French scholars like Victor Cousin, Maine de Biran and Paul Janet who discussed Hume but also Kant and helped to spread the latter’s work into France (2004: 59-60). These French spiritualists would take Kant’s epistemological arguments on the “conditions for objective scientific knowledge” for “a psychological theory of [...] sensations” (2004:56). For this group the categories were psychological faculties not Kant’s logical *a priori* conditions for human reasoning. Durkheim would support the spiritualist’s claim on the empirical existence of the categories, his novel contribution, though, would be the conception of *social*, rather than psychological-individual categories.

While describing the totemic organisation and religious practices of the tribal clans, Durkheim points at a common “principle” between the very “emblem” of the totem, the clan’s “human members” and the “animals or vegetables” that materialise the clan’s totems: a sacred force. This force is intrinsically collective, “anonymous and impersonal” (1915:188); it is independent of individuals and generations and remains in time. This force “is the god adored by each totemic force”; a god that is “immanent in the world and diffuse in an innumerable multitude of things” (1915:189). This force/god is materialised by the clan and its members through the *totem*, which becomes the material representation of the force/god³⁷. The totemic force/god acts as both “mechanical” and “moral” force (1915:190), for it can, from the member of the clan’s view, produce physical effects and cause actual sickness; it also compels the member to observe the religious rites “because he feels himself morally obliged to acts thus” as if “obeying an imperative”. Adding up to his impersonal force/god concept/s Durkheim then provides ethnographic evidence: among American tribes such a “pre-eminent power” is the *wakan* or the *orenda*; in Melanesian tribes this “anonymous force” is *mana*; among the Australian Arunta and Loritja tribes it is the “magic force” reported as *Arungquiltha* (1915: 192-8). Durkheim then states that this force/god/power constitutes the very “notion of the totemic principle” and, furthermore, a *pre-scientific idea of force* that explains not only natural phenomena but “everything that acts and reacts that moves and is moved”; it is “an universal principle of explanation” and the ultimate “cause” of the clan’s life and its members’. Durkheim then concludes, “*the idea of force is of religious origin*”, moreover, “it has been borrowed first by philosophy then by sciences” (1915: 203). ‘Force’, however, is not the only concept Durkheim sees arising from tribal religious experiences. I will present next Durkheim’s idea that the category of causality is a derivation of religious experiences as well. First I will review what those particular religious experiences would be.

Firstly, religious *imitative* rites, i.e. rituals where members of the clan reproduce the gestures or characteristics of animals for the sake of the latter’s reproduction and the clan’s wellbeing (1915: 355-60), have “moral efficacy” (1915:361). It is an efficacy linked to faith, to a

³⁷ A force/god Durkheim also calls “immaterial substance” and diffused “energy” (1915: 189).

predisposition to belief. In cases where the rite does not yield the expected effects, faith in it is still “impermeable to experience” for the member of the clan could not deny the rite’s efficacy “without causing an upheaval of his own being”³⁸ (361). Durkheim notices that in the science field, the same resistance to ‘disbelieve’ is present; in this field there is a commanding inertia in the prioritisation of confirmatory scientific evidence over evidence of failures or exceptions. Just as disbelieving in the rite causes moral chaos, it would be “against all method to renounce” to, and to disbelieve, scientific laws. In this sense, the believer and the scholar would differ from each other “only in degree”; the latter “only [...] introduces more method” (1915:361). But the religious imitative rite and the faith that sustains it would not be only impermeable to experience just as the scholar’s beliefs in scientific laws would be, the religious rite rests upon two key principles that would have further epistemological implications for lay people and scientists. One of those principles is the “law of contagion” by which a “condition or a good or bad quality are communicated contagiously from one subject to another who has some [physical] connection with the former”. The second principle is that of “the like produces the like” by which the mere “representation of a being or condition produces this being or condition” (1915:356). In Durkheim’s view, the origins of the category of causality are equivalent to the origins of the principle ‘the like produces the like’ in imitative rites. Furthermore, the latter “*is a concrete statement of the law of causality and, in all probability, one of the most primitive statements of it which has ever existed*” (1915:363). After this, the philosopher-sociologist from Alsace addresses the different conceptual pieces in his category of causality.

As he implied in earlier chapters, the notion of force³⁹ is contained in the idea of cause. As presented in the paragraph above, the main characteristic of such a *force* or *power* is its collective ritual nature, or, as Durkheim now qualifies, its “social” origin. The ‘prototype’ of the idea of force/power was collectively forged by society via religion, not necessarily by the

³⁸ Even among “cultivated people”, Durkheim states, there are “believers who, though having doubts as to the special efficacy attributed by dogma to each rite considered separately, still continue to participate in the cult. They are not sure that the details of the prescribed observances are rationally justifiable ; but they feel that it would be impossible to free oneself of them without falling into a moral confusion” (1915: 360)

³⁹ Here Durkheim adds further conceptualisations: a cause is a force that may remain dormant; if it is triggered off such a force becomes both an effect and an instance of actualised power (1915:363)

individual's senses or external experiences, as in a Humean or empiricist interpretation of causality; nor created a priori as in a Kantian theory of the mind⁴⁰. After discarding the "individual will" as origin of the idea of force⁴¹, Durkheim argues, in a clearly aprioristic statement that combines both Humean and Kantian precepts, that the idea of force in causality must hold two characteristics: firstly it should come from the individual, yet not from his/her external, sensorial experiences⁴² but from his/her spiritual or *internal* experiences, therefore it must be related to the only forces individuals can so experience: moral forces⁴³. Secondly, it must refer to impersonal powers, the first type of force thought of. These two conditions, from Durkheim's perspective, are met by the religious "collective forces" – *mana*, *waken*, *orenda* – which are impersonal, and contagious as well made of the individual's feelings.

Now, how does this religiously-originated force/power operate? The next conceptual piece Durkheim addresses is the idea of a "necessary connection" between cause (or force) and effect (or actualised force, power). This necessary connection is an *a priori* component of causality, it occurs in the individuals' minds "under the empire of a sort of constraint from which it cannot free itself" (1915:366). Unlike empiricist (Humean) approaches that held that the idea of causality was no more than an *expectation* of precedent-antecedent reinforced by habit, Durkheim sees causality and "necessary connections" from another angle. They are not a mere "tendency of our thought", but an authoritative "external norm superior to the flow of our representations". This norm's authority emanates from the collectivity and its reproduction, that is, the very existence of the social organisation and collective life as such,

⁴⁰ See footnote 34.

⁴¹ For Durkheim this would not be possible for the first notions of force would have to come, as he discussed in previous chapters where he defined the 'sacred force/god/power', from an impersonal energy, a power with no clear-cut identity but a diffuse collective constitution. According to Schmauss (2004:124) Durkheim was challenging spiritualists like Main de Biran's and Rabier and their 'animistic' derivation of the concept of power from the individuals' "internal experience of willed effort" or internal desires.

⁴² Which would be "incommunicable", and therefore unable of collective contagion and collective use (1915: 364-5).

⁴³ From Rawls' point of view, this does not mean Durkheim discarded the notion of feelings entirely. Individual feelings for Durkheim cannot be communicated but collective "feelings of moral force" (1996:450) can. So following a Humean reasoning, Durkheim would argue that if participants can collectively hold the same type of moral feelings they can collectively hold the same categories as well.

which are the very aims of the imitative rites. Imitative rites are then “obligatory” and have to be “executed regularly” for the collectivity’s very existence. Having such an external obligatory status, the “necessary connections” between cause and effect that are enacted in imitative rites become then the model for further non-religious causal relations and the category of causality as such.

Although Durkheim accepts his theorisations are not “a complete theory of the concept of causality” and that this concept varies in different times, geographies, and even among different professions, he defends his sociological theory of the category of causality and the categories in general (1915:368-9) on the grounds of its combination of aprioristic and empiricist stances, as it takes into account the *a priori* character of causality and necessary connections without discarding the contribution of the individual experience, which provides subjective feelings of regularity which the collectivity forges into stable, general and authoritative categories of thought and causality. Another ‘category’ Durkheim saw emerging from religion was ‘classification’.

Religion and classifications

Durkheim also stated that religion is a “system of ideas” whose “primary function” is to represent to individuals “the society of which they are members, and the obscure but intimate *relations* which they have with it” (1915: 225 –emphasis added). Durkheim then explained that whereas science would teach us that minerals and plants belong to different sets, totemic religions combined these elements and provided instead different classifications: “the sun, moon and stars are men or women who feel and express human sentiments, while men on the contrary are thought of as animals or plants” (1915: 235). So, Durkheim states, the classifications of primitive religion – which blended plant’s essences into men’s – would not have come from our senses like the empiricists claimed: our senses would have not been able to perceive the plant and the man being oneself. Therefore, Durkheim goes on, “some exceptionally powerful cause intervened [...] *It is religion that was the agent of this transfiguration*” (1915: 236; emphasis added). Totemic religions dictate that men and plants

partake from the same essence. The belief in this shared essence, became a “bridge”, a model for making further logical connections.

What are exactly these ‘bridges’? First Durkheim notices that the frequent opposition between phratries, or groups of tribal clans⁴⁴, i.e. a ‘water’ phratry versus an ‘earth’ phratry, ‘extends’ to persons; as a result, “the logical [water phratry-earth phratry] contrast has begotten a sort of social conflict” (1915:146). Durkheim then suggests that phratries include clans where things that are assumed to hold “the greatest affinities” with a totem are placed and included as part of the clan. Out of this totemic organisation of things arises a classificatory “framework” which Durkheim defines as “a definite form, with fixed outlines, [...] which may be applied to an undetermined number of things, perceived or not, actual or possible”. This framework or “class” would have “possibilities of extension [...] beyond the circle of objects which we know” (1915:147) and would entail hierarchies and relations of superiority, inferiority and equality whose model would be taken from the clan/phratries organisational hierarchies. Although Durkheim states this could be considered a crude logic, its contribution to “the intellectual evolution of humanity” would be unquestionable for it not only fed the first explanations of natural and physical phenomena but also constituted a foundational criterion to establish, outside the religious realm, similarities between elements. Hence, just like the ritual principle ‘the like produces the like’ originates further non-religious causal models,

“[t]he great service that religions have rendered to thought is that they have constructed a first representation of what [...] *relations of kinship between things* may be [...]. From the moment when men have an idea that there are *internal connections between things*, science and philosophy become possible. Religion opened up the way for them (1915:237 –emphasis added).

Primitive logic and scientific logic would not be essentially different, Durkheim argued. Although the former does not associate the same things the former would, both elaborate explanations and, therefore, both “show how one thing participates in one or several others”, that is, both unite “heterogeneous terms by an internal bond” (1915:238). Thus,

⁴⁴ A phratry, Durkheim explains “is a group of clans which are united to each other by particular bonds of fraternity.” (1915: 107)

between the logic of religious thought and that of scientific thought there is no abyss. The two are made up of the same elements, though unequally and differently developed. (1915:239)

According to Rawls (1996) scholars usually mix up the three different meanings, or “levels”, Durkheim would unclearly refer to when he addressed the concept of classification. From Rawls’ point of view, the first Durkheimian meaning of classification is an “ability to perceive similarity and difference in crude terms [...] that humans share with animals”. The second is classification as a cosmological “system of classifications” that are “patterned on divisions in social relations”. The third is, finally, the category of classification that develops “through the direct perception of moral force in the enactment of those practices that create the binary relations of sacred and profane, totem and nontotem” (1996:453). Rawls claims scholars tend to focus on the second “level” and forget the third one. As a result, scholars see classifications as part of Durkheim’s sociology of knowledge, not as part of his “social epistemology” (1996: 435, 452-5). Although I would not strictly separate from each other the three different “levels” of classifications noted by Rawls – for the three can empirically be found mixed up in real settings and one could lead to the identification of the other – I would agree with Rawls’ conceptual distinctions and would argue something similar to her claim about certain oblivion, or (un)conscious neglect, of Durkheim’s epistemological theses.

The whole set of passages from *The elementary forms* where Durkheim clearly grants a ‘beyond-religion’ epistemological influence to totemism in particular and to religion in general, seems to be overlooked by scholars. For example, Thompson seems to put aside Durkheim’s references to religion and rather focus on the “socially-derived” status of Durkheim’s cosmologies (2002: 100), or on his categories of thought being “derived from the society’s own life” (2002:109) or simply being “socially-derived” (2002: 114). Even Rawls, despite her review of Durkheim’s totemic classifications (1996: 455-7), seems at times more inclined to discuss Durkheim’s “moral forces” within “certain enacted practices” (1996: 438, 451, 461) than within their originally-reported religious matrix. Similarly, and despite his interest on Durkheim’s sacred-profane distinction, Bloor (1976) focuses on how

scientific knowledge has “the character of transfigured conceptions of *society*”, just as religion does ⁴⁵ (1976:45; emphasis added). Scholars that overlook Durkheim’s *religion/society-knowledge-science* arguments, and focus instead on the *society-knowledge* association only, would focus exclusively on the statements where Durkheim leaves aside the totemic/religious factor and deliberately replaces it with “the social”. For example, Durkheim states religion is able to perform its classificatory-model role for religion is “a social affair”, it occurs by and in society, the only instance where “a super-excitation of the intellectual forces” and the corresponding necessary “collective thought” are possible (1915: 238). The same religious-by-social replacement can be found in Durkheim’s initial theorisation of the totem not as god but as the clan as such. It is because the totem is the clan’s material flag that the clan’s totem, Durkheim states, “can be nothing else than the clan itself”⁴⁶ (1915: 206). Scholars like Thompson would probably focus as well on an earlier piece of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge: Durkheim and Mauss’ *Primitive Classifications* ([1903] 1963) and its thesis on the *social* origin of classificatory systems. In this acutely criticised work⁴⁷, Durkheim and Mauss analysed the correspondence between the classificatory schemes of Australian, Amerindian and Chinese native groups and their very

⁴⁵ See also Bloor’s discussion of there being “truth in the conviction that knowledge and science depends on something outside of mere belief [...] [i.e., in] *society itself*” (1976:72; emphasis added)

⁴⁶ It is not only that the categories of the understanding would be socially constructed because society is the god/power/force that originates the categories. Durkheim notes as well the religious-like characteristics society displays to “arouse the sensation of the divine”. Since it is a god/force society constitutes too the “superior” power individuals’ dependency feelings emanate from. This God-like society “imperiously demands our aid” for the sake of collective ends.; individuals would become “its servitors”; its “empire” over individuals’ consciences would be driven by the “moral authority” it instils, which is “the emotion [...] we experience when we feel this interior and wholly spiritual pressure operating upon us” (1915: 207). So, when society “commands” the individual, there are no doubts, no hesitation. This internalised “moral ascendancy” of society and its commands is a guarantee of efficacy (209). These passages back up both Milbank’s idea on Durkheimian sociology claiming an equal status between society and religion, and Sahlin’s statements on Durkheimian society’s necessary coerciveness over ‘naturally-wicked’ men.

⁴⁷ The introduction by Needham in the 1963 English translation of the text is probably the clearest example of this criticism. There Needham points at the authors’ “logical flaws”, e.g. lack of actual evidence to prove both “changing modes of classifications” and the assumption about clans constituting less evolved forms of moieties (Durkheim and Mauss [1903] 1963: xii). Lukes (1973:446) notes as well the authors’ avoidance of counter-evidence and deviant cases and their baseless assumption on there being one single classificatory scheme among tribal societies. But perhaps the riskiest flaw is Durkheim and Mauss’ *petitio principii* tendency ([1903] 1963: xii; Lukes 1973: 31), which makes the authors to include the conclusion (classifications of things reproduce the individuals’ social organisation) in the initial premise, (there are classifications of things that reproduce the individuals’). Yet, as Coser (1988a) and Lukes (1973:448) note, Durkheim and Mauss’ thesis’ remains as a breakthrough in sociological and anthropological fields.

tribal divisions, and put forward their hypothesis on the classification of things by individuals reproducing that of the very individuals in society. In any case, these interpretations and readings of Durkheimian sociology of knowledge – probably driven by the ideological paradigms of ‘secularism’ and ‘secular science’ presented above – clearly miss or downplay the very cognitive connections Durkheim painstakingly suggested between *religion* – or religious ‘moral forces’ (Rawls 1996) – and both *people’s logics* and *scientific logics*.

In his often-quoted work on Durkheim, Lukes (1973:449) states that Durkheim’s hypothesis on religions containing “the germs” of scientific logics “is, in many ways, both challenging and plausible”. However the same author states Durkheim offers no valid empirical evidence to sustain his causal association between religion/society and “particular classificatory or conceptual systems”, for his arguments on “sentiments and affective values” as causal links between one and the other are simply “not sufficient” (1973:448). This is a fair complaint, however, are Milbank, Sahlins and Cannell basically not arguing what Durkheim did in terms of scientific classifications arising from religious classifications? Milbank (2006:56) states that French philosopher de-Bonald did establish a connection between the “universal ratio” *pouvoir/ministre/sujet* and the triads “I/you/he, father/mother/child, sovereign/executive/subject and God/priest/faithful”. Furthermore, Milbank states that Durkheimian sociology carries Christian theological dualisms (or dichotomistic *classifications*) that travelled from De-Bonald, to Comte and then to Durkheim, i.e., general ideas, or social facts, as opposed to particular ideas; the divine-social whole versus the parts; ‘real nature’ on the one hand and ‘spiritual values’ on the other. Similarly, anthropologist Sahlins (1996) argues that the Christian dualism of corrupt human flesh *versus* the human spirit would inform an “anthropology of biology” that takes for granted this separation. Durkheim’s thesis on religious-scientific classifications is also similar to Cannell’s statements on both anthropological genealogies (i.e., *classifications*) deriving from the Christian genealogies and the concepts of pre-modernity and modernity in anthropological theory constituting an incommensurable division (i.e., *classification*) of phenomena that rests on the Christian idea of irreversible religious conversions (a before-after dichotomistic

classification) or on postulates of transcendent beyondness of the divine over the human (yet another dichotomistic classification). Despite these three authors not drawing explicitly from Durkheim's thesis, they indirectly corroborated its plausibility.

In one of the most recent critiques of the Durkheimian approach, Schmauss (2004:123) considers Durkheim's theorisations about the origins of 'necessary connections' as a "somewhat implausible hypothesis". Indeed, the scholarly and religious fields today are 'somewhat' different to both those Durkheim learnt from ethnographies on 'primitive societies' and those he personally experienced in the 19th-century European-French context (Greenberg 1976; Pickering 1984; Moore 1986; Strenski 1997). Individuals making animal gestures for the sake of their 'totem' and community's wellbeing would definitely not be a typical act among today's '(post)modern' 'technology-driven' societies. Even if religion is still an active force in contemporary societies, its prevalence relies perhaps less on Durkheimian imitative rituals than, for example, on Cipriani's (2011) 'diffuse' cultural-religious practices. And even if rituals were still relevant, what Schmauss notes could still be the case: individuals may participate in the ritual yet their personal beliefs may not correspond to the group beliefs (2004:130). Durkheim's 'necessary connection' troubles Schmauss (2004: 131-32), who thinks Durkheim did not explain sufficiently what type of necessity he meant and did not account, either, for the source of society's power or authority to impose such a norm⁴⁸. Sahlins (1996), as I have said above, does offer an answer in this sense. Sahlins sees the coercive nature of Durkheim's society as an ideological derivation of the long-term Christian concept of dual human nature that Durkheim would not contest but would take for granted. In this scheme, the human corrupt predator – as opposed to the human moral spirit – has to be watched and controlled; society then, in its role of 'secular religion', would perform this imperative. Here I ask, would not Sahlins' reading of Durkheim's attribution of a religious-like 'coerciveness' to society be a possible instance of Durkheim's own thesis on the scientific idea of force/power being taken from an analogous religious notion of force/power? If French philosophers de Bonald and de Maistre would

⁴⁸ He nonetheless accepts the validity of Durkheim's explanation of necessary connection as a principle whose actualisation allows both society to reproduce itself and individuals to have "moral and legal obligations" (2004: 133).

explicitly invoke “God” as “an immediate explanatory *cause*” (Milbank 2006:55; italics added), would this statement by Milbank not represent further evidence of the plausibility of Durkheim’s hypothesis on the religious origins of the notions of causality?

The first difficulty in answering this type of question –as in answering the question on the plausibility of Durkheim’s thesis on the religious origin of classifications – is the chronological scope of Durkheim’s theses. With his ‘positivistic genealogy’ of the categories, Durkheim wanted to account for both “the most essential” (1915: 8) religion and the ‘creational processes’ of the categories. This was perhaps an analytical-methodological strategy that might have been not only the preferred analytical approach of one scholarly stream (e.g., just as Foucauldian ‘genealogies’ in the second half of the 20th century were/are) but a taken for granted notion amid the political, social and cultural discourses of the 19th-century European and French contexts Durkheim was part of⁴⁹. In this dissertation, rather than searching for origins and drawing positivistic genealogies, I propose to focus more on the search for/analysis of *shaping forces* (chapter 2). Therefore the question is not whether classifications, notions of power/force and the category of causality have all a “religious *origin*”, but (1) whether the forces shaping them could be those that emerge from religion/s, and if so, (2) how those religious forces would eventually shape these cognitive elements. Although Milbank, Sahlins and Cannell are searching for ‘origins’ as well, their Foucauldian genealogies offer evidence to answer the first question tentatively. The question then is how this shaping process may occur. Sacred proto-forces, imitative rituals and their obligatory connections (causality) as well as totemic ‘moral’ hierarchies across and within clans and phratries (classifications) are explanans Durkheim proposed a century ago. Next I will review alternative explanations suggested in Durkheimian and Weberian literature.

⁴⁹ In terms of taken for granted approaches to ‘historical origins’ or ‘creational processes’, see for instance late-19th-century French Jewish scholar Darmesteter’s statements (1895) on the “truths that would save us” reportedly coming from the “authority” voice “heard eighteen hundreds years ago”, in a clear reference to Christ and the “misunderstood [Jewish] masters of Christianity” (1895:9-10).

IV. Same theses, alternative causal links.

Partly based on Durkheim, Mary Douglas (1986) considers the acts of dividing the world and making classifications as key components of human cognition (1986: 3, 62-7, 91-109). These cognitive acts, along with “conferring sameness”, “remembering” and “forgetting”, depend, in Douglas’ view, not on religious imitative rites but on *social institutions*⁵⁰ –see also Zerubavel (1999) for a relatively more recent reviving of Durkheimian-Douglasian sociology of knowledge and society’s role in individuals’ cognition which also includes individuals’ socially-shaped patterns of classifying phenomena⁵¹.

Douglas shares Durkheim’s functionalist view of patterned human cognition which demands “order and coherence and control of uncertainty” (1986:19). Following scientist Ludwig Fleck too⁵², Douglas (1986:12-9) puts forward the idea of “thought worlds”, which represent “the social grouping that is defined by its distinctive thought style”, e.g., “science worlds, art worlds, music worlds” (1986: 17). How, in these thought worlds, is cognitive order and control of uncertainty achieved? Douglas responds by referring to the concept, development and cognitive properties of institutions. Douglas borrows some tenets from information theory⁵³ and portrays institutions as constructs that control “informational complexity” by “encapsulating” past experiences, “encoding” expectations, and reducing “entropy” (1986:

⁵⁰ In their respective reviews of Douglas’ book, Lewis Coser (1988b) and Bruno Latour (1988) touch upon the ambiguity of Douglas’ answer to the classical questions about deterministic “group minds” and whether institutions are mere “metaphors” to explain human cognition or actual independent agents with cognitive capacities. I share both reviewers’ comments. Although Douglas asserts that “institutions cannot have minds” (1986: 8) and clearly explains individuals’ active interventions in the development of institutions as non-independent social constructions, she also stresses, for instance, that “institutions remember” and “create shadowed places in which nothing can be seen” (1986:69), e.g., the Nuer’s “institutionalised memory” (1986:77).

⁵¹ Zerubavel (1999) revives what I think are useful Durkheimian tenets for a sociology of knowledge or a “cognitive sociology”. His main proposal (a “sociology of the mind” that fills the gap between on one hand merely psychological accounts of ‘individual thinking’ that overlook society’s influence and, on the other hand, more universalist approaches to ‘human thinking’ such as those in neuroscience, where cultural cognitive differences are obscured) is supported by numerous empirical cases from anthropological and sociological literature. However, Zerubavel’s (1999) cognitive sociology does not really include detailed casual accounts of the sociological processes through which society shapes individuals’ cognition –or patterns of classifications. In this sense, Douglas’ work (1986) is more useful.

⁵² And his work on the social bases of scientific thinking and the existence of a “thought collective” (or Durkheim’s social group) and various “thought styles” within it (or Durkheim’s collective representations) (Douglas 1986: 12).

⁵³ The work of economist Andrew Schotter in particular.

47-8). But these social institutions are not given, they undergo specific processes of legitimation. Minimally, institutions would be “conventions” that would gradually become “naturalised”. One of Douglas’ contributions to this old sociological concept, is the idea that this from-convention-to-institution legitimation process begins with a “cognitive device” (1986: 55) or a “parallel cognitive convention” that sustains the development of an institution (1986:46). A convention starts off by setting forth a cognitive analogy, for institutions need stability, and conventions-analogies provide precisely this stability. For example, an institution of a basic division of labour would begin to materialise by using the analogy female-male so the female and male types of work are distinguished and then properly justified. However this analogy might be challenged at any point and therefore lack stability. Here is where parallel analogies would come into play. The female-male division of labour convention finds legitimation by drawing from further equivalent analogies, i.e. left-right, people-king. So, Douglas asserts, “‘female is to male as left is to right’, reinforces the social principle [i.e., the female-male division of labour] with a physical analogy” (1986:49). When these analogies are

applied back and forth from one set [of] social relations to another and from these back to nature, [their] recurring formal structure becomes easily recognized and endowed with self-validating truth (1986:48)

This is how conventions avoid being renegotiated every time and so can work properly as tools for ‘entropy-reduction’ by demonstrating that their ultimate “formal structure corresponds to formal structures in non-human realms” (1986:55). In other words, a convention becomes an established institution if the replies to the question ‘why do you hold this convention?’ refer eventually to reasons of cosmology and human nature, that is, when institutions find a “fit with the nature of the universe” (1986:46).

Iterative and mutually reinforcing analogies also indicate, according to Douglas, the ways “a political hierarchy” and political-cultural geographies may develop too. The analogy female-male would reinforce not only that of people-king, but also that of south-north, east-west, etc. Analogies may carry a contagious sense of asymmetry, or as Douglas puts it “the

preeminence of the right hand *over* the left, of the east *over* the west, of the north *over* the south” (1986:49, emphasis added). In Douglas’ view analogies “load” things or items within classifications “with moral and political content” (1986:63). For instance, the institution of economics/economists’ thinking, would be based on the following series of morally and politically charged analogies⁵⁴:

Spiritual – Material
Poetry and religion – Economics
Speculative philosophy – Applied science
Vague metaphor – Rigorous theory
Intangibles – Measurables

It is not only that institutions are based on analogies, institutions *offer* analogies or “classifications” to individuals too; in a sense, “institutions make classifications” (1986: 91). Furthermore, institutions make and offer classifications to *scientists* as well. Just as there is “a tension” between individuals’ own personal stock of analogies and society’s “founding analogies” which generally take over the former (1986: 55), there is also a similar interplay between scientists’ classifications and society’s: “[a] thinker who classifies the phenomena to be examined according to known and visible institutions saves himself the trouble of justifying the classification” (1986: 94). Douglas states that there is “a fundamental shift” (1986: 159) between social and scientific classifications⁵⁵, however she points at the continuities between one and the other⁵⁶. Weber, for example, would classify religious and secular lives into the compartments of the then mainstream secular paradigms and would analyse religions in Israel, China and India using “the institutional framework of Western society” (1986: 94), which includes a series of primitive, feudal and urban classificatory

⁵⁴ Similarly, Sayer (1992: 23) argues that there is a reinforcement and “leakage of meaning” running, not just horizontally but vertically as well, along aligned pairs of dichotomistic classifications. Sayer (1992:62) seems to base this idea on Douglas, who seems, in turn, to draw from Levi-Strauss (Douglas 1986:63).

⁵⁵ She seems to assign to these types of classification a different nature, since “the quest for knowledge is not one of [the social classifications’] objectives” (1986:59)

⁵⁶ Classifications by institutions would change though. Douglas (1986:102-8) suggests an account of classificatory dynamics by analysing wine producers, the categories of wine they produce and the changing labels of their products – i.e. the label ‘Bordeaux’ which remains for wines from Bordeaux, France, yet would change afterwards to ‘Bordeaux-type’ for equivalent wines from California. “First the people are tempted out of their niches by new possibilities of exercising or evading control” by previous institutions and their classificatory political-economic charges. After this, people “make new kinds of institutions”, and then “the institutions make new labels” and so classifications’ change would continue.

stages that Weber, according to Douglas, loaded with Western political/moral characteristics –feudal sacredness, nobles and peasants; urban markets, bureaucracies and disenchantment. Similarly, Douglas asserts, Durkheim divided societies into ‘primitive’ and ‘modern’ following the mainstream late-19th-century social discourses, and thus he discussed ‘primitive mechanic solidarity’ and ‘modern organic solidarity’ (1986:96). Douglas argues that scientists “are never completely free of their own contemporary society’s pressures”, therefore

[s]cientific theory is the result of a struggle between the classifications being developed for professional purposes by a group of scientists and the classifications being operated in a wider social environment. (1986: 56)

Institutions do not only provide classifications, they also “secure the social edifice by sacralizing the principles of *justice*”⁵⁷ (1986:112). Interestingly, Douglas states that “[w]ithout appeal to *religion*, intuitionism or innate ideas” the justification of “a substantive principle of justice as universally right” (1986:117; emphasis added) becomes problematic. Just as emerging institutions pretend to be anchored in natural analogies, justice “had to have existed long before humans came into the world; so it appears old and immutable as one of nature’s fixtures”⁵⁸ (1986: 120).

Additional to these properties of institutions, a ‘Durkheimian possibility’ could be theoretically suggested at this point, at least tentatively. If ‘causality’ entails the identification and association of causes, mechanisms and effects (by ‘conferring sameness’ and establishing differences), is not ‘causality’ an instance of a special type of classification? If causality would additionally imply the attribution of ‘power’ or ‘force’ (Durkheim) and therefore any sort of moral ‘load’ (Durkheim) which analogies-classifications would inherently hold too (Douglas), is not that further evidence that causality can be a ‘higher-complexity’ instance of a classification? So, if institutions ‘make classifications’ for individuals, would institutions make ‘causalizations’ as well? From a strictly logical and

⁵⁷ Here Douglas’ statements could be seen as consonant with Cipriani’s statements on ‘structures of (religious) *values*’ in general being ‘diffused’ by social *institutions* in Italy.

⁵⁸ In this author’s view, there would rather be different systems of justice that are comparable to each other and do allow for room to assessments of their consistency.

theoretical point of view, this would be a valid possibility and a potential function of institutions too. I will return to this point in the last two chapters.

In short, Douglas analyses how institutions and their cognitive ‘properties’ and ‘foundations’ – either as classifications, memories or concepts of justice (and perhaps ‘causalisations’ too) – develop over time and how they shape individuals’ cognition and judgement. Yet unlike the authors in the sections above, and despite stating that justice principles are anchored in religions, Douglas does not seem interested in linking *scientists’* classifications or parameters of justice to *religious* institutions. In any case, here we face a theoretical contradiction, which I hope the following paragraphs help to resolve tentatively.

Cipriani’s arguments on ‘diffused religion’ (2001, 2003, 2011) indicate that the influence and presence of formal ecclesiastical institutions, even in a historically Catholic country such as Italy, would be rather declining. The religious “indisputable global social fact” that Casanova advocates (2011:62) is not a ‘church’ *per se* but a religious “discursive reality”. Therefore, if priests, bishops, nuns, religious orders and their formal-material institutions are not as relevant as they once were, what are then the ‘Douglasian institutions’ that could ‘make’ and offer to social scientists Durkheim’s religious classifications and causality –and Milbank’s ‘theological metaphysics’, Sahlins’ ‘Christian cosmologies’ and Cannell’s ‘Christian methods’? An easy answer to this question would be to recall the concept of religion as cultural discourse, and then argue that religion, as a ‘cultural institution’, may act as transmitter. But this idea is excessively vague. Cipriani (2011) provides glimpses of more accurate answers. For instance, he asserts, without expanding on the subject, that religion in Italy would be ‘diffused through’ channels such as the *family, schools and universities*⁵⁹, where specific “values proposals” are disseminated (2011:2). A less obvious and more

⁵⁹ Cipriani states afterwards what may back up this inference: different research projects whose results suggest that Italian students “do avail themselves of the opportunity to study the Catholic religion at school”; or that the Italian “youth substantially confirms the same hierarchy of values of their fathers” (2011: 8).

complex institution that Cipriani does not explicitly account for -yet he himself, perhaps inadvertently, seems to draw from⁶⁰ - is a certain institution of “authority”.

It was Max Weber who put forward perhaps the most popular account of this concept and its three ‘pure’ forms: *rational*, *traditional* and *charismatic*. Here I will review in particular the “charismatic authority” type Weber analysed. First he conceptualised charismatic authority or charismatic domination (Swedberg and Agevall 2002:33) as a personalised, unstable type of authority that rests “on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him” (Weber 1978: 215). Charisma is then a particular type of personality “endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or [...] exceptional powers or qualities” that are considered “of divine origin or as exemplary”. The individual with charismatic authority is therefore a “natural leader” (1978: 241) made partly by his/her followers and whose saliency is circumstantial. Yet, this temporal and volatile charismatic authority may mutate to more permanent forms “[w]hen the tide that lifted a charismatically led group out of everyday life flows back into the channels of workaday routines”. After this “routinisation” process “the ‘pure’ form of charismatic domination will wane and turn into an ‘institution’.” (1978:1121 –emphasis added) As a result, the charismatic authority of “a prophet, artist, philosopher, ethical or scientific innovator may become a church, sect, academy or school” (1978: 1121). Along this process, Weber argues, tradition- and charisma-based authority merge together. If the charismatic leader is involved in routinised practices s/he “turns into a priest” whose original gifts become part of the charismatic “institutional structure” (1978: 1134-5). Weber argues Catholicism underwent this process; it went from bishops with a mere personalised charismatic authority to a Church of Rome with institutional powers and political jurisdictions (1978: 1140). In what seems a clear reference to Durkheim, Weber argues the *mana* and *orenda* in primitive tribes are instances of these charismatic “permanent institutional structures” too (1978: 1133). I am interested in this more permanent, yet

⁶⁰ With a clearly deferential tone, Cipriani addresses the work of an Italian scholar (Gian Enrico Rusconi) whom he describes as “an intellectual who constitutes a true reference point [...] because of the solidity and rigour of his ideas, being present for more than forty years in the field of public polemic on religion and civil society. He is then a protagonist and a master interlocutor, careful, documented, respectful.” (2011:6)

modifiable, sense of a “charismatic domination” which, regardless of its religious or non-religious *origins* (Riesebrodt 1999:5-8), may turn into a very “social institution” that does not necessarily have to be embedded in material organisations like the Catholic Church, but in a stable and relatively extensive set of practices-beliefs that form underlying “models” for further social interactions. This is more or less the sense that Smith (2000) gives to his Weberian ‘cultural model of charisma’. His model, empirically based in the cases of Hitler, Winston Churchill and Martin Luther King, is based on a relatively autonomous ‘cultural system’ and a charismatic leader that is “framed within a salvation narrative where strong binary themes contrast images of evil with those of the good”⁶¹. This model of charismatic authority would reach its peak “when images of evil are at their most threatening” (2000: 105) and would weaken

when binary rhetoric is no longer produced and when inflated salvation narratives are replaced by frames which substitute economic and piecemeal visions of mundane political life” (2000: 110).

Interestingly Smith (2000) suggests here a *condition* of an institution that Douglas (1986) would rather see as the institution’s *foundation* or *product*. If Douglas asserts that institutions are founded upon analogies, Smith’s Weberian charismatic authority could be regarded as an example. Furthermore, if narrative binaries are a condition of the institution of charismatic authority in Smith’s view, the same binaries (classifications) may well be the ‘cognitive outcome’ of the same institution in Douglas’ view. There is no statement by Smith that could, in theory, refute the possibility of such a Douglasian attribute in his cultural model of charismatic authority.

V. Conclusions

Here I want to sum up and argue three main points at a theoretical level. Firstly, although I personally support the search for historical and contemporary *shaping forces* over positivistic

⁶¹ Smith takes this idea from “Durkheimian body of work [that] indicates the centrality of binary oppositions in culture” (2000:103). From his empirical cases, Smith offers, among others, the example of Churchill and his defence of the English “great national traditions of democracy” versus the “evil” German war machinery and their leaders (107).

genealogies focused exclusively on ‘chronological origins’ or ‘creational processes’, I argue that the plausibility of Durkheim’s thesis (1915) on the religious genealogy of scientific classifications may be validated by Milbank’s (2006) statements on theological dualisms ‘landing’ in Durkheimian sociology; by Sahlins’ (1996) Christian duality of human nature encouraging a similar assumption in social science; and by Cannell’s (2005, 2006) statements on genealogies (or classifications) in anthropology being rooted in the concept, practice and worshipping of Christian genealogies and her statements on anthropological concepts of pre-modernity and modernity (dichotomistic classifications) being ingrained in the concept of irreversible religious conversion and human-divine beyondness (further dichotomistic classifications). Secondly, I argue that Sahlins (1996) account of Durkheim’s attribution of coerciveness to a society that stands versus the individual are both an example of the classifications with moral-political “load” that Douglas (1986) suggests, and evidence of Durkheim’s own thesis on religious ideas of force/power being the origin of scientific concepts of force/power. This and de Bonald’s and de Maistre’s invocation of God as ‘immediate cause’ (Milbank 2006) gives, I argue, further corroboration of the plausibility of Durkheim’s thesis on the religious origins of causality notions. Thirdly, I suggest that rather than the institutional Catholic Church *per se* and instead of tribal imitative rites (Durkheim 1915; Rawls 1996; Schmauss 2004), it may be the family, the school, the university (Cipriani 2011) and/or a cultural model of authority (Weber 1978; Smith 2000) that are the institutional entities (Douglas 1986) which may diffuse not only collective moral forces (Durkheim 1915; Rawls 1996), religious values (Cipriani 2011) and concepts of justice (Douglas 1986) but also patterns of classifications (Durkheim 1915; Douglas 1986; Zerubavel 1999). This series of institutions could then represent, in theory and tentatively, more adequate elements for an empirical-causal account that explains further the reported *epistemological resemblances* (Sahlins 1996; Cannell 2005, 2006; Milbank 2006; Evans and Evans 2008) between religion and social science –and the causal explanation of these epistemological resemblances would definitely contribute to a more reflexive understanding (Casanova 2009; Calhoun et al. 2011) of social sciences and their taken-for-granted secular character.

Chapter 2

Methodology

In this chapter I present the epistemological and ontological stances I assume in this research, the research design selected for the research's empirical phase, the most relevant findings of my pilot case study as well as other key methodological elements. First, I present a personal statement with theoretical-methodological implications. What follows is not my conclusive view of epistemological and ontological matters of social reality. It is rather a position I hold at this stage of my career –a position I will perhaps modify, greatly or not, in the future.

I. Epistemological and ontological assumptions

Realist scholar Bunge (1993:207) calls social constructivism a “false” philosophy which, along with subjectivism, relativism, conventionalism and hermeneutics, “damage” social science since it claims that “all social facts” are “constructions of ‘thought collectives’” that hold “mutually ‘incommensurable’ views of the world” (1993:214-5). I argue that this type of reading of social constructionism is unnecessarily radical and hinders the possibilities of a dialogue between some of its variants and some streams of *realism* and of *critical realism* in particular. In this research I adopt both a ‘soft’ *social-constructionist* perspective of social phenomena and a ‘soft’ *critical-realist* approach to social realities. I account for this stance next.

I am convinced that reality is hyper-complex and our cognitive capacities are limited. Reality cannot be ‘scientifically known’ in its entirety either (Sayer 1992, 2000). We have actively coped with such complexity though; we have partially deciphered it –and increased it as well. Through likewise complex social processes, we have metaphorically and literally constructed certain knowledge categories and certain knowledge institutions (e.g., Douglas 1986; Berger and Luckman 1966) that assist us in the partial control or understanding of complex realities.

However, I do not support radical and over-optimistic social-constructionist views that portray human agency as nearly limitless and explain knowledge and social phenomena as undetermined/undeterminable realities (Sayer 2000:91). I rather agree with the ‘soft’ or ‘weak’ social constructionist idea that however contingent or deliberate social construction processes and outcomes are, such processes and outcomes are open to influences and various levels of determination and may become part of exterior entities, or exterior entities in themselves, which gradually transform into constructions *partly* independent of their ‘makers’ (e.g., Douglas 1986; Foucault 2002, 2007). As Sayer argues, the fact that knowledge is socially constructed “does not mean that it cannot successfully identify real objects (including social constructions) which can exist independently of the researcher” (2000:90); or as scholar Calhoun (chapter 1) said recently about the phenomena of “human emergencies” in particular, they are “socially constructed phenomena [though] it doesn’t make them less real in the world” (quoted in ‘Event explores...’ 2012:16).

In this research I support a ‘soft’ version of *critical realism* as well (Elder Vass 2011; Sayer 1992, 2000). It is a ‘soft’ version because I am personally aware (see section above) of the risk of assuming ‘emancipatory’ (Sayer 2000) stances that may be rather unreflexive and bias analyses and research results. I am aware as well of the restrictive scepticism that the taking of such positions may generate within established communities where social research’s aims are not necessarily related to ‘emancipatory ends’⁶². However, I am convinced that certain forms of reflexive and cautious social criticism and teleologies (Cf. Bloor 1976) do fit into specific types of social research and specific types of research paradigms. Similarly, although I find slightly rigid the critical-realist categories of “intransitive” and “transitive” dimensions of knowledge⁶³ (Sayer 2000: 10-11), I support critical realism’s three interconnected levels of reality or its “stratified ontology”: the *real*, the *actual* and the *empirical*. I interpret “the real” as the realm of all types of occurrences

⁶² Doucet (n.d.), for example, argues that the methodological choices researchers take in the course of their research would depend on the criteria of the epistemic community the researcher is addressing “You need to be clear on what kind of evidence will satisfy your scholarly mentors, your colleagues, intellectual peers, and the readers who will evaluate your work” (Doucet n.d: 25)

⁶³ Categorising social reality as part of an “intransitive” dimension (Sayer 1992, 2000) may indeed lead to an underestimation of the flexible and rapid-change characteristics of certain social phenomena.

and possibilities, or more specifically, the realm of “objects”, whether physical or social and “their structures and powers”, whether active or passive (Sayer 2000:11). “The actual” would be constituted by occurrences, or the exercise of those possibilities by objects and their powers, and “the empirical” would represent our experiences of the actual and the real. The empirical does not exhaust the actual and the real, but it may get fairly close to them and therefore may describe and adequately explain parts of them. Next I will detail further the (soft) critical-realist/social-constructionist epistemological presuppositions that I will assume throughout this research.

Critical realism does not only rely on observability in order to know the actual and the real. Critical realists also accept “a causal criterion” in such a way that “a plausible case for the existence of *unobservable entities* can be made by reference to *observable effects*” (Sayer 2000: 12; emphasis added). These effects may “emerge” from the objects or elements involved but may not necessarily correspond to them. In other words, social phenomena, like some natural phenomena (e.g. chemical reactions), have emergent properties that are “irreducible to those of their constituents” (Sayer 2000:12-13). Unobservable entities, observable effects and emergent properties will be key concepts in the causal accounts that I will construct in the next chapters.

Sayer (1992, 2000) and Elder-Vass (2000), following Roy Bhaskar, argue that critical-realist accounts of causation involve *causal powers* in objects that involve *mechanisms*. These causal powers are not only individual properties, they would further depend on sets of particular social relations and social *structures*. The nature of an object and its causal powers are necessarily related, they explain each other; yet whether the object’s causal powers are activated or not, Sayer states, “depends on conditions whose presence and configuration are contingent” (1992: 107). These “contingent conditions” are in turn further objects with their own causal powers, whose contingency may deliver divergent events or results –even from the same initial object. Therefore,

depending on conditions, the [...] same mechanisms can produce quite different results and, alternatively, different mechanisms may produce the same empirical result (1992: 108).

In this view Catholic discourses in the West may be perfectly conceived as delivering both similar outcomes and very different effects to those delivered by Catholic discourses in Mexico or Latin America, given the different historical conditions and ‘particular’ contexts (Asad 1983, 1993) that prevail in the two regions –topics I will address in chapter 3. Sayer also suggests two epistemological assumptions I find useful, the first consists of the idea that “[c]ounteracting forces can override and conceal the effects of the operation of a particular mechanism” (1992:110) and the second one is the assumption that “the reasons given by actors for their actions may not always be the real reasons” as they might be unaware of “structural conditions and their historically specific character” (1992:111-2; see as well Blaikie 2000: 111). Is the epistemological influence of Catholic discourses in Mexico (and the West) concealed perhaps by a ‘counteracting force’ derived from the operation of secularisation and secular-science paradigms (chapter 1)? Were main respondents (university sociology lecturers) during data collection aware of the different historical-structural background and conditions of secularism, Catholicism and sociology in Mexico and the West? –I will offer an answer to this questions in chapter 6, where I present and analyse some Mexican sociology lecturers’ replies to the main research question in this dissertation.

I must say as well that my accounts will include some aspects about the ‘history’ of Catholic and sociological discourses, but will not offer an exhaustive explanation of ‘chronological origins’ –or what I would call ‘positivistic genealogies’, as opposed to Foucauldian genealogies that go beyond exclusively chronological moments of inception. Sayer considers this analytical strategy a mistake made by functionalists (1992:97). I would add that analysing ‘chronological origins’ or ‘moments of inceptions’ is, in fact, a philosophical-anthropological quest that religions and theologians around the globe have been discussing and answering since dozens of hundreds of years ago before social sciences. In particular contexts, it is therefore very easy to step over and reproduce, rather unreflexively, religious-theological arguments while trying to provide an account of origins –something that might

have occurred in Durkheim's, functionalist indeed, sociological accounts of the 'categories of the intellect' and their *socio-religious origin* (1915). My aim in this research is not to explain chronological moments of inception, but to account for the religious, and other social, *historical* structures, conditions and mechanisms shaping sociological discourses in Mexico *today*,

Leaning more towards the side of social-constructionism I also want to add the following. Causal explanations do not have to overlook the presence of structural constraints and shifting conditions (Sayer 2000:97), nor the possibility of individuals and communities escaping or resisting these constraints or, in Elder-Vass' words (2011:156), innovating discursive practices. In this research I take into account both individuals' capacity to put social determinants reflexively aside and what Elder Vass (2011) suggests about the "causal powers" of discourses: discourses may *influence* individuals' discursive choices *without fully determining them*. This 'influence' would mean that a discourse's causal powers would not generate a direct, complete, or "hard" determination but "a *tendency* to observe the [discursive] norm concerned, a *disposition* to do so" (2011:153 –emphasis in original), which emerges along with many other dispositions from different types of discourses.

II. The research design

Unlike the authors presented in the literature review chapter – except for Durkheim (1915), and Cannell (2005, 2006) to some extent – this research is not an exclusively theoretical exercise. This research does include an empirical component with its corresponding stages of data collection, data analysis and construction of accounts/explanations. This empirical evidence will indeed provide an opportunity to corroborate whether the theses presented in the literature review chapter would apply to the cases of Catholicism and sociology in Mexico and whether these theses can be further refined. Whereas Durkheim (1915) analysed ethnographic accounts of indigenous tribes to underpin his statements on the religious origins of the categories of the understanding and whereas Cannell (2005, 2006) drew on

findings from her research on Mormon communities to back up her conceptual-methodological links between Christianity and anthropology, I instead collected empirical evidence from objects and subjects that are closer not only to one of the types of social phenomena to be accounted for but to *both of them*. I collected empirical evidence on both Catholicism and sociology in Mexico, from the very ‘makers’ (individual and/or institutional) of both, and from the contexts where both exist and flow in everyday life, e.g., “actual” university classrooms, Catholic services, etc.

A *survey design* in this research would have probably delivered statistically generalisable findings, yet it would have been inadequate to unearth deeper evidence of historical conditions and structures. An exclusively *historical study* based on bibliographical sources and archival data would have perhaps meant a more manageable field-work in logistic terms, but would have likely limited the scope of the research to ‘who’, ‘where’, ‘how many’ and ‘how much’ questions and their descriptive answers (Yin 2009:8-9). A series of *interviews* with sociologists and Catholic clergy members would have provided richer, thicker data yet it would have missed a more holistic view of Catholic/sociological discourses and their “real” and “actual” (Sayer 1992, 2000; Elder Vass 2011) operation in real-life settings. Given these advantages and disadvantages, empirical data for this research was collected following a *case study research design* (Blaikie 2000; Gerring 2007; Yin 2009), *frame* (Stoecker 1991) or *approach* (Creswell 2007). Flyvbjerg states that case studies are “detailed examinations” perfectly suitable for “human learning” insofar as they deliver limited yet specific and manageable “examples” individuals can inductively transform into more comprehensive and complex knowledge frameworks (2001: 66, 71). Apart from the pedagogical advantages of the practical ‘case study’, I find the case study frame or approach suitable because it allows for *explanatory* accounts (Yin 2009; Blaikie 2000; Stoecker 1991, Flyvbjerg 2001, 2006) or answers on “how causes interact in the context of a particular case or a few cases to produce an outcome” (Bennett and Elman 2006:458). Case studies also facilitate a holistic analysis (Creswell 2007) of sociological and Catholic discourses, their constitution, occurrences and interplays with other discourses, conditions and social

structures in a real/actual context. Flyvbjerg indicates two types of contexts case studies can address

the small local context which gives phenomena their immediate meaning and the larger [...] context in which phenomena can be appreciated for their general and conceptual significance (2001:136)

Case studies are usually criticised precisely because of their context-dependent, and therefore limited, results and their consequent inability to underpin ‘generalisations’ about social phenomena (Stoecker 1991:90-1; Blaikie 2000:218; Yin 2009:14-5). But, according to Flyvbjerg, this complain arises because it emerges out of research paradigms where scientific knowledge equates to “universal truths”, a paradigm that Flyvbjerg (2001:67-71) traces back to ancient Greek philosophy –see also Asad’s critique of universalisms in the study of religion (1983; 1993). This research, however, does not seek to attain ‘statistical representativeness’ of Catholic/sociological discourses in Mexico and their epistemological connections⁶⁴. Case studies in this research are based on the critical-realist principle of partial knowledge of ontologically stratified social reality/ies I have explained above.

Further criticism against case studies points out their collection and generation of qualitative data that might be unreliable and not necessarily valid. In order to decrease that risk my case studies follow what Yin (2009: 47) calls a “replication logic” applied to a “two-case case study” design (2009: 60-2), which, unlike one-case study frames, is aimed at strengthening research findings by providing comparable evidence from more than one location. In Gerring’s words (2007:90) the case studies choice in this research would be examples of the “most-different-cases” approach. In Flyvbjerg’s terminology my cases would represent “maximum variation cases” (2006:230) and Creswell would describe them as instances of “purposeful maximal sampling” (2007:75). Two different locations in Mexico were thus selected Aguascalientes City (*AgC*, henceforth) and Mexico City (*MxC*, henceforth).

⁶⁴ In Sayer’s terms this research would be “intensive” (1992:242-50; 2000:20-2), since the tracing of “substantial relations of connections” is the analytical priority – as opposed to the location of mere resemblances and statistical generalizations which would be characteristic of, but not limited to, “extensive” research.

III. Catholic and sociological discourses

However, my main focus in this research, or “unit of analysis” (Yin 2009), is not these two locations as such nor the institutions or people I collected data from – my “units of data collection” (Yin 2009:88) – but the *Catholic discourses* and *sociological discourses* flowing or being produced there. As I did with the concept of “religion” in the literature review chapter, I will not define in advance the concept of “discourse” in this section. I will only indicate the interpretations that are consonant with my epistemological and ontological positioning and guided my data collection activities. Elder-Vass (2011:147), for instance, based on Foucault’s theorisations, distinguishes between language and discourse. In this sense, there would be both linguistic expressions or sentences (language) and also statements (discourse); the rules of language would not necessarily equate to those of discourse; yet in this ‘regulatory’ sense, the latter would comprise the former. Fairclough’s view of discourses (2003), more on the side of “language” and “linguistic rules” according to Elder-Vass, comprises a conceptual division between discourse as an “abstract” entity or an “element of social life [...] closely interconnected with other elements” as well as discourse as “particular” (2003:3-4) social phenomena, or relatively constant, stable and generalised ways or statements for representing certain aspects of the world –either “processes, relations and structures of the material world” or “the ‘mental world’ of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth” (2003:124). Fairclough (2003: 129) suggests as well two ways to think about discourses: as representing some particular part of the world –or themes; and as representing those parts of the world or themes from a particular perspective, angle or point of view.

In this research I assume the context-dependent existence and operation, mutually inclusive or not, of Catholic and sociological *discourses* (Fairclough 2003; Elder-Vass 2011) that constitute key and relevant, yet not unique, instances of “Catholicism” and “sociology” in Mexico. As part of a stratified social reality, these discourses would be indicative of, and therefore suitable to research empirically, “actual” and “real” social phenomena (Sayer 2000) such as the not always evident, but partly observable, epistemological interplays between Catholicism and sociology in Mexico. As social phenomena themselves, these discourses

would possess “emergent properties” (Sayer 1992, 2000; Elder-Vass 2011) and therefore both their constitution and their effects cannot be reduced to a ‘linguistic set’ of words and sentences (Elder Vass 2011, Fairclough 2003). As Fairclough does (2003:3), I will assume that these two types of discourses carry in themselves evidence of their mutual “interdiscursive” interactions and their interplays with other social discourses.

I also assume the possibility of sociological discourses influencing Catholic discourses in Mexico – and in other societies, e.g. Baum (1989), Lawler (2002); cf. Greeley (1989) – but I will rather focus on the possibility of Catholic discourses being tacitly implied in sociological discourses and influencing them along with other types of discourses. Given their historical significance and current ideological saliency in Mexico (see chapter 3), I will particularly consider the possibility of Catholic discourses not determining totally, but influencing to some extent, what Foucault (2002:34-43) calls a “discursive formation”, a concept that Elder-Vass (2011: 145) uses as well and defines as the “sets of rules about what can be said and what should not be said (what statements can be made or should not be made) in a particular social space”. From his “linguistic” perspective Fairclough, somewhat similarly, refers to the “order of discourse”⁶⁵, i.e., “the relatively durable social structuring of language”(2003:3).

Having these Catholic and sociological discourses in mind, my data collection activities in AgC and MxC were aimed at gathering different types of “texts” as well as other “primary” and “secondary” data (Blaikie 2000: 184), in both qualitative and quantitative formats. In this research I use the concept “text” in the terms Fairclough does, i.e., “[w]ritten and printed texts [...] but also transcripts of spoken conversations and interviews” (2003:3). This definition is similar to Mason’s (2002:130), who defines texts in a broad sense as well: “printed or virtual, text-based or visual, documents”. The texts – e.g. printed texts (scholarly publications, Catholic periodicals), interviews transcripts, university seminars transcripts, Catholic priests’ homilies transcripts etc – and additional quantitative and qualitative data

⁶⁵ These “rules” or “social structuring” could be found, for instance, in Sahlins’ (1996) statements on the conceptions of ‘human wickedness’ and their *prescribing* Christian original-sin-related ideological roots

from primary and secondary sources I collected⁶⁶ do not exhaust Catholic and sociological discourses yet represent adequate vehicles to trace and analyse the epistemological influences of Catholicism upon sociology in Mexico.

IV. Case studies choice and data sources

AgC and MxC were selected as geographical locations conducive to relevant case studies given their apparently divergent local atmospheres (Yin 2009: 47; Gerring 2007:90; Flyvbjerg 2006:230). Both cities are similar in terms of having analogous economic fields with a proportional degree of industrialisation. Both cities accommodate public universities where sociology as discipline is taught and where sociological and social research is carried out by full time university lecturers. However, these two locations may be described as ‘opposite’ in terms of *religious-ideological* local contexts. Aguascalientes City is located in the state of Aguascalientes –see appendix 2.1. According to the 2010 national census, Aguascalientes state’s population amounts to 1, 184, 996 inhabitants⁶⁷; 92.9% of the population is nominally Catholic, 3.4% is “Protestant and Evangelical”⁶⁸, 0.91% is “non-Evangelical Biblical”⁶⁹; 0.004% Jewish and 1.8% “without religion” (INEGI 2011b) . AgC was considered a location where a rather conservative⁷⁰ and relatively ‘closed’ religious-ideological context is *perceived* to prevail⁷¹, not necessarily within the university context, but as part of the local social environment. The following is the description of the local social context by an AgC-born social science lecturer I interviewed during my fieldwork:

People who come here [to Aguascalientes] from other states of the country immediately notice that they are not part of the local networks [...] that

⁶⁶ For instance, reports from surveys on religion in Mexico (some of them kindly offered by a couple of respondents); brochures, leaflets and organisational documents on/by the universities I visited.

⁶⁷ According to the same census the population in AgC, including suburban areas, amounts to 797, 010 inhabitants.

⁶⁸ This category includes Pentecostals, Neo-Pentecostals, members of the ‘Church of the Living God, Truth Base and Light of the World’ and ‘others’. (INEGI 2011b)

⁶⁹ Including 7th Day Adventists, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Jehovah Witnesses.

⁷⁰ See also ‘Pilot Case Study’ section below.

⁷¹ Here I am referring to *perceptions* by respondents themselves (e.g. lecturers) on AgC and MxC and not to these cities’ factual attributes.

happens very often, this sort of patriarchal networks that ease your personal identification ‘oh, so you are the daughter of ...’ [...] it occurs in local politics and business [...] those are codes natives like us can read and outsiders cannot, so they [outsiders] obviously feel rejected

Mexico City’s population amounts to 8, 851, 080 inhabitants; 82.5% of them are nominally Catholic, 5.4% “Protestant and Evangelical”, 1.4% “non-Evangelical Biblical”, 0.2% Jewish, and 5.5% “without religion” (INEGI 2011b) –see table below. Mexico City was considered to be perceived as the opposite case in religious-ideological terms, i.e., a context where religiosity seems, at least statistically, somewhat more diverse and where leftist and more liberal economic-political thinking would take place. This is how Norma, a MxC-based sociology lecturer, described this location⁷²,

Mexico City is more leftist; the level of education here is higher; people are better informed; the divisions between the private and the public are clearer [...] abortions are allowed here; gay marriage is legal; there is a series of things which would be unthinkable in other regions in the country, [...].

Table 2.1. Statistics on population and religion in Aguascalientes and MxC

	Aguascalientes State	Mexico City
<i>Total population</i>	<i>1, 184, 996</i>	<i>8, 851, 080</i>
Catholic	92.9 %	82.5 %
“Protestant and Evangelical”*	3.4 %	5.4 %
“Non-Evangelical Biblical”*	0.91 %	1.4 %
Jewish	0.004 %	0.2 %
“Without religion”	1.8 %	5.5 %

Source: INEGI (2011b)

*See footnotes 68 and 69.

I collected texts and data on *Catholic discourses* from “multiple” sources (Stoecker 1991; Yin 2009) in these two locations. Some of these sources were thought of in advance and comprised (1) “documentation” e.g., bibliographical sources on the history of the ‘local’ and

⁷² I do not agree with the either/or type of contrast between Mexico City and “other regions in the country” this respondent suggests. However this contrast is precisely illustrative of the type of *perceptions* I found about a “liberal” or “open-minded” Mexico City and other “conservative” states such as Aguascalientes.

‘national’ Catholic Church, newspapers and Catholicism-related notes/articles, (2) “interviews”, e.g. structured short interviews with priests and (3) “direct observations”, e.g. of Catholic services (Yin 2009:102). However, following in fact the ‘real-life context’ rationale, I did find data from sources that I ‘bumped into’ unexpectedly during my 1-2 months field work in each location⁷³, e.g. textual fragments of ‘folk Catholicism’ in religious “physical artefacts” (Yin 2009: 102,113) which I found frequently in downtown shops; Catholic magazines volunteers were giving away in the street; ‘mini soap operas’ about Catholic saints broadcasted by (non-religious) open-signal mainstream television channels and mentioned by pedestrians and bystanders in casual conversations.

My sources of *sociological discourses* were multiple as well, yet relatively more structured as I focused on one specific higher education institution in each location. The selected institutions are both public universities funded mostly by Federal-level and state-level budgets. The universities’ legal status and general operations are subjected to the constitutional laws of public education in Mexico, and the well-known “Constitutional article 3”, whose paragraphs I and II read:

- I. Additional to the religious liberties established under article 24, educational services shall be secular and, therefore, free of any religious orientation
- II. The educational services shall be based on scientific progress and shall fight against ignorance, ignorance’s effects, servitudes, fanaticism and prejudices (The Political Constitution of the Mexican United States, 2005:7)

These two public universities have social science schools where sociology as an undergraduate discipline has been taught, since the 1950s in MxC’s university and since the 1970s in AgC’s university. Both universities have a department-school type of organisational structure where teaching is carried out by both part-time lecturers and full-time lecturers, being the latter who carry out research activities. In these two institutions I collected data from (1) “documentation” on the history and organizational structure of the universities and their sociology departments, (2) “interviews”, e.g. with sociology lecturers, social science

⁷³ It was not until my fieldwork activities that I visited AgC for the first time. Although I had visited MxC in several occasions before, it was during my field work that I met and talked to MxC-based Catholic priests and MxC-based sociologists for the first time as well.

lecturers, undergraduate and postgraduate students; and (3) “direct observations”– and “participant observation” to a lesser extent – in undergraduate and postgraduate lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences. Although all the interviews were different and the questions I asked were rather tailored *in situ*, there were three main themes I discussed in most of my interview sessions: (i) biographical data (place of birth; family background and religious practices; type of and experiences during basic and secondary education); (ii) the university and social research fields (the interviewee’s comments, accounts, perceptions, and concrete experiences as sociology student, member of academic staff, social scientist, and/or university lecturer); (iii) Catholicism-sociology links, i.e., the interviewee’s sociological and personal comments, objections, and impression on my research topic. As I will explain and in Section VI below and in Chapter 6, my interview questions on the last theme were, on some occasions, not necessarily followed by enthusiastic replies.

Although the former are indeed multiple sources, my collection of ‘sociological’ texts *per se* (published and unpublished manuscripts, research reports, essays, university lectures, etc), and of individual instances of Catholicism-sociology discursive interactions, focused on a series of main “micro sources” (Blaikie 2000:188), i.e., the set of *full-time sociology lecturers* I met in each location –six full-time sociology lecturers in AgC’s university and seven full-time sociology lecturers in MxC’s university. These two sets of lecturers do not represent the totality of lecturers working in these departments, i.e., about twelve full-time lecturers in AgC and about twenty five lecturers in MxC. It was mainly time restrictions, but also practical issues in AgC⁷⁴ and ‘official’ limitations to meet lecturers in MxC⁷⁵, the circumstances that prevented me from interviewing them all. These two groups of lecturers kindly provided me as well with biographical material and opinions on religion and Catholicism that represent crucial inputs for the causal accounts I will present to the reader in

⁷⁴ Some of the lecturers worked in different premises.

⁷⁵ The head of the sociology department in MxC’s university gave me a pre-selected list of lecturers I would interview, saying that they would be the most helpful interviewees given their considerable academic and research experience. When I replied saying that I personally preferred to knock at the doors of each lecturer’s office, introduce myself and personally ask for an interview, the head of the department insisted on the list and the expertise of the lecturers. Eventually I did interview only the listed lecturers, not all of them though as I could not contact (neither physically nor via e-mail) some of them

chapters 7 and 8. Given the personal, and at times intimate and ‘professionally sensitive’, questions and answers these respondents and I exchanged during our interviews, I assured to them from the outset that their personal names would be anonymised in order to avoid the disclosure of their identities. The reader may find in Table 2.2 below the pseudonyms I will use to refer to these key respondents⁷⁶.

Table 2.2. Main respondents and sources of ‘sociological texts’

AgC’s university:	MxC’s university:
1. Brigitte	1. Angela
2. Edward	2. Gregory
3. Julia	3. Joseph
4. Laura	4. Norma
5. Michael	5. Peter
6. Rita	6. Rachel
	7. Suzanne

Secondary, yet likewise valuable, “sources” (Blaikie 2000) of sociological discourses in Mexico were some of the colleagues of the full-time sociology lecturers listed above. These colleagues were chosen from the academic staff of different social science departments within the same university and were interviewed in order to get the views of sociology in Mexico from academic “outsiders” as well. The number of colleagues interviewed in each location ranged from 3 to 5 academics. Regarding interviews, my research design originally included the “realistic interview” technique suggested by Pawson (1996). This type of interview focuses on, and facilitates,

⁷⁶ Except for a few moments during a couple of interviews, respondents were usually not troubled by ‘anonymity issues’ during the interviews and shared with me personal information without major *explicit* reserves. Yet in this dissertation I will stick to my promise of not disclosing real names in the data I present in the following chapters. I must, however, also add that it is possible to trace both the authorship of the data I use below (specially in chapter 7 and my references to the material published by the interviewees and used as qualitative data) and the respondent’s personal identities as detailed in the biographical content of chapters 5 and 6. Thus it is eventually possible to identify the real persons behind the pseudonyms I will use. I will reduce the possibilities of contributing to such unintended identity disclosing by including only minimal bibliographical references of the material authored by these respondents and by decreasing the amount of personal identity-related data in chapters 5 and 6, without compromising the methodological and explanatory aims of such chapters.

the creation of a situation in which the theoretical postulates/conceptual structures under investigation are open for inspection in a way that allows the respondent to make an informed and critical account of them (1996:313).

Following this technique I expected to approach lecturers empathetically, acknowledge their sociological expertise in such a way that both, interviewer and interviewee, were able to build together responses to my research questions. In practice though, this technique turned out to be of little help given the reaction of the interviewees to my research topic and questions. I met with these reactions from the outset during my “pilot case study” (Yin 2009: 92-4).

V. Pilot case study

I conducted a pilot case study in a city I visited for two weeks, before my data collection in AgC and MxC. This city is located in a similar religious-ideological context, or ‘cultural region’⁷⁷, to that where AgC may be found. I rehearsed there the collection of documentation on Catholic discourses, the scheduling and conduct of interviews with priests, and my non-participant observation during Catholic masses. I also interviewed for the first time university lecturers and students and rehearsed participant-observation in university lectures and seminars. Whereas collecting documents, carrying out non-participant observation and interviewing priests and university students did not entail major obstacles and modifications to the field work plan, the interviews with lecturers did, to some extent.

The reactions of interviewees to my introduction of the research thesis were diverse, although mostly sceptical. In each interview my initial comments about the possibilities of Catholicism shaping sociology in Mexico were followed by either silence or heads nodding cautiously; in both situations the interviewees’ physical gestures and reactions indicated most of them were genuinely puzzled by what I was suggesting. The immediate answer of

⁷⁷ Generically called “El Bajío”, a socio-geographical region within Mexico that comprises some of the central states in the country and is characterised not only by a similar economic base (industry and agriculture) but also by a particular religious (Catholic) cultural configuration –see, for instance, the section ‘Catholics vs. The state’ in chapter 3, for an example of this common religious-cultural background.

one of the lecturers to this initial introduction of my research may be translated⁷⁸ as “I do know the history and development of the Catholic Church but I cannot say I am Catholic because of my professional and ethical coherence” –the lecturer here was clearly referring to the constitutional article number 3, whose clauses I partially noted in the section above. Another immediate answer from another lecturer was,

No. The association you do between these two topics is something I have not seen [...] Other than research groups on religious phenomena, I have never heard social scientists talking about that.

I tried, however, to overcome these succinct answers and ask more specific questions such as the interviewee’s opinion about whether “Catholic values” would “leak into” lecturers’ “academic-research values”. To this question, one of the interviewees, for instance, replied with a long answer on the need to assess what Catholic values are and what type of Catholic group is the one holding those values; the interviewee did not at any point comment about researchers’ values as such. Another lecturer during our interview stated critically that Mexican researchers would be “sons of the West” and that “a son hardly rebels against his father”. Intrigued by this statement, I asked this lecturer, as cautiously as I thought was possible, whether this type of son-father “authority model” would be somehow related to religious factors. The lecturer rejected the connection immediately and gave instead an account based on a Marxist stance⁷⁹. Afterwards in the same interview, the lecturer and I discussed Marxism’s ‘dogmatisation’ in Mexico. After noticing the interviewee’s sympathy towards this view of Marxist thought in Mexico, I asked her whether she would see a relationship between the highly religious character of Mexican society and the development of these Marxist dogmatic groups. The lecturer replied: “I do not have the least idea [...] I do not have information on that” and made no further comment. In the situations like those described above I found myself feeling particularly unable to keep insisting on questions and ideas the interviewees seemed to avoid intentionally.

⁷⁸ All the interviews during my field work were conducted in Spanish. All the interview quotations I include in this dissertation were translated by myself.

⁷⁹ She explained to me: “No, there is no relation, not at all. Authority models come, from my view, from the economic attitude that prevails in Mexico [...] [from] the State’s participation in economics and the community. That is authoritarian. [...] that is the parental figure one could recall. Everything else derives from that. If the production model is authoritarian, everything else is authoritarian”.

This set of mostly brief or oppositional answers made me change my interviewing approach to sociology lecturers, not because I regarded the respondents' answers as untrue (Back n.d.:12), but because they were mostly concise and short and therefore unsuitable for an interviewer-interviewee co-construction of accounts (Pawson 1996). Although I kept the 'realistic interview' approach for most of my interviews in AgC and MxC – getting both brief and extensive responses (chapter 6) – I also added more questions focused on the interviewees' biographies (Harding 2006; Back n.d.) and particularly, their personal-family experiences with Catholicism and their current views on the Catholic Church (chapter 5).

Another key result of the pilot case study was the selection of AgC as the location for my first case study. My first choice for a "conservative context" suitable to analyse and compare Catholic and sociological discourses was originally a city and a public university where I located a pair of lecturers that explicitly included their Christian-Catholic religiosity, or opinions informed by Catholicism, in their academic publications⁸⁰. However, later findings about the ideological-religious context of this city and state did not reveal particularly salient conservative/Catholic local atmospheres. Looking at AgC as a context with a conservative/Catholic atmosphere was recommended explicitly by one of the sociology lecturers during the Pilot case study. AgC was pointed out as well by another lecturer who implicitly suggested the conservative, not "anti-Catholic", attitudes of the AgC-based sociologists⁸¹.

⁸⁰ This was a city in the central-east part of the country and a public university located there, where one of the social science lecturers based at this university published an academic article that contained an explicit defence of Catholic education and Catholic schools; and another social science lecturer, in an academic publications as well, made implicit references to her devotion towards Virgin Mary.

⁸¹ "No [not all Mexican sociologists are anti-Catholic], for example, in Aguascalientes' university they do not teach Marxism by any means, they are proud of being the only university without Marxism"

VI. Data-analysis logics

My strategy to explain the causal relations between Catholicism and sociology in Mexico via Catholic and sociological discourses started by identifying discursive “regularities” (Sayer 1992:114; cf. Sayer 2000: 20, 24), and locating resemblances at a theoretical-discursive level, like Sahlins (1996) and Cannel (2005, 2006) did (chapter 1). After this I moved forward to avoid atomistic and linear cause-effect accounts and focused instead on the non-observable “bridges” (i.e., mechanisms, conditions, structures) between Catholicism and sociology in Mexico, the historical contexts these ‘bridges’ are part of and the cultural-ideological dimensions that surround them. These bridges were, in a sense, located and identified as part of the ‘real world’ outside, and also *constructed*, by means of both the interviewees’ statements – particularly sociology lecturers’ – on their experiences in/with the sociological and Catholic fields and also my own observations of the Catholic and sociological fields and my inferences from the collected documentation. My series of analyses therefore involved on one hand a set of structural-causal analyses (Sayer 1992: 114; 2000:17-8), or what Blaikie (2000:108-14) refers as a “retroductive” type of analysis focused on unobservable mechanisms and structures out there in the real world and, on the other hand, “interpretative analysis” (Sayer 1992, 2000) or what Blaikie (2000:114-9) calls an “abductive” logic aimed at understanding actors’ meaning-making activities and, particularly, scientists’ discourses and their ‘socially-constructed contexts’ (Gilbert and Mulkay 1984:39; Mulkay 1993)

The *structural-causal* analysis I will present to the reader pays attention to historical conditions and contexts which I discuss mostly in chapters 3 and 4. In chapter 3 I analyse the Catholic context in Mexico, its historical development and relevance and its current saliency in ideological terms. This is a brief historical analysis but provides key conclusions that broaden conventional (secularist) views of Catholicism and the Catholic Church in Mexico and Latin America. In chapter 4 I present documentary evidence of Catholic traces in Mexico’s early sociological discourses and an overview of the institutional development of sociology in Mexico, including some of the sociology lecturers’ statements I collected during

our interviews. The final chapters offer an account of the context-dependent mechanisms by which Catholic discourses shape sociological discourses.

My ‘interpretive’ or ‘abductive’ analyses of texts, biographical (interview) data and the making of meanings by individuals, consisted of gradual stages that correspond to Mason’s three types of data reading: *literal*, *interpretive* and *reflective* (2002:148-150). The first series of analyses consisted basically of literal readings to identify the most frequent explicit ideas and statements (regularities) in my data set. This first set of readings may be described as well as an elementary content-analysis exercise (Silverman 1993: 59). The second round of analyses or “interpretive readings” yielded more frequent ideas and, in the case of sociological texts, produced a series of initial codes or categories by which sets of frequent notions and ideas were grouped. This series of qualitative analyses may be classified as (critical) discourse-analysis exercises, focused particularly on “discourse-specific assumptions” (Fairclough 2003: 58), i.e., the implicit statements in the observable instances of discourses (Elder-Vass 2011; Foucault 2003), or texts’ “propositional content” and their “assumptions and presuppositions” (Armstrong, quoted in Peräkylä 2005: 872). The third stage consisted of further ‘interpretive’ and ‘reflective’ readings that produced a meta-analysis or an analysis over my own analytical outcomes, some of which I have partly presented in the first section of this chapter and the ‘Introduction’ to the dissertation. My analyses of sociological texts and sociology lecturers’ interview statements shares Gilbert and Mulkay’s (1984) approach to scientists’ discourses as well. From this position, scientists’ statements cannot be taken as conclusive evidence of social phenomena and so used by the analyst as definitive proof; scientists’ discourses have rather to be analysed as social phenomena *per se* which the analyst has to deconstruct in order to account for the “systematic ways” in which scientists “fashion their discourse” (Gilbert and Mulkay 1984:15; Mulkay 1993).

Having specified above my data-analysis general strategies, I want to state that since I am assuming the *context-dependent* character of Catholic and sociological discourses and the open determinacy of social phenomena, I will not discard accounts of sociology and social

science in Mexico and Latin America that authors and scholars have previously suggested and related to non-religious elements, e.g. economic and political contexts, the figure of the state, internal disciplinary aspects of sociology's development –I present some of these authors in chapter 4. The outcomes of this research are not meant to ignore or refute those accounts but to *supplement* them, *by adding* an analysis of a pervasive discourse that has been clearly neglected. This research is not enough to bring the neglected element to the light, explain its operation and then integrate it to the descriptions and accounts that other authors have suggested and so answer how all religious, political, economic and other cultural entities and mechanism shape sociology and social science in Mexico and elsewhere. Without reductionisms, this research will primarily focus on the religious factors. Next I present the first piece of contextual-structural analysis and its outcomes: Catholicism in Mexico, its historical relevance and current configuration.

Chapter 3

The religious context: Catholicism in Mexico

In the next sections I present a brief and limited, yet balanced, description of the Catholic Church, Catholicism in Mexico and, particularly, of Catholic *discourses* in Mexico, their history and their persistent underlying patterns. Here I take into account both the resemblances and differences, firstly, between the ‘Vatican-Roman’ Catholic Church, the Mexican Catholic Church and its series of internal (sub)institutions⁸²; and secondly between the Church’s official discourses, Catholic (sub)institutions’ discourses⁸³ and people’s Catholic (cultural) discourses (Cipriani 2011; Blancarte 1996). My first aim is to present not an exhaustive historiography of the Catholic Church and Catholic dogma but to present historical evidence about the extraordinary relevance of the Catholic Church and Catholicism in educational, cultural and social fields not only during Mexico’s colony (16th-19th centuries) but also during post-independence periods (19th century) and post-revolution stages (early 20th century). To accomplish this, I will address the wide-ranging activities of colonial Catholic Church and Catholicism and what I think is an overstated 19th-century ‘reform’ period in Mexico’s history (Zavala, forthcoming). After this I will argue that despite some secularist-pluralist voices from the state and the academia advocating ‘religious diversities’ in Mexico, *Catholicism and Catholic discourses* are still a core part of the country’s current *cultural-ideological structures*. To discuss this I will present, without reductionist or essentialist intentions, evidence from multiple sources about the most frequent notions and ideological principles of (i) the current institutional discourses of the Catholic Church, (ii) people’s adaptations of official Catholic discourses, or ‘non-official’ Catholic discourses today, and, most especially, (iii) the remarkable intensity, extensiveness, depth and

⁸² E.g., Specific archbishoprics, bishoprics, religious orders, ecclesiastical and ‘lay’ organisations and so on.

⁸³ As I was told by some of the sociology lecturers I interviewed (sociologists of religion some of them), holding a conversation with a Jesuit priests who lectures in a Jesuit university may not necessarily be the same as talking to a member of the ‘high clergy’ working at a bishopric.

complexity that such a set of discourses have in the discursive environments of Mexican society/ies overall.

I. Colonial Catholicism and education.

Spain's *conquista* of American territories was not only political and economic, it was also "spiritual" (Ricard ([1933]2000)). Latin Americanist philosopher Dussel argues that the Spanish colonial Catholicism emerged out of the Spanish church-state's belief in being the "instrument chosen by God to save the world" (quoted in Sota 2005: 57). Scholar Lomnitz (2001) also reminds us that "Columbus and other explorers speculated on their proximity [...] to Eden, and to other biblical sites, when they reached the new world" (2001: 340). Although Ricard ([1933]2000) argues that some scattered missionaries did preach in the newly discovered New Spain after Hernan Cortez' ships arrived to Mexico's shores in 1519, it was not until 1524 when an official evangelisation campaign started with the arrival of the Catholic Franciscan order⁸⁴. References to this Catholic order and its evangelisation activities are, by the way, actual elements within the contemporary cultural spaces and discursive environments I explored in Mexico during my field work⁸⁵. Franciscans were followed by other religious congregations. By 1559, there would be "380 Franciscans, [working] in 80 centres; 210 Dominicans, in 40 centres, and 212 Augustinians, in 40 centres" in the then "New Spain" (Ricard [1933]2000: 3). According to Ricard, the first Catholic missionaries used sign language to teach basic Catechism to the native population. Since linguistic devices for translation had not yet been developed, the first missionaries would preach about basic doctrinal notions as follow:

⁸⁴ Lomnitz states that these Franciscan missionaries "interpreted their evangelising mission [...] in terms that were consonant with the messianic scholastic philosopher Joachim de Fiore" (2001:340), the theologian founder of the order of San Giovanni or the Joachimites.

⁸⁵ For instance, in the main square of AgC's old town a board with illustrations provides the tourist with information about the city's history. The board explains that one of the landmarks in Aguascalientes is the *San Diego* Catholic ex-convent and temple, established by the Franciscan order, which "would become the spiritual arm of the Spanish conquest" –see appendix 3.1.

to illustrate the hell they pointed their hands towards the ground, saying there were fires, toads, and snakes; immediately after this they raised their eyes to the sky, saying one single God was above ([1933]2000: 118)

Spanish historian Resines (1992) states Catholic missionaries were actually trying to carry out the same conversion practices they did in Europe, where people were relatively familiar with the figure of Jesus and Christianity. In Mexico, however, there was a clash of mind-sets between the once polytheist native population and the monotheist intentions of their converters. Resines argues this clash was not really worked out by missionaries and their Catechist practices as there were no “pre-evangelisation” stages (Resines 1992:26). But whether the Catholic Church could eventually adapt its evangelisation techniques to the social realities of the native population or not is not a point to be discussed here. What I suggest is that whether properly adapted or not such evangelisation campaigns – and missionaries’ gestures and references to toads on the ground and a god in the sky – may be alternatively interpreted as instances of the first cognitive and moral classifications spread by Catholic institutions (Durkheim 1915, Douglas 1986; Zerubavel 1999) in the same geographical region where Mexico as a society emerged from.

Furthermore, the ‘clash of mindsets’ that Resines (1992) reports certainly did not prevent the Catholic Church from becoming the most influential institution, if not the only one in some regions, in terms of *education* in colonial Mexico. Jimenez (1990) cites the work of Catholic friar Mendieta, author of *Historia Ecclesiastica Indiana* (1596) and historian Bramford Parks, author of *A History of Mexico* (1938); both authors, Jimenez argues, state that Catholic friars taught native population *reading, writing* and *Christian doctrine* in the schools that were built in “all the towns”. And the pupils soon became the teachers:

[t]he Indians at Tlatelolco⁸⁶ learnt Latin and Theology, and they made such rapid progress that within ten years their teachers were able to turn the college over to the Indian Alumni. There was a time where pure blooded Indians were to be found teaching Latin to the sons of Spaniards (Bramford Parks, quoted in Jimenez 1990:4)

⁸⁶ Mexico City today.

According to Tanck (1985), the first decades of the 18th century were characterised by major “religious and educational constructions”. What Tanck means by “constructions” is the series of primary schools and colleges for arts, philosophy and theology established by the Jesuits. These centres constituted “a true educational network” that offered opportunities of social mobility to the Creole population (Tanck 1985:31). Unsurprisingly, Spanish king Charles III’s decision to expel the Jesuits from Spain and its colonies (Mörner 1966) in 1767 would bring distress to most of the colony’s inhabitants (Zahino 1996). The distress arose not only because of the temporary closing of Jesuit schools and colleges but because of the abrupt stop to Jesuits’ “considerable presence” in the colonial society, which also comprised the establishment and administration of shelters for the female native population and of labour-skills-related training centres for the male population (Zahino 1996:199). The relationships between the Jesuits and Mexico’s population would not be the type of teacher-student relationship one finds today. These relationships, Zahino argues, extended to the family too, they were “for life”, and were not only aimed at religious-educational matters but also at an economic mentorship relationship as well (1996: 200). After this Zahino interestingly argues that “there is nothing more important in a person’s intellectual training and ethics than the bases she receives in her childhood”, and as for the case of many inhabitants of the colony, the provision of such a basic education was “in the hands of the Ignatians” (1996: 204). In the 1930s, Jesuit priest Jacobsen published a commentary about what he considered the “downfall” of Mexico’s education under what was perceived by then as a pro-communist Mexican state. Jacobsen introduces his complaint by referring to the contributions of the Catholic Church to Mexico’s education during the colony:

More than 400 years ago primary and industrial⁸⁷ schools were reared there by the Franciscans, and 400 years ago the first college of arts was begun. Three centuries of colonial life witnessed the establishment of a fine, system of primary schools and another system of secondary schools and colleges under the Jesuits, while several universities were built and maintained from the earliest Spanish times. This remarkable educational edifice was Catholic [...] (1935:346).

⁸⁷ This concept is unclear in the original text. It is probably related to the training centres Zahino (1996:199) mentions.

The Catholic Church and its network of schools and colleges were not the only colonial educational institution. In the 17th and 18th century private mentoring, mostly in Mexico City, was carried out by independent teachers that eventually established the “Guild of teachers of the most noble art of the first letters” (Tanck 195:33), a regulatory body aimed at organising primary schools and the concession of credentials to teachers. Tanck states that whereas an equivalent guild was established in the city of Puebla, the rest of the cities and provinces did not follow the guild’s norms and apparently did not establish satellite versions of this institution. Evidence suggests that the educational field, even after the Jesuits’ temporal expulsion in the 1760s and the functioning of the Guild of teachers in two of the country’s largest cities, was still controlled by the Catholic Church and its diocesan structure and networks of seminaries (Tanck 1985:51-5).

The Catholic Church and Catholicism developed into stable, wide-ranging and particularly appreciated series of institutions and religious practices in the colony. Tanck (1985) notes authors in the 18th century praised “the pride and the satisfaction Mexican society felt about its [Catholic] religiosity”; Mexican colonial society believed their home land was genuinely “a land blessed by God” (1985:29). Although lacking a clear causal link between the Jesuit ideology and that of Mexican society, and perhaps in an overstated conclusion, historian Jauregui (2004) goes further and argues that the Company of Jesus and its members can be regarded as the founders of “the Mexican national identity”. However overstated, this reported Catholicism-Mexican nationalism strong link (see also Wolf 1958) was related not only to the Catholic Church’s educational activities. Other economic, political and cultural institutions were not totally separated from the Catholic Church either, and in some cases they were constituted by the latter. For example the Catholic Church, via its religious orders and corresponding organisational structure, had turned by the end of the 18th century into “the largest money-lender in Mexico” (Kirkwood: 2000:79; Lida 2007). Similarly, in Mexico, and likely in other colonial territories in America, public health services comprised hospitals established and administered by religious orders like the Dominicans, the Bethlehemites or the Joanites (Fajardo 2005). As for other social domains, bishops were allowed to hold public-administration roles and this did occur in Spain’s colonies (Lynch 1992: 71-72). In

Peru, both indigenous and Spanish “authorities” participated in public Catholic festivities such as Corpus Christi (Gareis 2008). In Elliot’s words, Spain’s’ American colonies represented “a state church in a church state” (2006: 198).

Although my aim here is not to discuss Mexico’s colonial religiosity, religious education or Catholic Church in detail, I want to point out the fact that, regardless of the Catholic sources’ partisan statements and some scholars’ over-statements, there is certainly an agreement on the “monopoly” of Catholicism in the colonial religious field (Sota 2005:60). I want to stress that this religious monopoly developed into a *quasi*-monopoly, if not a monopoly as such, in Mexico’s colonial *cultural-educational fields* as well. In historian Vazquez’ view (1985), the Catholic Church brought “a true educational reform, as it changed the *values, behaviour and customs* of the Indians”, a reform that “has not been repeated [today] despite the efforts to do so” (1985:24). It is precisely the ideas of ‘Catholic values’ and ‘Catholic ethics’ (Zahino 1996; Weber 2003; Merton 1938), along with dualistic cognitive-moral classifications (Durkheim 1915; Ricard [1933]2000; Douglas 1986; Zerubavel 1999), a series of topics I have addressed in the literature review chapter and will refer to throughout this dissertation.

II. Mexico in the 19th century: independence and reform.

By the end of the 18th century, Mexican society’s discontent with Spain’s shifting colonial policies was evident. A group of creole army officials, public servants and clergy members, the ‘conspirators’, organised meetings to discuss possibilities of an uprising. As soon as it was alerted, the Spanish Crown began the capture of the dissenters. Miguel Hidalgo, a Catholic priest in charge of a parish in Guanajuato state, and one of the conspirators, after hearing about his captured associates, hastened the original plans and gathered the local population outside of his parish in September, 1810 (Hamnett 1999; Kirkwood 2000). After rousing the local population with the so-called speech ‘*Grito de Dolores*’ – which Kirkwood (2000: 83) interestingly qualifies as conservative: “Long live Ferdinand VII... Death to bad Government...Long live religion” – Hidalgo led, alongside other priests and ‘lay’ army

officials, the first ‘insurgent’ army that battled against the Spanish crown and its royalist army. Hidalgo was captured, excommunicated and executed in 1811. It was not until 1821 when Agustin de Iturbide⁸⁸ (royalist official), Guadalupe Victoria and Vicente Guerrero (insurgent leaders) signed the Plan of Iguala, which, despite the Crown’s resistance, led afterwards to the independence of Mexico. The country then entered into a series of fierce political disputes and armed conflicts –which seem to characterise several post-independence ex-colonies (e.g., Engineer 1991; Vetik 1993; Bates, Coatsworth, Williamson 2007). Amid this post-independence unrest⁸⁹, Santillan (1995) states, “the basic laws of the country consecrated a religious intolerance” in favour of Catholicism (1995: 176). The Plan of Iguala had postulated Catholicism as the new country’s official religion (Santillan 1995; Sota 2005:62). Mexico’s independence war constituted a rupture with Spain, not with the Catholic Church (Krebs 2002), and least of all with Catholicism.

In the 16th-century European context, ‘reformation’ in Britain and other countries consisted roughly of a break with a Roman Catholic authority and its representatives. The rupture unequivocally involved a set of Christian *protestant theologies* that would turn into alternative Christian religious practices and, eventually, distinctive Christian institutionalised religions (Hazlett 2003). In the post-independence 19th century *Mexico did not experience a theological ‘reformation’ movement by any Lutheran, Calvinist or Protestant priest, or group of these*. By then, liberal and conservative political coalitions in Mexico disputed the control of the State. It was liberal minister of justice, Benito Juarez, who proposed the Juarez bill in 1855. This bill –as other liberal or liberal-like political measures in the country, inspired by the European-Enlightenment principle of state-church separation (Hamnett 1999: 158; chapter 1, first section) – was aimed at dissolving the Catholic Church’s *fuero* or its previous colony-times charter, in particular, the Catholic Church’s courts (Kirkwood 2000:103). After this bill and fearing that the conservatives’ funding was coming mostly

⁸⁸ Lomnitz (2001:349) notes that it was the royalist officer Iturbide who crafted the Plan of Iguala and forged “an alliance with both the upper clergy (who never supported Hidalgo [...]) and the Spaniards by providing them with ample guarantees of continuity and belonging in the new republic”.

⁸⁹ Knight (1992: 101), for example, reports forty five different administrations in the country between 1821 and 1871. On the other hand, Fernando Escalante argues that such ‘unrest’ is actually a mistaken account; for this author there was rather a “political order” based on volatile central and regional cliques (cited in Brachet-Marquez 1997: 294-5).

from the Catholic Church's assets, liberal congressmen passed further restrictive bills. The 'Lerdo bill'⁹⁰ disentitled the Church and civil corporatives of their properties. In 1857, along with Mexico's new-brand liberal federal constitution, the 'Iglesias bill' prohibited the Catholic Church's collection of marriages, baptisms and funeral services fees. Conservatives fought these laws and their liberal supporters ferociously in the political arena and actual warfare. Cornered in the south, the liberal government lead by then by president Benito Juarez continued with its radical *political* secularisation, by prohibiting tithes collection and restricting religious public practices (Kirkwood 2000: 104-5; Puente 1995). In 1861 liberals would take Mexico City back and secular laws remained in force. Schmitt (1962) reports both the radical and conciliatory reactions of the clergy to these laws. The then Puebla state's bishop, who would become Mexico's archbishop afterwards, insisted that "the church was not subject to the State in the manner in which constitution and laws provided", and that "[i]n spiritual matters the civil government was under the supreme authority of the [Catholic] Church". Some years after, Schmitt states, a defiant yet less "belligerent" member of the clergy would still argue, without referring to Mexico in particular, that "religious authority exercises its dominion over all things spiritual and temporal" (1962:184). More importantly, scholar Lida (2007) argues that after this 'reform period' in Mexico it was possible to find "[a] more consolidated [Catholic] Church in its ecclesiastic structures, [...] *and even its social and political presence in public life*" (2007: 1395; emphasis added).

In this 19th-century volatile political environment, what Mexico experienced was a *political* reform (Zavala, forthcoming) where the Catholic Church was made redundant from its official political-administrative roles. Puente Lutteroth (1995: 295) refers to Benito Juarez' explicit defence of Protestantism and Lomnitz notes the liaisons between the Freemasonry⁹¹ and some of the country's post-independence political elites (2001:350). However in the greater social scene, i.e., in downtown streets and urban *barrios*, in the daily social interactions in rural settlements and indigenous communities, no further counter-theologies were brandished by 'rebel' ideologues; no alternative religions were afterwards established.

⁹⁰ By the then minister of finance Miguel Lerdo.

⁹¹ Both Scottish and Yorkish Masons, allies of British and American (USA) economic interests respectively.

Furthermore, other than the Church's *formal political functions*, the Catholic Church did not lose its central cultural role as provider of the only religious cosmology that had ideologically legitimated society's religious beliefs, classifications of the world, moral values and authority models for more than three hundred years (Durkheim 1915; Weber 1978, 2003; Douglas 1986). Unlike British and European reformations (Foucault 2007:148-50; Devine 2009), these secularist reforms in Mexico did not remove Catholicism's three centuries of *educational and cultural (quasi)monopolistic influence* (Zavala, forthcoming). Further evidence is offered in the next sections.

III. Catholics vs. the State: early 20th-century religious conflicts.

In the late 1920s, that is, more than half a century after liberal-secular laws were passed in the country, a revealing historical episode, or “the most violent challenge” to the post-revolution Mexican state⁹² according to Knight (2001:193), took place. It was an extraordinary three-years conflict that involved not the Church and the country's ecclesiastical authorities but ordinary parish-based priests, fervent groups of Catholics and actual armed battles between the latter and the state. Historian Padilla Rangel (2001) states the *Cristiada* started after elected president Plutarco E. Calles in 1925 strengthened the punitive character of the laws that regulated the Catholic Church's public activities. The state closed down Catholic asylums, and expelled female religious orders and priests. Control of Catholic schools was tightened and religious elements in the curricula as well as “religious objects in school buildings and the priests' interventions in school issues” were banned (Padilla Rangel 2001:96). Whereas the response from the Catholic Church's hierarchy was cautious, people' reactions were not; their faith had been undermined. The new legal measures, for instance, unsettled Aguascalientes' inhabitants who organised a resistance to boycott businesses associated with the state (Camacho et al 1994). According to historian

⁹² The Mexican revolution spanned from 1910 to early 1920s. Knight (1990) argues it was more a set of “provincial” rebellions than a “capital-city” revolt; in rough terms, its aim was to give a more tangible ‘independence’ to an Indian-rural population, whose members, even after one hundred years of post-colonial life, “continued to plant corn and beans under new masters” (1990: 3).

Meyer (1973: 49), the Mexican army captured and executed 125 ‘rebel’ priests that sided with the Catholic population and did not comply with the state’s new rules. Organised groups of Catholics answered accordingly and so battled against the state’s forces. According to Padilla, the warfare between *federales*⁹³ or *agraristas*⁹⁴ and *Cristeros* took place mostly in rural areas. Although the new law’s enforcement had national scope, *people’s* oppositional reactions were reportedly stronger in Mexico’s central region –e.g., Michoacan, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Aguascalientes⁹⁵ states. The conflict spanned from 1926 to 1929. Interestingly, once the conflict was over, former groups of *Cristeros* would continue the fight against local and state-level authorities in the 1930s, in what Guerra (2005) describes as a more fragmented guerrilla-like ‘second *Cristiada*’. The *Cristero* leaders of this saga kept fighting for various political motives, but also because of their “genuine passion about their religion and their unbreakable faith” (2005:569).

In Meyer’s view (1993), the ‘first’ *Cristiada* was a movement composed mostly by the rural population. This author argues that whereas the *Cristero* rebels came from a rather deprived background and were illiterate, they did not lack “complex and intricate” knowledge of reality. *Cristeros*’ was “a folk culture based on the bible, Christian [Catholic] oral tradition, chivalry books, and colonial poetry” (1993: 273). Meyer suggests the “kingdom of Christ” was the main ideological reference for *Cristeros*, whose background Meyer describes as follows:

We are in a land which is poor in civic culture; what happens depends on elites [...] [this land] does not have outstanding buildings other than the churches, convents, the bishop’s palaces [...] The toponymy is almost completely religious and peasants have motives to say ‘Mexico is the son of a priest’.⁹⁶

Meyer (1993) analyses further the *Cristeros*’ ideological perspectives by means of surveys and interviews with *Cristero* survivors. Meyer states *Cristeros* saw the Mexican government

⁹³ Mexican army’s soldiers

⁹⁴ Peasant population who had previously received (or given back) lands by the State and were thus encouraged, or coerced, to fight against *Cristeros*.

⁹⁵ *Cristero* rebels in Aguascalientes were led by Jose Velasco who upraised in Calvillo town in November 1926 (Camacho et al 1994).

⁹⁶ Statement Meyer cites from a *Cristero* leader. The statement refers to Miguel Hidalgo –see previous section.

led by Plutarco E. Calles as the devil, as Protestant and Mason. Calles' government was "the Caesar one had to pay obedience to" but, according to the views of Meyer's respondents, it had instead become "the antichrist, the devil"; it was "a bad government", "enemy of religion", and "a rebel against God and homeland" (1993: 282-3). For *Cristeros*, the Mexican army had the same characteristics, except for some minor differences: "the majority is good, but the bosses are bad" (1993: 283). Meyer states that *Cristeros*' arguments were not unreasonable, they accepted that "the legitimacy of established powers" came from God; "even anti-Christ's authority [comes from God], for not even a tree's leaf can move without God's will" (1993: 286). *Cristeros* were willing to "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's" as long as Caesar did not fight against God. Caesar, however, attacked God, therefore Catholics fought back. Meyer quotes a statement from a *Cristero* leader: "It is better to die fighting for Christ the King and the Virgin of Guadalupe [...], and never stand against the only true god, even if the devil gets angry" (1993:288). Although I do not claim any causal relation, I want to highlight here the ideological-discursive resemblance between the basic dichotomies (hell-heaven) missionaries reportedly taught to Mexico's colonial population (Ricard [1933]2000) and the *Cristeros*' dichotomistic references that reportedly include the ideas of good and bad army members and 'good God' versus the 'evil State'. Moreover I want to emphasise the importance of the idea of God's will as the *cause* (Durkheim 1915) or the source of "established powers' legitimacy", that reportedly includes the "anti-Christ's authority" as well.

In addition to the *Cristiada* as an example of the country's deep-rooted post-colonial and post-revolution Catholicism I want to highlight that *Cristeros* and their collective and individual stories have gradually turned into a relatively popular subject in documentaries⁹⁷,

⁹⁷ In a short documentary, a state-run local television channel, introduced the happenings as follows: "At the end, what are we as Mexicans if we do not fight for what is ours, what belongs to us, what we believe? What are we without our ideals and our spirit? In the states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, Queretaro, Aguascalientes, Nayarit, Colima, Michoacan, Mexico City, Yucatan, and Zacatecas, the Mexican army and *Cristero* forces fought each other 80 years ago. Today the atmosphere is very different to that of 1927; it smells like freedom. That 1929 July, the pride won, dedication won, passion and love won. The people won the liberty to proclaim 'long live Christ the king and the most holy Virgin Mary', without fear of being oppressed" (*La Guerra Cristera, 80 años despues*, 2009)

movies⁹⁸, Catholic-martyrs stories⁹⁹, folk songs¹⁰⁰ and even casual family stories¹⁰¹. These various outcomes constitute, I argue, further evidence of the outstanding relevance not of the Catholic Church as such, but of both institutional and people’s *Catholic discourses* in the country’s cultural and discursive spaces.

IV. Catholicism and the Catholic Church today.

According to Mexico’s 2010 national census, the total population in the country amounts to 112, 336, 538 inhabitants. The reader can find their reported religious affiliations in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Religious affiliation in Mexico, 2010 census.

Religious affiliation	Percentage of the total population
Catholic	82.7 %
“Protestant and Evangelical” ¹⁰²	7.5 %
“Non-Evangelical Biblical” ¹⁰³	2.2 %
Jewish	0.6%
“Other religions” ¹⁰⁴	0.9 %
“Without religion”	4.7 %

Source: INEGI (2011a)

⁹⁸ “El coloso de mármol” (1928) directed by Manuel G. Ojeda; “Los cristeros o Sucedió en Jalisco” (1946), by Raúl de Anda; “Lluvia roja” (1949) by René Cardona; “Los recuerdos del porvenir” (1968) by Arturo Ripstein; “De todos modos Juan te llamas. La historia de una gran traición” (1974) by Marcela Fernández Violante; “La Guerra Santa” (1977), by Carlos Enrique Taboada; and finally “Cristiada” directed by Dean Wright and launched in 2011.

⁹⁹ Mostly *Cristero* priests who were executed and sanctified later by the Vatican, e.g. San Luis Batiz Sainz, San Agustín Caloca, San Atilano Cruz Alvarado, San Mateo Correa, San Miguel de la Mora, San Pedro de Jesús Maldonado, San Pedro Esqueda Ramirez, San Margarito Flores, San José Isabel Flores, San David Galvan Bermudez, San David Roldan Lara, San Salvador Lara Puente, San Cristóbal Magallanes, San Rodrigo Aguilar Aleman, San Roman Adame Rosales, San Julio Alvarez Mendoza, San Jesús Mendez Montoya, San Sabas Reyes Salazar, San Toribio Romo Gonzalez, etc. (Aciprensa n.d.).

¹⁰⁰ Folk songs “Corrido de Valentin de la Sierra”, “Corrido de Victoriano Ramirez ‘El Catorce’” “Corrido de Polino Guerrero”, “Corrido del General Gorostieta”, “El arreglo religioso”, etc. (García and McKinley 2004).

¹⁰¹ A lecturer during my Pilot case study referred to stories of *Cristero* priests (getting shot or hanged from trees) being frequently told by his relatives when he was a kid.

¹⁰² Includes “Historical” (0.7%), “Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal” (1.6%), members of the “Church of the Living God, Truth Base and Light of the World” (0.2%), and “other Evangelicals” (4.9%).

¹⁰³ “7th Day Adventists” (0.6%), members of the “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints” (0.3%) and “Jehovah Witnesses” (1.4%).

¹⁰⁴ Not specified.

Here I want to emphasise that, despite the official census documents (e.g. INEGI 2005) insisting on the existence of a “religious diversity” in the country, the *majority* of the reported population is nominally ‘Christian’ (about 93%) and most of it is still ‘Catholic’ (83%). The above are not the only relevant statistics. Surveys by different organisations indicate that ‘churches’ or ‘the church’ are ‘the most trusted’ social institution in the country too. According to the World Values Survey (2005) 70.4 % of the sample surveyed in Mexico (N= 1, 500) reported having either ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ of confidence in “churches”¹⁰⁵. Research by the Mexican government (ENCUP 2008; N= 4,383) indicates equivalent results. According to this source, 72% of the sample said they have ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ of trust in “the Church” making this institution “the most trusted social” institution in the country¹⁰⁶. A larger survey (N=16, 000) by two private organisations (Banamex 2010), suggests, once again, that ‘churches’ are the most trusted institution in Mexico, with 68% of the sample trusting them “a lot”¹⁰⁷ or “fairly”¹⁰⁸. Although the questionnaires from these three surveys do not include the adjective “Catholic [Church]” in the question, it would not be analytically inappropriate to associate that reported ‘church’ with the ‘Catholic Church’ that, despite 19th-century reformist episodes, has been part of Mexico’s history from 1520s up to current days.

Today, 18 ecclesiastical provinces, 18 archdioceses and 67 dioceses constitute the organisational skeleton of the Catholic Church in Mexico (CEM 2009a, 2009b). According to a 2004 census published online (Cheney 2005), the total number of priests in the country¹⁰⁹ amounts to 14, 618. Mexican historian Blancarte, in his often-cited work on the

¹⁰⁵ Only 44.8 % and 33.6 % of the sample granted the same levels of confidence to “the Government” and “the police” respectively

¹⁰⁶ In this survey, only 26% and 23% of the sample assigned the same levels of trust to “the police” and “political parties” respectively.

¹⁰⁷ 40% of the sample.

¹⁰⁸ 28% of the sample. In this survey the ‘church’ was followed by “the army”, which is reportedly trusted “a lot” only by 27% of the sample. This survey shows as well that whereas 8% of the sample reportedly belongs to social networks such as Facebook and Tweeter, 11% of the sample reported to belong to religious groups, which would then be the type of organisation with the highest number of affiliates.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Diocesan’ priests (priests based within a particular diocese) reportedly amount to 11, 016 and ‘religious’ priests (members of Catholic religious congregations, e.g. Franciscans) amount to 3, 602. The same source reports that the number of Catholic priests in Great Britain reaches 5, 653. Considering that the population in the United Kingdom amounts roughly to 60 millions inhabitants,

Catholic Church in Mexico, catalogued the Mexican Catholic clergy's ideology from 1930s to 1980s as "integral-intransigent"¹¹⁰ (1993:22-7), that is, as an official mainstream discourse aimed at both denying liberal and socialist ideologies (intransigent) and intervening not only in spiritual matters but in the cultural and social realms of society as well (integral). Is the current post-second millennium Catholic Church different in that sense? To answer this question, I offer in the next section evidence of the Catholic clergy's 'institutional' or 'official' discourses I found flowing in the social-discursive environments I explored during my fieldwork. These discourses were collected from multiple sources (chapter 2). Although the following paragraphs are but a brief glimpse to these complex series of 'institutional/official' Catholic discourses, they give a proper idea of some of their most frequent notions and ideological bases.

The Catholic clergy's discourses

A documentary about Mexico City's Catholic archdiocese broadcast by a local television channel¹¹¹ one afternoon during my pilot study provides us with data on the institutional configuration and ethos of the Catholic Church in Mexico as well as some of the most representative elements in the Catholic clergy's discourses. First, the documentary's narrator explains the complex layers of the primate archdiocese's organisational structure¹¹². After this, one of the assistant bishops appears in the screen and declares that assistant bishops and vicariate-heads "follow up" what the head of the archdiocese and his team "design for the whole bishopric". Then, another priest who is introduced as the head of the 8th vicariate, states

these figures would mean that there would be three priests for every 20,000 people in Mexico and two priests for the same figure in Great Britain.

¹¹⁰ A term he borrows from French scholar Poulat and his work (1983) on French Catholicism

¹¹¹ One of the local channels operating in the state of Guanajuato.

¹¹² Which reportedly includes three "functional" vicarages and eight "territorial" vicarages, as well as a "collegiate Episcopalian council" that works as the "central government body" and is constituted by nine "assistant bishops".

It was for me a great honour that The Lord Cardinal trusted me and assigned to me the responsibility of the vicariate. Of course, he is the one who takes decisions about main matters. In other [matters] I have to be there with the priests, with the communities, with the parishes, with the members of religious orders and [I have to be] in many environments too, in the government environment, in civic associations, people organisations, one has to be there with the whole town

The narrator goes on and (re-)states that the archdiocese aims at reaching “*all the social reality of the Mexican state*”. Consequently, the work by the archdiocese has to be diffused, therefore the archdiocese seeks “to be present in the media” and so invites “more than forty reporters from different media” to attend Sunday mass at Mexico City’s cathedral. In this set of statements two elements are unequivocal: the references to a centralised-authority organisational structure in Mexico City’s archdiocese and the reported scope of the archdiocese’ Catholic discourses and practices: *impacting social life in its entirety*. This type of organisational authority structure and its ‘all-embracing’ or ‘integral’ (Blancarte 1993) discourses produce a diverse range of thematic institutional discourses whose ideological bases are, however, consistent. First off, as a ‘Servant of the Word’ Sister explains in a Catholic magazine a volunteer handed me in AgC’s downtown,

We enter into the field of *religious values* when we acknowledge that God is the supreme *Value* and that it is because of Him that all that leads to Him has value and all that separate us from Him does not (Carapia 2010:34 –emphasis in original)

This would turn out to be a simple yet consistent and accurate account of the dichotomistic and non-relativistic values I found being referred to in Catholic rituals such as Catholic masses and priests’ homilies –perhaps an empirical case of what Zerubavel calls cultural “styles of cutting up the world [...] by strict adherence to a purist either/or logic” (1999:56) and certainly a different instance of religious values compared to the *non-dichotomistic* values (e.g. a glorificatory ‘social utilitarianism’; a calling oriented towards the public-good) Merton (1938) identified in his analysis of Protestant religions in 17th-century England. For instance, in September 2010, in MxC’s Coyoacan borough, a priest in the downtown’s church is delivering his Sunday homily to churchgoers. He is preaching about love, churchgoers’ hearts and about Catholics driving their actions by mistaken criteria:

There are many probabilities of us having our hearts in something superficial that has no importance, [in something] very close to the *earth* instead of [close to] those goods and treasures of *heaven* (emphasis added)

In April 2010, in AgC, I attended a Catholic wedding ceremony in one of the city's downtown churches. There, the priest stated "We mistake *love* for *passion* and *lust*" (emphasis added); then he preached to the couple in front of him and the rest of attendees "we have to love our beloved one well. Every day you have to give the biggest, the most beautiful, the most holy to your beloved one". The same day in the same church, another priest conducted yet another wedding ceremony. This second priest touched upon the same 'passion *versus* love' dichotomy his peer had referred to earlier:

We cannot think about satisfying passions only, we cannot! That goes away [...] that is why I warn you again brothers, marriage is a delicate sacrament [...] so let's pray to God so this couple has an example of married life [...].

This priest's homily also included instances of normative statements and explicit social (and personal) criticism,

We are Christians so we cannot marry like pagans, pagans who do not know God. Unfortunately today there are many married couples that get together like pagans [...]. The Church is about love, the talent of divine love and we have to have it very clear.

After this, the priest stopped his speech and, still holding the microphone and pointing at a group of young female attendees wearing short and bright dresses, said

Listen to the sacrament of marriage, you have to practice it in your lives. So those young ladies that are listening to me can marry and get ready for it, by taking marriage as something holy and not full of sex sins!

After the homily, and before the service was over, the priest, once again, spoke as follows to the group of female teenagers in short dresses,

To the women that come ill dressed: I am not telling you off, I am just warning you that you are doing evil, you are inciting lust. You cannot be dominated by fashion, but by Christ [...] I'm not telling you off, it is just a warning for you to dress well

At a Sunday mass, in an improvised tent in one of the upper-middle class neighbourhoods in the outskirts of Aguascalientes, another Catholic priest preaches about 'Catholic faith' without the finger-pointing approach of his peer above. However, at some point during his speech this priest, brandishing normative and particularly critical statements too, said

Our Church has to walk straight over a very clear line: sanctity of life. This includes looking for wisdom; a Catholic that does not know his faith, that does not study, does not read or reflect is an ignorant Catholic and an 'ignorant Catholic [is a] Protestant for sure'¹¹³

A couple of minutes later the priest interestingly stated that despite the Church being attacked, "its methodology" remains: "see, judge, act". I will return to this 'see-judge-act methodology' in chapter 6. During the same homily, the priest also stated that the "fundamental task" to be carried out by both church and churchgoers is to take the "doctrine of faith" to young generations by means of the Holy Spirit, which drives people to be "straight, good, holy" and aware of their "fragility and proclivity to sin". In fact, this was not the only reference to a 'superior religious power' in the Catholic discourses I collected. The priest that 'warned' female teenagers during the wedding ceremony in AgC stressed during his homily that "Christ comes to us through the sacred Eucharistic" for "He, as *infinitely powerful* [...], did not have anything else to give us but Himself" (emphasis added). Similarly, in the first minutes of the documentary reported above the cardinal head of Mexico City's archdiocese, states that "one of the first images" he got familiar with was Virgin Mary –see also Wolf (1958). The cardinal then stated "I think she [Virgin Mary] is the main evangeliser of these lands; we could not achieve our evangelisation mission if we do not see Mary as model"; Catholics that left the Church and converted to other religions would have not done so

¹¹³ The Spanish original phrase is a sort of rhyming, and certainly harsh, aphorism: '*Catolico ignorante, seguro protestante*'.

had they known about the role of Mary in the history of salvation [...] it is because of her that the saviour comes. Mary brings the Holy Spirit. Mary congregates the apostles [...] so Mary has this fundamental mission in the Church; we would not be a Church without her.

In a newspaper published by Aguascalientes diocese, the editor in the first page addresses notions of divine/superior power as follows:

Not even the human sciences or the most advanced technologies [...] are able to solve the serious problems our world faces today, so we have to acknowledge, as Christians, that the only resource left to humanity is God, the God humanity has abandoned. So we have to implore for a second coming of the Holy Spirit, which is the love and the power of God, for it was because of love that god used His omnipotence to create the world [...].

Another concept I found in the reported documentary, the homilies I have referred to and the Catholic magazines I collected was “the family”. In the documentary, the cardinal stated that “the family is the fundamental cell of society” and that it “is unfortunately suffering many attacks, it is coming apart in many places, therefore problems come”. The documentary’s narrator then stated that “pastoral of the family” is another target of the archdiocese as it would represent a means for the society’s and the Catholic Church’s development. The article by the ‘Servant of the word’ sister (above) who writes about *values* in dichotomistic and non-relative terms (cf. Merton 1938), is actually part of a whole section in the magazine titled “Family Values”.

The evidence above suggests that the Catholic institutional discourses are underpinned by an underlying discursive structure whose bases include (i) asymmetric dichotomist values – where “the family” as value *per se* or as a vehicle to spread religious values plays a key role too; (ii) references to God, the Virgin and Holy Spirit as absolute or intercessory “powers”; and (iii) explicitly normative-prescriptive and particularly critical messages in which (i) and (ii) are embedded. I found these discursive characteristic not only in the Catholic media, Catholic printed media and Catholic homilies. In AgC I could interview one of the priests that conducted the first wedding ceremony reported above. Unsurprisingly, in the priest’s replies there are references, once again, to dichotomist asymmetric values

(conservative/liberal), to the Virgin and her sacredness, and, interestingly, to what the priest sees as an ‘innate religiosity’ in Mexican Catholics. Noticing the priest’s foreign accent and after confirming his Spanish background, I asked him about the differences he would see between Mexico’s and Europe’s Catholicism. The priest replied saying that a distinctive Catholic feature in Mexico was the “devotion to the Virgin [...] as a permanent miracle that encourages faith”. After this I ventured to ask about the reported “conservative religiosity” people said prevailed in regions such as AgC. The priest replied by referring to the conservative/liberal dichotomy:

When the term liberal is used, what does that mean? That I do not practice religion? That I interpret it as I want, as if I were God? I mean, the traditional [believer] is not [traditional] because he ill interprets God’s word, but because he wants to be faithful to what God have said once and forever. Today liberalism says ‘I am God and do what I want, God does not count’.

Then the priest stated he does not see the liberal attitudes in Mexico he would see in Europe, for

it [Mexico] is not like in Europe, [where] they feel satisfied and say ‘I do not believe in God’. Here it is a totally different mind-set, it is a religious mind-set that is therefore genuine because the religious is not superimposed but is part of people’s essence.

The paragraphs above might give an impression of highly normative, critical and dichotomist Catholic discourses flowing mostly, and perhaps exclusively, from and between AgC’s Catholic institutions. However, I met remarkably normative, critical and dichotomistic official Catholic discourses in MxC as well. I have presented above some examples of the ‘integrally prescriptive’ messages from Mexico City’s archdiocese, its cardinals and vicars. In the same temple in Coyoacan borough where the priest reported above preached about love, earth and heaven, I found a series of small handbooks for sale. They were placed in a shelf next to one of the temple’s front interior columns; the handbooks were all written by Catholic clerics and ranged from every-day life topics – e.g. ‘Television, the negative and the positive’, ‘Dating’, ‘Sweet sixteen’, ‘Virginity’, and ‘Chastity’ – to more theological and dogmatic themes – e.g., ‘Why the Catholic religion is not just the best but the only one’,

‘The ten commandments still rule’, ‘The legitimacy of the Catholic Church’, and ‘The two best proofs of Protestantism’s falsehood’. The author of the handbook on ‘Television’, for instance, states that television represents a vehicle to “promote universal values”, and a “rich” pedagogical tool that contributes to “elevate the cultural level of the public”. After this, the author goes on and, more critically, states that the television also plays the role of a teacher that teaches “passive” children about “crime, violence, selfishness, sensuality, materialism, etc”. The author of the handbook ‘Why the Catholic religion is...’ opens up his text by stating that the “[t]he expression ‘all religions are good’ is well known and is uttered by ignorant or malicious people”.

Now, what echoes in society from the Catholic ‘institutional/official’ messages and discourses above? What do people in general remember, adopt and/or adapt from these institutional Catholic discourses and their systematic references to (1) the family, (2) dichotomist values, (3) notions of God/the Virgin/Holy Spirit as absolute or intercessory ‘powers’, (4) the normative and critical statements those references, values and notions are embedded in, and (5) the integrally-prescriptive scope of such a set of messages and discourses? Next, based on data from diverse sources, I will suggest the discursive elements that constitute the society’s ‘non-official’ Catholic discourses or people’s ‘folk’ Catholicisms.

People’s Catholicism

In this section I will argue that Catholics’ religious discourses are both different and similar to the institutional Catholic messages/discourses I have presented. More importantly, I will argue that people’s Catholic discourses do flow and operate as part of the country’s cultural dimensions and do shape the morality and beliefs of individuals. First I present a foreword about people’s ‘various’ Catholicisms.

Whereas institutional Catholic discourses are thematically diverse yet would keep a relatively consistent discursive core – at least in AgC and MxC – a description and analysis

of religious discourses in/by Mexico's Catholic population represents a bigger challenge given the huge diversity of voices and their locally-constructed contexts and backgrounds. For example, despite the *Cristiada* (section above) being catalogued as part of the country's history (Meyer 1973, 1993), it seems to be, after all, a *regional* historical episode that supplied cultural references to the inhabitants of those regions exclusively. Acknowledging this Catholic heterogeneity, Scholars De la Torre and Gutierrez (2008) present a series of different Catholic profiles or 'Catholicisms' in Mexico. Based on survey data from an unspecified sample in Mexico the authors present Catholics' different opinions on the political role of the Catholic Church. In this sense they distinguish three groups of Catholics: (1) a majority group that agrees on the separation between the State and the Catholic Church and disagrees on the idea of the Catholic Church influencing public policies, giving advice to churchgoers about running candidates and who they should vote for; (2) a "minority clerical core"¹¹⁴ group that represents 15% to 20% percent of the sample and agrees on the Catholic Church influencing public policies as well as giving advice to churchgoers about political issues; and (3) a "hardcore clerical mini-group", between 7% and 12% of the sample, whose members do not only agree on the Catholic Church shaping the State's decision but support also the idea of the State governing with the criteria and principles of the Catholic Church. The authors stress that it is the latter that usually possess more social and economic capital than the rest and therefore have more social influence. The authors state too that there is a clear distance between the Catholic Church's criteria on sexual morals and those of Catholics. Sexual morals, related mostly to the use of contraceptive methods and sexual education, reportedly constitute a ground where the Catholic Church has lost control and where "the subjective emancipation of the ethical and moral schemes that drive Catholics' sexual conduct" is evident¹¹⁵.

¹¹⁴ The original electronic text lacks page/paragraphs numbers. This citation can be found in the section 'Los diversos rostros de los católicos y sus percepciones sobre la iglesia'.

¹¹⁵ These percentages reportedly change when the sample is disaggregated into 'urban' and 'rural' sub-samples.

Except for a succinct statement about the “celebrationist, ritualist, festive and pilgrim Catholicism” of “Mexican identity”¹¹⁶, De la Torre and Gutierrez (2008) do not seem keen on stressing the commonalities of Catholicism in the country. Moreover, for these authors, as well as for some of the sociology lecturers I interviewed during my field work (see some of their statements in chapter 6, section I), it is rather the country’s “religious diversity” that is more significant and therefore should be highlighted over the mistaken perception of a monolithic Mexican Catholicism. This ‘religious diversity’, as I said previously, is taken for granted in official census documents as well (INEGI 2005). However, although I do share these academic and state voices’ rejection of reductionist and homogenising interpretations of Catholicism in the country, I want to stress two counter points. Firstly, *nominal* ‘Catholic heterogeneity’ or *nominal* ‘Christianisms’ do not deliver *actual* ‘religious diversity’ automatically –not in a country where *only one* of those ‘Christian’ religions has had a historical quasi-monopoly in extra-religious cultural dimensions. Secondly, nominal Christianisms and Catholic heterogeneity do not necessarily equate to absence of ‘ideological patterns’¹¹⁷, and even less ‘ideological irrelevance’. In other words, there being 0.6% of Jewish population and 9.7% of other Christian populations in the country – “Protestant”, “Evangelical” and “Non-Evangelical Biblical”¹¹⁸ (Table 3.1) – *does not necessarily mean that the central place of Catholicism has been suddenly removed from both the historical archives and the contemporary cultural and ideological domains of Mexican society/ies*, as I will show next. It seems to me that the ‘religious-diversity’ scholarly stances eventually downplay, or discard entirely, what I have presented about the Catholic Church and Catholicism during the country’s colony, independence, post-independence and post-revolution periods. The normative paradigms of secularism and their “epistemic knowledge regimes” (Casanova 2009:1051) I referred to in chapter 1 are very likely related to these ‘religious-diversity’ views, which are consonant with a ‘pluralistic’ approach to social phenomena, yet miss or deliberately avoid addressing the various Catholicisms that have

¹¹⁶ Statement located in the section ‘Los diversos rostros de los católicos y sus percepciones sobre la iglesia’

¹¹⁷ Without falling into essentialist views, it could be argued in analytical terms that such heterogeneity develops precisely because there are strong and solid enough religious-ideological core ‘models’ (Weber 1978; 2003) with possibilities of diverse and divergent materialisations.

¹¹⁸ Some of these religious minorities arrived or converted in the late 19th century and early 20th century; others developed until the 1970s (INEGI 2005; Sota 2005: 69-92).

permeated, and still permeate Mexican society overall. Next I will offer quantitative and qualitative data to support this last statement and explore whether Mexican Catholicisms draw from the discursive elements – ‘the family’; dichotomist-asymmetric values; God/the Virgin as ‘powers’; normative-critical statements; ‘all-embracing’ prescriptive scope – found in official Catholic discourses.

In one of the surveys cited above¹¹⁹ (Banamex 2010), one question in the questionnaire asked respondents about what they believe was “the reason for his/her success in life”: 61% of the sample reported “their efforts and dedication” as the reason; 27% of the sample reported “their family”, 9% reported “God”, and 2% reported “the government” (Banamex 2010:25). The answers to this question might give the impression of people rather ignoring God in their everyday lives. But when respondents were asked the question “How important is god in your life?” and were asked to give a number between 1 (not important at all) and 10 (very important), the average answer¹²⁰ was 9.1 (2010:101). The same type of question, this time addressed to the importance of the “Virgin of Guadalupe” in the respondents’ lives, received an average¹²¹ of 8.2. (2010:102). When the respondents were asked about the “quantity” of different social elements or situations occurring in their respective states (where number 1 represented “there is nothing of it” and 10 “there is a lot of it”), the options that received the highest average was “corruption” and “poverty” both with 8 points, followed by “religious faith” with a 7.5 average response¹²² (2010:15). What would this apparently strong ‘religious faith’ and ‘belief in God’ and ‘the Virgin’ mean for Catholics? When respondents in the same survey were asked about “how much” they drive their actions based on the belief of “God will provide”, 23% of the sample responded “a lot”, 36% of the sample replied “some”, 27% of the sample “a bit” and 13% “nothing” (2010: 81). Although 59% of a 16, 000 persons sample reporting to guide their actions “a lot” or “some” on the idea of a God that “provides” does not clearly explain people’s belief in God, it is nonetheless evidence of the

¹¹⁹ This survey includes Catholic and non-Catholic respondents. The former amounts to 82% of the total sample (Banamex 2010: 109).

¹²⁰ 77% of the sample chose marks 9 or 10.

¹²¹ 66% of the sample chose 9 or 10.

¹²² “Opportunities for success” and “justice” received the lowest marks with 5.8 and 5.5 respectively (Banamex 2010:15).

presence of the notion of God in people's minds and a glimpse of what people believe that God actually does or can do. The centrality of God as 'potence', 'power' or actual 'force' (Durkheim 1915) would not therefore be a strange element in people's thoughts and does seem consonant with the official Catholic discourses presented above. I will offer qualitative data about this specific topic in this section's last paragraphs.

What other particular beliefs and ideas can be regarded as part of people's Catholicism? "The family" was already mentioned above as a "reason for personal success" reported by 27% of the sample. Interestingly, respondents' answers to the question about "the three things that reflect a person's success in life", comprise 25 % of the sample reporting "the family" as one of those three things¹²³. The results of a smaller survey carried out by Aguascalientes Planning Institute¹²⁴ (IMPLAN 2004), suggest that the three "most important values" in Aguascalientes' society are "the family", reported by 96% of the sample; followed by "work", reported by 87% of the sample and, of course, "religion" reported by 72%. The Catholic Church's historical and contemporary "pastoral work" on the family as society's "fundamental cell" (above) cannot be counted as the only discourse shaping the sampled respondents' beliefs and ideas on the family, but would definitely constitute one of the forces giving legitimacy to such a 'successful' institution.

If the family is such a key institution in Mexico, inevitably sustained by official and 'folk' Catholic discourses, what are then the 'in-family' Catholic messages or ideas that prevail there? In Banamex survey (2010) respondents answered a question about the most important qualities they think children should be taught about at home. From a list of different options only 31% of the sample chose "religious faith", 46% of the sample chose "obedience", 62% chose "hard work" and 73% "responsibility"¹²⁵. The reader may find in Table 3.2 below the "most important values to be instilled in children" in Aguascalientes according to

¹²³ Followed by 21% of the sample that chose the option "having a degree" and 17% of the sample which selected the option "having a respected work"

¹²⁴ The sample was chosen from Aguascalientes' inhabitants exclusively. The sample size, the survey's questionnaire and technical information is not included in IMPLAN's report. This report is not publicly available; I collected it personally in IMPLAN's premises, from a staff member who kindly agree on me accessing and keeping an electronic copy of the original document.

¹²⁵ Respondents were allowed to choose more than one option.

IMPLAN’s report (2004). These results are comparable to the results from Banamex survey, yet suggest the value of “religious faith” –5th and 4th place in Table 4– would be more esteemed by Aguascalientes’ and Mexico’s population than what Banamex report indicates.

Table 3.2. Most important values to be instilled in children

Position in Aguascalientes	Value	% of importance	Position in National survey*
1°	Responsibility	19	1°
2°	Tolerance and respect	17	2°
3°	Work	14	9°
4°	Obedience	12	3°
5°	Religious faith	11	4°
6°	Savings and care	8	7°
7°	Independence	8	6°
8°	Generosity	6	5°
9°	Determination, perseverance	3	8°
10°	Imagination	3	10°
		100 %	

Source: IMPLAN 2004: 39

*Unspecified survey

Results from Banamex survey support the distance De la Torre and Gutierrez (2008) see between the Catholic Church’s values on ‘sexual morals’ and ‘life rights’ and those of people. To the question on “how much” (i) homosexuality, (ii) euthanasia and (iii) abortions “are justified”, where number 1 stood for the position “it is never justified” and number 10 stood for “it is always justifiable”, the sampled respondents gave an average answer of 3.9, 3.9 and 3.4 respectively. These life events, along with “divorce” (4.6 average points), would represent the “most justifiable” events from the respondents’ view. The “less justifiable” events were “killing a person” (2.0 points), “a man beating up his wife” (2.1 points), “pretending to be sick and not going to work” (2.6 points) and “infidelity in marriage” (2.7 points).

Whereas De la Torre and Gutierrez's assertion on people's non-Catholic (or 'less-Catholic') sexual morals may find support in these answers, the later indicate as well two situations I want to highlight. Firstly, these answers show a strong tendency to disapprove, apparently with the same intensity and at least 'discursively', not only universally repudiated acts such as killing or cheating on your partner, but also simple actions such as pretending to be sick and not going to work¹²⁶. Secondly, it is likewise revealing that divorce was "the most justifiable" event; however, it was eventually placed, like the rest of the answers indeed, *below the 5 points mark or the 'never-justifiable' end of the scale*. If the British (N:1000) and Mexican (N:1500) samples from the World Values Survey (2005, 2006) are compared, the picture is similar¹²⁷. For instance, whereas only 7.2% of the British sample reports "divorce" as a "never justifiable" event, 26% of the Mexican sample reports divorce in the same terms. Similarly, whereas 20% of the British sample reportedly considers "homosexuality" as "never justifiable", 34% of the Mexican sample holds the same opinion¹²⁸. Is this apparent tendency to hold a rather 'strict' (discursive) morality related to the official Catholic discourses' persistent and 'all-embracing' normativeness-prescriptiveness I presented glimpses of above? Catholic discourses' normativeness does not determine (Elder-Vass 2011) people's moral beliefs. However, I argue that if "churches" are, and have been for a couple of centuries, "the most trusted" social institution in the country and if "religious faith" is a relatively solid 'value' in Mexican society today, the relations between people's apparently strict morality and the Catholic Church's 'integrally prescriptive' discourses are unmistakable related and might even suggest a mutually-dependent relationship, if not an asymmetrically-reinforcing link.

¹²⁶ This answer is explicitly included as one of the options in the questionnaire.

¹²⁷ Results from the Mexican sample only (World Values Survey 2005) suggest, interestingly, that respondents would have more flexible stances when it comes to events involving 'civic responsibilities' or the figure of the state. For example, only 37% of the sample reported both "claiming government benefits" and "avoiding a fare on public transport" as "never justifiable" acts, and 11-13% of the sample reported both acts as "always justifiable". Answers to the same questions in the British sample (2006) indicate that British 'civic morality', would be, discursively at least, more strict or rigid than the Mexican public services/state-related morality.

¹²⁸ These results actually might refute De la Torre and Gutierrez (2008) statements about the Mexican population holding a 'free' sexual morality. For example, whereas only 20% of the British sample reported "abortion" as "never justifiable", 54.5% of the Mexican sample reported the same answer, and whereas 30% of the British sample reports that "prostitution" is "never justifiable"; the same "event" was reported as "never justifiable" by 42% of the Mexican sample.

As for further religious beliefs, IMPLAN's survey (2004: 67) includes a question on whether respondents "*believe in hell*". To this question 63% of respondents replied affirmatively. Similarly, 89% of the sample reportedly "*believe in heaven*". In a report from another survey carried out by a private agency in Aguascalientes (IMO 2009; N: 800¹²⁹) the same questions were asked to respondents. In this survey 66.5% of respondents reportedly "believe definitely" in hell and 20% of the sample "believes probably" in hell¹³⁰. The same type of question was asked to respondents about "heaven"; 75.5% of the sample chose the option "to believe definitely" in heaven and 15.1% "to believe probably"¹³¹ (IMO 2009:36). Are these beliefs in heaven and hell related to the constant dichotomistic references and values (e.g. earth-evil/heaven-good; love/passion-lust) found in the institutional Catholic discourses? Very probably. In the same survey (2009:41), when different statements were given to respondents, who were asked to select the statement closer to their "feelings about the bible", 49.4% of respondents chose the option "The bible represents exactly the words of God and has to be taken literally, word by word"; 42.3% of the sample chose the statement "The Bible is inspired by the words of God, but it does not have to be taken literally word by word"; only 4.6% of the sample chose the statement "The bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history and moral precepts recorded by men". Before, during and after field work, I did not find similar surveys focused on samples from MxC only, except for a survey included in Sota's (2005) analysis of religion and "modernity" in Mexico City. Results from this survey (N: 1080) indicate that 80% of the respondents are nominally Catholics; 95% reportedly believe in God; 64% do not support abortions; 57% agree on the idea that churches and religious groups have to renovate themselves and 30% agree on the idea that "the truth" never changes therefore "churches and religious groups should not change their rites" (2005:150).

Now, other than the possibly inaccurate and casual answers to surveys' questionnaires, is there additional evidence that would suggest people's Catholic discourses do contain ideas of God/the Virgin as 'powers', the family as a central social institution, dichotomistic values

¹²⁹ Representative of the urban and rural areas of the state.

¹³⁰ Only 6.5% of the chose the answer "not to believe definitely" in hell.

¹³¹ 4.1% chose "not to believe definitely" in heaven.

and a strict and ‘wide-ranging’ folk morality? Next I present evidence I collected ethnographically from different sources during my explorations of MxC’s and AgC’s everyday-life discursive environments.

In MxC’s northern bus station a statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe within a nine-foot glass case flanked by marble columns lies at the centre of the building off the front gates –see appendix 3.2. A box for donations is located on one side. Echoing what seems an implicit allusion to Christian base communities and Theology of liberation, a sign above the donation box asks the public to support “the preferential option for the poor” and donate money for three shelters where kids and teenagers “suffer the consequences of the *moral, social and economic* disequilibrium of the current world” (italics added). Around the corner, inside the same bus station, I found a religious-items shop. The shop’s glass front walls were covered with decorative posters for sale that show images of Jesus Christ and different prayers intended for different professions, or life circumstances. In bold or capital letters the titles of the posters read: “The heaven’s shop”, “The value of life”, “Dialogues with the Lord”, “Letter from a son to his atheist parents”, “The athlete’s prayer”, “The physician’s prayer” and the like. A poster on the top of the right glass wall, titled “What our son feels” lists sixteen “commandments” about how to raise children, the commandments are told first-person by a hypothetical infant, e.g. third commandments: “Do not change your mind frequently about what I should do. Make up your mind and keep your decision”; sixth commandments: “Do not correct me in front of others. Teach me how to improve when we are alone”. Below this poster, the “The athlete’s prayer” poster reads:

Thank you Lord for allowing me to run this marathon. I thank you for *this life you gave me* [...] because every day of training [...] you allow my *soul* and my *body* to enter into *the Nature you have created* for me. I thank you Lord because in the solitude of my training you allow me to get close to you [...], opening my *soul* and my *body* to all the creatures *you have created* (emphasis added)

Similarly, “The physician’s prayer” opens up with the phrase “Our God and Creator” and continues,

instil in me a great love for studying and practicing medicine [...]; inspire me to be charitable and love my patients [...]; preserve people's lives if your lofty decisions do not command the opposite, *because science and all efforts are in vain when you declare the end* (emphasis added)

In AgC's downtown, the front showcase in a bookshop exhibits a series of books on English grammar, ocular medicine and Mexican Architecture –see appendix 3.2. The books to the left of the showcase are books for kids about dinosaurs, riddles and the Mayans. In between these two groups of books the showcase also exhibits books for kids titled “David and Goliath”, “Cain and Abel”, alongside other books titled “Jesus and the blind guy” and “Palm Sunday”. On the other side of the showcase, a poster of the Virgin of Guadalupe facing the street is stuck to the glass. A couple of blocks away, another shop in AgC's downtown exhibits books, small electronic appliances, and decorative wooden frames with short messages printed over. In one of those frames the printed message reads: “‘I know the plans I got for you’, the Lord says, ‘plans of peace, not of evil, [...]’”. Pedestrians could read ‘The prayer of Saint Francis’ (Cunningham 2004:146) in another frame,

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. So, where there is hatred I will plant love, where there is offence I will give forgiveness, where there is doubt I give faith, where there is sadness I give happiness, where there is despair I give hopes, [...].

Next I offer to the reader the last segment of data on people's Catholic discourses. This data comes not from MxC or AgC, but from a mainstream media source (open-signal television channel) that reaches basically all the cities in the country. Like the fragments of Catholic messages and prayers above, the next ‘textual pieces’ represent the Catholic discourses that surround, and in a sense ‘besiege’ (chapter 8), individuals, and their thoughts and actions in their daily lives. ‘*A cada quien su santo*’ is, up to the present, a television programme broadcast by one of the two main private, open-signal television channels in Mexico. The title of the programme can be roughly translated into ‘A saint for each person’. It consists of single episodes that refer to fictional characters and events that are meant to represent instances of real people's personal or family problems and their solution by means of praying to Christian saints or virgins who somehow intervene in the plot and solve the

difficulty in question. By the time I collected this data, the channel's web page (TV Azteca 2010) introduced the programme as follows:

Faith moves mountains; that is the main premise of the programme 'A saint for every one' [...] Saints are close to people, they are always there, either [as portraits] in one's purse, in a street corner in a post card and immersed in the everyday language. We look for saints to access the divine grace for they are our celestial lawyers. [...] Devotion in Mexico is tightly linked to the history and identity of people, to their contrasts and rites. So, 'A saint for every one' shares this warm Mexicanity that reflects the roots that get us close to each other and give us identity through our beliefs.

Prior to my pilot case study, one of the episodes of 'A saint for every one' addressed the Virgin of 'la Candelaria'. The plot of the story consisted of a widowed mother and her two sons living in a deprived urban background. One of the sons, Candelario, was alcoholic and struggled to stay sober. One day the mother says to Candelario "I know you are a *good son*, but the absence and the *ill example* of your alcoholic father ruined you". The mother continues "May the Virgin enlighten you and protect you. *May she intercede before almighty God* for you to be out of the wrong path". But Candelario does not stop drinking, leaves home and goes missing. Fifteen years pass by. The afflicted mother talks with a friend. The friend advises the mother: "Do not despair, you will find your son soon; if you ask for it to the Virgin of 'la Candelaria', *she will get your son back to you*". The mother confesses "It is because I feel I have been such a *bad* mother". The friend disagrees and sympathetically states, "No, had you been a *bad mother* your other son would have become *bad* too and you can see he is such a *good boy* [...]". The mother with no hopes replies "yes, that is just how life is, *some things are good and others are bad*" (emphasis added). This episode and others by the same channel are actually not 'unique', they compete against their 'rival episodes/programme' broadcasted by the largest television network in Mexico¹³².

¹³² Azteca TV's main competitor, Mexican private network Televisa, was actually the first channel that began to broadcast a similar TV programme 'The rose of Guadalupe'. "As a family programme whose aim is to transmit positive messages full of hopes [...] The rose of Guadalupe offers a series of stories where the drive to solve problems is people's devotion" (Televisa 2010).

V. Conclusions

If religions are inherently normative, institutional-official Catholicism in Mexico is certainly not an exception. But this is not all. Discursively, the official normativeness of Catholic discourses in Mexico would be based on systematic elements and here I suggest those I met more frequently: (i) a system of *dichotomistic* values or two moral poles where ‘right’ or ‘desirable’ choices rest invariably upon one single side: heaven/hell, traditional/liberal, good/evil, heaven/earth, love/passion –which resemble, unsurprisingly, the heaven-hell notions spread by the first missionaries in New Spain according to French historian Ricard ([1933]2000); (ii) legitimation by God/the Virgin/Holy Spirit and their absolute or intercessory powers, (iii) a particularly critical and judgements-based set of messages and (iv) a corresponding ‘all-embracing’ or ‘integral’ prescriptiveness, which is substantially consonant not only with the heavily-critical messages but also with the idea of God’s interventionist powers and the assumed *universality* of social values such as the Catholic ‘family’. Institutionally, this official normativeness-prescriptiveness would be supported by a rigid centralised-authority organisational structure that would certainly assure the consistent production and flow of these principles and discourses.

Survey data corroborates the thesis of people challenging (Elder-Vass 2011) official Catholic discourses on sexual morals, abortions, euthanasia and homosexuality (De la Torre and Gutierrez 2008; Cipriani 2011). However, ‘folk’ Catholic discourses still seem to draw from similar *dichotomies* with exactly the same *non-relativity* – or the same “either/or logic” in Zerubavel’s words (1999: 56-8) – e.g., hatred/love, offence/forgiveness, good/bad. Further elements in people’s Catholicism and non-official Catholic discourses do correspond to the elements found in official discourses, i.e. references to God as *power* or *creator*, references to the *intercessory powers* of Catholic saints and Virgins, as well as references to the family as key social institution or “example of people’s success”. Moreover, people’s reported beliefs or moral attitudes seem to resemble the official ‘all-embracing’ and ‘non-relativistic’ morals, which apparently disapprove of both murdering and not attending work with the same intensity. The ‘integral’ normativeness-prescriptiveness of the Catholic Church’s

official discourses (Blancarte 1993) could therefore be read in what seems to constitute people's rigid morality¹³³.

These similarities would represent fairly expected outcomes of the historical conditions discussed in the first sections of this chapter. Firstly, colonial Mexico was constituted by a deeply religious society where the educational field/s, national identity, ideological atmosphere and even political and economic contexts were all heavily permeated by the Catholic Church and Catholicism in general, to a degree that we could talk about a quasi-monopolistic Catholic social influence during the three hundred years of the colonial regime. Secondly, Mexico's independence from Spain (1820s) did not mean independence from Catholicism, which remained, figuratively and practically, as the new nation's 'official religion'. Understandably so, Mexican liberal politicians in the 1850s-1860s passed, not without resistance, Enlightenment-inspired secular laws to strip away the Catholic Churches' *political-administrative public roles*. Nonetheless those liberal politicians and ideologues never saw or met alternative Christian theologies spreading across society before, after and simultaneous to their political 'reforms' –like statesmen, politicians and lay people did see and experience during the 16th-century reformationist theological-social effervescence in Britain and Europe. Mexican 19th-century liberal politicians and their Enlightenment-inspired bills, I argue, barely altered the Catholic Church's and Catholicism's grassroots cultural influence, religious cosmovision and ideological powers (Zavala, forthcoming). The secularisation process in 19th century Mexico was a *political* secularisation, not an *epistemic-ideological* secularisation. The *Cristiada* and its legitimated-by-God 'ideology' (Meyer 1973, 1993), even if localised in some geographical regions only, is just one example of the potentially extreme outcomes of such religious-cultural discourses and their persistent ideological force. And, however banal this seems, it is not a coincidence that the two largest open-signal television channels in this country include in their weekday broadcast programming a series of soap-opera-like programmes that appeal to a 'devotional'

¹³³ Except perhaps for people's moral criteria related to civil responsibilities and the figure of the state; see footnote 127.

Mexicanity and so dramatise the ‘divine’ intervention of saints and the Virgin/s in people’s everyday lives.

I argue that Catholicism in Mexico has certainly changed but has never ceased to be a fundamental component of Mexican society/ies’ *ideological-cultural structures* (Weber 2003; Merton 1938; Waggoner 2009; Cipriani 2011; Sayer 1992, 2000), even if the Catholic Church’s face has been backgrounded and even if people now see sexual morals, abortions, euthanasia and homosexuality from different (non-Catholic?) ethical stances. It is as a central part of these *historical contexts* and as a key part of the *current ideological-cultural structures* in the country that Catholic discourses flow extensively and intensively and although do not determine people’s beliefs, customs and behaviour (Vazquez 1985; Zahino 1999), they may certainly *influence* them by *predisposing* (Elder-Vass 2011) individuals to assume ‘strict’, ‘all-embracing’ (Blancarte 1993) and ‘non-relativistic’ moral stances and take for granted both dichotomistic religious values (love/passion; heaven/hell; peace/evil) and the various types of ‘powers’ (Durkheim 1915) of/by God, the Virgin and Catholic saints –assumptions, beliefs and values that enter into varied combinations and account for the emergent Catholicisms that permeate Mexican society today.

Chapter 4

The ‘secular’ context: sociology in Mexico

The primary aim of this chapter is to introduce and describe the current *underlying rationales* of the sociological field in Mexico (and Latin America) and the *public-university ethos* as interpreted by both the specialised scholarly literature and the full-time sociology lecturers from whom I collected data (Table 2.2, chapter 2). The main conclusion in this chapter is that the underlying rationales of Mexico’s sociological field and the university ethos do include elements that resemble some of the elements of the Catholicisms and Catholic discourses I have addressed in the previous chapters, namely a parallel moral sensibility, and prescriptive-teleological ethos as well as an analogous configuration of vertical authorities. In order to have a clear picture of these parallels I will first present, similarly to the previous chapter, a description of events and individuals directly related to the history of sociology in Mexico/Latin America. In this first section I will present evidence about the early sociologists, early sociological thought in Mexico, and the suggestion that both were not only anchored upon French positivism but may have also been permeated by the religious cultural-ideological structures previously addressed. After this review of sociology’s historical background I will present qualitative data about the current configuration and daily-life ethos of the sociological field, the university institution and the social-research environments as experienced, and constructed, by the main respondents in this research.

I. The beginnings

According to Briceño-Leon and Sonntag (1998:11), sociology in Latin America has been driven by two forces since its inception: the search for an identity in a post-colonial context and the promotion of progress, development and modernity¹³⁴, or, in short, of “evolution”.

In Mexico, sociology surfaces, or rather ‘arrives’, for the first time in the second half of the 19th century. The story begins with a Mexican medicine student, Gabino Barreda, who arrived in Paris in 1848. There, a fellow national introduced Barreda to the work of August Comte. When Barreda is back in Mexico in 1853, Comte’s *Cours de Philosophie Positive* lies inside his luggage (Zabludovski 2007: 198). Barreda is considered the first ‘messenger’ of positivism in Mexico, and the first director of the country’s then newly-established ‘national public high school’ – *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* (ENP) – or, as Gonzalez states (2010: 694), “Mexico’s main diffusion centre of positivism”. Barreda’s positivism held classic Comtean principles, i.e. freedom and progress. These principles and the positivism they were framed in were by then considered, in Zabludovski’s view, as “the only possible means for bridging the gap between everyday life and the nation’s [...] aspirations for democracy and the new republic” (2007: 202). Zabludovski argues that Barreda, unlike Comte, supported liberalism as “the positive path” to the country’s post-independence reconstruction, “in contrast to [Catholic] clerical thinking, that attempted to impede progress” (Zabludovski 2007:199). Indeed, Mexico’s 19th century secularisation laws I presented in chapter 3 constituted the political-ideological context Barreda experienced during his positivistic campaign. He decided, as head of the country’s first ‘national public high school’, to establish a “scientific education” in order to shape “the moral norms that would make life between individuals compatible” (Chazaro 1995: 7). Unsurprisingly, Barreda defined morals in opposition to “religious dogmas”, therefore for this positivistic scholar, ‘moral’ was the discipline of intellectual and affective faculties driven by the brain and his organic and physiological functioning (Chazaro 1995: 8). Andrade (1998) reports that the then positivistic social sciences in Mexico were thought as contributing “to

¹³⁴ See also introduction to chapter 2.

transform and even *substitute* gradually the detrimental factors of the Indo-Iberian population's 'abnormal' evolution" (1998:43; emphasis added). This documentary evidence suggests that Barreda and other positivistic intellectuals in Mexico¹³⁵, adopted Comtean-French positivism as an actual substitute of religion and, particularly, of the Catholic Church and its morals.

The key question is, could positivistic intellectuals replace entirely Catholic-religious morals with "scientific" ones? To what extent would the 'old Catholic morals' still prevail in the then ideological atmospheres and in these positivistic discourses? In 1867, that is, in the same decade when liberal secular laws were passed in the country, Barreda delivers the public speech "Civic prayer" before president of Mexico Benito Juarez and other local authorities. In the speech's opening the author appeals to people's "sacred duty" to reflect on Mexico's independence and reports both the "anarchy that reigns in [individuals'] spirits and ideas" and the "sordid politicians" that "disgrace" people's "spirits and hearts, intelligence and morality" (Barreda 1867:1). Then the author reviews with passionate prose the last decades of Mexican history, praises the Mexican independence movement, touches upon episodes of ancient European history and despises the Catholic clergy for its alliances with the Spanish crown and its role in Mexico's colonial subjugation. In the last paragraphs, Barreda exhorts his listeners to be driven by liberty, order and progress just as "the saint emblem of our independence" (1867:19), the flag used by independentist armies, commended. The physician concludes his "prayer" as follows:

May a total freedom of conscience, an absolute freedom of expression and argument spread the light everywhere and make unnecessary and impossible the revolts that are not purely spiritual, revolutions that are not intellectual. (1867:19-20)

Some scholars in Mexico would state that the first proto-sociological analysis of Mexican society may be attributed to Spanish chroniclers that produced detailed reports about native communities during colonial times (Andrade 1998: 78). However, according to Cardoso

¹³⁵ E.g., Parra and his psychological variant of positivism in the late 1870s –focused on 'moral diseases' and their psychological and physiological origin; or Zayas and his phrenological work on the physiology of crime during 1880s and 1890s (Chazaro 1995).

(2005), Barreda's "Civic prayer" may be read as the first sociological analysis in, and about, Mexico. It is not the aim of this chapter to present a thorough study of Barreda's work or a thorough Foucauldian genealogy of sociology in Mexico. What I do argue is that however 'civic' and based on 'scientific positivism' it appeared, Barreda's 'prayer' was permeated by the heavily Catholic ideological context of Mexico's 19th century and its colonial background. In the European-French intellectual scene, Durkheim (1915:361) spoke of scientists who *believed* in scientific arguments just as churchgoers believed in religions. Scholar Girola (1995) states that late-19th-century and early-20th-century positivists in Mexico relied less on empirical research and more on their "assumptions of the positivistic creed" (1995:44).

By this time (1890s-1910s) sociology was taught only as a course in Law schools' classrooms (Zabludovski 2007: 202-3) and the public national high-school in Mexico City (Hernandez 1990:1Cardoso 2005:189). Antonio Caso, who would afterwards become "the great supporter of philosophy and sociology in Mexico" (Mendieta y Nuñez 1978: 653) and rector of the National University of Mexico in the 1920s, attended one of these Law schools in Mexico City and learnt sociology in a clearly positivistic atmosphere. However, Caso and a group of intellectuals¹³⁶ criticised this scientific positivism strongly. According to Andrade (1998:38-9), Caso conceived progress not as mechanistic and universal but as unpredictable and discontinuous; he supported individual agency and individuals' contribution to progress. Interestingly, in one of his early philosophical essays titled "The existence as economy. Essay on the essence of Christianity", Caso introduced and summed up his reflections as

A synthesis of Christianity based on the moral biography of some great Christians [...] a homage to the heroes of the most important history in humanity's evolution: the development of the Christian ideas and feelings through the centuries. (Caso [1916] 1989: 13)

In her biographical study of Caso, scholar Krauze (1990) states

¹³⁶ The so-called *Ateneo de la Juventud*, whose members were politicians, artists, writers and intellectuals such as Diego Rivera, José Vasconcelos, Alfonso Reyes and others (Zabludovski 2007:209).

Caso professed Christianity. It was the figure of Christ who attracted him the most and he loved Him with great zeal. ‘For me,’ he confessed to me in one of our interviews, ‘Jesus is the way to solve all the problems’. He had detached Jesus from the [Catholic] Church’s dogmas. Christianity for Caso was the Christianity of the origins, of the Gospels, especially Saint John’s (1990: 80).

In his academic works Caso would agree with positivist thinkers on the empirical origin of knowledge. However, drawing from Henri Bergson’s spiritualist metaphysics¹³⁷ (Hernandez 1990), he would disagree with positivists on what such an empirical base would comprise¹³⁸. Caso reportedly claimed that “the experiences of religious faith and metaphysical intuitions are arbitrarily overlooked in the type of experiences positivism considers” (Hernandez 1990:3; see also Cueva 2009).

I argue that similar to the way Barreda would not only draw from Comtean positivism when he wrote, or literally ‘preached’, his ‘prayer’, Caso certainly was not only drawing from Bergsonian metaphysics when he explicitly advocated the epistemological relevance of ‘religious faith’. Barreda, Caso and their two opposite intellectual stances, that is, the ‘anti-Catholic’ and the ‘pro-humanistic’ (Zabludovski 2007: 218-9) do not exhaust the description of sociology’s inception in Mexico, however, they illustrate intellectual main streams whose normative and epistemological bases had not completely broken with the country’s, primarily Catholic, colonial and post-colonial ideological-cultural discourses.

II. Stages of institutionalisation

The first social research centre in the country, *Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales* (IIS), was established in Mexico National University at Mexico City in 1930. Scholars Loyo, Guadarrama and Weissberg (1990) note, in a critical statement, that the first researchers working at IIS did not really have enough time to carry out social and sociological research for they were involved in “various political actions” or held government posts as well

¹³⁷ See Greenberg (1976) for a psychological analysis of the religious influence in Bergson’s philosophy *via* his father’s Jewishness.

¹³⁸ In a brief statement Zabludovski states that Caso was “inspired by the ideas” of German philosophers Wilhelm Dilthey and Edward Spranger as well (2007:210)

(1990:6, 9-11). This was not fortuitous. Andrade (1998) states that IIS' founders trusted social sciences' capacity to assist in the solution of the "great national problems" (1998:43). Scholar Sefchovich (1989) argues that the rhetoric of 'national problems' was part of the social discourses of 'national reconstruction' harnessed by the ideologues of the Mexican Revolution and the political party that capitalised on this historical episode. In an interesting passage of their chapter, Loyo, Guadarrama and Weissberg (1990) state that the establishment of IIS represented "the *persistent faith* in knowledge's utility to solve the great national problems [...] a faith that has its roots in liberalism and particularly in the positivist thinking" (1990:5; emphasis added).

Andrade (1998) reports, and Benitez (2008) suggests as well, that it was not until Lucio Mendieta y Nuñez was appointed head of the IIS in 1939 that relatively more systematic programmes of sociological research were launched. The results of these research activities and other sociological texts were published in *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* (RMS), the first specialist sociology journal in the country reportedly founded by Mendieta y Nuñez in 1939 as well¹³⁹. Interestingly, Andrade quotes the following definition of society by Mendieta y Nuñez: "the set of individuals and aggregates of individuals who live on earth in constant and complex material and *spiritual* interrelations" (quoted by Andrade 1988:50; emphasis added).

In his Eurocentric assessment of RMS and its sociological contributions, De la Garza (1989) states that the 1939-1950 period is represented by the dominance of the "hermeneutic streams" brought to the country by Spanish refugee scholars¹⁴⁰, who were reportedly familiar with German thinkers such as Weber and Heidegger. The "rigorous" philosophical works of

¹³⁹ I will argue in chapters 7 and 8 how this type of 'mono-causal' statements –in which the occurrence of social phenomena in general is attributed to one single agent or entity – are common in sociological discourses in Mexico and are, in fact, closely related to Catholic discourses. Both IIS and RMS still operate as part of Mexico National University.

¹⁴⁰ From the Spanish Civil war period in the 1930s. Some of these intellectuals played a part in the establishment of *La Casa de España* in 1938, an academic institutions that later on became *El Colegio de México*.

these Spanish scholars joined Mexican scholars' "vitalist tradition"¹⁴¹ that started as a reaction to positivism" (De la Garza 1989: 116; see also Girola 1995:44). Andrade (1998) and Rabotnikof (1995) argue that it was Spanish Scholars who brought sociology's European classics to broader Mexican audiences by means of translations of the Europeans' original works. De la Garza states that whereas Spanish intellectuals in Mexico, analysed abstract philosophical topics by "holding discussions without interlocutors [and instead] with Comte or Durkheim", more empirical and positivistic research was carried out by scholars like Mendieta y Nuñez (1989: 117-8). In Girola and Olvera's views (1995:93) Mendieta y Nuñez' research agenda, embedded in the research logics of IIS and RMS, "is related to an idea of social science in Mexico as panacea [...] as the key to decipher the logic of a society that is to be transformed".

Both the lack of a university sociology degree and sociology's early appearance in the 19th-century Law schools in Mexico City certainly had some effects. Briceño-Leon and Sonntag (1998:15) note that the 1930s-1950s period in Latin American sociology meant a "sociology of lawyers". According to De la Garza (1989) sociology in Mexico by then was practiced by lawyers, anthropologists or philosophers, not by 'sociologists' in *sensu stricto*. Both Andrade (1998:37) and Girola and Olvera (1995:44) qualify these generations and their work as "proto-sociology/ists". In Mexico, this situation began to be reversed with the foundation of Mexico National University's School of Political and Social Science in 1951-53 (Mendieta y Nuñez 1978; Andrade 1998). The first undergraduate programmes offered in this school were Social Science, Diplomatic Sciences, Journalism and Political Science¹⁴². These students would attend courses on 'general sociology', 'sociology of Mexico', 'sociology of religion', 'sociology of the family' and 'sociology of law' (Colmenero 2003:44-9) and would be conceived, according to Andrade (1998:57), as contributing to

¹⁴¹ De la Garza does not account for this 'vitalist tradition'. Fernandez (1991:360) touches upon Antonio Caso being part of that stream. Intellectuals in *El Ateneo de la Juventud* may be counted as part of this group too (Zabludovski 2007).

¹⁴² The foundation of this school motivated the establishment of similar undergraduate programmes in universities within Mexico City and other states of the country (Mendieta y Nunez 1978: 665)

the improvement of the performance of Mexico's international relations; the formation of a national identity; the supply of neutral information based on ethical principles, and the organisation of a more rational, just and equitable Mexican society

It was in the 1960s when an undergraduate sociology degree was finally established and offered to applicants in Mexico National University and two public universities outside the capital city (Loyo, et al. 1990:43). Andrade (1998:36) notices that some scholars, Loyo among them, place the start of sociology's institutionalisation in Mexico precisely in this decade and not necessarily when IIS and RMS were established in 1939. In any case, it is during the 1960s and 1970s, when reforms in the curricula of Mexico National University's School of Social and Political Science imprinted "a strong leftist orientation" in sociology (Mendieta y Nunez 1978:666). Girola and Olvera notice the same change of direction in the IIS and RMS (1995:96). Loyo, et al. (1990) state that the Cuban revolution (1953-1959) played a key role in this period too and influenced, particularly, the university context, where leftist students adopted Marxist and revolutionary radical political discourses (1990: 38). From Andrade's point of view (1995: 146-50) sociological thought in this period was influenced not only by Marxist thinking but also by "critical sociology" paradigms and "the dependency theory". The latter developed from the works of Latin American economists Raul Prebisch and Felipe Herrera, the former being a key member of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC, or CEPAL in Spanish). The so-called 'CEPAL's dependency theory' influenced university economic disciplines first and after the inclusion of the more "social aspects of development" during the late 1950s it reportedly became a constant reference in social research (Loyo, et al. 1990:39). The extent to which both critical sociology and dependency theory really shaped sociological discourses and their epistemological configuration and the extent to which these two theories rather adapted to the pre-existing ideological conditions of social science and the very society of Mexico and Latin America, are questions that I am not going to address here, yet imply analytical subtleties that may lead to greater accuracy –or to the reification of 'theories' and 'schools' if they are rather unattended.

Briceño-Leon and Sonntag (1998), in their reading of Marxism in 1970s-1980s Latin America, pay attention to these subtleties. These authors qualify the 1970s-1980s period in Latin American sociology as the period of an “ahistorical” and “antihumanist” Marxist-structuralist sociology where “the structures, the forces superior to actors, determine teleologically the social change”¹⁴³ (1998:18). The revival of this version of Marxism was linked, these authors state, to May 1968 in France and the election of South American communist Salvador Allende as president of Chile in 1970. The evidence I have presented previously may point at other causes as well. Perhaps this Marxist revival with its ‘forces superior to actors’ (Durkheim 1915) and its ‘teleological’ and ‘ahistorical’ features, even if ‘anti-humanist’, may be fundamentally linked as well to the aforementioned cultural-ideological structures and religious contexts –just as Barreda’s anti-Catholic moralist positivism and Caso’s humanist sociology (and Christian profile) certainly were. I will return to this topic in chapter 8.

III. Current sociologies

Two “clearly distinguishable” streams operated in Latin America’s sociologies in the 1990s according to Briceño-Leon and Sonntag: a “philosophical and humanistic sociology of a nomothetic character” focused on holistic theories, pure research and qualitative methods; and a “scientific sociology” based on the analysis of micro phenomena through inductive thinking, quantitative methods and utilitarian principles (1998:22). Andrade (1998) states that 1990s sociology in Mexico was constituted not necessarily by the rejection of “holistic paradigms” such as Marxism, functionalism and structuralism but by “a growing diversification of perspectives and multiple communities” that “promote the revision and discussion of the foundations and application” of that set of holistic paradigms and “reflect about their limitations and possible new approaches” (1998:151). In the same decade Mexican scholar Aguilar (1995) analysed sociology in Mexico with a more critical lens. Aguilar states that sociological research centres in the country are tacitly led by “traditional

¹⁴³ Cf. Andrade (1995: 148-149). For this author Marxism lost its influence by then.

and hegemonic” (1995:210-11) research institutions based at Mexico City (see also Gutierrez 1995:180). Aguilar (1995) also reports a lack of communication between Mexican sociologists and their peers overseas and a low level of intellectual exchange which is patent in publications where authors reportedly tend to cite authoritative European sociologists (e.g. Habermas) or close colleagues only. He also sees in Mexico’s sociology a return to normative research linked to a “moral and political philosophy of human rights and political freedom”, which would mean “turning back to confuse normative with factual judgements, practical recipes with explanations, heart wishes with truths of the intellect” (1995:213-4). Critical too, and somewhat Eurocentric and normative, Gimenez (1995:198) reports an “insufficient familiarity” with classic sociological knowledge, a “weak epistemological culture” (seen also De la Garza 1989) based on “positivistic dreams” and “traumas before the hard sciences”, as well as a “clumsiness” in the theoretical handling of empirical data that would produce “descriptivist and quantitativist” limited results.

A more recent and comprehensive analysis is Castañeda’s work (2004) on Mexico’s “academic sociology” and its relation to the state *via* a particular university model and a likewise singular community of intellectuals. For this author “the Mexican sociological tradition” has developed as “a duality of souls”, i.e., as an “empiricism” plagued with common-sense and as an “ideological rhetoric” marked by the state’s agenda and the “national courses” (2004:206). He explains this as follows. After the Mexican Revolution, the audience of Mexican intellectuals was basically the State. Intellectuals were the State’s “alter ego” and universities constituted the State’s “moral conscience” (2004:113). This State-intellectuals relationship changed after what Castañeda calls “the break” that reportedly occurred in the aftermath of the 1968 student protest, or Tlatelolco massacre¹⁴⁴. The State embraced intellectuals anew, this time as “experts” of “technical” knowledge and

¹⁴⁴ The protest-massacre took place during president Diaz Ordaz’ administration (1964-1970). In October 1968, a large number of university and high school students gathered in one of the main squares of the Tlatelolco area in Mexico City to protest against the government. The place was surrounded by members of the Mexican Army, who opened fire at some point from the roofs of the apartment buildings nearby. Hundreds of protesters reportedly died by the initial shooting and during the subsequent search the army carried out door by door in the adjacent buildings (Zermeño 1994, Poniatowska 1999). In statements similar to Castañeda’s (2004), Zermeño (1994) argues that the happenings showed a deterioration of the State-university relationship and the weakening of the official political ideology and its nationalistic discourse.

not as “moral authorities”. The Marxist intellectuals-ideologues from the 1970s turned into public commentators and the leading voices of public opinion in the 1990s (2004: 114). Sociology as part of that university ethos and intellectual context was obviously not immune. Sociology would take for granted the Mexican Revolution’s aims as its *raison d’être*; the former was not only a companion of the Mexican revolution’s agenda, it eventually became a dependent of the revolution’s national reconstruction plans. According to Castañeda, this ‘nationalistic’ sociology would lose its force gradually. By the 1980s critical theory and postmodernist ideas, with their “anti-method” air, started to spread in sociology’s classrooms. However these fresh theoretical streams would have “disastrous consequences” for students were trying to learn about a “[postmodernist] denial of social science’s discourses” without really knowing the western/European foundations and backgrounds of these discourses (2004:189) –see below sociology lecturer Rita’s personal statements on a similar matter. From a somewhat Eurocentric position, Castañeda argues that even in the new sociological topics and fields that arose in Mexico’s sociology afterwards – e.g. studies of Weber, sociology of work, urban and political sociology – there is still a persistent “love for the ideological function” that commits sociology to “notions and discourses that surpass its analytical role” (2004:190). In short, in Castañeda’s view, the “Mexican culture”, including intellectuals, universities and sociologists, “emancipated itself from the [Catholic] Church, not from its king” (2004:112). I would agree, Mexican culture emancipated itself from the Catholic Church, yet I would specify further: whereas Mexican culture emancipated from the Catholic Church and some of its official discourses, it *did not* emancipate from people’s Catholic discourses and least of all from the partly Catholic ideological-cultural structures I discussed in chapter 3.

Although Castañeda takes for granted this secularist rupture between the Catholic Church and ‘Mexican culture’, he interestingly touches upon a parallel between the way audiences have interpreted and ‘mythologized’ the work of some classic Mexican sociologists and the way people approach biblical texts in Mexico. Castañeda uses the case of Gonzalez Casanova’s classic sociological book *Democracy in Mexico* ([1965] 1972). Just like the bible, Castañeda suggests, the “truth and meaning” of *Democracy in Mexico* lies in its “reference to

a truth” that “transcends” the content of the book and its logical-methodological inconsistencies¹⁴⁵ and rather lies in its courage to criticise the “absence of democracy” in the country, in its setting up of a national-democracy agenda and in the interpretations of the book as a forecaster of the Tlatelolco protest/massacre in 1968 (2004:232). In a brief paragraph Castañeda also argues that the “identity” of both the religious and sociological discourses “*depends on its Enlightened [spokespersons], on its priests, on its privileged interpreters* (2004:233)” (emphasis added). The author does not draw any causal link between one discourse and the other. I will. First, though, I will present what the sociology lecturers I interviewed reported as their own experiences in the university, sociological and social research fields.

Sociology lecturers’ personal experiences.

What I will present below is evidence of what the respondents during the interviews reported having experienced in the university, sociological and social research fields and what they currently think about these contexts. I include these interview statement in this chapter to offer not only an intellectualist historiographical depiction of sociology in Mexico but also a picture of the latter’s current tensions, the tacit beliefs and norms that make up its university-academic identity, the routine practices, the awkward anecdotes and occurrences that some specialised authors seem to avoid; in short a description of sociologies in Mexico by the people that ‘make’ those sociologies, by the professionals that (partly) construct the discipline and keep it alive despite the chronic shortage of funding, the challenge of educating hundreds and thousands of students with scant resources and the not-always-friendly bureaucratic structures and institutions around them.

As the respondents’ statements were greatly diverse, I will group such statements and will present them in a series of thematic and individual micro narratives that will go from the simple to the complex –the ‘local’ context first, the ‘national’ and ‘international’ contexts

¹⁴⁵ For example Castañeda argues that Gonzalez Casanova used the term ‘democracy’ but did not explain the model of democracy he had in mind.

afterwards – and from the respondents’ references about the past to their statements about the present.

Experiences in/views from Aguascalientes

Respondents’ higher education experiences

AgC-based (MxC-born) sociology lecturer Brigitte told me her first undergraduate-programme choice was philosophy, not sociology. She attended this programme at a private Jesuit university in Mexico City where she “started to get involved with classmates who were into political matters and sort of supporters of Theology of Liberation”. Brigitte eventually entered a sociology undergraduate programme at a public university in MxC in 1978 because, she stated, “this thing of the Philosophy of Liberation and studying Marxism with my mates; we read Lukács, what a horror! A had a friend who taught me the Capital on Saturdays”. Brigitte then paused and described the “environment” in this public university as “very Marxist, very orthodox”. She noticed lecturers “were not really critical, they were closed, [...] inconsistent with what they said and what they did”. When she was about to finish her undergraduate sociology programme she realised that her training was not necessarily sociological.

I did not get to know sociology because most of my courses were about Marxism. I took four workshops on The Capital; a whole semester was for [studying] Gramsci and another one for Althusser [...] that was the curricula and we had no option

MxC-trained sociologist Michael also described his undergraduate studies as “an orthodox Marxist training”. Michael summed it up as “Marxism was about saying ‘no’ to everything: not to watch TV, news, not to read the newspaper, not to go to night clubs”. That sociology undergraduate curricula, Michael stated, was all about “reading [Louis Bonaparte’s] Eighteenth Brumaire, and [the Communist] manifesto”, Michael reported not remembering other sociological perspectives as part of his undergraduate studies.

The statements by other AgC's lecturers were analogous. Julia for example remembered that she and her classmates at AgC's university were perceived as Marxists, "you know the stereotype of the guy wearing sandals, with beard, long hair and jeans". Julia then said that there was "a bit of this trend" in the school but referred to this perception as a mere stereotype. Later during our interview though, Julia stated "you could see I mastered Marxism when I was lecturing", it was because,

when I did my undergraduate [sociology] programme, Marx's Capital was our bible [...] we had to work on it; lecturers were sort of obsessed [teaching Marxism]. So yes, Marx was the author who predominated out of all the authors we read.

Edward did not attend a Mexican university for his undergraduate studies¹⁴⁶; his memories of Mexico's sociological field are not different from Brigitte's, Michael's and Julia's though. After enrolling as sociology lecturer in Mexico, Edward said he realised that,

the fundamental perspective in almost all the social science disciplines was Marxism. But it was a very primitive Marxism! as an academic put it recently in a meeting. [...]. Perhaps they only read the book cover of 'The Capital' and not the book as such.

Edward recalled as well the occasion when a public university in Mexico summoned sociology lecturers from other universities to collect inputs for the opening of an undergraduate programme in social science. Edward attended the meeting and referred to it as follows:

It [the programme's proposal] was all about Marx one, Marx two, Marx three, Marx four, Marx five, and six; from the beginning to the end it was all about what was already known: determination by economic infrastructure on ideological and political structures; everything depended on class struggle.

Although Edward touched upon Mexican authors whose Marxist work included what he described as original contributions, he concluded Marxism "became a total dogma". This

¹⁴⁶ He attended a Catholic seminar in Mexico and a Catholic university in Italy afterwards. Even after he decided to quit his priestly vocation two years before graduating, he kept attending the university in Italy and completed there his studies on social sciences. The reader may find Edward's further biographical data in chapter 5.

sociologist then referred to his own work in the establishment of the sociology programme in AgC's university in the 1970s. According to the interviewee, this programme was meant to avoid such a biased Marxist trend. Edward and the colleague that designed the first sociology undergraduate curricula in AgC University

came from different experiences¹⁴⁷, we did study Marxism but also other trends that were not even known in Mexico by then, for example, structuralism, symbolic interactionism, Bourdieu's theories [...] We designed a very plural curricula, with courses on Marxism but also [...] on Pareto, Durkheim, Weber, and also Parsons

This is consonant with what AgC-based lecturer Rita described. For this lecturer, who studied undergraduate sociology in AgC's university, her undergraduate experiences were not necessarily "Marxist". Rita stated that they studied authors who were not included in other universities' sociology programmes: "Parsons, Merton, Levi-Strauss, Max Weber, Durkheim [...] along with Marx, Lenin, Engels [...] in a sort of balanced curricula". In a statement that resembles Castañeda's (2004) on the blind or baseless postmodernist-like "denial" of social science in sociology classrooms in the 1980s, Rita interestingly stated "I remember there were some courses on Marxism, or methodology where there was a strong criticism towards everything about positivism", and then went on: "but here we had not even gone through positivism". In Rita's view, that criticism towards positivism was issued from a "pre-positivist" stance for they "had never met positivism, and we were already criticising it".

Michael characterised his undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, both in public universities located in MxC, as totally different. He told me he realised the lecturers in the university where he completed his undergraduate studies "were in an archaic state". During his undergraduate studies, Michael said he was told by the lecturers that sociologists would not find jobs,

most of us studied the [undergraduate] programme with the [economic] depression on our backs. Our lecturers used the public transport with us and you could not say 'this guy makes a lot of money as sociology lecturer, so I want to be like him'. There was a frustrating atmosphere [...]

¹⁴⁷ Here Edward is referring to his social science studies at the Catholic Italian university and his colleague's studies in similar Catholic institutions.

Michael described lecturers from his postgraduate sociology programme in opposite terms; those lecturers were “successful [...] they published, they travelled abroad, they attended conferences; a totally different landscape opened up [...]”. Michael also described this public university as a place “with a Foucauldian discipline” because, in Michael’s words, it was a place “where you conceived yourself as an individual who did not know”. Michael then recalled that some of his colleagues used to say “while you are [postgraduate] student you are a non-human”. Michael added “if your lecturers are senior and renowned academics it is very hard for you to debate with them”.

Authority practices in the past and present

The “main advice” Michael said he received, in terms of how to deal with disagreements between tutor and tutoree or colleagues, was “do not confront that person”. Michael stated, “I could not argue with my [postgraduate] tutor, it was like ‘you do this, period’ [...]. My PhD was a political academic training”. Michael told me about the day when he was upset after a tutor gave him a low mark in an essay, so he said to his tutor “I will submit a complaint form”. Michael said that his tutor replied “if you are intelligent you will not do that”. In terms of authority relationships between colleagues and between generations, this respondent stated:

Let’s say X is the boss at this university, so we [...] have been his students somehow. Let’s also say that there is, academically and politically, still a long way to go for somebody to stand up in front of this one [X], who controls everything.

Michael then explained as follows: “the senior academics who were our lecturers have voice, they have the authority, and there are many of us who are just starting our [academic] careers, yet I think there is a glass ceiling”. Michael stopped for a while and said “when I was doing my PhD I knew about 20 lecturers, who gradually left [the department] because of conflicts

with that one [X]”. Michael then suggested “maybe things are getting more democratic now”, and added,

in the regional [research] networks [where] I can find a colleague and we can start a research group, but it [the regional network] is not about [saying] ‘hey come here and apply my questionnaire’; it is rather a group where we discuss as peers.

Afterwards I asked Michael about the differences between Aguascalientes and Mexico City in terms of authoritarian practices, Michael replied:

five years ago I would have thought there were many differences [...]. [I would have said] ‘those [authoritarian practices] do not happen in Mexico City’. But they do happen, under other forms and other codes, yet they do happen [...] I think we are talking about an authority culture with national scope.

After my question about how to get authority in the academia, Laura told me that, in older generations, authority was acquired by holding “moral leadership”, by “having leadership in teaching” and by having a long academic career. Then she said that academic authority in current generations is granted rather if the person has a doctoral or postdoctoral degree, experience as visiting academic, publications and membership to the country’s National System of Researchers¹⁴⁸. Afterwards, in an interesting and somewhat contradictory statement, Laura touched upon the authorities in the sociology department and stated that whereas some people there have “administrative authority” they lack “moral authority”, and it is them whom Laura does not “respect”. What counts for Laura is not the “authority position” in the academic structure “but the person that holds that position”.

The university and local research contexts.

The respondents referred to very different work-place-related situations using a rather critical tone. Perhaps the least critical respondent in this sense was Rita, who described the

¹⁴⁸ Government-funded institutional system ran by Mexico’s council for science and technology. See below Joseph’s and Suzanne’s account of this ‘system’.

sociology department at AgC's university as "an elite group", for they "are a bit more open than common people". This advantageous position is related, from Rita's perspective, to their academic training which "has promoted an open mind-set, a mind-set of respect". In that sense, Rita stated, "I do think we are less bad than society in general".

Laura, rather critically, referred to two types of researchers working at the university: "open" researchers that "research new things" and "very intolerant researchers that do the same type of work". Laura then explained that some of her colleagues once said to her that she was wasting her time by doing research on Catholic institutions. Laura recalled these colleagues suggested her "to study power, gender, violence" not the Catholic institutions she was investigating. In Laura's view the most intolerant researchers "tend to describe themselves as liberal and as more concerned about 'fundamental' topics, which bring about changes in society".

Mexico City-born Brigitte and her reported experiences of founding and running a research centre in Aguascalientes would be revealing of not only the academic context but also the local intellectual context. In 1994, Brigitte and others colleagues founded a centre for interdisciplinary social research. At first, she said, "it seemed the research centre was going to work". After some years, Brigitte reportedly realised that the research centre was all about her "and a board of males with the sacred-cows [guru] attitude". "What do you mean by 'sacred cow' attitude?" I asked her. She replied,

It was these people who had a higher level of education than most of the people; doctors, government officials [...] [who] had this attitude of being enlightened males that do read and do know

This respondent said that whereas research in Aguascalientes has "changed a bit partly because people from outside [other states in Mexico] have arrived", she sees "the idea of [social] research" there being about 'handbooks', about what the handbooks say; so the research steps are one, then two and so on [...]". She then went on "I do not know if [by using handbooks] they really think they are very good researchers or if they do it as a way to

protect themselves because of their insecurities. Anyway” she concluded, “... the level of research overall is very low”.

Social science and research in Mexico.

Next I present a representative selection of the respondents’ statements related to the country’s performance in social research and social science in general. Although many of the following statements are focused on ‘generation of social theory’– as my initial research proposal suggested¹⁴⁹ – they are revealing in terms of Mexican social scientists’ perception of their professional field overall. Brigitte, for example, said she thinks social scientists in Mexico “review the theory instead of generating it”; they “try to paste theory into data while doing analysis, and the result is horrible”. Edward’s comments on theory production in Mexico were somewhat different. He talked about a theoretical production that is “limited to middle range theories”. In terms of specific sociological fields in Mexico, he said:

for example, some researchers of religion, not all of them though, do produce theoretical knowledge in that particular area; the same in cultural studies, or cultural ethnic groups. But I think there is not much about general theories

For Edward this is related to people apparently “not daring to produce or show what they do”. This idea was touched upon by Julia as well. She stated that there is no theory generation in Mexico and this situation has to do with “our cultural education [...] we are very immersed into this idea of being humble” (see next chapter for my follow-up of this answer). After this Julia stated that whereas AgC’s university does support researchers and generation of theories, “the State and its policies do not”.

In Michael’s view, the state’s council for science and technology represents the main funding body in the country: “with no funding from them you can do nothing”. After my rather Eurocentric comment on the apparent “poor analysis” in sociological research in

¹⁴⁹ The generation, or lack of generation, of sociological theories in Mexico and how the Catholic ideology was linked to such phenomenon were my initial research object and research question. After data collection and initial data analysis exercises, and after realising that my empirical evidence was enough as to address sociology as a whole, I changed my research object and started to work on the topic the reader can now read in this dissertation.

Mexico, Michael replied saying that there would be a “serious problem” in the country in this sense. In his view, this problem arises because social scientists “get demands from everywhere for contributing to social policies”. Mexico’s Council for science and technology, Michael said, “has five or six high-priority topics: water, energy, medication, food, poverty”, which are researched by corresponding networks of scientists. Michael then said he became part of the network of poverty, and then referred to a situation he thinks is key to understand social research in the country

The idea of the network is about a large group of researchers looking for solutions to the country’s problems [...]. There is pressure there because at the end you have to say how the problem is going to be solved. Before the scientist used to say ‘this is wrong’, now the scientist has to say how to fix the problem too.

In statements which portray a particular *research rationale* that is consonant with some of the authors I have presented above (Castañeda 2004, Briceño-Leon and Sonntag 1998; Aguilar 1995; Loyo, et al. 1990), Michael said the following about the “labour studies” research field:

I think we do research having an ideal of the world, a political ideal and that biases or interferes with our gaze. I was reading Bauman the other day and then I realised that, in labour studies, we are getting to a point of asking ourselves ‘ok, what should drive our scientific observations?’ [...] Labour studies are usually carried out with an ideal model of waged work [...] however it seems the precarious work model is there and yet we base our criticism on a model [waged work], an ought-to-be model. So when you read the descriptions by Bauman you say ‘right, that is how the labour world is’, but the question is ‘what do I say after describing that world?’.

Research topic choices in social research, from Laura’s perspective, depend on the researcher asking herself questions such as “what is fashionable? [...] who is going to pay me? What do they [funders] want to see?”. As a result, Laura continued, “you see the list of external institutions that fund research, then you find ‘gender’ [as a topic] so you say ‘ok I will research gender’. Laura described these as “perverse aspects” that arise because of the “political agendas, where political topics are more important than social topics”. Keeping a critical tone, and after my question on the academic publishing business in Mexico, Laura

said there is a pressure for publishing and then went on, “whereas there are fifteen journals published in United Kingdom, there is only one in Mexico”. She then stated

another perversity is that if it [the publication] is not [written] in English it does not count [as publication abroad]. Look at American academics, it is an offence [for them] if English is not spoken in conferences. So if you do not speak English you are not visible for publishing, for people to listen to you. Why is a Latin American forced to speak English and an American is not forced to speak Spanish?

I present below further statements by Laura and other lecturers on their views about the international social science and research field.

The international field

“Would there be resistance from the Spanish-speaking researcher to learn English?” I asked Laura. “Yes there is resistance, but it is also a resistance about saying ‘why? Why do they rule the world?’” Laura went on and stated that an academic text written in English is not a guarantee of quality. From Laura’s view, some of those texts “are true crap”. Laura continued,

the case of American researchers is a true...; it is ignominious, [they complain saying] ‘how it is that they [Spanish-speaking researchers] do not speak English?!’ [...] I find that truly annoying

Unlike Laura, Michael stated he rather takes for granted the convenience of speaking English for research purposes. Similarly, Brigitte commented on people’s cultural difficulties to learn English and later on told me she had just submitted a draft to an English-written journal. Brigitte’s statements on the relations between the western and Mexican academies were critical though. She stated, “we have to read many [Western] theorists, I mean I had to read Giddens, [...] but when will Giddens read us? Never”.

In Michael’s view, academic dialogues with sociologists based at other countries takes place usually between Latin American and Spanish researchers. As for his publications abroad Edward referred to them as minimal and rather as ‘invitations’. He said he thinks the greatest

barriers for publishing abroad is language as “publishing in English is not easy at all”, and the result “is that [our] publications are done by invitation” via the researchers’ “social capital” or “networks”. In terms of quality of research Edward stated that there are researchers in Mexico who work with the same “rigour” as researchers in Europe, and then added:

The difference I find is that it is the majority of researchers in Europe who work seriously. I do know the other type of people in Great Britain, in United States, or Italy, people who is there doing minimum work. Unfortunately those people in Mexico are the majority

From Edward’s perspective the priority assigned to “bureaucratic” and “research issues” in Great Britain and in Mexico is different, for “the way of seeing research abroad is different, less emphasis is placed on bureaucratic issues and more on research”, whereas in Mexico the emphasis is “more bureaucratic than academic”.

Experiences in/views from Mexico City.

MxC’s university-based lecturers Norma and Angela referred, separately and critically, to a distinction which I think is worth presenting from the outset¹⁵⁰. In Norma’s view, it is not in the department of sociology where she has found intellectual companionship in her interests in theory and sociology of science. Norma stated she found her colleagues at one of the MxC university’s research centres more interested in these areas. Norma then continued and said, “there is an abysmal difference between the university’s research centres and the departments, in all the disciplines”. After this – and using a metaphor similar to the dichotomies I presented in chapter 3 – Norma stated:

I had better [working] conditions as a PhD student in the research centre than the conditions lecturers in the school have [...] in the sense of access to a computer, borrowing books from the library [...] the differences are from heaven to earth.

¹⁵⁰ My interviews with MxC-based sociologists were aimed at exploring the same topics I addressed in the interviews with AgC sociologists. In practice this was hard to accomplish, given the shorter length of my interviews in MxC, related mostly to the interviewee’s tighter schedules.

The above are similar to Angela's statements. By the end of our interview, this lecturer advised me to interview researchers outside the department, since the latter would not give me "a picture of research in the country". Angela stated the picture I would get from the school "is going to be terrifying, horrible". Although the aim of this chapter is to portray the country, its academic environment and research fields as experienced and reported by the sociology lecturers, I will include occasionally remarks and commentaries from 'outsider' interviewees, whom I did interview after Angela's suggestion –and according to the original data-collection plan.

Personal-educational backgrounds

After asking MxC's university-trained lecturer Peter about his undergraduate studies he told me that his sociology programme was focused only on theory, "everything [was] very abstract". He then told me about an anthropologist who taught him about qualitative research and how this changed his understanding of social research dramatically. The anthropologist, Peter said, "told me 'sociologists do surveys; anthropologists research people, do ethnography'".

Peter's colleague Angela stated, "I choose sociology for the same reasons as others, thinking you could build a better world"; after a couple of sentences she re-stated "I think my interest in sociology comes from there, from trying to understand what is going on [in society], trying to build a better life". In a somewhat similar statement, MxC's university-graduate Gregory explained to me the reasons why he decided to study sociology. "It was because I was very close to the social problems of my region and because of the influence of my father, who was a humanist". Gregory said that in the second half of the 1960s, once enrolled as a sociology student in MxC's university¹⁵¹, his sociological vocation "was reinforced" by his participation in the 1968 student protests in Mexico City¹⁵² and because, Gregory added,

¹⁵¹ The university Gregory has worked at since he graduated.

¹⁵² Gregory is referring here to the protests related to the fatal events that took place in Tlatelolco on October 1968 –see footnote 144.

I had to face some problems in my community as leader of the peasants. Those situations made me see a world that you cannot see from here, from the university; what I call the necessities of life.

Joseph, a sociologist graduated from MxC's university and a lecturer in this institution since then, stated "when I started my undergraduate studies in the 1960s the school was very Marxist". He then referred briefly to his participation in the 1968 student movement as well. Joseph's colleague Suzanne, who completed her undergraduate sociology programme in the late 1970s, roughly ten years after Gregory and Joseph, described the then school atmosphere as "the beginning of the debates about women as a sociological topic. Gramsci's translated work, Suzanne stated, "was just arriving too". Those years according to Suzanne represented "an openness" in terms of topics and trends as they went from "a very technical, structural-functional, positivistic training to a broader [training] from a Marxist perspective". Then Suzanne added

some say that period corresponds to Marxist dogmatism; I do not think so, at least it was not so in all cases, because we went through functionalism, structural-functionalism [...]. As a student you had other options.

Norma, sociology student graduated from MxC's university in the first half of the 1990s, stated that she considered studying sociology at a private university. In Norma's words that university was "a sort of toy university" though, a university "for posh people, not really serious". Then, in a rather opposite account to that of Suzanne, Norma stated she received a "totally" Marxist education. "When I got here [MxC's university] the idea of sociology was all about a means for political practice, very linked to Marxism, of course". Then Norma described her studies as

very deficient training in some aspects, barely sociological actually. They taught Marxism, which is crucial for the development of social thought and it is always a reference in sociology, but it is not sociology.

After this Norma stated that despite such a strong emphasis on Marxism, and despite her not finding convincing the idea that sociology "had to be necessarily linked to practice", her studies in sociology at MxC's university "opened up" her "views on the [world's] problems",

I thank this university for my exposure to the Marxist discourse and to an alternative view of the world really changed me; it opened up for me a more realistic version of what this country is. [...] This university trained me in a hard sense, an ethical [sense], not just academic, which was deficient. [...] It gave me this very clear idea about the country being deeply unjust, deeply unjust, because the distribution of wealth is insane, it is polarised, it is misogynist...

Power notions and authority practices

Striving for coherence between one's political position and one's academic practices "is not convenient for the dominant groups in [public] universities", said Gregory. After some statements about him giving conferences in religious private universities, Gregory told me about his views and scepticism on these universities as follows:

They are elitist, [...], many of the youngsters attend courses there because they have nothing else to do, because they just want a degree to continue the chain of domination that comes from their parents, who have the best jobs; so they do networking to keep that world [...] a world of domination, of negotiating job posts to get to the top of power

Speaking critically about her own work place, Angela stated MxC's university "believes the only research [in the country] is done by MxC's university and that is very, very serious". So "would you say there is a sort of a MxC's university-centrism?" I asked her. She agreed. "Is this related to the centralisation of authority practices in society at large? I then asked. "Of course", Angela replied, "here everything crosses the centre, even research [-related matters] crosses the centre of the university". According to Angela people in Mexico "do not know how to live democratically [...] we have a country which is still authoritarian, based not on the experts' authority but on the authoritarian's authority". Angela went on,

Mexico does not have that [democracy] tradition, does not have that tradition anywhere, including the academia. You can see that in this university and its totally centralised and vertical structure¹⁵³

¹⁵³ A researcher from one of MxC university's social research centres, whom I interviewed as well, stated on the same matter: "MxC university is a very hierarchical university, very hierarchical, overwhelmingly hierarchical, those authority interplays are reflected in the [difference in] salary levels, in the institutional power logics, in the categories of researchers; it [the university] is very

When I asked Peter directly whether he, as a lecturer, was an authority in the classroom, he replied,

Yes I am an authority figure. For example, one day I asked my students to go to a conference where I was going to present something. One of the students said ‘you just want to have quorum’, I said ‘no, [...], I want you to go so you listen to my colleagues and if you do not go I am going to fail you in the course’. Some students complained to the school’s office. The head of the department asked me what was going on, I said ‘they do not want to do the [assigned] activity’. So, yes you have to be an authority

More specific and extensive comments on lecturers’ authority came from Norma. Next I present a careful summary. Similar to the authority “centralisation” reported by Angela in the university, Norma commented on the university’s “traditional” and “hierarchical” teaching style saying that “the lecturer is the one who gives lectures, teaches” whereas students listen to lecturers and learn. “In that sense MxC’s university is very hierarchical” said Norma, and then continued “I do not necessarily criticise that”. She explained as follows:

This thing of pretending that I do not have authority over the students is, for me, a very easy discourse, very fake. I think symbolic violence can be exerted in many forms and it does not go away just because we say to the students ‘let’s here all learn from all of us, and call me by my first name’.

In Norma’s view, there has to be a “principle of acknowledgement” which she described as “an acknowledgement from the students about the lecturer being there because he knows things the students do not [...]. Otherwise the lecturer would not have anything to offer”. For Norma, if the lecturer is “not more competent” than his students “why would he have to be your lecturer?”. She also stated

if you do not grant authority [to the lecturer], the course would worth nothing. I am not saying I do not believe in my students but I want them to acknowledge that I can... for example, they once told me ‘no, you are wrong’, but I have the authority, the epistemic authority, the reasons, the knowledge.

gerontocratic as well, it is a university that values how many years you have been in the institution, [...] let’s say that in a viva voce doctoral examination one’s participation [as examiner] depends on the year one entered the institution. I am usually the youngest so I am the last who speaks and you may even not participate, because the other [senior or emeritus] examiners are there”

After I suggested the idea of “sharing of authority”, Norma replied

Look, I am very open, for example, when my students say something I find right I say ‘you are totally right’, [...] ‘that is a very interesting question’ [...]. I am not sure if that is sharing the authority, the authority is still in me,...[...] There is an asymmetry there, and to say it does not exist is [...]. I mean, to say that I share the authority with them [wondering herself]... No, I acknowledge their opinions [...] and I have no problems to say ‘oops that I do not know’. But I do not know if that is sharing the authority.

Theoretical and empirical research

After listening to Rachel’s experiences as an academic social activist, I asked her whether a social-activist profile was a common characteristic among her colleagues. Rachel replied:

I do not know, I do not remember. There is a lecturer who is very active [...] and has received many awards because of her activism but I feel she goes too far from the level of commitment one must have. The rest I do not know, I think my colleagues are too theoretical. As a sociologist, I consider necessary the sociologists’ involvement in social [extra-academic] groups, not just studying the classic books or others’ [research] results.

During our interview, I told Rachel’s colleague Angela that I had often heard the idea of there being a separation between theoretical and empirical research in the school and social research in Mexico in general. Angela agreed and then added that such separation “happens a lot” and it “is the worst mistake in this school”. The empirically oriented researchers, from Angela’s perspective, “do what Bourdieu calls ‘mere empiricism’”.

Joseph defined “empirical” research as “getting in touch with social problems, and bringing from there conclusions that generate new ways to interpret a concept, a principle”. Joseph referred to this involvement in reality as a priority. Yet he also advocated the usefulness of theory and theorising in research, which he explicitly defined as “finding the principles, the laws, the categories that represent the processes and are expressed in a general language, a universal language”. On the other hand, this lecturer also referred to students and lecturers

avoiding empirical research, and doing instead “speculations”, which he related to a “habit of intellectualism” that consists of “repeating discourses, so”, he continued, “you just have to write an essay elegantly, by speculating about Plato’s concept of liberty for example. So in one night you produce fifteen or twenty pages and call it research”. In Joseph’s view the reasons of why students and lecturers do not go to the field and research reality, and do instead speculations or “grope” others’ theories, is both an evident lack of funding for field trips and a series of “bureaucratic” applications and administrative procedures lecturers have to go through to get their field trips approved and, if possible, funded.

Norma stated she never conducted empirical research, and then said “I respect people who do it though”. Right after this and in a critical tone, she stated “but even Bourdieu says that the best intentions can also produce bad sociology and that is truth”. In Norma’s words, the level of theoretical knowledge in the school is “bad, bad” in the sense that the staff’s knowledge is not updated and “the community is not really interested in that”. Norma went on and said that there is “a discourse” in the school that “diminishes the importance of theory”. Norma also stated that she was critically told by colleagues “what is the point of your philosophical disquisitions when there is so much poverty in the country?” Norma concluded that lecturers in the school “are inclined towards empirical research”, and some of them “ignore theory, and if they know about it it is only about Marxist theory, outdated Marxist theory, not Wallerstein’s Marxism, for example.”

The sociologists’ community

In a review of conference proceedings published by a group of colleagues, Joseph referred briefly to the lack of a community of sociologists as such in the school. During our interview I asked him about this and his views on the matter. In a statement similar to Angela’s assertion on the lack of academic ‘democratic’ practices, Joseph stated that sociologists,

are very anti-social, we do not know how to cohabitate, we barely trust each other. If the authority [head of department/school] summons us to a meeting to discuss work

issues, only ten out of one hundred staff members attend the meeting. [...] Some lecturers [...] do not look forward to create a community.

From Joseph's point of view, a probable cause is that lecturers "are very disappointed of the very structures, the very institutions", they "do not believe in them". Yet this would be only an "internal distrust" as Joseph sees his colleagues getting involved in activities with colleagues from other universities. Joseph then touched upon a more sensitive topic: salary and unethical work practices. "We have a low salary" said Joseph, "but if we prove that we are productive, we get salary incentives". He continued:

some [lecturers] cheat, they may publish an article with the title 'biography', then another article with the title 'life history' and another one with 'case study', so I just have to change the first paragraph and then I have three different publications. That has generated a productivity that is only apparent. [...].

Joseph went on: "I may have a heavy work load with several courses, but I can say, 'let's put the students from these two courses together so I lecture only once'". For this lecturer "that is an immoral act". After my explicit question, and despite his lengthy account on the matter, Joseph accepted that these work practices are rather "exceptions" among his colleagues. Joseph's colleague Suzanne referred to the same salary-incentives scheme mentioned by Joseph. She referred to it as "a world of problems" and as "a sort of new credentialism". In Suzanne's words, "if you get the credentials they give you points [which mean] a salary increase [...] of fifty, sixty or up to one hundred ten per cent over your monthly salary"

Doing research and publishing research results is another source of "points". The problem with such source, in Suzanne's view, is that teaching by lecturers becomes "subjected" to the lecturers' research interests. "I may research workers in this factory so I assign to my students a paper that is related to that research topic". And that for Suzanne implies "ethical issues", which she implicitly related to authorship matters. After she described the practice of academic criticism in the school as "academic cannibalism", Suzanne stated the following, about the school's cliques and the criteria for academic awards

They have serious problems in that sense [...] there are groups, orientations, political stances [...] so the people who will be favoured will be those who belong to that

group and are closer to the [school's] administration, even if they have no academic merits

Norma's statements about the academic staff were probably the most optimistic. Despite her criticism of 'bad' and outdated empirical and theoretical researchers, this lecturer said that "the [sociologists'] community is getting more professional". In Norma's view, many lecturers with no academic interest or training were hired in the 1970s, yet "that generation is retiring now" and today "you get no chance [in academia] if you have no interest, training and commitment". Norma concluded "there has been a very fast change in terms of level of professionalisation".

Social sciences and research in Mexico and abroad

Speaking about the country's educational field in general, Suzanne stated that "many streams" that "dominate" this field in the country "are implicitly conservative". According to Suzanne, "that thinking does not assume itself as conservative but it is. It harms in educational terms". Such streams,

are based on this discourse about 'coming from a Marxist background and then overcoming it and then overcoming structural functionalism and creating a new vision that is superior to the former' blablabla

However, despite this "supposedly overcoming of Marxism, of structural functionalism, they are still positivistic", Suzanne stated. This is evident for her because

some people, for example, cite some authors and not others, so if you leave aside Marxism it is very clear, isn't it? [Those people say] 'why read it [Marxism] if it is out of fashion and has been overcome'

This implicit preference for Marxist perspectives was rather explicit in Gregory, who described himself as Marxist and one of his published books as "leftist, even from the cover". In a critical statement he also referred to some colleagues as "office-worker-Marxist, instead

of fighter-Marxist” because “when it comes to criticise or protest, they step aside”. After this, Gregory added

you have to write with bases, with foundations, convinced of what you write and being consistent with what you write. Some people follow me even if they do not know me because they can see I have kept my political-ideological position, instead of putting it aside, as many authors and researchers have done

For Gregory this coherence between a person’s political profile and her intellectual position is crucial and tells about a person’s level of professional commitment. Interestingly, during our interview Angela critically touched upon the same matter and stated

the Latin American thought is too politicised [...] there is no difference between sociological thought and political thought; it is very value-laden [...] the Latin American thought mixes the [political and sociological] fields up. [...] the fields are stuck to each other

After more questions on different topics, and while talking about classic authors becoming authority figures in Mexico, Angela speculated on Mexican and European researchers as follows,

I am going to say something I am not sure about. It seems that the European social scientist does know he is thinking on his own; whereas we, here in Mexico, have to use back up, we feel ourselves underdeveloped or weaker so we need support from them [the authority figures], so we can say ‘I’m thinking this and for you to see it is true, Weber is here backing me up’; the European social scientists does not need to say that.

During our talk on his first publications Joseph stated that it is usual to find social science publications based more on “discourse” than on “research, and that”, he went on,

“is a mistake in social science. Our research is about what other researchers in the first world do [...]. We would have to generate theories that explain and allow us to overcome conditions of poverty, domination, etcetera

When Peter referred to his research work on indigenous communities, he explained:

We focused on the Canadian [native population] to understand what is going on in Mexico. I thought ‘we have to see what other [countries] are doing with their indigenous [people]’. I did not want to go to Guatemala, because its San Carlos academy was not good, besides I knew what they do with indigenous [people] there, they kill them. So [...] we went to Canada

Peter stated that he realised that the indigenous, as research subject, “is more interesting for them [Canadian academics] than for people [in academia] here.” Then Peter referred to his impressions of the Spanish researchers he met once in Spain, and whom he asked for a review of one of his books:

they are specialised on single topics, they are specialists on childhood, or this or that. So, if you talk to them about a general social subject they know nothing. By then I realised that the advantage we have here [in Mexico] is that our explanations are more totalitarian¹⁵⁴, more general. We are [also] advanced in the methodological field, in how we represent and process knowledge. We end up teaching Spanish researchers!

While talking about exporting the scientific knowledge generated in the country, Norma touched upon ‘doing philosophy in Spanish’. “Why not to publish philosophy in English?” I asked her.

It is a matter of culture, [...] academic culture [...] For example, [...] philosophers are very into building rigorous knowledge, but in the sense of doing it in Spanish; the language is very important. They have this IberoAmerican network and they have many contacts among them, of course their references to European and Anglo-Saxon authors is constant

I then told Norma about my interview with the editor of the journal the sociology department publishes. I told Norma about the editor’s comment on the journal’s choice of not publishing articles written in English on the grounds of a defence of the Spanish language¹⁵⁵. “Would philosophers prefer not to publish in English because of the same motive?” I asked Norma, she replied

¹⁵⁴ This is the literal adjective the interviewee used (‘explicaciones más *totalitarias*...’)

¹⁵⁵ Editor’s statement: “The aim of the [sociology department’s] journal does not include publishing [articles] in English, because we are rather thinking about the Latin American production and we also want the [Spanish] language somehow; somehow to defend the language. We are aware that the largest audience would be the native-English speakers, and that is why we publish abstracts and keywords in English [...] But we want to defend [Spanish] and not to assume everything has to be published in English, so English speakers who want to publish [in the journal] would have to translate [their work] to Spanish”.

It is not really a defence [...] It is about doing philosophy using a language which has consequences, let's say, epistemic consequences [...] If a language opens up the world for you, as Wittgenstein would say, then doing philosophy in a particular language has consequences about how you see the world. [...] It is not about being close-minded, or about us wanting to do our own philosophy, it is more nuanced [...]

IV. Conclusions

Other than Rita's brief allusions to Parsons, Merton, Levi-Strauss, Weber and Durkheim and Suzanne's comments on functionalism and structural-functionalism, the respondents did not refer to 'critical sociology', 'dependency theory'¹⁵⁶ (Andrade 1998; Loyo, et al. 1990) or 'German hermeneutics' (De la Garza 1989) as school 'memories' or decisive elements in their educational backgrounds. On the other hand, the respondents' statements on their Marxist backgrounds were frequent. Brigitte, Michael, Julia and Edward in AgC all referred to the prevalence of Marxism in sociology programmes of Mexican public universities during the 1970s and 1980s. Rita, however, described his undergraduate-sociology background rather as a balance between Marxist perspectives and positivism, functionalism, structural-functionalism. In Mexico City, explicit statements on Marxist backgrounds came only from Norma, who, as a student graduated in the 1990s, described her school experiences as "totally" Marxist. Gregory, who graduated in 1960s, did not comment further on his Marxist undergraduate studies, yet his explicit Marxist profile fits into the statements above. Similarly, whereas Suzanne stated her undergraduate studies represented for her an "openness" upon sociological strands, her implicit preference for Marxist perspectives would represent Suzanne's most decisive learning experiences. Joseph's case is somewhat similar: although he did not explicitly describe his university training as Marxist, he stated that the school was indeed 'very Marxist' in the 1960s. It is fair to recall as well the absence of explicit allusions to Marxist sociological backgrounds during my interviews with Rita, Peter and Angela in MxC. Data on this particular topic cannot support the view of Marxism as the only sociological trend in Mexico since the 1960s to the 1990s. However, data does indicate

¹⁵⁶ See also Davis (1992) and his account of why dependency theory and world-system theories in Mexico "never took hold the way they did in other countries" (1992:396).

that Marxism, during that period, constituted for the majority of respondents one of the most influential, if not the most influential, sociological trend they interacted with and therefore a constant and influential element in the respondent's intellectual development¹⁵⁷. However, the force of such a Marxist trend in Aguascalientes' educational context seems, from the Aguascalientes-based respondents' perspectives, less extensive and less intense.

The personal statements above seem rather to support Briceño-Leon and Sonntag's (1998) idea of two streams of sociology in Latin America (a holistic, nomothetic, qualitative sociology and a scientific, quantitative, pro-utility micro sociology) and Castañeda's more normative statement on the 'duality of souls' in Mexico's sociology (common sense empiricism and ideological rhetorics). I argue that despite the 'problems' and 'malfunctions' of the university, social research and sociology fields as reported by the interviewees, and beyond the 'duality of souls' that seems to persist, the underlying *logics* or *rationales* of these fields seem to be consistent and solid. The literature suggests it and the personal statements previously presented corroborate it: the sociological and social research fields in Mexico, whether Marxist, positivistic or otherwise, seem to be based on a clearly *prescriptive-interventionist rationale*, where 'ought-to-be' models (Michael) are reportedly key constituents of the very research process. These models and the prescriptive-interventionist logics, or the various *teleologies*, that underpin them are not casual or fortuitous. They are a suitable companion for the type of sociology Castañeda (2004) reports, one in which the state's 'national problems' agenda becomes eventually the ultimate priority of sociologists and a compelling call for prescriptive and interventionist sociological thinking.

I want to address now a series of additional elements that Castañeda rather overlooks. In an environment where individuals constantly issue, and interact with, normative statements and prescriptive thinking, the 'classroom epistemic authority' defended by Norma and explicitly referred to by Peter would be a necessary companion, for norms and prescriptions would have to be issued from an authority position whose legitimacy is stable and visible enough.

¹⁵⁷ See as well the case of the 'Marxist' sociology lecturer in 'Pilot Case Study' section, chapter 2.

Along with these types of authorities, the ‘moral authority’ that Laura first discarded and afterwards reported as ‘respectable’, would provide further strength to this particular university ethos and sociological rationales. Similar to the ‘ought-to-be’ models and prescriptive-interventionist rationales they operate with, these ‘authorities’ are not an accidental outcome. They constitute what one would expect from both the type of “hard ethical-sense training” Norma reported having received in her undergraduate studies and also the “political academic training” Michael pointed out as part of his postgraduate studies. This “political/ethical” university training is perfectly consonant with both what Angela normatively reports (similarly to Castañeda) as an ‘inappropriate’ mix of political and academic thought and Gregory instead considers as a ‘necessary’ fusion of academic and “political-ideological” stances.

In such a heavily political, normative and moral/ethical environment it is not surprising to find sociology lecturers issuing harsh criticism towards their peers and their workplace. At first this criticism may seem irrelevant and rather common to all workplaces regardless of prescriptive-interventionist sociologies, yet I want to highlight two findings. Firstly, such criticism seem to be partly based on *morally-sensitive judgements*, for instance Joseph’s statements on “immoral” teaching practices and Suzanne’s report of “ethical issues” in some university courses. Secondly, this particular atmosphere of moral criticism seems to be based on systematic *dichotomistic asymmetries* as well. These are asymmetries where a clear-cut, non-relativistic separation between ‘the right’ or ‘the adequate’ and ‘the wrong’ or ‘inadequate’ is evident. They are found, for example, in Norma’s statements on the ‘abysmal’ and ‘heaven-to-earth’ differences between departments and research centres in the university; in Angela’s speculative assessment of Mexican social scientists needing the classic-sociologists’ back up that European social scientists ‘do not need’; in Michael’s statement about the ‘archaic state’ of his undergraduate-studies university, compared to the ‘success’ of his postgraduate-studies lecturers; in Laura’s, Norma’s and the Mexico City editor’s preference of Spanish ‘over’ English language; in Peter’s idea of Spanish researchers being specialists on single subjects as opposed to generalists; or in Gregory’s classification of ‘fighter’ *versus* ‘office-worker’ Marxists.

At this point more specific questions on the research topic start to emerge. As for material-organisational aspects, what is the relation between the centralised-authority structure of the Catholic Church presented in the previous chapter and the vertical, rigid and centralised authority system in the academia reported by the interviewees? In terms of Mexican/Latin American historical and contemporary ‘epistemic cultures’, what is the relation, if any, between the ‘all-embracing’ prescriptiveness-normativeness in ‘institutional-official’ and ‘folk’ Catholic discourses and both sociology’s *prescriptive-interventionist rationales* and its peculiarly *moral ethos* –and moralist backgrounds (e.g. Barreda 1867; Caso [1916] 1989)? Are prescriptiveness and interventionism related *only* to the demands from the state (Michael; Castañeda 2004) and the funding bodies reported by Laura? There is obviously a relation of ‘metaphorical similarity’ between the earth-heaven dichotomies presented in chapter 3 and MxC lecturer Norma’s use of the same dichotomy in her descriptions of university departments and research centres. Now, could there be further relations between those persistent *dichotomistic-asymmetric values* in Catholic discourses (e.g. earth-heaven, love-passion, heaven-hell) and the discursive (non-relativistic) *dichotomistic asymmetries* in the critical-moral statements by the interviewees on various elements of the sociological and academic fields? Furthermore, if Marxism turned into such an influential paradigm, could it have had links to Catholicism *via*, perhaps, ‘biblical’ approaches to sociological literature and/or priest-like Enlightened sociologists – or ‘moral authorities’ (Laura) – that Castañeda (2004) would suggest?

In order to answer these questions and similar ones, I will present the comments, suggestions and reactions of the aforementioned sociology lecturers on these very matters and related topics. But first I will present to the reader, as I did in this chapter, more empirical data I collected during my interviews with sociology lecturers. The data I will present next can be read as a complement of the biographical micro narratives included in this chapter.

Chapter 5

Sociology lecturers' Catholicisms and their views on religion and the Catholic Church

In this empirically rich chapter I present evidence of three key elements: 1) the sociology lecturers' religious backgrounds, 2) the lecturers' current religious stances and 3) the lecturers' current views and perspectives on the religious fields and the Catholic Church. I will point the differences and similarities between the religious backgrounds of AgC and MxC lecturers and will put forward two main conclusions: all the sociology lecturers interviewed in this research do have a religious background and all the sociology lecturers do hold currently certain religious beliefs and practices that do not seem to be totally detached from the religious practices they, mostly in their families, schools and community contexts, carried out in the past. The data and conclusion in this chapter are also a key introduction to what I will present in chapter 6, that is, the lecturers' comments about, and replies to, the Catholicism-sociology thesis this dissertation focuses on.

Exploring lecturers' religiosity in general was not an easy task during the interviews. My research topic was being perceived as possibly (or actually) clashing with the lecturers' "ethical and professional" stances –as a lecturer during the pilot study stated (chapter 2). During most of the interviews I found myself having to choose between being blunt and direct with regard to the interviewee's religiosity, and perhaps losing rapport for further questions and interviews, or taking a more passive approach and not insisting on the topics I could sense the interviewee felt uncomfortable talking about¹⁵⁸. Next I present the results of these enquiries. In order to keep continuity between the second half of the previous chapter

¹⁵⁸ Eventually my choice depended on my *in situ* assessment of the interviewee's personality and moods. My approach was more active and direct with interviewees who seemed to have an extroverted attitude or seemed to be less troubled by my questions. I switched to a more subtle and circuitous approach with interviewees who showed rather introversion or understandably defensive stances.

and this one, in the sections below I will present data from AgC sociology lecturers and will then continue with the data from MxC lecturers. In the first section I will present three specific biographical topics and an analytical commentary. After this, and prior to the final conclusions, I will analyse the lecturers' current religiosity and their standpoints on religion and Catholicism.

I. Past Catholicisms

The Catholic-family background

Interviews with sociologists were not extensive enough to get exhaustive evidence on the Catholic practices of the interviewees' forebears. But some statements by the interviewees provide us with evidence of Catholic practices carried out by several generations before. In AgC Laura, for example, stated that she studied in the same Catholic school as the three previous generations in her family did. Laura's work mate Brigitte referred to her mother's mother (Mexican) asking her son in law (Brigitte's French father) to convert to Catholicism and to baptise her future grandsons and granddaughters as conditions of marrying her daughter. During our interview, Julia remembered her rosary-praying sessions with her grandmother. Michael recalled praying a prayer his grandmother taught to him and Edward recalled the stories about "the devil" he was told by his mother's "old aunts". In MxC, Angela stated that her mother let her and her twin sister, teenagers by then, decide on their own whether to keep being Catholic or not: "[T]he only thing she asked us was to keep attending Sunday mass so my grandmother would not get upset".

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s— decades that roughly correspond to the interviewees' childhood periods — the percentage of the Catholic population in Mexico represented 98.2%, 96.65% and 96.2% of the total population respectively (INEGI 2005). The idea of sociologists growing up in families that had maintained their Catholic practices, at least for one previous generation, is therefore not surprising. But these family cases are not instances of an homogeneous Catholicism (chapter 3). The level of Catholic observance and the type

of Catholic practices varied across individual cases and were reported by some respondents as relatively diverse within their own families. One of the most heterodox cases in AgC was Brigitte's. As hinted above, this lecturer was raised by a late-converted Catholic father who grew up in a household formed by a Protestant mother and a Catholic father, who had agreed to raise their sons as Catholics and their daughters as Protestants –eventually, their kids were neither Catholics or protestants. Brigitte's father converted to Catholicism as a condition of marrying Brigitte's mother, who was described by Brigitte as “coming from a typical family [...] very Catholic”. Brigitte described her father as very critical of the Catholic Church and usually telling jokes about Catholic priests. In Brigitte's view, her family context was relatively “tense”, although “Catholic” in terms of religious practices, for his father attended Sunday Catholic mass and reportedly prayed with his daughters and sons as well.

Rita's case is similar to Brigitte's in terms of their parent's different approaches to Catholicism. Rita stated that her father was critical of priests. On the other hand she described her mother as “very respectful” towards the Church and its practices. Rita explained to me how her father's critical attitude helped her to develop a critical attitude towards the institution of the Catholic Church. After my question about whether her family used to attend religious celebrations, Rita replied somewhat elusively:

Just a few times, I mean, The *Romeria*¹⁵⁹, ...because, well, my father was a taxi driver, [...] so my father participated in the parade with the taxi cabs procession. I liked that a lot. My father invited us or we just went to see it. [...] When we went to Mexico City, we visited the Virgin of Guadalupe's cathedral, and sometimes we went to *San Juan* to visit the temple too¹⁶⁰, just as tourists though

Then she added “let's say it was not usual in our family to go walking to *San Juan* or to go to the pilgrimages or religious holidays”. I then ask her “What did you use to think when you attended mass with your parents, when you are sitting there listening to the priest?” Rita replied as follows

¹⁵⁹ Catholic celebration that takes place in AgC's downtown. It is organised every year by Aguascalientes' bishopric as homage to the city's patron saint: the Virgin of Assumption.

¹⁶⁰ Rita is referring here to Our Lady of *San Juan de los Lagos*, whose figure may be found in the city of San Juan, in Jalisco state. Large groups of Catholics – about 7 millions according to an online source (Ferguson 2009) – visit this temple every year.

I have gone through different stages in terms of religion; in my childhood stage I was very critical, I would say I was critical at a very early age; [critical] about *the religious institution*¹⁶¹ though; my father had also a very critical perspective [...] he said he sometimes saw priests having a night out or hanging out with women, things like that. So my father in particular was very critical of priests. I was rather critical of nuns. [...] yet I did not question my obligation to go to mass. In fact yes, we went out to church every Sunday, [we went there] as a having a walk though (emphasis added).

Julia and Michael did not refer to their fathers' stances on Catholicism, however they did refer to their mothers and the religious activities both carried out. Julia for example told me about the questions that came to her mind when she used to listen to gospels during masses. She then stated that it was her mother who helped her to clarify gospel-related doubts. Julia also mentioned that she liked to sing the hymns and songs in mass because of her mother, who liked singing in the church as well. Julia reported having learnt how to pray the rosary at a very early age and being taught by her mother. She said she kept 'leading' rosary praying sessions as she grew older, especially during funerals. Julia remembered as well praying the rosary with her grandmother every November 2nd, in the cemetery during the *Dia de los Muertos* celebrations.

Michael stated "my mother was very religious and we attended the group 'Christian Renovation of the Holy Spirit'", where, according to Michael, collective praying and singing also took place. After moving to Mexico City, when Michael was about to attend secondary school, he and his mother reportedly began to look for similar Catholic groups to attend in the capital city. According to the interviewee, they found the "Holy Spirit Missionaries" group and attended together its meetings until Michael completed high school.

Michael's colleague Laura stated that her family "was not very Catholic, or rather nominal Catholic not really practitioners". She described her father as being "very detached [from the

¹⁶¹ Sociology lecturers and other interviewees used the words "religious" or "religion" frequently. Some times it was relatively evident they were rather referring to the term "Catholic" or "Catholic Church/Catholicism" –as in this statement by Rita. The interviewees' replacement of the concept of Catholicism with the term "religion/religious" is indicative of both avoidance of the term "Catholicism/Catholic" as such and an implicit reference to Catholicism not as "a religion" but "*the* religion".

Church], very detached”. Edward, on the other hand, remembered his parents as “very religious”. Edward stated that he had relatives who were priests and were keen on suggesting him to study at the seminary -he also recalled his sister attending a school administered by Catholic nuns. Interestingly, when I asked Edward about his practice of praying during childhood, he said

My mother’s old aunts used to tell me that the devil was around and that if I prayed ‘the magnificat’ the devil would stay one block away from us; so I prayed at nights, and I remember clearly the image of the devil standing up [...] one block away from my house [...] I also remember the guardian angel taking care of me, so I also prayed to my guardian angel

In MxC, Joseph’s case is similar to Brigitte’s and Rita’s. Joseph explained to me his father’s religiosity, somewhat obscurely, as follows:

My father participated in the Mexican revolution [in the 1910s]; plus the people in the state I used to live¹⁶² are not very religious; so there was a rejection of the clergy’s abuses¹⁶³. There was a big Jesus Christ figure in our home and my father used to say ‘if you need a god you want to communicate with or implore for protection and goodness, there you have it [the Jesus Christ figure], you do not have to go to the temple’.

Joseph stated that his mother, on the other hand, “did think it was necessary to have temples for God, as well as to pray before images there, and give thanks at the end of the year”. Joseph recalled himself as being raised “in two worlds”. Then he said, “When I got to university in the [nineteen] sixties, the school¹⁶⁴ was very Marxist, so my father’s idea of being unrelated to the Catholic Church was reinforced”. Joseph’s colleague Gregory referred to both his mother and father as ‘distant’ from the Catholic Church:

My father was a free thinker, very liberal; he did not believe in saints, he rather believed in something supreme he had faith in, not as in the Catholic tradition about that god, but as in a power beyond us that is present. He was a free thinker in that sense. He did not believe in aberrant dogmatism. My father said that in order to believe something or have faith in something you do not need to go to pray [to the church]. My mother, because of the influence of my father, got distant from the church too

¹⁶² One of the thirty one states Mexico is politically, administratively and geographically divided into.

¹⁶³ Literal translation

¹⁶⁴ Joseph’s current workplace, MxC’s university

MxC-lecturer Rachel referred to her father exactly in the same terms, “a free thinker”, who used to have “arguments with priests because of the priests’ closed-mindedness”, whereas her father was “more open, more analytical”. On the other hand, Rachel stated she and her siblings were baptised, completed first communion, and fulfilled “all the rites” of official Catholicism.

We were not forced to go to mass, or to confess, so we did grow up in a Christian context, but we had freedom to choose [...] Yes we went to church, but it was not an obligation. We liked to go rather because we shared time with my father, he bought candies for us and we played in the park

In brief statements Angela stated that her mother, Catholic, made her and her sister

pray before going to bed, we prayed something I do not remember; I do not remember because...let say there was a lot of religious instruction¹⁶⁵; let’s say we had habits.

Peter described his mother and his sister as “fanatic and fundamentalist” Catholics. Peter stated his mother “found a refuge in religion”. Afterwards during our interview, he said it was not “God’s omnipresence” that he feared but “the devil”, as “that was the threat my mother used to say: ‘If you misbehave the devil will come’”

The statements by MxC lecturer Norma resemble the statements by AgC lecturer Laura. Norma described her family as nominally Catholic, not practitioners. Norma stated the rites were important for her family, e.g. getting married at church, baptise kids, “but it did not go further”. With a slightly careless tone, Norma stated:

It was not at home, but at the school where I received a Catholic education. We did not pay attention to Catholicism at home [...] my parents sent us to Sunday mass so they could take a nap

What I want to stress in this section is that even in the ‘most heterodox’ or ‘distant Catholic’ family cases, e.g., Brigitte’s or Gregory’s, there seems to be a reproduction of some Catholic

¹⁶⁵ Literal translation

habits and rituals, such as praying, completing baptisms and attending Sunday mass. Except for Brigitte's and Rachel's cases, whose families include parental figures raised within other type of Christian families, all the sociology lecturers I interviewed grew up in households where parents, and their ascendants, were Catholics. Moreover, *all* the sociology lecturers I interviewed grew up in families where Catholic rituals were practised to greater or lesser extents. Before addressing the sociologists' adult-life religiosity, I will present further evidence on the Catholic institution addressed in the last quotation above.

The Catholic-school background

All the sociology lecturers I interviewed in AgC, except for Julia, attended Catholic schools to complete primary, secondary and/or high school levels. Whereas MxC sociologists Gregory, Joseph, Peter, Angela and Rachel attended public or private non-Catholic schools, their work mates Suzanne and Norma, as lecturers in AgC, attended Catholic schools as well. The reader may find details of these school experiences in the following paragraphs.

Rita attended a Catholic school run by nuns in AgC. She completed the first two years of primary school there and then switched to a public school. Rita stated her mother saw the Catholic school as "a place for a good education". The first comment Rita made when I asked her about her memories from the Catholic school, was:

I remember very unpleasant situations [...] since my early childhood I noticed how nuns [in the school] made the difference between poor and rich people [...] I did not like that atmosphere.

When I asked Rita about the curricula-related differences she could see, retrospectively, between the Catholic and the public school she attended, she said that one of those differences was about "everything related to values formation". Right after this she explained:

I remember we had to confess [in the Catholic school], we had to go to mass the first Friday of every month, had to sing, and all those things that have to do with religion; besides they tried to make everything silent, which I hated

Rita completed her first-communion ritual while attending this school. She stated that the nuns explained to them that first communion meant “to be close to god”. After saying this Rita stressed “but I do not attach great importance to that”. Then she told me her experience about getting grounded at school during rosary praying because she told a joke to one of her classmates. “I was not really misbehaving, so I did not like that ritual of...of religious practices”. In Rita’s view, her experiences in that Catholic school made her perceive the Catholic Church as “self-interested”.

Rita’s colleague Laura completed nursery, primary and secondary education in a school ran by the Company of Mary Order. When I asked Laura about what she remembered the most from this school, she replied “well, it is something common in Aguascalientes’ context”. Afterwards, she stated that there were in that school both “very liberal” and “very conservative” nuns. The interviewee then said “I was very interested in trying to understand the world I was living in; probably that was because of these [liberal and conservative] contrasts I was part of”. After Laura told me about other experiences in the Catholic school, she stated that the religious order in charge of that school “is not that conservative [...] they are like Jesuits”. From her point of view, those nuns were actually *vanguardistas*, “revolutionary nuns” who insisted on the value of education for women. Laura then described how nuns used to encourage debates “precisely about the social and the religious, [nuns asked us] ‘what do you think about that parable, and that one?; it was very Jesuit: see, judge, act’ –the same ‘formula’ mentioned by a priest preaching in AgC (chapter 3). Laura also stated that she was never taught about “Christian base communities”¹⁶⁶ but she now thinks “it was in the hidden curricula”. The interviewee referred afterwards to a series of negative aspects in the school, such as “the separation between boys and girls” or “the distinction between intelligent students, less intelligent and dumb students. [...] They stigmatised you. It was elitist”. With a similar emphasis, Laura referred as well to “conservative nuns” with “pre-Concilium”¹⁶⁷ ideas of charity, who, according to Laura, used

¹⁶⁶ The interviewee used the term ‘comunidades eclesial de base’, which translates literally to “basic ecclesial communities”.

¹⁶⁷ Previous to the “II Vatican Council” which took place in the 1960s.

to say “let’s go and find poor kids to give them food”, as if those kids, Laura complained, “belonged to a different category [...] it was plain charity”.

Laura’s colleague Brigitte attended a Catholic-nuns school as well. In that school Brigitte completed nursery, primary school, secondary school and high school levels. She stated that the usual Catholic practices she and her classmates carried out in the school consisted of communion every first Friday of the month, non-compulsory daily mass, and confession. Brigitte mentioned as well that prior to her attendance to university, she lived temporarily with a group of women in a Christian base community. She also “attended retreats with the ‘nuns and brothers of silence’” and “was into that for a while”. Interestingly, Brigitte stated: “I studied in a Catholic school, from nursery to high school, so I ended up sympathising with people involved in theology issues”. As an undergraduate student in Mexico City, Brigitte reportedly began to socialise with pro-theology of Liberation classmates who were former Dominican friars and were involved in social activism. Brigitte refers to her first approaches to sociology coming precisely from her pro-theology of Liberation friends: “we read Lukács [...] I had a friend who taught me the Capital on Saturdays” (see full quote in chapter 4, section III). Reflecting on this, Brigitte stated afterwards: “I was one of the typical [cases] who converted into Marxism from Catholicism”. After this I asked her whether this conversion was a sort of “trend”. She replied “I do think so, there was a [trend][...] I would say it was my generation and the previous generation”. Then Brigitte told me about how she initially saw a “diametrically opposed world” in her undergraduate studies and how eventually she realised that lecturers were as “orthodox” as the teachers in her Catholic school.

After telling me about his attendance to both Catholic and public primary schools, Michael stated, “I was deeply religious when I was in high school”. Michael went on and explained: “when I just started [undergraduate] sociology I was very scared of what I was going to face, I knew they were Marxist, they were atheists, so I was truly terrified”. Michael continued,

When I started the [sociology] programme a process of transformation occurred. It was a very violent rupture with the idea of religion, because I could say it [religion] was what centred and supported my life [...]

Edward's 'Catholic-school' background is certainly different¹⁶⁸. He began to attend a Catholic seminary at the age of thirteen, after half a year of attending a public secondary school. Edward reported having relatives who were priests and two of them insisting often on him either attending the seminary or being a missionary. Edward stated that his decision to attend the Catholic seminary was not a "conscious" or thought-through decision. He spent eight years in that seminary and seven years in an Italian Catholic university. In the latter he studied theology for 4 years and then social science. Two years before completing his studies in Italy Edward decided to resign from his priestly career, but he was allowed to continue his studies. As a result of this background Edward has particular anecdotes not about the Catholic school in Mexico –as several of his work mates –but about the very priestly education in Mexico and in Italy. Edward described the Mexican seminary as "very traditional, very closed" and "very traditionalist in terms of teaching too". The Second Vatican Council had just finished when Edward arrived in Italy and those, Edward stated, "were other waves; my experience in Italy was very different, it was a very wide, complete openness, [...] not a common experience for a seminarist". Edward described one of the most evident differences as "being able to go out" from the students' residence to the university. He explained to me that in Mexico's seminaries "you studied and lived in the same premises, so you had only sporadic contact with reality". Edward told me that one day he and one of his mates decided to go out and buy a drink, Edward immediately headed to the director's office. His mate asked him "why are you going there?", Edward replied casually "because we are supposed to ask for authorisation first, aren't we?". Edward reported that in Italy he experienced "open-mindedness [...] in terms of discipline and thought". He stressed as well that the atmosphere in the Catholic universities in Rome was very liberal and open¹⁶⁹.

¹⁶⁸ Edward's Catholic-seminary background is actually similar to the Catholic-seminary background of two additional senior members of the staff in AgC sociology department.

¹⁶⁹ To illustrate this, he told me that many students and theologians at these universities expected the Pope to lift the ban on contraception medication. As the Pope eventually did not do so, some of those theologians reportedly quit their posts at the university and their priestly vows.

Cases like Edward were not found among the MxC-based sociology lecturers I interviewed. Catholic-education elements were not totally absent there though. Whereas Rachel attended a reportedly “secular” school managed by an “Evangelical board”, Norma and Suzanne attended Catholic schools. Norma attended two Catholic schools until her first year of secondary school. The first school was administered by “Mexican nuns”, and Norma attended it for a couple of years. She then transferred to another Catholic school whose staff members were, in Norma’s words, “American Catholic priests”. Norma recalled her experiences from the first Catholic school and stated:

The impression I got is very polarised, it is about people who are there because it is their vocation, so they really care for the others; and about people who are just frustrated as they are there not because it is their vocation, so they have a contained rage. I remember very bad nuns and priests; on the other hand I remember very kind people.

When I asked Norma whether she could remember any difference between the school managed by Mexican nuns and the school run by American priests, she replied:

Yes, there were many differences, cultural differences rather than religious. Mexican Catholicism is very different, it is more about rituals, about the forms [...] Nuns for example insisted on us not chewing the host and things like that.

Norma stated that she would not say American priests were “less rigid”, they rather

insisted on deeper things [...] and on us acting in specific ways based on a series of principles; theirs was less linked to these ideas of guilt, or hell or sin, which is very Mexican; they said ‘this is so because it represents what is right, what is good.

Norma’s colleague Suzanne introduced to me her educational background as follows:

I studied here [in MxC], my education is basically...ok, first in a private school, Catholic, with religious practices; and after that in a public school, where there was obviously a great difference.

The first thing Suzanne remembered from her experiences in the Catholic school was the “religious practices [...] they made us pray, they organised services every first Friday of each month, so there was a mass and communion”. Suzanne said that mass and communion were voluntary. “They [school staff] did not force us. [Although] there was obviously an introjection of situations¹⁷⁰ there it was not overwhelming for me as a child, I did it with joy”. Later Suzanne told me a story about the “school’s coupons”, small pieces of paper with moral proverbs¹⁷¹ students received as rewards for good marks. The teachers though, Suzanne stated, claimed back the coupons or asked the students to hide them every time there was a check-up visit from the Ministry of Education. After this Suzanne asked herself, “right, so what happened when I moved to the public school?”, and went on “it is a really radical change!”. In Suzanne’s view there was a change in the teacher-student relation. Whereas this relation in the Catholic school was more personal and kind, it was rather distant in the public school. In Suzanne’s words, the discipline in the Catholic school was more about “self-discipline, [also] more about appearances, like having to wear ironed clothes, a tidy uniform, clean shoes; it was more about presence”. Whereas the public school, Suzanne stated, “was more rigorous in terms of thinking”, something that “is now lost”.

When I asked MxC-based lecturer Rachel about whether the schools she attended were religious, Rachel replied. “Interestingly, no, those schools were not religious, the school I attended [...] had a board whose members were Evangelicals, but the school was secular [...]”. She went on,

I had school mates who were Evangelicals, Protestants, Catholic, Agnostics, sons of intellectuals with no religion. We learn how to respect each other, we minded our own religions, our own beliefs.

I asked Rachel whether she would say the dynamic in this Evangelical-secular school would have been different to a Catholic school’s? “I would say so”, replied Rachel, “in Catholic

¹⁷⁰ Literal translation. This term was used by the interviewee only in this statement; whereas the interviewee did not expand on this concept, the sentences and ideas around it suggest that she was referring to an unconscious, unacknowledged or implicit learning of certain habits.

¹⁷¹ These coupons “had some thoughts, some religious phrases and the like”

schools the first thing you do is praying, even before sitting down. It was not like that in my school”. After this, though, she stated:

There were even two different religious masses for primary, secondary or high school graduations. One mass was for the Catholic students and one mass was for the Evangelicals. We attended both masses so we could socialise with our mates.

Peter on the other hand told me about a series of anecdotes related not to Catholic school, but to two types of Catholic ‘training’: Catechism and ‘retreats’. Peter described his Catechism lessons as “very fierce, in the sense of being too repetitive [...] we had to memorise everything, the sins, the commandments; there were exams too”. Peter stated he did not dislike praying during Catechism, but considered it “meaningless and repetitive”. Openly and casually, Peter added: “I spent all the fucking primary school doing spiritual exercises [Catholic retreats]”. Afterwards the respondent stated: “Catechism made me feel uncertainty and anguish”.

Sociologists’ priest-related memories

During my interviews with sociologists I also explored the interviewees’ memories about the figure of the priest. In AgC, whereas Laura stated that she did not have specific memories of priests – since Catholicism for her was more about nuns and a “feminine face”–, Julia, interestingly, remembered priests as people who used “to have the knowledge, who knew a lot, somebody you had to respect; it was not a divinity, it was earthly, special though”. Julia also told me about her father’s mother and how she, as a good-will gesture, helped seminary students by washing their clothes on weekends. Then Julia stated that these past/family experiences made her think about priests as “special, as they are feeding our spirit, they are the mediators between the earthly and the divine”. In Julia’s current opinion, both people and priests themselves are changing their attitudes, for priests understand that “it is not good for them to be up there in the ivory tower”. Julia referred to disagreeing with the traditional way

of looking at priests as authorities placed “above other professionals’ authority”, such as lawyers or psychologists.

I think people [now] look at priests as equals, as an authority that handles some information, so we either listen to them or we listen to them less, depending on the situation we are in.

Brigitte stated that her experiences with priests “were not that traumatic”. What she remembered was the reprehensive answer she got from a priest after she told to him about dating a boy and asked him for his advice. “He said something like ‘where have you been educated girl?!’, something like that”. After this Brigitte stopped for a couple of seconds and then said “I was going to say that was the last time I asked for advice to a priest, but it was not. When I hung out with the theology-of-liberation priests I approached them too”

Former Catholic-seminary student Edward stated his childhood memories of priest were not really clear, but “in general”, he said, “the figure of the priest in the town was something important”. Explicitly joking, Edward told me the story about a priest who broadcasted various messages and opera music through a set of speakers in his downtown: “I had no idea that was opera music, by then I thought those female voices were the priest’s wives”.

Michael stated his memories of priests consist of “figures mostly appealing”. Michael recalled one priest in particular “tall, very fat and with a long beard designed almost deliberately to be a priest”. Right after this, Michael said

I remember another priest, from the time I attended a chorus, he was completely different, a priest from the coast, curly hair, dark skin, who cursed. Yet in terms of authority the heaviest¹⁷² was the bearded one.

In MxC, after his frank statement about annoying Catholic retreats, Peter told me the story of the priest he befriended in his neighbourhood when he was a teenager. First, though, Peter stated

¹⁷² Literal translation

I had no reactions towards priests; they were alien to me. I thought priests were always surrounded by widows and sanctimonious women [...] I saw an excessive reverence from those women towards the priest.

It was after this when Peter told me the following:

As you can see I did not reject the idea of the priest. At some point I wanted to be a priest, because I had this friend who was a priest. [...] I saw him knocking at the neighbours' doors. He was collecting money to organise Christmas celebrations in the parish [...].

In the interviewee's view, the priest "was a very intelligent guy". Peter said he ended up helping the priest organising Christmas celebrations. He described the man as "a missionary, not just a priest. He used to show me pictures of his missions. [...] He did Theology of Liberation". Peter then told me that after meeting this priest he started to meet other priests. However, Peter stressed "I did not get involved in the institutional aspect of Catholicism. I was interested in the social activism side that I saw in this priest". Peter then said he used to have discussion with a Protestant classmate in high school. "I used to reply to his arguments from a Catholic viewpoint. Those discussions were very interesting".

Norma remembered a couple of priests in particular, "one very bad and one very good". She recalled one of them punishing her brother's misbehaviour and another priest, the school head, "as a very kind-hearted person". Norma's colleague Angela, on the other hand, recalled Catholic priests as "authority figures". She stated that the figure of the priest fed her resistance towards "authoritarian authority" figures, "especially male". Joseph reported similar experiences with a couple of differences:

I found priests' clothes striking, the clothes were not common; they made me think priests were not like the rest of people. I found a lot of ostentation in those clothes [...]. I also understood that was something inaccessible

Similar to Brigitte's anecdote on confessing before a priest, Joseph told me about his experience with a priest during his first communion.

When I attended my first communion I felt some rejection because whereas the education I received in my house was fraternal in the sense of [being told] ‘do not put your feet on the table because you will bring dirt and that will affect all of us’ [...] when I met the priest it was like ‘do not kill, do not do that’, everything was prohibitive.

Analysis

Here I want to be careful and not to generalise the particularities in the series of biographical micro narratives I presented above. Data above suggests the sociology lecturers come from different types of Catholic families. On the one hand, there are what might be called ‘extreme’ cases such as Edward’s in AgC and Peter’s in MxC. The former described his parents as “very religious” and reported having more than one relative that was a priest; the latter described his mother as “fanatical and fundamentalist”. Edward’s long experiences in Catholic seminaries and Peter’s meaningful relationship with a missionary priest and frequent “spiritual retreats” are relevant in this sense too. In terms of ‘intensity’ of Catholic observance perhaps Julia’s and Michael’s cases come after Edward’s and Peter’s. Julia and Michael did not explicitly refer to an ‘extreme’ Catholic background, yet Julia’s constant allusions to rosary praying, to her mother as ‘facilitator’ of gospel passages and to her grandmother washing clothes of seminarists seem to be indicators of a family with a very close contact with Catholicism and its rituals. Michael’s and his mothers’ attendance to Catholic groups suggest a similar, if not the same, level of family closeness to Catholicism and Catholic discourses. Laura from AgC and Norma from MxC referred to their parents’ Catholicism in the same terms, i.e., ‘nominal, not practising’ Catholics. A mix of both ‘closeness to’ and ‘distance from’ Catholicism seems to be part of Rita’s, Brigitte’s, Rachel’s and Joseph’s family backgrounds. It is revealing that in these four cases – except for Rachel’s – it was the father figure who was the one reported as “distant” or “critical”, whereas the mother sides were described as “closer” to the ideas and rituals of Catholicism. Data on Angela’s and Suzanne’s background is not enough to qualify the level or intensity of Catholic practices in their families, yet there is enough data to state that these sociology lecturers did grow up in practising Catholic families that interacted with Catholic institutions

and discourses as well. Gregory's statements on his father being a "free-thinker" and his mother "being distant from the [Catholic] Church too" may represent the greatest distance from Catholicism among the thirteen sociology lecturers I interviewed. However, it is interesting that Gregory reported attending Catholic ceremonies occasionally. By the end of this chapter I will discuss the implications that these diverse yet *practising Catholic backgrounds* have if they are compared against the lecturers' views of Catholicism and religion in Mexico overall.

II. Present Catholicisms

During our first interview AgC lecturer Rita stated "I have always had a more individual or more family[-centred] faith, not close to the ecclesiastical institution". Later on she stated that she and her family are currently Catholic, "we do go to church on Sundays". Rita also explained to me that she finds some Catholic homilies "more adequate to what one wants to hear" yet she dislikes "discrimination towards homosexuals" and "the traditional way of looking at women" in priests' homilies. The interviewee reported looking rather for Sunday-mass homilies in which she can find "messages that strengthen respect to others [and relate to] taking decision in everyday life; how to respect people, appreciate people, help, give support". Rita said homilies of this kind "enrich one's spirit". She referred to the Catholic Church and priests helping vulnerable people as something desirable. Afterwards she stated "I try to help poor people that are nearer to me". However, Rita said she does not like to give donations to the Catholic Church as an institution, "I am a free thinker in that sense".

AgC lecturer Laura described herself as "a Catholic with a very distant practice". Interestingly, when I asked Laura whether she got bored attending Sunday mass when she was a child, she replied: "yes I did, like all kids [...] like any kid, it is boring for my kids too; the solution is half an hour mass". Whereas this statement does not refer directly to Laura's present Catholicism, it does suggest the Catholic practices she currently carries out with her family. Laura's colleague Brigitte seemed, on the other hand, to disagree on her children

attending Catholic schools. “My daughter”, she said, “sticks to attending a Catholic school, despite me offering her other options; I enrolled her in another school but she wants to go back to her Catholic school”. In terms of her own religious stance, Brigitte stated “I lived, sort of close to the [Catholic] Church until I finished high school because I attended a Catholic school and so on. After that I had no contact with the Church”

In AgC too, Michael’s, Julia’s and Edward’s statements on their current personal religiosity were shorter yet somewhat more explicit. Whereas Michael openly explained “I describe myself as non-religious and maybe even anti-religious”, Julia stated “I recognise myself as Catholic, not totally observant; great believer though”. Former Catholic-seminary student Edward referred to his current religiosity saying “I do not deny I am Catholic, heterodox though, yet Catholic”.

In MxC, sociology lecturer Suzanne, who attended a Catholic school and whose experiences there are presented above, did not touch upon her religious current profile and I decided not to ask such a question after listening to the interviewee’s critical comments on Catholic schools and Catholic conservativeness. Whereas Rachel did not offer any personal statement about her own religiosity – and I decided, again, not to ask possibly ‘unpleasant’ direct questions about it – she stated that all her siblings are Catholic: “all of them have baptised their kids, follow all the Church’s rites; some of them attend mass”. As for her and her family, Rachel stated that she got married to,

a very very Catholic man, therefore we and our kids never missed Sunday mass; my kids were part of the [parish’s] chorus; they attended retreats; they organised the retreats afterwards.

Gregory stated that he has not been in a church since he turned twelve, except for the times he has been there to attend “ceremonies or to admire the beauty of temples”. He explained to me,

when you are in a church you feel [it is] a space to be with yourself, [and to feel] spiritual peace [...] I'm not the only one who says so, many people say the same, that one feels in churches an appropriate atmosphere for spiritual peace [...] it has nothing to do with religion, it is just spiritual

As stated above, Joseph reported growing up in a half-Catholic and half-atheist household. During our interview Joseph stated, rather impersonally, that the “need to hold communication” with a god,

keeps arising in conflictive moments [...]. Although when things are ok we also say ‘thank you’; thank you to whom though? Whom is generous and grants us goods, love?

The interviewee went on with his reflection and then added in a more personal tone:

I am still married to my wife after 37 years, and when I see some of my friends having two or three marriages I think we have to be thankful; thankful to who? I do not know, thankful to life, to what is called God, I do not know. I mean, we acknowledge there is an explanation we cannot materialise and it sometimes fits with what is called God.

Then in a statement that slightly resembles the last line of Gregory's statement above, Joseph stated:

But I do not attend temples or participate in Catholic organisations, no way. That was something I learned from my father about the [Catholic] Church, which is different from religion

After saying that his Catechism lessons caused him “uncertainty and anguish”, Peter pointed out that “one ends up abhorring religion, so one follows a more individual religion”. Later on during the interview Peter also stated that he likes the Lord's prayer as “it's very beneficial”. In a joking yet genuine account, this interviewee also told me that when he does applications for research funds, he thinks and says “in the name of the father...there goes my application”, and then asks god to help him by saying “[God:] if I get the funding I [can] study these things and then I will let you know how they are doing”. In MxC too, Angela described her current religious stance briefly:

My sister and I started to question religion when we were teenagers. I broke away from religion and I am currently atheist [...] Today my relationship with religion is from a strictly sociological perspective

As for Norma, she stated she and her siblings are now “not religious”. As I did during my interview with Suzanne and others, I decided not to ask further questions to Norma about her current religious position in order to reduce the possibilities of losing rapport with her.

III. Current views on religion and the Catholic Church

During our interviews, sociology lecturers held diverse and divergent viewpoints towards Catholicism and the Catholic Church. These viewpoints were relatively easier to address because most of the times they did not entail direct mentions about the interviewee’s individual-family life and were rather issued as the interviewee’s ‘sociological’ or ‘professional’ commentary on the matter. Further evidence of the lecturers’ current religious profile may be inferred from these views though. Next I present these views in order to offer both a fuller description of the lecturers’ current religious profiles and an additional background of qualitative data the reader may draw from to interpret the following chapters and chapter 6 in particular.

During our two interviews, Laura provided a mix of critical and purely analytical statements on the Catholic Church and some of its elements. She said first that the Catholic Church is a very complex topic, “it has many inner strands, is not homogeneous at all, [and] it is a Church that is changing despite its hierarchy”. On Aguascalientes’ Catholic Church Laura claimed that one may find “both conservative and liberal messages”. Laura concluded that the most frequent type of discourse in Aguascalientes diocese is the conservative. This lecturer also referred to the Catholic Church in Mexico in general and stated that it still holds a social and political influence which “you could imagine the Catholic church [having] during the colony, in the 19th century”. Consonant with the conservative and liberal distinction she made about Aguascalientes’ diocese, she classified the Catholic Church in

Mexico as, on the one hand, a “traditional church” which “is about charity, [about saying] ‘I give to you, I am a protective father, but in return you owe me everything’”; and on the other hand a more “liberal” Church. About the latter she interestingly stated

I have hopes for the [Catholic Church’s] more liberal strands, not necessarily theology of liberation, but basic [ecclesial] communities¹⁷³ for example, with adaptations to a new age and society’s potentials [...]. I trust that Church more, the Church that makes mature and responsible men out of its churchgoers

Laura’s colleague Julia said that there is “a diversity in religious terms”¹⁷⁴ in Aguascalientes as “we can find Catholic, Christian and non-Christian religions and religious movements”. In Julia’s view, there have been people practising other religions since the 1950s, “but they were marginalised”. Julia also stated that she does “not defend” the Catholic Church “all the time”, she tries to be “objective [...] not fanatical”. She said there are “comments” from the Catholic Church that she thinks are “helpful”, whereas there are other comments she disagrees with. She then explained to me that she does not want,

to say that everybody is good or everybody is bad [...] there are some good people in the sense that they help churchgoers and there are others who just want personal benefits, as in all institutions

After this Julia mentioned the concept of “moral norms” and the latter not corresponding to “today’s society”.

I understand that societies evolve and change, I do not think those values are lost though. I rather think people prioritise them differently. However, I do think things are, say, getting relaxed

As Julia and Laura, sociology lecturer Edward reportedly conceives Aguascalientes and Mexico’s religious contexts as “diverse” too¹⁷⁵. Edward also stated, in a critical tone, that “the scheme of authoritarianism” may be found in Aguascalientes’ Catholic context.

¹⁷³ Or ‘Christian base communities’

¹⁷⁴ See my discussion about some Mexican authors (e.g. De la Torre and Gutierrez, 2008) insisting also on Mexico’s “religious diversity” (chapter 3)

¹⁷⁵ This was an implicit idea by Edward during our interview. The diversity argument was rather explicit in a conference by Edward which I attended in AgC.

Critically as well, he added that “the Catholic Church in Aguascalientes preaches only about strictly religious things or sexual morals; social issues are not discussed”. In another similar statement Edward complained about the absence of the Catholic Church in “social life” and the Church’s “social doctrine” being overlooked.

In Rita’s view the “religious discourse” in Aguascalientes has changed. This lecturer reported that Catholic homilies used to focus on “basically ecclesial [topics], things linked to saints, to the Church, miracles, things that were distant from daily life”. Rita then said that this situation “has improved” in the sense that the discourses and messages from Aguascalientes’ bishopric have “got closer to daily-life issues”. The interviewee then referred to her disliking of priests’ “discrimination towards homosexuals” and their “traditional way of looking at women”. After this critical comment though, Rita also said that there are “more honest actors” in the Church, whose “message is more appropriate, better, more adequate to what one wants to hear”.

Brigitte described the Catholic Church in Aguascalientes as a type of Church she thought “no longer existed”. She referred to it as an “old” Church she “remembered from her school days [...], a very old and very institutional Catholic Church”. In terms of the Catholic Church in the country overall Brigitte stated that it is “a microcosm of the larger society”, as one can find “leftist, rightist, conservative, perverse, honest people”, that is, “the same diversity one can find in the context the Church operates. She also described the Church as a formal organization with two main characteristics: highly hierarchical, and based on “unity-maintenance”, which means “it has to be Catholic, apostolic and Roman”. Explicitly critical, Brigitte also stated that the Catholic Church in Mexico is

akin to the maintenance of authoritarianism in Mexico. I think our political culture and our religious culture have sustained this national culture which makes us to be in the state we are, very asphyxiating

In AgC too and critically as well, Michael referred to the Catholic Church as

terribly conservative, it is a power that stops progress. I would describe it in those terms, it is a power, a space for repression. I would not dare to find positive elements in it

Michael suggested the Catholic Church helps some people “to have meaning in their lives”; however the Catholic Church is also

the institutionalization or personification of the impossibility to think, of [the impossibility of] giving freedom to people, with models of [social] exclusion¹⁷⁶ and as corrupt or more corrupt than society

In MxC, Norma stated that the greater Catholic Church’s influence in Mexico has been detrimental to other churches and that is one of the reasons why she on the one hand agrees with the “freedom of religion”, yet on the other hand thinks religion “has to be kept in the private context”. About the “real” Catholicism practised by Catholics in Mexico, Laura stated:

they [Catholics] are very pragmatic in terms of [Catholicism driving] their daily-life [...]; they think they are entitled to do anything and then go to Church and confess and that is it. People are very pragmatic [...], [for instance] drug-traffickers are able to kill twenty people and then go to church and donate money.

When I touched upon the topic of differences between Catholicism in Mexico City and other regions in Mexico such as the Bajío¹⁷⁷, Norma stated Catholicism in the latter “is more militant, entangled with the political life, with everything”. By contrast, Norma referred to Mexico City’s religious and social atmosphere as

radically different [...], Mexico City is more leftist; the level of education here is higher; people are better informed; the divisions between the private and the public are clearer [...] abortions are allowed here; gay marriage is legal; there is a series of things which would be unthinkable in other regions in the country unthinkable!

¹⁷⁶ Literal translation. The interviewee did not expand on this idea.

¹⁷⁷ A geographical and cultural region located in the centre of the country, comprising roughly the states of Queretaro, Michoacan, Jalisco and Guanajuato.

Norma's colleague Rachel, referred to the impossibility to "separate" the Catholic Church from "the influence it has had in people's way of thinking and acting". In Rachel's view this influence has brought clear disadvantages.

Just look at the [living] conditions of women, Catholic indigenous women [...]. They have to receive all the kids God sends to them, so a thirty years old woman has nine children, and she is even a grandmother [...] that woman is going to die before she is forty years old and will leave all her kids around; the man will marry another woman afterwards and he will have ten kids anew. It is a disgrace.

After distinguishing between conservative and more flexible priests, Rachel also stated that the Catholic Church's "official discourse" does not

take into account people's rights, specially women's; they punish abortion, not paedophiles¹⁷⁸; girls and boys are abused; they [priests] get women pregnant, and still they criticise others

Gregory's first statements about religion and Catholicism were critical. He stated he sees religion "interfering in many aspects" of social reality. In a rather sarcastic tone, he recalled George W. Bush's discourses on the Iraq war and how "God had inspired Bush to take those [war-related] decisions on Iraq". With a subtle switch of tone in his voice, he then referred to "santeria" and her importance in Cuba. Later on Gregory would adopt again an explicitly critical position with regard to private Catholic universities. "I do not like to go to private or religious universities" stated the interviewee, "but I have to go and I do learn from those worlds, I mean..." Gregory explained, "if there are people in this [public university] school who lack conscience, are rightist and have no critical reasoning, what can you expect from a private elitist university?"

Before telling me the story of the priest he befriended in MxC, Peter referred to people's fears being caused by Catholicism as "there are still god-devil, heaven-hell schemes" that drive people's behaviour. "We rule our lives" Peter argued, "based on the good and the evil".

¹⁷⁸ Cases of paedophilia among Catholic priests in different countries were a common topic in the media a couple of months before I conducted my interviews in MxC (e.g., Willey 2010, The Guardian 2010)

He also stated that it was the Spanish colonisers who brought Catholicism as a “fear factor” in society¹⁷⁹. Unlike Peter, Joseph did not refer to the Church as a source of fears in society; his perspective was not less critical though. As Rachel did, Joseph addressed the reported cases of paedophile priests as follows

When I knew about what the [reported paedophile] priests did, I thought it was a totally immoral act; it was an abuse. A clean¹⁸⁰, enthusiastic young guy looking for support and then a priest abusing him because of [the priest’s] level of power, the level of authority force... I think that was totally contradictory: the institution that preaches about morals being so immoral

Angela, a self-described atheist, stated that her mother being a Spanish refugee from Franco’s regime made her eventually associate “the Church” with ideas of “dictatorship, the army” and, above all, with “authoritarianism” and “totalitarianism”. Later on during our interview, Angela stated briefly that the “Catholic tradition”, given its particular history, is “less linked to free interpretation”.

Analysis

As it was expected when I designed the research’s methodological frame, two lecturers did address AgC’s and MxC’s ‘oppositional’ religious contexts. AgC lecturer Brigitte and MxC lecturer Norma referred to, on the one hand, Aguascalientes’ context as ‘conservative’ and ‘militant’ and, on the other hand, Mexico City’s context as less conservative, ‘leftist’ and more ‘liberal’ if not ‘less Catholic’¹⁸¹. The moderate criticism against the Catholic Church issued from AgC lecturers compared to the criticism by MxC lecturers might suggest that this dichotomistic distinction is accurate. For instance, in AgC Edward criticised the Catholic Church for its absence in ‘social issues’ and Edward’s colleague Rita criticised specific Catholic discourses only, i.e. the Church’s messages on homosexuality and female

¹⁷⁹ This statement is certainly related to Peter’s critical view about Spanish researchers being “less advanced” –chapter 5.

¹⁸⁰ Literal translation.

¹⁸¹ Interestingly, ‘insiders’ in Aguascalientes (i.e., Julia, Laura and Edward) rather insisted on the idea of Aguascalientes as a ‘diverse’ religious context –probably as an indirect counter-defence that has been aware of the conservativeness-related criticism in the past.

stereotypes. The type of criticism against the Catholic Church among Mexico City sociologists was more systematic and extensive. For Norma, Rachel, Gregory, Suzanne, Peter and Joseph, Catholicism in Mexico is related to undesirable and ‘pragmatic’ – or morally inconsistent – conservative practices and thoughts by people in the country in general. Now, do lecturers’ religious backgrounds and religious profiles fit into these ‘conservative/militant AgC’ versus ‘liberal/atheist MxC’ dichotomistic categories?

Edward’s (AgC) and Peter’s (MxC) statements on their Catholic family practices suggest that both sociologists were particularly close to Catholicism and established, at least during their childhood and early and late adolescence, close contact with this religion, with some of its institutional representatives (mostly figures of priests) and with its ‘official-institutional’ and ‘folk’ discourses (chapter 3). Interestingly the occurrence of this type of background, at least in the cases under study, seems not determined by their geographical location, as ‘extreme’ religious backgrounds would be expected from AgC-born lecturers only. This might suggest that the *type* of family Catholicism is more related to socio-economic membership than to strictly geographical criteria, since Peter referred to the fact of growing up in a “poor family” and Edward referred to the “little rural town” where he grew up –in suggesting this I do not seek to draw a necessary relationship between ‘poverty’ and ‘rural towns’ but merely point at their simultaneous presence in my data set.

AgC lecturer Laura, who described her family as ‘nominal, not practising’ just as MxC lecturer Norma did, stated that her classmates in the Catholic primary school she attended were rather “homogeneous” and came from the same “class”. Norma, who attended Catholic private schools as well, described her family as a “traditional middle class family”. As in Edward’s and Peter’s cases, Laura’s and Norma’s similar backgrounds in religious and socio-economic terms might suggest again that the type or level of ‘Catholic observance’ may be less related to geographical location and more to class membership, family-income levels, and community/institutional networks . Therefore the probability of finding sociologists with a ‘non practising’ Catholic background in AgC compared to MxC will vary less because of the putative conservativeness of AgC and the reported liberalism of MxC and

more because of AgC's and MxC's different proportions and configurations of low, middle and high class/income families and what would be the corresponding networks and type of social institutions around them. I must add that 'distant-Catholicism' cases such as Gregory's were not found in Aguascalientes. However, if we follow what I suggest in these lines there would be no reasons to deny the possibility of 'distant-Catholicism' backgrounds being found in AgC too.

Having addressed this matter, my interpretations of the data presented in this chapter, suggest as well that whereas not all sociology lecturers keep currently the same intensity of Catholic observance and the same level of contact with Catholic discourses as they once did, their ruptures with past Catholic practices and discourses do not seem total but *partial*. These partial ruptures are relatively clearer in AgC lecturers' statements. Edward, for instance, disagrees with the Catholic Church's absence in social issues, but suggests implicitly the usefulness of the 'Catholic social doctrine'. Laura criticises the Catholic Church and specific discourses such as 'plain charity', but still describes herself as 'Catholic with distance', takes her kids to Catholic mass and holds 'hopes' for the more 'liberal', 'Christian-base-community' streams within the Catholic Church. Rita is rather oppositional to 'the religious institution', its discourses on homosexuality, traditional female stereotypes and the practice of donations to the Church. Yet she also keeps attending mass; considers this practice an 'obligation'; likes homilies about 'how to respect people'; and helps 'poor people' that are 'closer to her'. Julia disagrees with the idea of priests as 'authority figures' superior to lawyers and the like, but describes herself explicitly as a non-observant yet 'great Catholic believer'. In MxC lecturers' statements 'partial ruptures with Catholicism' are not necessarily explicit but can be inferred as well. For instance, Rachel's critical statements on the Catholic Church and priests that 'get women pregnant' on the one hand, and, on the other hand, her statements about getting married to a 'very, very Catholic man' and their kids participating in Catholic chorus and retreats, is evidence of both ruptures and non-ruptures with Catholic discourses and rituals. Peter reported both 'abhorring' Catholicism but also following 'a more individual religion'. He also seems to (still) entertain in his mind the idea of a God whom he reportedly asks for help to get research funding. Alluding to a similar

belief, Joseph reported his father rejecting attendance in Catholic temples, but described him as sympathetic to the practice of ‘communicating’ and ‘implored to God’—practices that had to take place at home, in front of a ‘Jesus Christ figure’. The ruptures and non-ruptures or ‘continuations’ in Joseph’s father Catholic practices seem to be consonant with those in his son. Whereas Joseph rejects attendance to Catholic temples, he reported himself being ‘thankful’ to ‘something’, to ‘an explanation we cannot materialise’, for the ‘goods’ and ‘love’ received. This is also similar to the case of ‘distant’ Gregory and his father, whom the former described as being reluctant to believe in ‘saints’, and ‘that god’, but a believer nonetheless, a believer in a ‘power beyond us’. And this is another finding I want to highlight.

The statements by lecturers indicate the practice of believing in the Catholic Church, in its ‘institutional’ face, saints, discourses on homosexuality among other elements, is systematically criticised and personally rejected by the majority of lecturers. Yet the evidence also suggests that the respondents, not only in AgC but also in MxC, are believers nonetheless, believers in ‘something’, ‘a non-material explanation’ according to MxC lecturer Joseph, or ‘a power beyond us’ in so-reported Gregory’s father’s words, or in ‘God’ as such, as Peter explicitly mentioned. The act of ‘believing’ remains. And, following Joseph, what seems to remain as well is the same type of object of belief: ‘an entity’, that may not be ‘that (official-institutional) God’, but still (i) ‘explains’ reality, (ii) hands out ‘goods and love’, (iii) cannot be ‘materialised’—as it would lie ‘beyond us’, just like Gregory recalled, and (iv) has the power to intervene in social phenomena, e.g. funding application processes according to Peter. Are these characteristics of sociology lecturer’s religious beliefs similar to those of official and ‘folk’ Catholic discourses in chapter 3—the family as ‘cell of society’, God’s/the Virgin’s powers, etc? Sociology lecturers clearly did not refer to the family as a cell of society but some of them alluded, implicitly or explicitly, to God’s powers or a God-like entity’s powers (Durkheim 1915).

Before closing this section I want to point out two additional ‘discursive’ findings which I noted in chapter 4 as well: (i) the lecturers’ *morally-sensitive* judgements and (ii) the

dichotomistic asymmetries, this time in their appraisals and commentaries about the Catholic Church and religion overall. Explicit ‘moral judgements’ by lecturers on the Catholic Church are plainly evident in Joseph’s complaint about ‘how immoral’ the ‘institution that preaches on morals’ is; or in Norma’s complaint about hypothetical drug traffickers committing murders and then donating money, improperly, to the Catholic Church. Similarly, *dichotomistic asymmetries* are evident not only in some of the respondent’s perceptions on the religious differences between AgC and MxC, but also in Laura’s appraisal of ‘very liberal’ and ‘very conservative’ nuns; or in Julia’s assertion on ‘good’ and ‘bad’ people in the Catholic Church –here the respondent shows evident caution in assigning the good/bad labels to the appropriate amount of people (i.e. not “everybody” is good or bad), but does not show reluctance to use the labels *per se*. Further asymmetries are found in Edward’s statement on ‘conservative’ and ‘traditionalist’ Mexican Catholic seminars *versus* the ‘liberal’ and ‘open’ religious atmosphere in Italian Catholic universities; or in Norma’s ‘polarised impression’ of ‘bad nuns and priests’ and ‘very kind people’ in the Catholic school she attended.

In the ‘secular university’ and ‘secular public education’ contexts portrayed by some lecturers —and, indeed, in many secular-university contexts abroad— criticism towards the Catholic Church would be an unsurprising message. Whether such a set of critical statements is justifiable or valid, is not a point I will discuss. What I claim is relevant is the consistency that such a type of ‘criticism’ or ‘judging’— i.e., ‘morally sensitive’ and based on non-relativistic asymmetric dichotomies (Zerubavel 1999) – seems to hold.

IV. Conclusions

The explicit accounts by sociology lecturers and my inferences from those accounts suggest a series of ideas that are not surprising, but rather consistent with the historical saliency, contemporary presence and ideological-structuring role of the various Catholicisms in Mexico I presented previously. Firstly, if Catholicisms in Mexico have the extension,

intensity and force that I illustrated in chapter 3, it is not surprising that MxC lecturers did not grow up in an entirely *areligious* atmosphere but actually in the same or very similar Catholic family environments that their peers in AgC did. This finding suggests that although the categories ‘conservative/Catholic AgC’ and ‘liberal/atheist MxC’ are *useful divisions that represent social perceptions* they do not represent accurately the reported religious backgrounds of the sociology lecturers I studied in this research. Secondly, having specified the variable intensity of Catholic observance in individual cases and their family contexts, the more striking conclusion in this sense is that *all* the sociology lecturers grew up as members of *practising Catholic families*, where both ‘official-institutional’ and ‘folk’ *Catholic discourses* circulated and were instilled to diverse degrees. And this finding leads to my last point. The ruptures between the sociology lecturers’ current religious stances on the one hand, and, on the other, their Catholic backgrounds, past observance of Catholic rites and past interactions with Catholic discourses, *are only partial*. Some lecturers still attend Sunday Catholic masses and those who are not currently observant of Catholic rites seem still observant of Catholic beliefs, e.g., beliefs in an omnipotent God. Are these partial ruptures related to the ‘morally-sensitive’ judgements and dichotomistic asymmetries constantly found in both (official and folk) Catholic discourses (chapter 3) and lecturers’ statements on various social phenomena (chapter 4 and sections above)? I will discuss in the next chapter the plausibility of this and other possible Catholicism-sociology relations, as suggested, or not, by the sociology lecturers themselves.

Chapter 6

Sociologists' responses to the research question.

In the first part of this chapter I present the sociology lecturers' replies, opinions and reactions to my interview questions about the possible or actual influences of Catholicism upon sociology in Mexico –in terms of parallel authority structures, Marxism-Catholicism links, and values-related influences. In the second part of the chapter I will categorise these replies as ranging from secular-oppositional stances to secular-sympathetic positions. I will also describe the replies in general as 'Mannheimian' (Bloor 1976), i.e., based on a normative understanding of knowledge and scientific knowledge and the risks of 'desecrating' such knowledge with 'religious pollutants'. Going beyond these assumptions, I will argue that, based on the evidence presented in chapter 5, the lecturers' particular replies about the continuity of Catholic values in sociology lecturers' ethics is entirely plausible and suggests as well the possibility of Catholic values' non-relative and dichotomistic bases being echoed also in the sociology lecturers' dichotomistic-asymmetric moral and evaluative (non-sociological) opinions and statements on everyday-life phenomena.

Next I will present the lecturers' responses as close to the original interview transcriptions as possible in order to offer to the reader not only an account of the lecturers' 'sociological' comments but also a glimpse of their personal reactions to the very research objective. As in the previous chapters, I will group the lecturers' replies into individual micro narratives that will represent, first, the answers from AgC sociology lecturers and then the responses from MxC sociologists.

I. Aguascalientes sociology lecturers' replies

Laura, who attended Catholic primary and secondary schools run by nuns (chapter 5), stated that Catholic nuns overall have an important role in education, health and community work in Mexico. In terms of the education they provide, Laura stated:

How many women have gone through this education [provided by nuns]? How do nuns determine future people's choices? How does what they imprint on us build-up our lives? In order to know this, I researched them

In Laura's view:

Catholic schools mark you in many ways, some ways are positive and some negative [...] I have talked to my former school classmates and [we have talked about] nuns leaving an imprint on you, like discipline and the capacity to order ideas

Sensing what I saw as the respondent's openness to talk about the topic I then asked her, "Was there anything you were told in these Catholic schools which made you have special interests on social phenomena?". Laura replied "probably, although I do not remember clearly [...] there must have been something though". With a less-personal phrasing, I asked her again "Would there be a link between people coming from a Catholic-school background and them choosing sociology as university degree?" Laura disagreed, she told me that out of the ninety female classmates she had in the Catholic schools, it was only her who studied sociology. However she added: "in the Catholic discourse you find this idea of service frequently, so people do not study sociology but social work"¹⁸². I insisted and asked Laura about the idea of service in her colleagues at the sociology department. She replied briefly "I do not see it [emphasis on service] clearly, the reasons why we [sociologists] are here are different". I then tried to switch topics and focus on Laura's opinion about the possible (Weberian) influence of Catholicism in the researchers' 'codes of ethics'. To this Laura replied:

¹⁸² She explained to me the work of one of her master students who was reportedly "locating the religious elements, not just Catholic but also Christian" among undergraduate social work students

I think that in Aguascalientes context and in Mexico's *mochó*¹⁸³ context, the Catholic scheme and the scheme of social values are very similar, you cannot draw great differences; we are actually talking about very similar things, with re-interpretations, with nuances [...]The religious and the socio ethical [in Mexico] are very similar to each other. In my case I think it is the same story.

One week later, in our second interview, Laura seemed slightly more sympathetic to the possibility of Catholicism influencing sociologists and social researchers in general. By then she explicitly said “many of our values, and our beliefs that are apparently lay, have origins or are linked to the religious”. Then Laura referred to some social researchers not researching religion yet having a religious point of view that shapes their interpretations. As an example Laura referred to a poster on Aguascalientes' gangs that was presented by an undergraduate student in a conference organised by the university one week before:

The gangs [according to the poster's author] were the cause of all the evils and kids joined gangs because the fathers' authority was not controlling enough; hey, that and the [Aguascalientes] bishop's version [of gangs] are the same!

Laura then went on and said “the student who authored the poster does not perceive that there is a religious discourse that permeates her apparent scientific objectivity”, and then added “That is what I think is serious”. At the end of our last interview I told Laura about the difficulties I was having in getting the respondents talking about my research topic. Referring to her own research work, Laura replied:

No, I have thought about it [Catholicism and sociology] because of a fundamental reason: I chose to study nuns. So if I am not clear about my own religious determinants I will end up hating or loving what I research. And that has been one of the hardest things to do in my professional academic activities: try to keep a distance as a native

After this Laura stated that most of the researchers in “all areas” present themselves as free of religious determinants. But those religious determinants would be there and, according to Laura, “mediate your views” as “there is a lot in our unconscious”. Laura then stressed that “it is foolish, it is naïve to think that there is nothing there. We are naïve, period”. After this, the interviewee stated that these “free-of-religious-determinants” positions are “related to the

¹⁸³ ‘Fanatical’ or ‘extremely conservative’.

idea of secularity we have in Mexico”, which makes researchers avoid speaking about their religious profiles under risk of being taken as “less serious”. After the interviewee’s explicit acknowledgement of Catholicism shaping sociology somehow, I ventured into further questions. The next situation I asked Laura about was the possibility of the Catholic discourse having to do with society’s conceptions of ‘untouchable’ authority figures and the way people approach, or not, authority figures in Mexico’s academia. After my question Laura asked “you mean as in the case of dogmas?”. I nodded and she stated,

I think there would be many possibilities in that sense. And it would not be only part of the Catholic world but the Christian world too [...]so, yes there is clearly a vertical scheme of authority and [a scheme of] obedience to the discourse, it is possible yes, I had not thought about it

However, Laura suggested afterwards a different cultural determinant as an alternative explanation for unchallenged authority figures in the academia –‘the foreign’, a historical construct that holds validity and authority *per se* for the sake of coming from abroad.

In our first interview, after my question about her family background, AgC lecturer Rita told me about her parents’ backgrounds and stated:

I think both my father and mother were hard workers. My father always had two jobs. My mother at home was very dedicated too. In general I think work is one of the things, one of the values I keep and try to instil in my sons [...] Unlike my parents, I do like my kids having a job

In our second interview I brought up again the topic of ‘hard work’ as an important value in Rita’s family and then asked Rita further questions on this. By then, though, she rather disagreed on my interpretation of her previous statements and rejected the value of work as part of her family practices. “It is not that we consider work as an important value in our lives”, the interviewee stated. After this she touched upon a Weberian explanation I actually did have in my mind yet did not speak about in the interview: “Let’s say it is not like in the Protestant ethic [by Weber], where we have to work to go to heaven, no, it has nothing to do with that at all”.

Even more intrigued I then tried to address the same topic from a non personal angle anew. I told Rita about my readings of the city's coat of arms, local newspapers and a co-edited publication by the AgC sociology department. In these three different sources, I said, there were explicit mentions of the value of hard work as part of the city's identity and the people's practices. This time I said explicitly to the interviewee that I was interested in whether this hard-work value in Aguascalientes' context could be linked to a parallel Catholic discourse on "hard work". After this I paused to encourage Rita to intervene. After getting no answer from the respondent, I decided not to risk my rapport with her and asked no further questions related to Catholicism's influences. Although I could not get Rita's explicit thoughts on my thesis, her critical answers on adjacent topics – i.e., her references to "unpleasant" experiences in Catholic schools (chapter 5); her explicit comments on not granting "too much importance" to the idea of God; her open criticism towards some aspects of the Catholic Church; her disagreement about a Weberian 'hard work' value operating in her family – and her reaction, or lack of, to my direct suggestion of a link between the city's 'hard work' value and Catholic discourses, may likely represent the 'secular attitude' Rita's colleague Laura explained to me as a common feature in researchers (above).

When I asked Rita's colleague Julia about the apparent lack of theoretical production in the country, she replied, "I think it has to do with our cultural education. I think we are very immersed into this idea of being humble, of not [being] self-praising, but let others speak" (chapter 4). Intrigued by this answer, I asked Julia whether this cultural 'humbleness' would be related to the country's religious discourses. Her answer was "Yes [...] Yes". I then ventured further saying "it seems religious discourses could be related to the way we conceive authority figures in academia too". To this Julia replied:

I totally agree, [...] in this state we are very determined by the religious; up to recent times this state was 99.99 percent Catholic, So I think it [Catholicism] is part of the cultural formation people receive since they are kids; this official religion, that has everything very structured, whose discourses are directly related to how we should act, what we should do, what is right and wrong. It determines us, [in the sense of] how to be a good father, a good son, a good employee, so you get to do things the way you have to do them. So yes the religious aspect in this state is very determinant, since we are kids.

But things are changing from Julia's perspective. "The advantage" she sees now is that "after the globalisation process Aguascalientes went through, everything has been transformed". As a result Julia sees a beneficial religious diversity in the country that has brought openness and tolerance. Later on, after touching upon a Weberian understanding of religion as possible promoter of particular social values and after recalling the respondent's remarks on Catholicism determining how to be a 'good' father, son and employee, I told Julia I had collected evidence that indicated the religious and cultural local discourses constantly stressed ideas of the "ethically right" or "ethically good" things and people in society. "Would you say you can find traces of these ideas in your colleagues' work?" I asked her. She replied,

It would be illogical to think there are no such traces. I would say 'yes', I would not know what type of traces those would be though, I have not thought about it. [...] Indeed here in the Aguascalientes there is a lot [of emphasis] on these ideas of the right things and the good people. So we [as researchers] are into this and may reproduce the same scheme without being conscious about it

Lecturer Edward's responses to my thesis were affirmative, but relatively cautious. One of the first topics that arose during our first interview was Marxism in Mexico. After Edward mentioned the idea of a "primitive" version of Marxism circulating in the country (chapter 4) I asked him whether Marxism's reported adaptation into a dogmatic social theory in Mexico had to do, precisely, with the historical saliency of Catholicism in the country and its perceived religious conservativeness. Edward replied stating that Mexican universities and their Marxist theories were seen as revolutionaries and supporters of rebellions and *guerrillas* that were aimed at fighting against conservatism and religious dogmatism. "But what I used to say to my students is that if we go deeper, that [Marxism] was a belief, Marxism was a Church". Edward went on:

If you read the biographies of Marxists like photographer Tina Modotti, you can see she had to ask the [Communist] party for authorisation to have a boyfriend, and he had to be an adequate boyfriend, not a bourgeois. And that happens only in religious congregations. You find those extremes in a very conservative church, like the Marxist Church

Then Edward concluded

I had not thought about it [dogmatic Marxism as consequence of conservative religious atmosphere], yet it may be; this intellectual submission in one field and the other may be the same, eventually those are beliefs without reflection

As I did with the other respondents, I asked Edward about the possibility of a connection between researchers' personal ethics and Catholic moral precepts. Edward replied:

Yes, of course, they [researchers] grew up in this religious environment and we learnt from it and formed our moral criteria [from it]. When you are an adult you may change your ethics code a bit, but I would say those are just a few cases

By the end of our last interview I, rather roughly, summarised Marshall Sahlins' suggestion about the concept of 'human need' being derived from Adam and Eve's Christian myth and persisting as a 'longue duree' underlying notion in classic economics and current social sciences (chapter 1). Edward disagreed with the proposal stating the concept of human need was rather Protestant. Yet he admitted the possibility of both the operation of Weberian "non-intended" effects of religion and, not an idea but, a specific "scheme" of ideas being taken from religious discourses and shaping people's non-religious thought. After I shared with him my first initial thoughts on the possibility of dichotomistic sociological discourses being somehow shaped by corresponding dualistic Catholic discourses, Edward said "yes I agree, that is precisely what I call a 'scheme' [...] I think it is possible"

MxC-born sociologists Brigitte, who reported both attendance at Catholic schools up to the high school level and attendance at a public university where she received a Marxist training (chapters 4 and 5), stated that moving from a Catholic-school environment to a Marxist one meant for her, at the beginning, a total break up:

At that moment I thought it [Marxism] was another world, diametrically opposed [to Catholicism] in many things; that is why it was so attractive, it was the denial of what I had been taught

Then, in a similar comment to that of Edward, Brigitte reported a realization that Marxists in her university were rather “orthodox”, “close-minded” and “uncritical, inconsistent between what they said and did”. After this I asked Brigitte about the types of “religious attitudes” she could say her local colleagues enacted in the department. She replied critically, comparing her colleagues to the academics she met in Mexico City,

I think there is, in general, a very evident schizophrenia in Mexico City: one thing is what you research and a different thing is what you live as person. Here in the [AgC’s university] department and in the research group I am part of, I think there is this [attitude] of ‘I’m religious, so what?’ and [an attitude of] ‘the religious matters and I will show it’ [...] In Mexico City I did not know anybody with a religion”

I then asked Brigitte about Aguascalientes’ society discourse on the ‘good people’ and the ‘morally-correct’ and whether she could see some traces of this discourse in the work of her local colleagues, for example in the way they used certain methodologies or chose research topics. She replied cautiously:

I am not sure. I am going to put it different: intolerance extends to the methodologies [...] So when it comes to research [they complain saying] ‘you are not doing it like it should be; you cannot do it; you do not know’ [...]. It is a very moralist attitude [...] in the sense of [...] what they think [it should be], their values, all those rules; and there is no room for others.

Trying to clarify Brigitte’s position on the matter I asked her further questions. The interviewee stated that some of her colleagues think she “does not do things” the way she “should do”, so “there is this attitude about them knowing, them doing things right, [...] making things well”. Brigitte, however, did not comment further on the idea of these attitudes being shaped by particular religious or Catholic elements.

Michael was also critical of his workplace and colleagues. In similar terms to those of Brigitte, Michael stated Aguascalientes’ society and academia were not necessarily conservative but “traditionalist”. When I asked him whether this “traditionalism” would be related to the ideological and religious local discourses, his answer, unlike Brigitte’s, was, “without doubt”. After this and other questions, Michael stated Marxism and Catholicism,

both as paradigms that sought social transformations, “fit together”. Later on Michael referred to the remarkable extent to which his undergraduate studies turned out to be Marxist and orthodox. “We [students] said ‘no’ to everything [...] the message was atrocious, ‘do not see the news, do not read the newspaper’”. Referring to this Marxist context and Catholicism in general, Michael stated: “what was dramatic, indeed, was coming from a doctrine and going to another”. I will return to these reported parallels in chapters 7 and 8.

II. Mexico City sociology lecturers’ replies.

During our interview in MxC Norma accepted that science is non-aseptic. “For a long time” she stated,

this idea of the neutrality of science prevailed. Science could solve controversies because it was neutral and objective [...] Afterwards sociology of science said the foundations of science are never totally aseptic

Interestingly, Norma then explained the undesirability of such non-aseptic foundations:

The consequences have been very negative [...] pharmaceutical [companies] do science seeking profits [...] the science that is done in these regions is frequently linked to interests that are not necessarily academic, that gives science a different character; plus this idea of the politicisation of science

Understandably so, when I introduced to Norma the Catholicism-sociology thesis and then asked her about her impressions of it, she replied:

I think in those cases it is impossible to generalise [...] From my experience in this university I would say people are atheist or agnostic [...] I do not know any sociologist that would defend his religiosity or that defends Catholic values openly. Probably in other regions of the country it is not necessarily so. From my experience, [I say that] it [Catholicism] is not part of [Sociology].

And right after this, without me suggesting it, Norma touched upon Marxism and stated a series of direct connections AgC lecturers had pointed out as well, yet in strikingly opposite terms:

I would say that it is a different type of millenarism that plays a role [in sociology]; a different type of salvation. For example when Marxism was a religion, it played exactly the same functions [...] in the sense of everything, the association of men, of the good and the evil, of salvation, of a millenarist decision, everything, everything.

I then insisted and said that even in “atheist” researchers there would be a possibility of finding traces of such Catholicism, though “diluted” and “historically mediated”, since the Catholic Church might be interpreted as one of the few social institutions operating in the country uninterruptedly since colonial times and having a major cultural role. Norma’s reply to this comment was,

Listen, I agree on that, and I do not doubt that culture in [the country in] general is so. But you have to take into account that this is a country that underwent two wars of religion to separate the Church and the State¹⁸⁴ [...] And, for example, in this university it is reiterated over and over that this is a public, free and secular university!¹⁸⁵

Norma concluded “I defend by all means the laity [secularity] of public education” and further rejected my research thesis by adding that Mexicans’ Catholicism is merely “ritual, it has nothing to do with the way they [Catholics] behave”.

My interview with Rachel was brief given the tight schedule of the interviewee. As a result I did not have time enough to explore Rachel’s viewpoints on my research topic. Yet, some of Rachel’s statements are particularly relevant in this sense. For instance, on her primary-school background and the role of religion in public education in Mexico, she stated

¹⁸⁴ Perhaps Norma refers here to the series of armed conflicts between liberal (secularist) and conservative political cliques in the 19th-century, post-independence period that I discussed in chapter 3.

¹⁸⁵ See the “Constitutional article 3” in the Methodology chapter.

The primary school I attended [...] is a school whose board is formed by Evangelicals. It was a totally lay school though, they never told us anything about religion, they never invited us to read religious texts, never¹⁸⁶. I think it is a perfect model for a lay school

It is possible to infer from the statements above that Rachel would probably hold a similar ‘secularist’ position to that of Norma’s about the Catholicism-Sociology thesis –a position implicitly taken by AgC lecturer Rita too and somewhat criticised by Rita’s colleague Laura (above).

Right after our interview started, MxC lecturer Suzanne asked me politely about my interviews. I used this opportunity to say that sometimes it was difficult to debate with the interviewees about my research topic, especially after some of them brandished the argument of public education in Mexico being ‘legally’ secular. I told to Suzanne that I was trying to analyse, indeed, the extent to which sociology, as a discipline in public universities, was really ‘secular’. “You mean [not secular in terms of] the positions, in the way you choose some theories and not others?” asked Suzanne back. “Yes” I said to encourage further comments by the interviewee. Suzanne went on:

[And not secular] in the way of arguing and teaching?...Without any doubt, of course. Frequently it is absolutely unconscious. I think that is reflected too in a conservative position with regard to the use of theory. I think it [Catholicism] is there when you use certain theory or become part of a certain thought stream, or when you start to assume a series of interpretations with regard to the very concept of history [...] different interpretations with regard to sociology itself, to methodologies, to the ‘why’ and ‘what for’ of sociology. So, yes somehow it [Catholicism] is present [in positions] that do not assume themselves as conservative.

After telling me the story of his Catholic missionary priest friend (chapter 5), I asked MxC lecturer Peter whether he would say lecturers in the classroom reproduce the authority model of priests in temples. “Of course” he replied.

The priest is a preacher and the lecturer is the same. I am, as a lecturer, a manipulator of the group. Yes, I think there is a transposition from the priest’s authoritarianism, for example this authority figures [in the department] that nobody challenges.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. This interviewee’s statement on her attendance to both Evangelical and Catholic masses organised by this school (chapter 5, “The Catholic-school background” section)

Peter concluded “I think there is an inspiring model, a reference model”. Afterwards, however, he implicitly denied Catholicism as his own model of authority and then suggested alternative sources: “In my case I took that model from my lecturers in anthropology [...] My other reference model is my psychoanalyst, who is anti-Catholic”. Yet again, in an implicit complaint about the formal ways of addressing authority figures in the academia, Peter re-stated the link between such approaches to authorities and the ‘Catholic Church’:

I address the head of the department and the head of the school as equals: ‘what’s up dude?’. Whereas the family and the [Catholic] Church encouraged you to address people respectfully.

When I said to Peter that some interviewees rejected the Catholicism-sociology link on the grounds of the legally-secular character of their academic work, Peter replied

I see two things, yes indeed, institutions are secular, but sociologists are Guadalupean Marxists. What does that mean? It means they get married in the church, or you can find them in Sunday mass, that is, they are not consistent between what they think and what they believe

During our interview, I suggested to Peter’s colleague Gregory the possibility of Marxism becoming a dogma in Mexico because we were already “a country of believers”. Not necessarily convinced he said “yes” first and then said that Marxism achieved popularity in Mexico because of the “anti-Yankee feeling people have in Mexico even if they do not speak it out”. I could not collect further statements from this interviewee on my research topic, however, I could ask him about the concept of “Guadalupean Marxist” which, I said, I had heard from a couple of lecturers. In a different, perhaps less critical tone to the one he had used to refer to Catholic universities and religion in general (chapter5), Gregory stated that Guadalupean Marxism had “started with the University workers’ union”, and then he explained to me:

I participated in the union’s foundation in November 1972; it was [called] Guadalupean Marxism because one of the things the union accomplished was to make the university to set December 12th as a holiday, so workers could go in procession to the [Virgin of Guadalupe] temple

In MxC as well, Joseph explicitly stated that his sociology studies were unrelated to religion. Although I could not ask Joseph further questions about my research topic, his statement about “setting a considerable distance from the Church” when he started to attend university and his emphatic statement on him not attending Catholic temples and not participating in Catholic organisations (chapter 5, “Present Catholicisms” section) indicate that Joseph might hold a secular personal position with regard to Sociology and Catholicism. During our interview Angela reported holding a similar position. Yet, unlike my interview with Joseph, my interview with Angela was more productive on this particular topic. Angela explicitly stated that she studies,

how all societies have, like Durkheim says, a religious attitude, very secularised though. You can see it [religious attitudes] in the rites, in many things that are not necessarily religious, but lay, secular.

I then suggested that the “skeleton” of societies such as Mexico’s might not be secular but still religious. Angela reiterated, “yes, the skeleton of societies is highly religious”. After this I asked the interviewee her opinion on whether people’s habits and concepts on authority could be partly shaped by Catholic discourses. Angela said “it could be; there is still this relationship between Catholicism and authorities”. Later during the interview we talked about what seemed to be some Mexican academics’ habit of referring to classic sociologists as authoritative sociological arguments *per se*. “I want to know” I began to say, “whether those ways of approaching classic sociologists are related to...”. Then Angela completed my sentence “to the figure of the priest [...] yes our classic authors are like priests [...] the symbol of the priest”. Angela continued, “you can play with these symbols [in your research], with these representations; you will see, the school for example is a ritual, is a world of rituals”. After I briefly told Angela about some interviewees’ answers being grounded in the constitutionally-secular status of public education in the country, she replied:

That is very interesting. We are all sociologists but ignore sociology, because all the classic sociologists [...] have talked about religion, they have addressed it as a topic for sociological reflection [...] I do not know what the answers are in other countries but in this school it is surprising and disappointing that they [interviewees] say to you things like that. That is to ignore sociology [...]. I agree, education in Mexico is

[constitutionally] secular, of course it is secular, but what does that have to do with your research topic?!

Summary

In the following lines I will group the lecturers' individual replies into more concise types of positions and themes –in these I will occasionally include the data I have presented in chapter 5 as well.

Lecturers' opinions on the influences of Catholicism *in society in general* were actually consistent. For instance, Julia's statements on Catholicism in Aguascalientes determining the criteria for the 'good' son/father/employee and 'what is right and wrong' are strikingly similar to MxC lecturer Peter's statements about the prevalence of 'god-devil, heaven-hell schemes' that drive 'people's behaviour' and 'the good-the evil' distinctions that 'rule' people's 'lives' (chapter 5). These reported links between Catholicism/Catholic discourses and 'people's behaviour' or their 'criteria' of right and wrong do correspond to, and are basically summed up by, Laura's explicit statements on the scheme of 'social values' in Mexico being "very similar" to the Catholic scheme of moral values –and her personal case being "the same story".

Although focused only on 'detrimental' consequences, Rachel's statement about the 'impossibility to separate' the Catholic Church from the rather 'negative' influence it has had in 'people's way of thinking and acting' (chapter 5) are actually consonant with the assertions of the four lecturers above. Suzanne's statements on the relation between Catholicism and 'conservative' thinking, fits neatly as well into Rachel's explicitly critical statement. A similar parallel can be drawn from Michael's statement on the relation between 'traditionalism' in Aguascalientes' social context and corresponding ideological and religious discourses. Both the statements about 'negative' effects and the somewhat more neutral statements on the scheme of moral values ('right/wrong'; 'the good/the evil') being

similar to the 'scheme of Catholic values' are entirely consonant with Angela's opinion on the operation of a broader 'religious configuration' in secular societies in general.

Lecturers' views on the possible effects of Catholicism *in sociology* were mostly cautious and rather brief, oppositional or absent. Laura, for example, agrees about the prevalence of a Catholic idea of 'service'¹⁸⁷ but restricts it to 'social work' practitioners. She agrees as well on a parallel relation between dogmas and vertical authority figures in the Catholic Church and corresponding elements in academia, but for Laura this is just a possibility. On a similar topic, Peter's position was clearer though: there is a 'transposition' from the priestly model of authority to the lecturer's authority in the classroom, which is a relation whose possibility Angela explicitly suggested as well.

In a series of longer responses Edward agreed on the possibility of a link between Catholicism and sociology via 'schemes of ideas', e.g. *dichotomies*, and not specific ideas *per se* – a proposition that is, indeed, totally consonant with Julia's statements on the Catholic right-wrong criteria, and Peter's ideas on the Catholic god-devil and heaven-hell 'schemes' driving people's lives. Perhaps related to this 'scheme of ideas' too is Edward's assertion about researchers' ethics codes being formed out of the Catholic 'environment' and changing this religious imprint only in a 'few cases'. Indeed, an example of such a scheme of values might be the 'hard work' family value Rita personally expressed in unambiguous statements and afterwards denied.

Another possible relation, explicitly noted by Edward and Michael, and thoroughly, yet indirectly, stated by Norma as well, is the case of Marxism not only as an "orthodox", "primitive" or "dogmatic" paradigm (chapter 4) but also as "a church" or "a religion" in Mexico. What does this exactly mean for these respondents? Edward sees both Marxism constituting 'a belief' similar to those in an organised religion and Marxist 'strict authority practices' similar to those of 'religious congregations'. More critically, he also sees

¹⁸⁷ Which may certainly constitute a 'companion' of corresponding Catholic moral values or a Catholic moral value as such.

‘intellectual submission’ and ‘beliefs without reflection’ in both Marxism and Catholicism. Michael sees both institutions as ‘doctrines’ based on ‘orthodox’ discourses and seeking ‘social transformations’. Although Norma does not see links between Catholicism and Marxism, she interestingly described the latter as ‘a religion’ too, that even ‘served the same functions’ as Catholicism in the sense of ‘the good and the evil’ as well as ‘salvation’. Here Brigitte’s statements on Marxism are also important. Whereas Brigitte initially perceived Marxism as ‘diametrically opposed’ to Catholicism, she then perceived a familiar ‘orthodoxy’ as well.

Now, is what the sociologists stated in terms of possible or actual relations between Catholicism and sociology/Marxism consistent enough as to be the bases of a more detailed and specific analysis? Next I will analyse the lecturers’ replies by contrasting them with the empirical evidence presented in previous chapters.

III. Lecturers’ responses compared to evidence

All the replies I have reported above are relevant and meaningful in empirical and individual terms. These replies are perfectly consistent with the lecturers’ critical positions towards the Catholic Church (chapter 5) and some lecturers’ open defence of ‘secular education’ and the constitutional secularism that prevails, at least discursively, in the country –normative-epistemic paradigms of secularism (Casanova 2009) which emerge from a particular and justified, although not necessarily accurate (chapter 3), interpretation of secularisation in Mexico as a full political-cultural-ideological separation between Catholicism and the Mexican state, and Mexican state institutions including public universities. Rather unsurprisingly, most of these replies seem to rest upon the assumption that Catholicism does, or may, have ‘negative’ effects in people’s ‘thinking’ and acting’ and does, or may, have detrimental consequences (e.g. conservativeness, traditionalism, authoritarianism) in sociology and sociologists as well. This assumption, I argue, suggests two further findings. Firstly, it reveals the heavy influence that the Western secular/ist scientific paradigm/s

(Calhoun et al. 2011; Casanova 2009, 2011; Bremer 2008) have in these lecturers and in the conceiving and operation of the academic/scientific communities they belong to. Secondly, it also suggests the assumption and prevalence of a Mannheimian sociology-of-scientific-knowledge perspective in which the ‘social elements’ or ‘social factors’ in science and scientific knowledge are regarded not as *inherent constituents* but as *unwelcome pollutants*¹⁸⁸ (Bloor 1976; Douglas 2002). Given the evidence that I have presented in chapter 3 in terms of the major historical relevance of Catholicism and the current pervasiveness of ‘official-institutional’ and ‘folk’ Catholic discourses in this country, the question is then: can the lecturers’ “Mannheimian” (normative) accounts and comments be *complemented* by a non-Mannheimian interpretation of science that does not assume the pollutant character of ‘the social’, e.g., Catholicism and Catholic discourses, but its intrinsic ‘contributions’ to the formation of scientific knowledge –regardless of the ‘negative’, ‘positive’ or ‘neutral’ qualities of those contributions? I will offer such a *complementary analysis* in the next paragraphs. This analysis will be based on the evidence that I presented in chapter 5 and, occasionally, on some of the theoretical statements and empirical findings in chapters 3 and 4 as well.

In his Weberian ‘thesis’ Merton (1938) stated, regarding science in 17th century England, that

the mere fact that an individual is nominally a Catholic or a Protestant has no bearing upon his attitude toward science. Only in so far as his thought and behaviour is actuated and directed by their respective values does his religious affiliation become significant. (1938: 479)

If sociology lecturers’ ruptures with Catholicism are only partial and their current religious profiles may be described as ‘non-practising believers’ – e.g., believers of a God/entity and its explanatory/intercessory powers (chapter 5) – do they ‘believe’ in Catholic moral values as well –as Laura and Edward suggested explicitly and Julia, Peter, Michael, and Suzanne

¹⁸⁸ In this sense, Douglas’ (2002) classical study (see also Zerubavel 1999: 58) about the symbolical relations between religious notions of purity/impurity and society’s conceptions of dirt, pollution and certain social rules in everyday life, opens up interesting research questions, e.g., how do Christian or Catholic notions of purity/impurity shape the conceiving of (pure) ‘secular science’ models in this society and others?

partly confirmed? Or, even if they do not ‘believe’ in those values, would they base their ‘thoughts and behaviour’ (Merton 1938) on them anyway? Not only Edward’s explicit statement on the matter but also his complaint about the Catholic social teachings being left aside by the Catholic Church, and his own ‘extreme’ Catholic background suggest Edward currently holds moral values that not entirely yet partly correspond to those of Catholicism. But what about the sociology lecturers that did not attend Catholic seminaries, yet grew up in likewise Catholic practising families? Laura unambiguously accepted that her moral values correspond to Catholic values. Interestingly, she also stated that her school training seemed to be tacitly based on the Catholic formula ‘seeing, judging and acting’. In Rita’s case the parallel between her moral values and the Catholic discourses is not explicit yet it would be clear too. From the outset Rita stated one of the differences between the Catholic and the public schools she attended was ‘everything related to *values formation*’. Although this may represent only minimal evidence, her statements on attending Catholic mass are, I think, more conclusive. She finds convenient the ‘messages’ by priests about ‘strengthening respect to others’, ‘respecting people’, ‘appreciating people’, ‘helping’ and ‘giving support’. Moreover, when I asked Rita whether she would draw from these principles to lead her relations with her current university students, she replied:

Yes maybe, I sometimes feel that my students are like my sons, I mean this is my job, so in that sense I try to do it as best as I can, [and also] help people to gain knowledge on their own [...] Unlike other lecturers who are very greedy with their knowledge, I am not, I try to share with my students all I have, so I borrow them my books, materials, everything

This is a strikingly similar answer to that from the assistant editor of the sociology journal in MxC’s university I interviewed. This assistant editor stated that she participated in the “Christian youth movements” that were related to “one of the streams of Theology of Liberation”. After this, she reported having experienced “the following of Christ” through her activities of evangelisation in deprived communities in the country. Then, without me asking, she said,

I do not participate in those communities anymore. But I do think that in my job I do have this [Christian] human value¹⁸⁹, I do think I have it, so I try to give my best to people. I do not participate in any Catholic group now though

Back to sociology lecturers in AgC, less explicit yet evident, is Julia's case too. Her statements on 'things getting relaxed' in terms of Catholic social values might indicate that she agrees with people 'prioritising' those values in a different way; yet this statement also portrays a respondent that is still holding Catholic social values themselves as criteria to assess the extent to which 'things' are 'relaxed'. Julia's explicit statement on people in AgC being determined by the Catholic criteria of 'right' and 'wrong' does strengthen this inference.

Whereas Michael's rupture with the Catholic Church seems to consist of a breaking-up with the institution and its 'repression' (chapter 5), there are probabilities of the once 'very-religious' Michael holding notions about what 'the right' is (Julia, Peter) that seem to be directly connected to the Catholic notions on what is morally or 'ethically' right. For instance, in our interview, Michael criticised the corruption within the Catholic Church: it "plays on ethical issues"¹⁹⁰, he stated. Where did Michael get his criteria to judge 'ethical issues' from? After observing Catholic rituals and attending Catholic groups weekly during his childhood and early teenage hood, did Michael acquire a totally new set of social values from the university and his sociology courses? It is possible. However, lecturer Edward would say that the personal 'erasing' or 'oblivion' of Catholic values would happen in just a few individuals, including social researchers.

From Norma's perspective in MxC, those 'new social values' do come from the university or the public higher education community. Norma reported receiving training of an 'ethical' type at the university, where she reportedly learnt about Mexico being 'deeply unjust' and

¹⁸⁹ Literal translation. The interviewee referred to a single 'human value' ('valor humano'), she did not expand on this though.

¹⁹⁰ Michael told me one of his wife's nieces was baptised twice by the same priest. The first baptism took place after the girl was given a fatal medical diagnosis; the second baptism happened after the girl recovered. Michael reported the priest charging the girl's parents twice for his services. Michael's literal words were: "those ways of corruption are unacceptable. I do think religious beliefs should be taken seriously, right? [...] I cannot conceive the religious practice being sold, because you are playing on ethical issues"

‘wealth’ being inadequately distributed (chapter 4). But, are these statements not very similar to those of the donation box in MxC’s bus station, where a text exhorts people to donate money for a Catholic shelter for ‘kids and teenagers’ who ‘suffer the *moral, social and economic disequilibrium* of the current world’ (chapter 3)? Whether the university as social institution reproduces and instils in students moral notions that are parallel, or not, to Catholic discourses is a question that I cannot answer here exhaustively. However, the data I presented in chapter 3 about the *historical saliency* and *ideological* role of Catholic discourses in Mexico and the evidence I presented in chapter 4 about both the traces of Catholic/Christian thinking in the country’s early sociological discourses and the current prescriptive-interventionist sociological rationales in Mexico, does suggest that sociology and the university in Mexico would not produce, despite their secular legal status, social values that run against those of the Catholic Church –except clearly for those on sexual morals, euthanasia and abortions (chapter 3). Both Catholic Church and universities would share a particular set of common discourses, with different justifications yet similar value-frames, on the overcoming of poverty and injustice.

Yet it can still be argued that cases such as Norma’s might be one of those few cases where the ‘erasing’ (Edward) of Catholic values did take place. Interestingly, Norma reported during our interview that the teachers in the Catholic schools she attended insisted before students on specific ‘ways of acting’ based on ‘a series of principles’ –her American-priests school insisted on principles of ‘what is right’, ‘what is good’, her Mexican Catholic-nuns school did it on principles or ‘ideas’ of ‘guilt’, ‘hell’ or ‘sin’. In the same sense, what is interesting and further revealing is this lecturer’s critical comment about drug traffickers killing people and, improperly, giving donations to the Church afterwards; or her literal complaint about husbands not fulfilling the monogamy principle and so cheating on their wives¹⁹¹. What is more, in these two discursive instances of the lecturer’s moral position – as in most of the critical statements by sociology lecturers in chapters 4 – there is not a *relativistic* approach to the *judging* of drug traffickers’ donations and unfaithful husbands, at

¹⁹¹ After complaining about drug traffickers’ donations, Norma criticised as well men who, once married by the Church, cheat on their wives “every time they can”, which is, Norma said clearly upset, “a daily-life thing here”.

least not implicitly or explicitly evident during our interview. What was evident during my interview with this sociology lecturer and others were (i) reports of lecturers being told by relatives about Catholic *dichotomistic metaphors* such as ‘the angel’ and ‘the devil’ in Edward’s case or about ‘the devil’ in Peter’s case; and (ii) reports of lecturers being told at Catholic school about both ‘sin’ and ‘hell’ and what is ‘right’ and ‘good’, as in Norma’s case. This evidence suggest that some or most of the moral values that sociology lecturers hold would not only be fundamentally linked to their Catholic backgrounds –e.g. relatively-observant Catholic families, Catholic schools, experiences with priests, etc – but would also lie upon a *dichotomistic-asymmetric* base, where relativistic judgements hardly have a place, since social phenomena would be judged according to simple right-wrong, good-bad ‘schemes’ –see above, for instance, Edward’s dichotomistic judgements of ‘traditional’ and ‘enclosed’ Mexican Catholic seminaries and ‘liberal’ and ‘open’ religious atmospheres in Italy; Laura’s critical statements on ‘liberal/revolutionary’ and ‘conservative’ nuns (chapter 5); or Gregory’s ‘fighter’ and ‘office-worker’ Marxists (chapter 4). I do not think these are ‘schemes’ I have forced my data to show. Firstly, these are the type of ‘dualistic schemes’ that Edward, after my suggestion, accepted as possible reproductions by scholars from Catholicism. Secondly, these are exactly the same moral-values dichotomistic schemes that Julia and Peter explicitly reported as coming from Catholic discourses and ‘determining people’ (Julia) or ‘driving their behaviour’ (Peter).

IV. Conclusions

Sociology lecturers suggested or agreed on a series of resemblances between Catholicism and sociology as well as on possible or actual influences from the former on the latter in terms of i) ‘vertical authorities’ structures (Angela, Laura, Peter), ii) priest-like authority models (Angela, Peter; see also Castañeda 2004), iii) dichotomistic ‘schemes’ of ideas or good-bad criteria (Edward, Julia, Peter) and iv) Catholic and moral values (Laura, Edward). In terms of the similarities between Catholicism and Marxism, lecturers pointed out their parallel ‘strict/dogmatic’ authority practices (Edward; Brigitte), their shared emphasis on

‘social transformations’ (Michael) and shared ‘salvation’ notions and ‘good/evil’ distinctions (Norma). If the Catholic values-sociologists’ moral values relation is contrasted with the evidence provided by the lecturers’ themselves, this relation seems to stand as an actual influence of Catholicism/Catholic discourses upon sociologists’ reported personal stances. The evidence I have discussed in chapters 3, 4 and 5 also suggests that this values-related relation may involve as well certain influences between the systematic dichotomies and non-relativistic system of values in Catholic discourses (chapter 3) and the likewise dichotomistic and non-relativistic statements, ideas and opinions of sociology lecturers (chapters 4 and 5). Another interesting parallel or actual influence is related to the suggestion about a ‘Catholic’ (priestly/vertical) model of authority being somehow used or enacted (or ‘transposed’, in Peter’s words) by sociologists, and contributing, by extension, to ‘orthodox/dogmatic’ sociological streams such as Marxism in Mexico and the hierarchical authority structures in universities in general.

But even if we escalate these parallels into actual influences and so take for granted Catholic discourses’ influences upon the sociology lecturers’ scheme of moral values or their authority interactions, what do these findings mean for ‘sociological texts’ *per se* (chapter 2)? Do university sociology lectures or actual sociology publications authored by the academics above reflect and materialise the suggested parallels and influences? What can these texts tell us? In the following chapter I present an analysis of the lecturers’ sociological texts where the answers to these questions will begin to emerge.

Chapter 7

Sociological discourses in Mexico and their parallel with Catholic discourses

In this chapter I will de-construct ‘texts’ (Fairclough 2003; Mason 2002). I will also de-construct, and then re-construct sociological ‘discourses’ (Foucault 2002; Elder-Vass 2011) and, in a sense, I will ‘confer sameness’ (Douglas 1986). I will present and analyse sociology lecturers’ ‘texts’ - both published and unpublished academic papers and manuscripts as well as transcripts from voice recordings of university lectures and workshops- and will discuss their most frequent *discursive features*, or ‘discursive assumptions’ (Fairclough 2003; Gilbert and Mulkay 1984; Mulkay 1993) as empirical evidence of the current ‘sociological discourses’ in Mexico, that is, as evidence of the most abstract rules of what can be said or not in the sociological field (Foucault 2002; Elder-Vass 2011). In addition to this, I will simultaneously offer to the reader a picture of what I argue are the *resemblances* between Catholic and sociological discourses¹⁹², that is, their parallel *prescriptive* and *normative bases*, equivalent styles of *critical thinking* and *stances*, similar *dichotomistic logics* and analogous ‘*power-over*’ and ‘*mono-causal*’ views of certain social entities and social phenomena in general –see Figure 7.1 below.

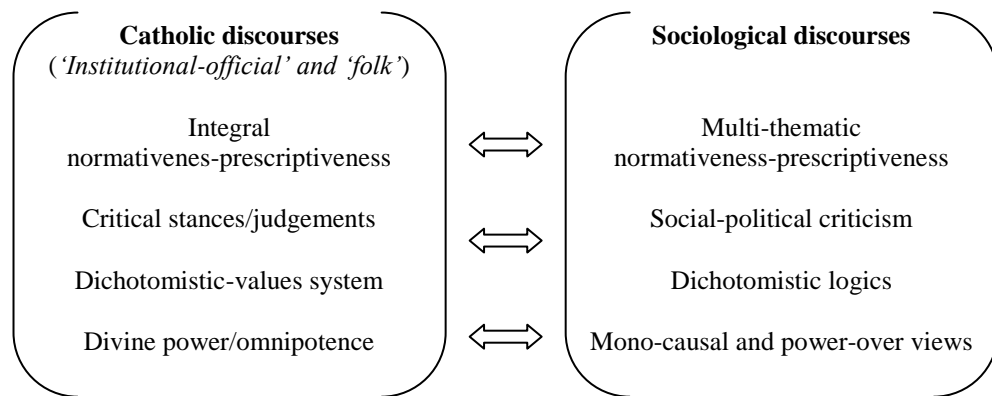
Some of the discursive characteristics I will identify and discuss in this chapter (Section III. ‘Interpretative analysis’) will unavoidably appear as rather ubiquitous elements in any set of sociological/social science discourses flowing or produced in any region of the world. For instance, the ‘dichotomies’ and the ‘critical statements’ I will refer to in the following sections may be taken as building-blocks of any sociological account insofar as dichotomies may appear as the most basic cognitive classification at hand and criticism, in all its types

¹⁹² Douglas asserts that ‘sameness’ or ‘similarity’ is not an inherent property of things to be discovered but an outcome we construct based on a surrounding “coherent scheme” (1986:59). I do acknowledge that the resemblances I will note in the following chapters are not findings I ‘discovered’, but similarities I have constructed based on both the ‘coherent theoretical scheme’ I discussed and presented in chapter 1 and the own accounts of the sociology lecturers I interviewed.

(social, cultural, explicit, implicit, radical, soft, pluralistic, etc), is invariably produced as a rather expected and highly-valued contribution of the sociological discipline. Firstly, I want to state that, except for my general concept of ‘prescriptiveness’ that the reader will find next, I will specify such discursive features in order to demonstrate their distinctiveness. For instance, I will describe sociological discourses in AgC and MxC not as ‘normative’ but as *tacitly* normative, or not as ‘critical’ but as *socially and politically* critical –with brief or minimal criticism aimed at theoretical or methodological issues. Secondly, and more importantly, I want to stress again one of the critical-realist arguments I noted in chapter 2. In brief, having the same ‘outcome’ here (e.g. Latin America) and there (e.g. Northern Europe) – e.g., normativeness, critical thinking, etc – does not mean the same ‘causes’ are at work here and there. In other words, I do not want to suggest that the ‘discursive features’ and the sociological ‘discourse/s’ I will present in section III, if found in other sociological/knowledge fields outside Mexico, must be necessarily explained by Christian or religious discourses too¹⁹³. As said in chapter 2 from a critical-realist view (Sayer 1992, 2000), causal accounts of social phenomena have to address the historical and contemporary contexts, particular conditions and the mechanisms linked to those conditions. And precisely this necessary ‘contextualization’ of causal accounts takes us to my next introductory statement. I would like to suggest that the readers, if possible, keep in mind, when they go through the sections of this chapter, what I have pointed out in chapter 3 about the *historical* (colonial, post-independence, post-revolution) and *present intensity and extension* of Catholicism in the society/ies I am analysing. I will then properly signal what I argue are the resemblances between the Catholic discourses I discussed in chapter 3 and the sociological ‘features’ and discourses that I will present in this chapter. I will discuss at length in chapter 8 the manners in which these two apparently oppositional discourses, usually viewed from science-*versus*-religion standpoints (e.g., chapter 6), do not only resemble each other but are causally related as well.

¹⁹³ Nonetheless, the extent to which religious discourses shape sociological/social science discourses outside Mexico/Latin America, e.g. Asian sociologies, or even ‘Western’ social sciences, remains as an interesting research object (Durkheim 1915; Sahlins 1996; Milbank 2006; Cannell 2005, 2006).

Figure 7.1. Parallels between Catholic and sociological discourses



I. Sampling of texts and types of qualitative analyses.

Fairclough (2003) states that his critical discourse analysis “can be productively applied to a sample of research material rather than large bodies of text” (2003:6). Indeed, sampling is not irrelevant in qualitative research (Mason 2002: 120-127). Having adequate texts-sampling criteria in this research is fundamental for there is a possibility of biasing the selection of sociological texts and so choosing *a priori* only those texts that would more likely prove the Catholicism-sociology epistemological relations I am looking for. Sampling criteria also comes in handy in this research since the total number of publications by AgC and MxC sociology lecturers would roughly comprise one hundred texts¹⁹⁴ –and unpublished academic manuscripts would constitute a further set of analysable texts as well.

My first sampling criterion was *'year of publication'*. I analysed texts published after year 2000, as this research is concerned more about the sociology lecturers' current statements and discourses than on their gradual development –although the latter is certainly no less interesting and will be occasionally addressed. From a broad historical perspective, one decade might not convey enough significance, however a data set constituted by texts from

¹⁹⁴ That is roughly thirty eight published texts by Aguascalientes sociologists and sixty two texts by Mexico City sociologists. This set would contain texts with 3,000 to 100,000 word-counts. A conservative estimate of the total words that could be analysed from this 'universe' would amount to 19 doctoral dissertations with a 80,000-words length.

the last ten years may well be considered theoretically and analytically relevant in terms of sociological discourses in Mexico *today*. Texts from before 2000 were included in cases where the most recent publications by the lecturers were inaccessible or minimal in quantitative terms. The second sampling criterion I used was '*individual representativeness*'. I focused on analysing at least half of the texts published by each lecturer in such a way as to have a 'soft' representativeness of the lecturers' individual work and avoid studying a minimum number of texts that could be meaningless in terms of sociological 'discourses'¹⁹⁵. The final sampling criterion was '*randomness*'. I planned on analysing texts that I would select randomly from the set of post-2000 texts which would represent half of the author's sociological production. In practice, this criterion could not be fulfilled in all the individual cases though. Whereas the texts I could collect *per* sociology lecturer represented, in most of the cases, more than half of the author's production and therefore I was able to choose randomly from those individual sets, there were some individual sets of texts which I could not trace fully¹⁹⁶. Another reason was the lack of access to the texts I knew the lecturer had published¹⁹⁷. These practical difficulties aside, I analysed a set of 69 texts that comprises from 3 to 8 texts by each lecturer – see the last part of appendix 7.1 for minimal bibliographical references¹⁹⁸. Sixty four texts are published materials –i.e., books, research

¹⁹⁵ This sampling criterion may be defined as the combination of two of Mason's criteria: statistical representativeness and illustrative/evocative sampling (2002:125-126). Whereas this 'individual representativeness' criteria might not portray the complete range of sociological themes researched by each lecturer, it provides a fair and indeed representative illustration of their sociological discourses overall –I suggest so even if we ponder the abstract and empirical troubles in defining the "total population" (Mason 2002: 126) or 'universe of discourses' in each lecturer, in AgC and MxC and in Mexico in general.

¹⁹⁶ The main reason was the lack of a list with the total published texts by each lecturer. Lecturers' curriculum vitae were of exceptional help, but the number of texts referred to there was frequently limited. Some of the lecturers did give me access to their published texts, in most of the cases this did not occur though. I must admit as well that I felt particularly uncomfortable asking lecturers for their publications, especially after I did perceive their uneasiness with the research topic. I did not want the lecturers to feel 'scrutinised' and I frequently ended up not asking them directly for access to their texts.

¹⁹⁷ Some of these published texts were conference proceedings with only temporary electronic access or texts published in local journals or media with no electronic access or physically irretrievable.

¹⁹⁸ As I mentioned in the methodology chapter I do acknowledge that the anonymity of respondents is indirectly compromised by making explicit references to the content of their published works. However, I cannot offer an analysis of sociological discourses and their links to Catholicism without drawing from the sociological literature published by the respondents themselves. I will only offer minimal bibliographical references in appendix 7.1 though and in doing so I hope to decrease the possibilities of full-identity disclosures –complete bibliographical references would be disclosed upon request; consultation with the authors would follow the requests.

articles, essays, commentaries or conference proceedings¹⁹⁹ and five texts are conference papers and transcripts from lectures and workshops²⁰⁰.

The analyses of these texts included a series of gradual stages that correspond to Mason's three types of data reading: literal, interpretive and reflective (2002:148-150). The first analysis was basically a literal reading to identify the most frequent explicit ideas and statements *within* and *across* the texts. Frequent ideas *in single texts* were targeted regardless of their specific location within the text –either in the introduction, discussion/analysis or conclusions. Frequent ideas *across texts* were located too, regardless of the texts' main themes. This reading constituted a first elementary approach to the lecturers' publications and may be described as well as an elementary *content-analysis* exercise (Silverman 1993: 59). The second stage consisted of further analyses or 'interpretive readings' that yielded more 'frequent ideas' and the initial codes or categories by which sets of frequent ideas and statements were grouped. Similarities and minor differences between AgC and MxC texts started to appear in this stage. The third stage consisted of further interpretive and reflective readings that produced an account of the 'sociological discourses' in AgC and MxC. This last stage would constitute a discourse-analysis exercise, focused particularly on "discourse-specific assumptions" (Fairclough 2003: 58) implicit in the sociologists' observable sentences (Elder-Vass 2011; Foucault 2002).

II. Literal analysis

The full report of this analysis may be found in appendix 7.1. In this section I only want to highlight that the sociological texts I analysed contain a predictable thematic variation by single author/lecturer –e.g. Edward's texts addressing organizational culture, corruption,

¹⁹⁹ It includes a couple of unpublished papers.

²⁰⁰ With regard to transcripts from lectures and presentations/workshops by lecturers, there was no sampling criteria as such, but rather a more practical 'selection', as the lectures and seminars that were recorded and transcribed are only those I could attend during my field work in AgC and MxC, certainly limited in number. These selections depended on my interviews schedule, but other than that my practical criterion was 'randomness'.

religion, and other sociological topics— and, obviously, a greater thematic diversity by the group of lecturers in AgC and MxC —e.g. texts from MxC ranging from theoretical essays, to articles on racism, sociology of childhood, Mexico’s educational field, etc. Alongside these thematic diversities I found as well relatively constant ideas and types of statements (i) across single texts and across group of texts by individual sociology lecturers, and (ii) across sets of texts by groups of lecturers. Recurring ideas in texts by AgC lecturers are, for instance, ‘authority’ (Laura), ‘beliefs’, (Edward), ‘domination’ (Michael). Frequent ideas in texts by MxC lecturers are, for example, ‘laws’ (Rachel), or ‘social problems’ (Suzanne). Constant ideas by groups in AgC were ‘diversity’ (Laura, Rita) or ‘power’ (Michael, Edward). Constant ‘group ideas’ as such were not really found in the texts collected in MxC —except perhaps for the concept ‘neoliberalism’ in texts by Gregory and Suzanne (see also Abend 2006, cited in section below) . Instead a systematic type of statement was frequently found in MxC texts: strikingly critical statements, some of them made from Marxist standpoints. For instance, Gregory’s criticism of “capitalism as the dominant production mode” (2002:46) and his statements on health and illnesses in society being “caused by the ways society organises itself to produce and reproduce, that is, the dominant mode of production: capitalism”²⁰¹ (1999c: 9). Further evidence of critical statements was found in Peter’s texts, for instance, his literal statement: “I am convinced that Mexican society, especially in urban areas, is terribly racist and discriminatory” (2003: 257); or, “the most dramatic expression of human cruelty is with no doubt represented by German Nazism” (1997:141). The reader can find the full quotes in appendix 7.1.

In short, the results of my ‘literal analysis’ are indicative of a multi-discursive sociological field in terms of both explicit ‘topics’ and explicit/implicit ‘themes’. There is, for instance, a series of ‘religions/Catholicism’ sociological topics by Laura, Julia and Edward or a broad normative ‘education’ theme by Suzanne, Joseph and Gregory. Whereas these sociological topics and themes provide glimpses of the sociological field in Mexico, I rather focused, as I have stated previously, on identifying and analysing the more general and abstract sociological “discourses”.

²⁰¹ Literal translation

III. Interpretative analyses

After my literal/content analysis I moved on to a stage where a series of categories or codes (Mason 2002: 153; Silverman 1993:37) was elaborated by focusing on the whole set of texts by AgC and MxC sociology lecturers, rather than on single (thematic) groups. The evidence in these analyses is constituted by both explicit/observable ideas and sentences as well as implicit statements or ‘assumptions’ (Fairclough 2003: 55, 58). Based on this analysis I argue that sociological discourses in Mexico can be adequately characterised by a series of ‘discursive features’. The data suggest that the sociological texts by both AgC and MxC lecturers do draw systematically from (1) a *tacit normativeness*, (2) *dichotomistic logics*, and (3) *social-political criticism*, which are constantly, yet not always, combined with (a) *prescriptiveness*, (b) *power-over notions* and (c) *mono-causal statements*. Whereas the use of a ‘prescriptive’ logic was not particularly extensive in AgC’s texts overall, this feature was definitely more intense and extended in MxC texts. And whereas ‘mono-causality’ and ‘power-over’ statements were recurrent in texts from AgC, their frequency decreases, only slightly, in texts from MxC. By reporting these differences in ‘usage’, I do not want to suggest that the six discursive characteristics I will refer to next are isolated and independent discursive ‘components’ sociology lecturers choose discretely. As I will discuss below, these features are *mutually dependent* and so represent the sociological “discourses” (Elder-Vass 2011; Foucault 2002) that constitute, and are constituted by, the lecturers’ texts – irrespective of the finer sociological ‘arguments’, ‘themes’, ‘theses’ and ‘viewpoints’ and ‘theoretical frames’ these texts address explicitly. Having noted this mutual dependence, I will present and discuss each feature next and will note the parallels with the Catholic discourses I have presented in chapter 3.

Prescriptiveness

In chapter 4 I have already presented evidence of the prescriptive-interventionist *rationales* that may be found behind, or below, the sociological (university/academic) fields in Mexico. The sociological texts ‘produced’ by the sociology lecturers who are part of this research

indicate that this ‘prescriptiveness’ is not only a ‘backstage’ element but also a visible feature of sociological texts *per se*.

Statements with ‘prescriptive thinking’ were slightly more frequent in the texts from MxC than those from AgC. But except for some minor differences in ‘frequency of prescriptions’ across authors, explicit prescriptive statements were constantly found across the entire set of texts. They ranged from relatively specific ‘instructions’ to solve particular problems to general ‘suggestions’ for ‘better scenarios’. For example, at the end of his book chapter on ‘Churches’ in Aguascalientes, Edward touches upon the idea of religious diversity and at the end concludes that “religious actors would have to be encouraged to go from tolerance of diversity to the richness of plurality” (2009b:189). During her presentation on ‘children’s perception of corruption’²⁰², Julia stated the ultimate aim of the research project she was referring to was “to generate strategies where a new culture of anti-corruption is given to kids, in order to re-educate them in terms of values”²⁰³ (2010a). In their book chapter on Aguascalientes’ urban development Brigitte, Julia and the third colleague who authored the text concluded at the end:

[T]here are two fundamental elements that have to be solved in the neighbourhood²⁰⁴: a) the availability of public spaces for culture, recreation and sports for teenagers and young people, and b) the elimination of drug-selling [...]. If there is something we must do, it is to create and renew spaces for culture, recreation and sports for young people (2007: 236)

In MxC, Suzanne states, in her book on education, that “all levels of education, from basic [school] to university, must recover the humanist view for the education of new generations” (2006: 13). After this, the author states that “modernisation” in education “cannot be carried out without education being valued and encouraged in daily life work, with incentives such as fair salaries, democratic union relations [...]” (2006: 43). After this Suzanne argues again:

²⁰² As part of a research conference organised by AgC university.

²⁰³ Literal translation

²⁰⁴ The neighbourhood the authors analysed and presented in the text.

Education is a profoundly human process and we need indeed to be efficient and productive. However, productivity would have to be considered as the consummation of men, of their rights; work is a conquest of man and if you do it [work] for love, it allows the affirmation of our human nature (2006:91)

In another text, Suzanne openly states that the aim of social sciences and humanities is

to discuss and analyse national priorities, social needs, values configuration, individuals' culture, their participation in the country's life and the country's plans in political, economic and sociocultural terms (1998: 54)

In MxC too, Rachel concludes her dissertation on family-violence stating:

We, women who have attained greater independence and freedom, have to let others know the rights we have as human beings, the fights that have taken place to gain equality; we have to keep working to educate men and women [...] We have to teach these rights in elementary school and universities, in our networks and offices, in hospitals, wherever there are discriminatory attitudes against women, but above all in the family (2000: 196)

In his analysis of information technologies in libraries, Peter recommends that “library science should meet the demands and the complex needs of the new times; therefore it requires non traditional forms and settings (2002: 285)”. After this Peter also argues that: “society needs new ways of relationships, [new ways of] economy and labour [contractual] relationships” (2002: 290). More interestingly, in his text about ‘native communities in Canada’, Peter states that “the re-valuation of nature is a cultural need that *has to be practised by all the inhabitants of the world*” (2003: 268; emphasis added²⁰⁵) –in terms of ‘universalisms’, I also find greatly interesting the statements of a speaker in an academic event I attended in MxC during my field work. The speaker was a member of a panel organised to present and ‘honour’ the work of a Mexican ‘classic’ sociologist (Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, 1922-). When the speaker praised the relevance of the Mexican sociologist’s theorisations, he also cited, as a “compliment”, Foucault and what the French

²⁰⁵ In this and the following quotes from sociology lecturers’ texts, I will emphasise some words using an italic-letter format; those italics will signal my own emphasis unless otherwise stated.

scholar had reportedly said about the work of this Mexican sociologist: “Foucault says he [Gonzalez Casanova and his work] is universalist, prescriptive and prophetic”²⁰⁶.

Back to the lecturers’ texts, in the introduction of one of his books, Gregory states from the outset “this book [...] arises from an interest to contribute to the solution of the country’s socioeconomic problems” (2006: 17)”. Joseph, during his presentation on sociology teaching in Mexico, argued unambiguously that

In its practical dimension, the sociological profession has an eminently social end and responsibility, as it is destined to study facts, phenomena or problems, in order to find the conditions and appropriate means to make human intervention more efficient, proposing actions in a conscious and motivated way (2003: 198)

Briceño-Leon and Sonntag (1998), quoted in chapter 4, state that Latin America sociology has been involved in the ‘promotion of progress and development’ since its inception in these regions. During one of our interviews, sociology lecturer Michael stated that the research funding from the Mexican government is usually granted on condition that the researchers not only identify ‘social problems’ but also say ‘how to solve them’ (chapter 4). If Latin American/Mexican sociology, as a knowledge field, is prescriptive-interventionist *per se* and if the state figure is one of the main external drivers of these prescriptions and interventions, might the prescriptive statements I presented above have yet another complementary discursive ‘reinforcement’? In chapter 4 I noted that the sociological field’s prescriptive-interventionist ‘rationales’ do resemble the prescriptiveness found in ‘institutional-official’ and ‘folk’ Catholic discourses’ (chapter 3). The evidence above suggests that the ‘all-embracing’ or ‘integral’ prescriptiveness of Catholic discourses is equivalent to the multi-thematic prescriptiveness of sociological discourses and is basically identical to some of the lecturers’ ‘integral’ prescriptiveness, e.g., Peter’s ‘re-valuation of nature by all the inhabitants of the world’²⁰⁷ (or the so-reported ‘universalist and

²⁰⁶ I could not trace the source where the panellist originally took this quote from. It is, however, not too problematic to state that Foucault was not necessarily praising Gonzalez Casanova when he uttered these adjectives. It is the panellist’s use of these descriptors as worthy what I want to highlight in this passage.

²⁰⁷ See also chapter 4 and Peter’s critical remarks on Spanish researchers being “less advanced” compared to Mexican researchers because, Peter stated, the latter do know about “a *general* social subject” and so their “explanations” are “more *totalitarian*, more *general*” (emphasis added).

prescriptive' sociological *oeuvre* of Gonzalez Casanova). I will discuss in chapter 8 whether these prescriptiveness-related resemblances between Catholic and sociological discourses are, indeed, causally related and whether the former might be one of those additional 'drivers' of the sociological discourses' generalised prescriptiveness.

Social-political criticism

In his comparative analysis of peer-reviewed sociological articles published in Mexico and United States, Abend (2006) found that whereas only *ten percent* of the sociological articles published in United States²⁰⁸ contained what could be classified as "value judgements" (2006:22-4), *eighty percent* of the Mexican-articles sample contained this type of statements²⁰⁹. In this sense, Abend's findings are equivalent to mine. In both AgC and MxC texts, and with an even greater frequency to that of 'prescriptive statements', a particular type of critical statements was constantly found in lecturers' texts. These statements contained explicit criticism towards a series of *political and social issues*. A few exceptions aside²¹⁰, similar critical ideas, remarks or commentaries focusing rather on scholarly literature as such (e.g., other scholars' theoretical theses²¹¹, empirical findings, methodological proposals) were brief if not absent in the texts overall. Although a few of these statements (e.g. Gregory's) are clearly based on critical Marxist tenets, most of them

²⁰⁸ Abend's sample (2006:4) includes 60 articles total, published between 1995 and 2001, i.e., 30 articles from 2 peer-reviewed Mexican sociology journals and 30 articles from 2 peer-reviewed sociology journals issued in United States.

²⁰⁹ As an example, Abend (2006:23) cites one of the 'Mexican' articles as follows "Salas-Porras's (2000) article on Mexican entrepreneurs' participation in electoral politics is full of trenchant censures of former President Carlos Salinas de Gortari and the then incumbent Partido Revolucionario Institucional. [...] her (2000:77, 80) very approach to her main object of inquiry, the relationship between entrepreneurs and electoral politics, is by no means neutral"

²¹⁰ For instance, the text where Edward (2009c) discusses the sociological and anthropological literature on 'culture', 'ideology', as well as 'sociology of knowledge' and 'social theories' and then develops a culturalist 'theory of social action'. Most of Angela's texts are further examples as well. She discusses, for instance, the theoretical work by Durkheim (1989) and Schutz (2002). In these texts, however, these theorists and their work are 'presented', almost paraphrased, and not necessarily 'criticised'.

²¹¹ Again, Abend's findings are comparable to mine. Abend states that the authors of the articles that constitute his 'Mexican' sample "have a very different understanding of the concept of theory. None of their theories is 'tested' by and related to the data in the U.S. [-articles] sense, and none of the articles explicitly say that theories ought to be tested by the data" (2006: 6)

do not appear explicitly embedded in any ‘critical-sociology’ paradigm. Either as part of the texts’ introductions, analyses, references or conclusions, these critical statements ranged from ‘mild’ to ‘strong’ *judgements* and alluded to different socio-political phenomena.

Some of the statements presented above illustrate this type of criticism, e.g., Suzanne’s criticism of (capitalist) ‘productivity’ and ‘efficiency’ criteria in the educational domain. Further evidence is found, for example, in AgC lecturer Rita. While Rita illustrates the social context prior to her analysis of *bolero* songs²¹², she also describes the former critically as a historical period “where local customs have barely a space in a cosmo-vision charged with utilitarianism and immediatism” (2007b:121). No criticism of the scholarly work cited by the lecturer was found in the text. In her text on Aguascalientes’ community development Brigitte states in terms of housing-related issues: “There is no proposal from the authorities, what they do is give temporary solutions and cede to the pressure of lobbyists or the real estate business” (2006a: 10). Although in this text Brigitte refers briefly in two lines to an author whose work focuses on ‘public spaces’, she does not conclude by making critical remarks on this literature but rather by referring critically to local authorities: “If the city council does not take appropriate measures to soften the cost of [urban] growth, the future will not be promising” (2006a:11). In his book on female participation in multilevel business, Michael cites, and seems to agree with, a series of authors who address “the poor or null appreciation of women’s contribution to social and economic sectors of societies” (2005: 34). Later on in the same text Michael states “precarious work is like a cancer that sickens a large part of the work life” (2005: 97). During his seminar presentation about corruption in Mexico Edward stated the research he was part of was “aimed at fighting corruption in more efficient ways than those used so far in the country” (2009d: 414). Criticism of scholarly literature on corruption or other adjacent topics was not part of this text/presentation either.

In MxC, whereas in her article on ‘scientific controversies’ Norma (2010) briefly criticises what she called the “minimal”²¹³ and “radical versions”²¹⁴ of “social epistemology”²¹⁵ (2010:

²¹² A type of slow-tempo music by single performers or groups.

²¹³ According to the author, those strands that only stress the role of “social institutions” in “the division and organization of cognition” (2010: 126).

126), she seems rather to focus her attention on discussing whether “science” is “losing autonomy” and “being politicised” (2010:136) and so includes in her final conclusions explicit criticism towards, for example, economic and political “agents” which “do not respect the time required for scientific research” (2010:137).

Gregory’s (openly Marxist) critical statements are explicit too. For instance, in his book on research methodology, he opens up the chapter on ‘selection of research topic’ by stating the following:

Research choices in organizations are driven by the intellectual and political interests of leaders; just a few times the choices are based in an adequate prioritising leading to planning and programming of activities for social improvements. Research in research institutes is based sometimes on the researchers’ useless curiosity aimed at enhancing their profiles [...] (2006:58-9)

In this chapter, there are no references to further literature. In other chapters of the same book, there are some references to other (Marxist) scholars’ methodological strategies. The author, however, does not discuss those authors and their strategies but rather quotes them to support his views.

Critical statements by Peter related to racism and discrimination have been presented above (section II). Further examples by the same lecturer are found in his text (1997) on indigenous population in Mexico and the EZLN army²¹⁶. In the texts’ introductory sections the author draws from some historians’ accounts of the “indigenous genocide” of Mexico’s and United States’ native population. Peter’s text does not really discuss these accounts or other scholarly/sociological debates (e.g., about ‘violence’, ‘criminal behaviour’, etc.) but rather focuses on portraying the detrimental conditions of ethnic minorities in the country as the context the EZLN emerged from. The first lines of his final conclusions read:

²¹⁴ Those that hold that the “cognitive subject” is actually represented by the “epistemic community” and not the individual (2010: 126).

²¹⁵ Without expanding further on this, Norma criticizes these two versions since both “overlook what is proposed outside sociology of science and so lack an adequate theory of society” which would have to offer “elements that account for the social conditions that have to be met for knowledge and scientific knowledge to exist” (2010: 126).

²¹⁶ Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional – guerrilla-like army composed mainly of indigenous populations; rose up in southern Mexico (Chiapas state) in 1994.

Racism is a process that starts with prejudice; and discrimination, likewise, is the social expression of economic exploitation and political domination; and together they form an aberrant trinomial²¹⁷ (1997: 167)

In a sociological field whose functioning and very contributions are described as greatly dependent of the state's agenda (chapter 4; Castañeda 2004), *socio-political* criticism (or 'mild-to-strong' socio-political judgements) along with 'prescriptiveness' (section above), fit almost perfectly –either as anti- or pro-state agendas. Once the role of the state and what seems is Mexican sociology's very nature are accounted for in the production of this 'socio-politically critical' sociology, may we include an additional discursive influence? In chapter 3 I quoted a series of critical messages by priests during Sunday-Mass homilies –e.g., 'an ignorant Catholic is a Protestant for sure'; 'I am just warning you that you are doing evil'. I also presented further evidence of the Catholic discourses' critical tone in 'official' religious documents from MxC, e.g., in 'handbooks' about 'The two best proofs of the Protestantism's falsehood', or 'Television, the negative and the positive'. As I noted in that chapter, this discursive style seemed to be adequately summarised by a priest who literally stated that "the methodology" of the Catholic Church, i.e. its "see, *judge*, act", still "remains". Moreover, I also presented evidence that suggest that these, or very similar, '*critical judgements*' may be also found in 'folk' Catholic discourses, e.g., MxC's donation box for a Catholic shelter and its message on 'the moral, social and economic disequilibrium of the current world'. If official and folk Catholic discourses 'judge' events, individuals and phenomena in general in such a 'critical' way and have the structural (cultural-ideological) presence that I have discussed, could they perhaps be related to the social-political criticism I have presented evidence of in this section? Laura, for instance, reported that her own Catholic schools' curricula was based on this 'see, *judge*, act' formula (chapter 5). I will argue at length in chapter 8 the ways on which this and further evidence indicate that certain 'models of critical thinking' underpinned by Catholicism are echoed in sociological discourses.

²¹⁷ Literal translation.

Tacit normativeness

When Abend (2006) discusses, from what clearly seems a Westernised standpoint²¹⁸, the rather ‘lack of ethical neutrality’ across his sample of Mexican sociological articles, he also notes that the concept of “neoliberalism” in these articles is frequently addressed not as a merely “economic doctrine” but as “an economic doctrine [...] that is conceptually incorrect and morally deplorable” (2006:24). Another category I propose here to describe my sample of sociological texts – *tacit normativeness* – would likely explain those ‘moral appraisals’ of neoliberalism that Abend reports. The tacit normativeness I found in the texts I analysed appeared directly linked to the ‘prescriptiveness’ and ‘socio-political criticism’ I presented above and is certainly more complex than the two previous ‘features’ as it is based more on unspoken assumptions than on explicit ideas. By ‘tacit normativeness’ I mean evidence of assessments or judgments of events, persons or actions that rests on what seems to be *unspecified* ‘ideal standards’, or ‘ways things/people ought to be’, that are implicitly portrayed as right or morally legitimate *per se*. This ‘normativeness’ is also a discursive feature that one of the sociology lecturers clearly touched upon during our interview²¹⁹. Next I will present further evidence.

Although not as frequently as in other lecturers, Laura’s normative statements based on ‘ideal’ scenarios seem somehow to lurk in her texts. For example, in her book chapter on cloistered nuns Laura concludes: “the community [of cloistered nuns] becomes the new family, [which is] *a social bond necessary for any human being*” (2007: 327). In another text, Laura describes a ‘Catholic association’ and reports its members holding “strong links of friendship and solidarity *but with minimal democracy in the interior.*” (2005:139). One of Julia’s first statements during her conference presentation on Marian Spiritualism referred to

²¹⁸ In his conclusions Abend admits that his comparative analysis “sides with the U.S. [articles’] epistemological approach” (2006: 28)

²¹⁹ I quoted that statement by Michael in chapter 4; next a shorter version: “I think we do research having an ideal of the world, a political ideal [...]. We are getting to a point of asking ourselves ‘ok, what should drive our scientific observations? [...] Because labour studies are being done with an ideal model of waged work [...] however, it seems the precarious-work model is there and we base our criticism on a model, *an ought-to-be model*” (emphasis added). Although clearly explicit, Rachel’s emphases on ‘legal frameworks’, ‘laws’ and ‘human rights’ are also revealing –see MxC texts section in this chapter’s appendix.

Aguascalientes as “a purely Catholic state”. After this, Julia added, “but the centrality or homogeneity of Catholic religion *has evolved* little by little; now there is more *religious diversity*”. This is indeed related to the frequent scholarly portrayal of Mexico’s religious field as diverse, which I discussed in chapter 3 (‘People’s Catholicism’ section). What I argue here is that it seems Laura’s and Julia’s statements are based not on *ideas* of ‘family’, ‘democracy’, ‘evolution’ and ‘religious diversity’ but on the what they regard as the ‘*ideal representations*’ of such phenomena. Whereas all these *ideas* would be part of any sociological discourse in and outside Mexico, they nonetheless appear in these texts as ‘norms’ that are taken for granted and not discussed further.

In her introduction to a co-edited book about Aguascalientes’ society, Brigitte states that “it is necessary to strengthen institutions that guarantee *liberty, solidarity and capacity to communicate with each other*” (2009a: 10). In the final lines of this text she also states that the very aim of the book she is introducing is

to contribute to the reflection and dialogue about how we can live together, as equal and different [individuals], in a city that *should open itself to diversity*, by building-up *solidarity links* and communication in such a way as to *strengthen a true democracy* (2009a: 15)

In her text about community development, the same lecturer states,

processes of development and urbanisation broke traditional, social and cultural practices that have not been transformed or substituted by patterns which guarantee a good *quality of life* and people’s *integral development* (2006a:3)

No definitions or discussions about “liberty”, “solidarity”, “true democracy”, “quality of life” and “integral development” were found in these texts. Similarly, in his book on female empowerment, Michael introduces his work as follows

We tried, from the academy, to contribute to *a world with less violence*. Our work is not only a critical report but a reflection on the forms women use to fight against economic violence (2008: 10)

In his text on Catholicism and Pentecostalism, and their relationships to poverty, Edward writes about ‘believer’s prayers’ in a critical style, addressing and ‘normativising’ the notion of justice – which is, again, not discussed further:

The idea of justice is absent in pilgrim’s prayers [...]. From this type of religious perspective, having goods or not depends on God’s will. And whereas one seems to please the divine will to get goods, the same does not happen in terms of the goods’ just distribution, [because] justice is not asked and inequality seems as normal as to be ignored (2009a: 161)

Less political yet likewise normative, Rita states the following in her text on *bolero* music: “Now more than ever, the commercial value of bolero is *a very serious obstacle* to appreciate the symbolic and cultural value of this type of music” (2003:346). This text does not include accounts of why music’s “symbolic and cultural values” are or should be more beneficial than its “commercial values”.

As discussed above, in her article on ‘scientific controversies’, Norma criticises some strands of social epistemology for their lack of “elements that account for *the social conditions that have to be met for knowledge and scientific knowledge to exist*” (2010a: 126). Later on in the same text, Norma states, from a normative-prescriptive-critical stance, that the “time” allocated to research

must be determined by means of programmes of the science system²²⁰ and not by economic and/or political interests [...] We have to make sure that research and public debates are carried out in such a way as to respect the temporality that research requires [...]. (2010a:137)

Parallel to these ‘normativised’ account of scientific knowledge and ‘temporality of research’, Norma also suggests, implicitly, an ‘ideal/idealised’ portrayal of ‘politics’ when she asserts that “[t]o do science is not to do politics either. Science does not take decisions. That is the work of the political system” (2010a: 136). Normative (and prescriptive) statements are also found in Suzanne’s texts. In her book on education in Mexico, she states

²²⁰ Literal translation.

the political and ideological fight²²¹ in all levels of education and [in all] universities must be aimed at the formulation of a social project, where *exploitation is reduced, more people are involved and our national identity is strengthened* (2006: 12).

The reasons why these three specific goals should be encouraged are not further discussed by the author. In his conference paper on sociology in Mexico, Joseph interestingly states that sociology “affects indirectly all society *with the highest humanitarian sense, wellbeing and happiness*” (2003:198). No further discussion of why the author appeals to these three concepts, or ‘norms’, is found in the text.

Sociology lecturers certainly seem to differ in terms of what should be an ideal scenario in society in general and sociology in particular, and it is not my intention to analyse the ultimate goals of every individual sociologist in AgC and MxC. However what sociologists in this research seem to converge upon is not only the frequent socio-political ‘tone’ of their prescriptions and criticism (previous sections) but also on the corresponding idea that their research and academic work contributes, or rather *should* contribute, to fulfil a *social-political ideal* or to materialise a *social-political teleology* –either by strengthening democracy, increasing religious diversity, contributing to a world with less violence, keeping the ‘autonomy’ of science or promoting wellbeing and happiness. In most of the texts collected these socio-political ideals/teleologies appear as self-evident and seemingly require no further sociological discussion.

In chapter 4 I quoted scholar Aguilar (1995) and his critical (and indeed normative) statements about sociology in Mexico and its “turning back” to “normative” instead of “factual” judgements and “practical recipes” instead of “explanations” (1995:213-4). Once the *inherent* normativeness of sociology/ies in Mexico is acknowledged and not necessarily censured but rather taken as an ‘internal driver’ in its own right, may we ask whether this rather tacit normativeness is somehow related to the official-institutional Catholic discourses’ *systematic normativeness* presented in chapter 3 (e.g., constant references to ‘God as *supreme value*’, ‘the *sacrament* of marriage’, ‘*sanctity* of life’, ‘the family as *cell of*

²²¹ Literal translation.

society)? Or is it perhaps more related to the likewise normative ‘folk’ Catholic discourses in which, for example, prayers for parents may include ‘16 commandments’ and an imaginary kid saying to his/her parents ‘teach me how to improve when we are alone and not in front of others’ (chapter 3)? Taken out of the religious context I have analysed in chapter 3, these may certainly appear as odd questions. However, if there is evidence both of Catholicisms’ cultural-ideological centrality and of a continuity between the lecturers’ Catholic backgrounds and their current moral values (chapter 6), there are therefore clear suggestions that these continuities (partial ruptures) may be also related to the sociology lecturers’ systematic adoption of normative, or ‘moral’ (Abend 2006:24), tacit sociological stances.

Dichotomistic logics

In chapters 4 and 5 I presented and discussed several of the sociologists’ critical statements about Mexico’s sociological field, their workplace, colleagues, the Catholic Church and their accounts of their Catholic-school memories appear to rest on asymmetric dichotomies or asymmetric-dichotomistic judgements as well. In my analysis of sociological texts *asymmetric dichotomies* were found, again. The *asymmetric* dichotomies I found appeared alongside a series of *symmetric* dichotomies. The latter would be rather part of the expected vocabulary of any sociological account. For instance Laura’s usual remark on “rural” and “urban” communities” (2009); Rita’s statements about migration “from rural to city areas” (2007); Michael frequent ideas about going from “the traditional” to “the modern” (2008) society. These rather standard symmetric dichotomies, or sociological dualisms, were *remarkably constant* in the texts I analysed. However, in this section I will focus on asymmetric dichotomies and, particularly, the rather ubiquitous *asymmetric dichotomistic logics* in these texts.

This type of dichotomistic thinking ranged from instances that imply a ‘mild separation’ between a two-elements frame to dichotomistic references that entail a ‘rupture’ between

two elements and/or an explicit sense of ‘one-sidedness’. For instance a ‘mild-separation’ dichotomistic logic was found in Laura’s statements (2005) about Catholicism in Mexico and the cultural symbols related to the Virgin of Guadalupe:

those symbols [Virgin of Guadalupe imagery] have been *re-signified* and have been *separated* gradually from Catholicism, and have been taken to other spaces, as an evidence of the *loss* of ultimate meaning that religion held and cannot offer *anymore* in a theological and general sense (2005:45)

In this statement the ‘win-lose’ and ‘before-after’ situations the author is referring to seem to be arranged over a clearly dichotomistic view of reality where a social phenomenon is separated from what is taken as its ‘counterpart’. A similar, this time explicit, case of dichotomistic thinking was found in one of Peter’s texts, where he uses dichotomies as both his ‘data’ and his own ‘conclusions’. On the issue of racism, Peter first states that “depending on the ideology, there are differences that establish the belief on pure and impure races, or superior and inferior races.” (1997:141). After this he explains that “processes of social exclusion are linked to dichotomistic criteria: good, bad; inferior, superior; black, white; indian, creole; rich, poor; work, exploitation” (1997: 144). Then, using one of those dichotomies, Peter concludes: “racism in Chiapas has multiple forms, the first may be framed in the dichotomy indian-creole [...]”(1997: 156).

Further ‘separations’ are evident in one of Gregory’s texts, in which this author states, from an abstract yet clear stance, that “the drive for development is the existence of antagonistic poles that are found in relative unity and permanent fight (social classes for example)” (2006:52) –social classes which Marxist Gregory predictably terms ‘the bourgeoisie’ and ‘the proletariat’ in other texts. Using a similar, dichotomistic logic and different content, Brigitte and Julia state in one of their co-authored texts on urban growth that

the establishment of Inegi²²² represented a *watershed* in the history of the city, that [...] marked the start of a *social change* with relevant social, cultural, economic and political implications” (2007:211)

²²² Mexico’s National Institute of ‘Statistics, Geography and Informatics’ –organisation in charge of national censuses and other statistical data-generation/storage/management macro projects.

What I think is relevant in the sentence above is not whether Inegi represented a watershed or not, but the fact that the authors seem to distinguish and conceive ‘before-Inegi’ and ‘after-Inegi’ social reality/ies as two different and basically irreconcilable ‘times’. Similarly, in one of her theoretical texts Angela distinguishes from the outset: “two opposite traditions: the empiricist, which includes the positivist [...] and the hermeneutic” (2001:199). This opposition is the criterion Angela draws from to organise and present her ideas in the text. In another theoretical text, this lecturer presents the idea of “the crisis of the natural model” by citing Giddens and Bernstein:

In ‘The new rules of the sociological method’, Giddens – as well as Bernstein in ‘The re-structuring of social and political theory’ – declare *the end* of the so called ‘orthodox consensus’ (2001: 212)

Then Angela confirms the ‘natural-model-crisis’ thesis and states:

After the natural model crisis, this is, *after the rejection* of the idea of theoretically neutral observations and laws *being no more* the supreme ideal of scientific research [...], the problems about the meaning of action became highly relevant in 1970s-1980s’ social theory (2001: 212)

Apparently based on Giddens and Bernstein, Angela eventually seems to support an interpretation of social theory development based on a clear-cut before-after distinction. This logic is similar to the type of ‘rupture’ a reviewer finds in a book co-authored by Angela²²³ and other colleagues, who discuss the development of a ‘first’ and a ‘second’ modernity. The reviewer argues that the authors imply that second modernity “erased” first modernity or that first modernity did not survive and was totally replaced by second modernity “as in an irreversible change” (‘Review of Angela et al.’ 2005: 453). Actually, some of the oppositions above could be actually termed ‘ontological dichotomies’, although this term would perhaps be too broad for some of the examples I present here.

²²³ The reviewer uses the term “epistemological rupture”, borrowed from Althusser.

‘One-sided’, and rather explicit, dichotomies were also found in the lecturers’ texts. In these dichotomies the attention, conformity or antagonism of the authors seems clearly to stand on one single side of the dichotomistic frame/reference set by the authors. Peter’s ‘indian-creole’ ideas and conclusions (above) are an example of this category. In his book chapter on everyday life, Edward distinguishes between “great collective” agents and “ordinary individuals”. After this, he states everyday-life actions

“*are not* carried out by the great collective social subjects (social classes, heroes, great villains, politicians, women, indigenous) but by ordinary individuals, men and women” (2007:15)

Suzanne (2006:63-64), in a combination of (Marxist) critical thinking and dichotomistic reasoning, argues that private business, *unlike* public universities and institutions, “train their own staff and, based on their interests and ideology, invest part of their capital in private schools, so profits become the main concern”. After this she states that in “private schools”, unlike public schools, having “innovative curricula depends on the demand of the capital and the reproduction and respect of the dominant ideology”. When Peter recalls Canada’s indigenous population selling souvenirs for tourists, he wonders about the meaning of those souvenirs as symbols, and then he, critically and sympathetically, states

The question is relevant since the problem with ethnic minorities is more or less the same all over the world, that is, *a subaltern culture versus a dominant culture* within the limits of the nation²²⁴ (2003: 275)

In chapter 6 I argued that sociology lecturers’ dichotomistic-asymmetric (non-sociological) ‘judgements’ are constant and systematic and do seem to be related to the stock of (dichotomistic) Catholic values which sociology lecturers’ were socialised into. The idea of Catholic dichotomistic values finding an echo in lecturers dichotomistic judgements is also supported by some of the lecturers’ explicit suggestions on the values of researchers, academics and people in general being fundamentally linked to the ‘Catholic scheme of values’. During data collection I came across a volume on social science published in MxC,

²²⁴ Literal translation

co-authored by Mexican scholars based at different universities in the country. One of the chapters discusses ‘dualisms’ in sociology. The author²²⁵ states:

Let’s say, metaphorically, that sciences are from earth, not from heaven or hell; but [let’s say] those earthly creatures that do science can reach heaven or hell. Thus, dualism is a limit that sciences have to admit [...] all sociological thought that ignores the celestial or diabolic possibilities of actors, deserves to be called naturalistic, and that which takes for granted those possibilities may be called culturalist (Hernandez 1999:501)

The sociological fragment above contains, just like the texts cited in this section, clear instances of what I called ‘dichotomistic logics’. An additional element here is the explicit earth/heaven-hell dichotomy which seems to be the ‘guiding metaphor’ in the author’s distinction between “naturalistic” and “culturalist” sociological thought. The question is: are the AgC and MxC lecturers’ sociological asymmetries presented above somehow being ‘guided’ as well by the dichotomistic-asymmetric ‘scheme’ of lecturers’ Catholic (or Catholic-like) moral values and/or by the systematic dichotomistic messages found in the country’s *historical and contemporary* Catholic discourses –e.g., the heaven/hell, love/passion, good/bad dichotomies (chapter 3)? I will answer this question in the next chapter.

Power-over

As the last quotation from Peter’s text above suggests, another category I constructed to characterise my sample of sociological texts is based on the lecturers’ constant statements about ‘power’, ‘impositions’, ‘dominance’, ‘hegemony’, ‘influence’, and implicit ‘denials’ or ‘underestimation’ of individual agency –some of them spotted since my ‘literal analysis’ (section II above). I called this group of ideas “power-over” notions (Hearn 2008, 2012). Instances of power-over statements in the data set were relatively constant and ranged from

²²⁵ This author is not part of the AgC or MxC sociology departments I investigated. I include him in this section for he is also a Mexican sociologist and the passage I quote from him is a peculiarly literal example of the Catholicism-sociology parallels I want to draw in this chapter. See further citations from Hernandez’ work in chapter 4’s first sections.

soft and implicit references to individuals' or groups' 'minimum agency' to explicit and critical statements on 'dominance' and 'exploitation' –see also Abend²²⁶ (2006). Similar to the 'tacit normativeness' found in the texts and except for those statements clearly based on Marxists stances, these 'power-over' references were not necessarily discussed and framed in specific theories or paradigms but rather used as taken-for-granted depictions of reality, whose meaning was meant to be self-evident.

In AgC, examples of rather 'soft' power-over thinking may be found in Laura's texts. For instance her statements on Catholic associations "being used" by the Catholic Church; or the effects of religious diversity "forcing" the Catholic Church to adopt marketing strategies (2005:44). Slightly more explicit are Laura's statements about Saturday-Catechism in Mexico as "ideological spaces of fight against the socialist education imposed by the Mexican government (2005:44).

As cited in the 'literal analysis' section, Julia's ideas on hegemony/hegemonic elements were frequent. Sometimes those ideas were mixed with references to a reduced self-agency, as follows:

[Aguascalientes'] [s]ociety did not trust non-Catholic people because they were considered as deviants; [...], for all women had to have null or minimum agency and could not be part of a religion that was not the hegemonic [Catholic] one. (2009:197)

When Rita introduces her text on local radio industry, she states "when the Mexican revolution was over, *a control* over the radio broadcasting was exerted; this [control] made people move away" (2007a: 89). In her book chapter on boleros and female stereotypes, Rita refers to women "being discriminated" and to "an ideology of dominance of a gender over another" (2007b:162). On women's social conditions too, Michael states:

The condition of woman implies a segregation that affects possibilities of work and income [...] multilevel-selling companies *take advantage* of [women's] historically *imposed* condition in taking care of the family and the household (2006:12).

²²⁶ Once again, Abend (2006:24) reports a similar finding: "Mexican sociologists frequently talk about "dominant classes" [...]; "dominant power" [...]; "dominant groups" [...]; "dominant sectors" [...]"

About “work force” in general, Michael states that it “*was defeated* in the 1980s, now corporations and business seek non-conflictive places, cheap, skilled and *docile* labour force” (2006:19). Michael states too that “new ways of work bring *colonisation of time*, where work *invades* more spaces and relations (2006:21). In her dissertation, MxC-based sociologist Rachel argues “family violence is explained by the dominance and power relationships males have *exerted over* females for a long time” (2000: 3). In the same text Rachel states that “violence occurs in a process of interpersonal or inter-group conflict where *somebody wins and somebody else loses*” (2000: 77) – and then states that

aggressive or violent conduct is *exerted over* those who are inferior; when the latter are *subjected to power* their inferior position is reinforced [...]. Thus individual wills are *subjected to a social order that imposes or represses them*. The person that establishes that order has power and in order to keep it, violence is exerted through force (2000: 77- 78).

As part of his book on writing and oral-presentations skills for students and graduates, Gregory argues that

“a person’s reality is *conditioned* by her specific historical context. The socio-cultural environment that prevails in the family and school context, often *restrains* the development of communication skills” (2004:19)

Then he states that “the educational system constrains or does not encourage communication” (2004:21). After this he argues “the traditional teaching-learning system” is reproduced in “the *passivity* of students”, hence, “the mechanical transference of knowledge leads to the *submission* of individuals, as the latter become mere data-receivers” (2004:27). In one of his texts Peters explains “dynamic” and “static” relationships in “concept maps” and illustrates the former as follows:

Whereas static relationships determine *hierarchical* relationships, dynamic relationships defy them [...]. For example, whereas the individual will be *always subordinated* to the State and its social codes (static relations), the interaction between some sectors of the government and social subjects or civic groups varies [...] (2009:42).

Suzanne argues critically that teaching students how to think “may mean danger for some groups and people because it would pose a threat for traditional forms of authoritarianism and power” (2006:63). Then, more explicitly and drawing from dichotomies as well, Suzanne states that economic crises in “dependent” countries as well as technological development of “industrialised countries” and “fights for international hegemony” have led to “*domination* [from industrialised countries] *over* dependent countries” (2006:143).

In the previous section I have suggested the possibility of lecturers’ sociological asymmetries being related to the asymmetric dichotomies found in Catholic discourses and to the corresponding non-relativistic dichotomistic (Catholic) values that do seem to be part of lecturers’ personal moral criteria. If the ‘power-over’ notions above do rest upon ‘asymmetric dichotomies’ – in which ‘powerful entities’ on one side are conceived as winning over or controlling *asymmetrically* ‘powerless individuals’ on the other side –, are they also related to Catholic discourses in the terms suggested previously? Furthermore, if Durkheim (1915:361) noticed that scholars ‘believe’ in their scientific evidence just as religious believers believe in their Gods and rites’ efficiency²²⁷, and if the data in this research suggest that AgC and MxC sociology lecturers’ current beliefs do include a God/God-like entity that wields omnipotent ‘power’ (chapter 4), do these personal beliefs somehow reinforce the power qualities that lecturers attribute systematically to certain ‘entities’ and individuals in their sociological texts? From a rigid secularist standpoint this question, I admit, is odd and even awkward. Nonetheless, if we place this question within both the pervasive religious context I have frequently referred to and the lecturers’ religious backgrounds I have analysed, the question about whether the lecturers’ own religious beliefs – together with the persistent remarks about God as ‘power’ or ‘creator’ and the Virgin/Holy Spirit’s ‘intercessory powers’ in Catholic discourses – influence their sociological power-over statements turns into a plausible hypothesis.

²²⁷ The difference being that the scholar “only [...] introduces more method.” (1915: 361).

Mono-causality

A series of statements with implicit ideas of social phenomena being triggered off by one single cause was another relatively frequent characteristic in lecturers' texts. Some of these statements were indeed found within passages that included *power-over* notions as well. Although this mono-causality would be indeed an ordinary 'complexity-reduction' rhetorical resource in scientific discourses, what I found further revealing is that statements that would suggest further reason/s or causes were not found in, or alluded by, these texts.

Non-mono-causal statements – references to events being caused by more than one force, entity or circumstance – were found in many passages, for instance Rachel's statement (peculiarly critical and normative, by the way) on "Mexican society's deterioration" being caused by a lack of an integral development programme; lack of credibility in the political and justice system; growing unemployment; impunity; people's fear to report violent acts; collective and individual moral harm; increasing of poverty and lack of public safety (2000:1-2). However, I found, in both key and secondary passages, relatively constant references to social events being attributed to actions or failures by one single individual, institution or entity. For example, In one of his books, Gregory opens up a chapter stating "*modern life* generates barriers that inhibit communication at home, the school, the workplace etcetera", and "this reality", he continues,

emerges mostly because of the implementation of *the neo-liberal model* in the educational field. *The model* trains individuals to satisfy the labour market's expectations (2004: 29 –italics added)

Rita states, in her previously-quoted book chapter on *bolero* music:

this modernity has gotten into the individual sphere; *it* has allowed, among other things, the reduction of mortality rates, increasing in life expectancy, demographic growth, more competition in labour markets, increasing of schooling levels, birth control, etc (2007b: 121 –italics added)

Despite being somewhat vague, one of Brigitte's statements on diversity in Aguascalientes is revealing too:

Today, Aguascalientes' inhabitants experience a diversity of people they did not cohabitate with in the same territory²²⁸, before the big changes *brought by global economy*" (2009b: 115 –italics added)

Similar evidence was found in Michael's secondary reference to modernity in 19th century small towns "being brought by" multilevel selling companies (2008:99). In terms of citing other authors who in turn refer to mono-causal notions, Norma's text on Critical theory is also revealing. In this publication the lecturer seems to state categorically that Marxism "inherited from Hegelian thought" –and apparently 'only' from it – concepts such as "totality, dialectics, consciousness and reason". Furthermore, right after this, Norma states "those concepts had been *suppressed by the economic-like thought of the II International's leaders*" (1999: 239 –emphasis added). Similarly, whereas Peter states that the Canadian constitution acknowledges the rights of indigenous population since the 1970s, he explicitly argues the same legal acknowledgement "did not occur in Mexico, where [Mexico's] *president Salinas* reformed some articles in 1992, so *the decision was from the top and not from the bottom up*" (2003:259 –italics added).

In chapter 1 I presented Durkheim's theses (1915) about the "religious origin" of the concepts of power/force and the (Aristotelian-Kantian) category of 'causality'. Although I disagree with Durkheim's analytical search for 'chronological origins', I would ask whether both 1) the lecturers' beliefs in God/God's powers and 2) the systematic references to those and other divine 'powers' (e.g., the Virgin's) in Catholic discourses in society at large somehow shape the lecturers' mono-causal sociological views and statements –e.g., the concepts of 'modernity', 'neoliberalism', 'global economy' and their apparently omnipotent/omnipresent qualities and effects? I will discuss in the next chapter whether Catholic discourses in Mexico are offering a particular model of causality (and power) that shapes the 'mono-causal' sociological statements above.

²²⁸ Literal translation

IV. Conclusions

As I said previously, the sociology lecturers draw systematically not only from one or two of the ‘features’ I have presented above but from the ‘group’ of features, forming thematically-diverse (individual) sociologies with a very particular collective mark, which cannot be reduced to the six characteristics I have presented but does include them systematically. This group of features, their emergent properties, and their collective operation represent, I argue, the *sociological discourses* flowing in AgC and MxC or the ‘rules about what can be said and what should not be said’ (Elder-Vass 2011) in this particular field. I support this conclusion not only because of the extensive (across texts) and intensive (within texts) use of the features, but also because except for Gregory and perhaps Suzanne – whose texts are based on Marxist standpoints – the prescriptiveness, social-political criticism, normativeness and power-over notions in the sociology lecturers above do not appear explicitly grounded in sociological paradigms such as the often-mentioned critical sociology of the Frankfurt school (e.g. Forchtner 2011) or some version of ‘public sociology’ (e.g. Burawoy 2005). Data in chapter 4 shows that, other than their Marxist education, sociology lecturers did not go through any relevant intellectual training based on these sociological paradigms. The lack of explicit references to critical or public sociology in the lecturers’ texts corroborates the idea that the group of features I have suggested constitute a rather ‘naturalised’ set of sociological “discourses” (Foucault 2002; Elder-Vass 2011).

Without a doubt, these distinctive sociological *discourses* are causally related to the government’s demands (to ‘contribute to social policies’ and ‘fix problems’) that Michael reported and Castañeda (2004) summed up in his thesis about sociology in Mexico taking for granted as its *raison d’être* the ideological needs of the Mexican state (chapter 4). In a discipline that has been taught and practised in a society for half a century or more, these prescriptive-interventionist rationales – along with their predictable normativeness and criticism – have certainly become a series of discursive ‘internal drivers’ in their own right which clearly seem to encourage likewise critical power-over views and mono-causal interpretations of social phenomena. But, once the roles of the State and the very intrinsic

(institutional) rationale and ‘nature’ of sociology/ies in Mexico are acknowledged as forces that do shape sociological discourses, what is the role, if any, of 1) Mexico’s historical (colonial, post-independence, post-revolution) Catholicism, 2) current Catholic discourses in both ‘official-institutional’ and ‘folk’ versions and 3) lecturers’ Catholic backgrounds? As I stated above, this is not an odd question.

Except for some individual cases –e.g., Peter’s and Gonzalez Casanova’s ‘universalist prescriptiveness’ and Hernandez’ (1999) ‘heaven-hell sociological dualisms’– the prescriptiveness, criticism, normativeness and dichotomistic logics in sociological discourses are not strictly identical to the prescriptiveness, criticism, normativeness and dichotomistic values found in Catholic discourses. For instance, whereas most of the Catholic discourses’ *critical* statements that I have presented in chapter 3 seem to be aimed at Protestantism, ‘pagans’ and ‘sex sins’, the criticism in sociological discourses challenges rather different phenomena. However, regardless of its themes, this criticism and the rest of discursive features I have noted above, are perfectly equivalent in one discourse and the other, as if one really echoed the underlying structure of the other. If the Catholic discourses have had the historical (colonial, post-independence, contemporary) and exclusive (quasi-monopolistic) role and cultural-ideological presence that I have constantly insisted on, and if sociology lecturers, despite their understandable secular stances and variations across individual cases, seem currently to hold not only Catholic-like moral values but also both similar non-relativistic reasoning as well as beliefs in God or a God-like entity and his/its actual powers, could these discursive resemblances represent actual instances of ‘epistemological’ influences of Catholic discourses upon sociological discourses? If so, do these influences from one discourse to the other occur directly *via* Durkheim’s (1915) ‘imitative rites’? Or are these influences rather mediated by ‘social institutions’ with ‘cognitive properties’ that Durkheim (1915) did not look at but Douglas (1986), for instance, did address? I will offer next a causal account of what I call the ‘neglected epistemological influences’ of Catholic discourses upon sociological discourses in Mexico.

Chapter 8

Catholic and sociological discourses: the causal links

In the following paragraphs I will offer an ‘updated’ Durkheimian account of the causal links between the parallel discursive features in Catholic and sociological discourses I have discussed previously. I will first group the ‘features’ of sociological discourses I proposed in chapter 7 –prescriptiveness, etc– into a series of more manageable ‘discursive pairs’ where inferences are clearer and safer to draw from. I will construct my account of these ‘causal links’ based on Douglas’ thesis (1986) about ‘institutions’ *making* individuals’ thoughts –e.g., their ‘classifications’ (chapter 1). Thus, my account will include a series of ‘*bridge institutions*’ which, I argue, act as ‘transmitters’ of Catholic discourses. Some of these ‘bridge institutions’ are readily recognizable material entities such as ‘Catholic schools’ and ‘Catholic families/Catholic family practices’. Another ‘bridge institution’ I will discuss may be described as rather Weberian, as less visible than the latter, as religious – not necessarily Catholic – in a certain sense and as a crucial ‘model’ in the lecturers’ current academic practices. Going beyond Douglas’ thesis, I will argue that these ‘bridge institutions’ do not merely *echo* ‘official-institutional’ and ‘folk’ Catholic discourses separately but also reflect the society’s partly-Catholic ideological-cultural structures and all together, the *ensemble* of bridge institutions along with the society’s ideological-cultural *structures*, turn Catholic discourses and their apparently parochial flow into a subtle, almost imperceptible yet intense and extensive ‘discursive offensive’²²⁹ –with no comparable rival in the religious-cultural arena. However, departing from Douglas’ deterministic views (Cosser 1988b:88; Latour 1988:384), I will argue that these institutional and structural Catholic discourses and their emergent ‘epistemological’ charge *do not determine* sociological discourses (including Marxism) but *do predispose* sociology lecturers (Elder-Vass 2011) to adopt the discursive characteristics I analysed in chapter 7. I will at the end address the case of Marxism in

²²⁹ I am deliberately using the term ‘discursive offensive’ as a martial metaphor that can convey graphically the complex operation and emergent powers of otherwise neglected Catholic discourses in this country.

Mexico as a perfect example of the discursive echoing/offensives I will account for in the next sections.

In order to depict the relevant institutions, structures and conditions in my causal critical-realist account I will, as I did in the previous chapter, draw from the data presented in chapters 3 and 4, (contextual-structural analyses) and from the particular events and statements reported in chapters 5 and 6 (interpretive analyses). Next I will start by accounting for the pair of most frequent discursive characteristic I introduced in chapter 7.

I. Normative and dichotomistic logics

Although my data indicates a striking parallel and potential causal links between Catholic discourses' all-embracing or 'integral' prescriptiveness (Blancarte 1996; chapter 3) and the instances of both 'universalist prescriptiveness-normativeness' in lecturer Peter's texts and the putative 'universalist and prescriptive' sociology of Mexican classic sociologist Gonzalez Casanova, here I rather focus on the type of normativeness that I found more frequently in the set of sociological texts. As I said previously, many of the dichotomistic statements and passages presented in chapter 7, just as most of the Catholic-discourse fragments analysed in chapter 3, include *asymmetric* statements— e.g., Brigitte's separation between 'before-Inegi' and 'after-Inegi' where crucial social changes would occur only in the after-Inegi 'side'; Angela's 'first' and 'second' modernities, which even a reviewer finds suggesting that the latter 'erased' and replaced the former; Suzanne's pro-capitalist (detrimental) private schools *versus* non-capitalist (beneficial) public schools, etc. Just as Suzanne's analytical distinction above clearly indicates, I argue that it is in these *dichotomistic asymmetries* – most of them *non-relativistic* too, or based on 'either/or logics' (Zerubavel 1999), just as those in Catholic discourses – where one can find one of the main bases of the sociological texts' normativeness. For instance, when Norma states that 'to do science is not to do politics', is she not assuming a 'normative notion' that rests upon a non-relativistic asymmetric frame where politics and science are naturally oppositional and where

(‘bad’) politics on one side ‘contaminate’ (‘good’) science on the other side? Similarly, when Rita states that the ‘commercial value’ of *boleros* is a ‘serious obstacle’ to appreciate this genre’s ‘cultural value’, is she not taking for granted a non-relativistic dichotomistic frame, firstly, to assume normatively an ideal scenario where ‘cultural values’ should intrinsically precede ‘commercial values’, and, secondly, to judge so the current state of *boleros*?

I am not suggesting that the non-relativistic/dichotomistic normativeness in sociological discourses is exclusively related to Catholic discourses. As I stated in chapter 7, the normativeness in Mexico’s sociological discourses has been documented by other authors and may be described as an inherent characteristic of the sociological practice in this country, substantially reinforced by the state’s direct (conditioned funding) and indirect (ideological) demands to contribute to the country’s development (chapter 4; Castañeda 2004). Whether the state’s demands for normativeness include dichotomistic-asymmetric frameworks, is a question this research is not really meant to answer. What I do argue is that sociological discourses’ *non-relativistic normativeness* not only resembles Catholic discourses, but also that the latter shapes the former.

In chapter 1 I noted the possibility of *classifications* and *principles of justice* being elaborated and diffused, just as Douglas argues (1986), by institutions. This is a thesis Cipriani (2011) would probably confirm as for the case of ‘religious *values*’ diffused through specific *institutions* in Italy. What I argued in chapter 1 from a theoretical point of view is that the institutions diffusing these elements (classifications, e.g., *dichotomies*; and values, e.g. *non-relativistic* principles of justice) may not be the official Catholic institutions (e.g. ‘the church’, ‘bishops’, ‘clergy’), which most of the sociology lecturers criticised heavily (chapter 5), but what I call ‘bridge institutions’, e.g. the family and its Catholic practices (Cipriani 2011). As I reported in chapter 6, all the sociology lecturers I met do come from family backgrounds where observance of Catholic rituals – and therefore close contact with Catholic discourses like those I analysed in chapter 3 – did take place to varied extents. For example, it is in this type of family contexts where Peter remembers being told by his mother to behave or else ‘the devil’ would get to him; and where Edward was also told by his

relatives about ‘the devil’ and was then advised to pray to his ‘angel’. Similarly, Julia referred to ‘praying the rosary’ with her mother and liking it –the reader may find interesting that one of the main prayers in the Catholic rosary, i.e. the Lord’s prayer, does contain the dichotomy *earth-heaven*²³⁰ that Hernandez (1999) uses in his account of ‘sociological dualisms’ (chapter 7, ‘Dichotomistic logics’ section). Angela did not refer to devils and angels or praying the rosary but, indeed, to ‘praying before going to bed’. Here I am not trying to imply that Catholic prayers during childhood ‘determine’ sociology lecturers’ thoughts in adulthood. Neither do I want to over-state the influence of Catholic prayers and their normative and dichotomistic contents –even when identical metaphors have an explicit ‘sociological usage’ as in Hernandez’ (1999) passage above. I am merely suggesting that *dichotomistic values and their corresponding non-relativistic base* –or ‘either/or logic’ (Zerubavel 1999:56) – *either in prayers, parental religious advice, and/or family religious rituals*, were a relatively systematic part of the family discourses sociology lecturers were socialised into. Now, we could easily overlook and reject entirely the potential influence of these particular values and logics if we only look at family Catholic practices. However, the latter was not the only ‘bridge institution’ a significant number of sociology lecturers interacted with systematically.

Most of the sociology lecturers in AgC, and a couple of lecturers in MxC, did attend *Catholic schools* and reportedly obtained from them particular memories and lessons (chapter 5; section I). In terms of *dichotomistic-normative logics* flowing from/within these Catholic schools some of the lecturers’ statements are greatly revealing. For instance Norma’s memories on both ‘very good’ and ‘very bad’ primary school priest-teachers who reportedly ‘insisted’ on both ‘what is right, what is good’ and ‘ideas of guilt, or hell or sin’; Rita and her explicit memories of Catholic school as ‘everything related to *values* formation’ and, interestingly, her report about nuns making a constant distinction between ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ students. I propose to look at, and grant relevance to, the reinforcing role the Catholic-school institution certainly had in terms of instilling (Douglas 1986) in sociology lecturers the non-relativistic values/logics their own families also ‘produced’ and ‘offered’ to them.

²³⁰ Our Father who art in heaven, [...] Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven [...]

And yet Catholic family practices and Catholic schools are not the only ‘bridge institutions’ lecturers received normative and dichotomistic messages from. Some of the sociology lecturers – e.g. Edward, Peter, Brigitte – also had additional, sometimes very close, contact with a particular type of Catholic official representative: *priests*. Joseph, for instance recalled how a talk with a priest meant for him the idea that, precisely as in a non-relativistic normative frame, ‘everything was prohibitive’. ‘Do not kill, do not do that’ were the priests’ non-relativistic statements Joseph reported (chapter 5; section I). Interestingly too, when Julia recalled her memories of priests, she used yet another dichotomistic metaphor – “mediators between the *earthly* and the *divine*” – as if the figure of the priest was in itself evocative of such asymmetry. At this point the reader may want to recall as well the homilies and messages by priest I have presented in chapter 3, and their frequent dichotomistic and non-relativistic references – e.g. (good) love *versus* (evil) passion – as likely examples of the systematic discourses sociology lecturers once heard, and perhaps did ‘learn’, from the Catholic priests they had consistent or sporadic relations with.

I argue that sociology lecturers interacted enough with the bridge institutions above (Catholic family practices, Catholic schools, Catholic priests) as to have received from them – just like Edward and Laura suggested and Peter, Julia and others confirmed directly and indirectly (chapter 6) – not only any set of random moral principles but rather a basic ‘stock’ of *non-relativistic dichotomistic moral values* (Cf. Merton 1938) as well as the corresponding bases of *dichotomistic and non-relativistic reasoning* (Zerubavel 1999). These values and reasoning would not deliver any epistemological effect over sociological discourses whatsoever if we isolate them and take them as elements of casual discursive interactions and random religious practices. This stock of non-relativistic values and corresponding dichotomistic reasoning that lecturers once heard from or learnt in not only one but three different bridge institutions does have the force to shape currently the lecturers’ sociological texts and discourses because such values/reasoning find an echo in the country’s greater cultural-ideological structures (Weber 2003; Merton 1938; Sayer 1992, 2000). It is as part of these structures that Catholicism and Catholic discourses have played a fundamental role in the past and currently have a more subtle yet pervasive presence in the country’s

cultural domain –e.g., just as in open-signal and non-religious television channels that broadcast soap-opera-like programmes where characters ask favours from the Virgin and ‘almighty God’ and stress, in non-relativistic terms indeed, how some things in life ‘are good and others are bad’ (chapter 3, section III). These, partly Catholic, cultural and ideological structures actually depend on the Catholic Church and its official discourses but also on the very ‘bridge institutions’ sociology lecturers interacted with, and to some extent constructed as well. Combined together they – structures, bridge institutions, and the Church itself (however criticised) – subtly and almost imperceptibly ‘bombard’ the lecturer with statements charged with non-relativistic normativeness and dichotomistic logics. This structural-institutional ‘discursive strikes’, however overlooked by the lecturers themselves, may activate the normativeness and dichotomistic logics once ‘met’ or ‘learnt’ by lecturers in the past, and may eventually *shape* the lecturers’ sociological arguments and their sociological normativeness and dichotomistic logics not by ‘determining’ them but by *predisposing* (Elder-Vass 2011) the lecturers *to adopt equivalent non-relativistic normative stances*, just as the structural ensemble of institutions around them do (Douglas 1986).

Moreover, these stances have further consequences in the dichotomistic-asymmetric logics of sociological discourses overall. They may additionally reinforce the systematic use of *non-normative dichotomistic logics* in sociological discourses. Sayer (1992:62; 2000), apparently based on Douglas (1986; chapter 1), states that there is a reinforcing “*leakage of meaning*” in sets of parallel dichotomistic concepts (e.g., thought-action, mental-material, mind-body) where the first element in each dichotomy (e.g. ‘thought’) not only reinforces its opposite (‘action’) but the other pairs’ first elements as well (‘mental’, ‘mind’) and by, extension, the whole set of dichotomies. I argue that a similar extended reinforcement takes place between sociological discourses’ *normative* non-relativistic dichotomies and the series of *non-normative* asymmetric dichotomies. Both underpin each other. If Catholic discourses shape sociological discourses’ dichotomistic-asymmetric normativeness in the way I have suggested above, therefore, Catholic discourses *predispose*, by extension, sociological discourses’ *non-normative asymmetries* and *dichotomistic logics* in general.

In this causal account I do want to highlight the role of both *structures* (Weber 2003; Merton 1938; Sayer 1992, 2000) and *institutions* (Douglas 1986), the mutually dependent relations between them and, more importantly, the lecturers' common yet distinctive and active experiences and interactions with the latter (chapter 5). Whereas the state would play a more obvious, visible and 'academically acceptable' role in sociology's normativeness (Aguilar 1995; Castañeda 2004), this is the manner in which, I argue, Catholic discourses also reinforce, through the cultural-ideological domain and by means of 'bridge institutions', the adoption of non-relativistic normative stances by sociologists and their sociological discourses. Now, by referring to the same type of 'cultural-ideological structures', 'bridge institutions' and 'discursive predispositions' I have discussed here, I will offer next an account of another pair of 'discursive features'.

II. Social-political criticism and prescriptiveness

The sociological prescriptiveness, and corresponding socio-political criticism, encouraged by the state and conceived as one of the inherent constituents of sociology in Mexico, are not oppositional to the prescriptiveness and criticism of Catholic discourses. The latter are not part of the 'methodological tools' and 'academic resources' lecturers and scientists acknowledge, but are, I argue, 'discursive-ideological companions' operating, again, from the background, from the country's very cultural-ideological structures and some of the bridge institutions discussed above. As I said previously, these discursive-ideological companions would not *determine* sociological discourses, but would *predispose* these discourses to echo corresponding stances/instances of social-political criticism and prescriptiveness.

My data does suggest that Catholic discourses' criticism and all-embracing prescriptiveness would, in some cases, not only be working from the country's abstract and elusive ideological-cultural structures. The criticism and prescriptiveness I found in Catholic discourses are elements that some sociology lecturers themselves reported as part of their

education or their *personal backgrounds*. Laura, for example, explicitly pointed out the *see-judge-act* method and the Christian-base-community logic in her Catholic school's 'hidden curricula'. Peter, for instance, openly reports that he was 'interested in the *social activism* side' he 'saw' in his missionary-priest friend; a statement similar to Brigitte's about her friendship with activist ex-Dominican-friars she used to study Marx and Lukas with (chapter 5; section I). As in the section above I argue that some sociology lecturers had enough interaction with (Catholic) 'bridge institutions' as to receive or learn from them certain 'models' of how the social world *should* work and *what to do* accordingly. Whereas most of the lecturers now readily refute several of the Catholic 'official' views on how the world should work (chapter 5; section III) – i.e., they reject Catholic discourses' criticism and prescriptiveness – they do not seem to refrain themselves from adopting strikingly similar discursive positions and issuing parallel sociological discourses. In this sense, one of the few differences between AgC and MxC sociological texts might be revealing. Whereas MxC lecturers held, in general a more oppositional stance towards the Catholic Church and Catholic discourses overall, they are the authors, on the other hand, of what appears as more prescriptive sociological discourses, as if they were, in fact, substituting priests and clergy and so were issuing different thematic discourses yet with the same heavily-prescriptive base. Is this also related to the heavy presence of Marxism in the educational background of lecturers trained in MxC? If one of the lecturers sees Marxism serving the "same functions" (chapter 6, section II) as those of religion, perhaps the causal links between Catholicism and Marxism in Mexico are more evident than MxC secular sociology lecturers would be willing to admit. I will return to the Catholicism-Marxism link in a section below.

In brief, the social-political criticism and prescriptiveness of the sociological discourses presented in this research are influenced by Catholic discourses operating from, and flowing between, *both* the country's ideological structures in the background and from *the personal experiences and interactions* of sociology lecturers with particular (Catholic) bridge institutions, i.e., Catholic schools and, again, priests. It is by means of this emergent ensemble of structures, institutions and individuals' practices, that Catholic discourses do not determine but predispose sociology practitioners to take for granted the necessity of

political-social criticism and prescriptiveness and use/produce those ‘discursive features’ systematically –features that are complimentary to the university’s ideological functions (Castañeda 2004), and what appears as Mexican sociology’s critical-prescriptive ‘nature’ and its intrinsic teleologies (chapters 4 and 7).

Now, in the previous sections I have argued that Catholic discourses shape sociological discourses by predisposing them to adopt (1) non-relativistic dichotomistic normative stances (values) and further non-normative dichotomistic logics, and (2) social-political criticism and prescriptiveness. These predispositions would be the consequence of Catholic discourses being diffused variously yet persistently through ‘bridge institutions’. These *visible* ‘bridge institutions’ – *Catholic* family practices, *Catholic* schools, *Catholic* priests – are constituted by, and constitute, the cultural-ideological structures I have depicted in chapter 3 and both structures and institutions and their emergent properties turn this, apparently irrelevant (localised, individualised, random) ‘echoing’ of Catholic discourses into an actual ‘discursive offensive’. But what if, despite the evidence that indicates the contrary, the ‘partial ruptures’ between Catholic backgrounds and lecturers’ moral values (chapter 6) are, in fact, total and irreconcilable ruptures –or are at least kept in a strictly private sphere that does not ‘leak into’ the lecturers’ sociological practices and arguments? What if sociology lecturers and discourses have really built an ‘ideological shield’ around them that prevents them from being affected by such a structural and institutional set of discursive forces?

I will suggest next another ‘authoritative’ institution that may act as an additional ‘bridge’ between Catholic and sociological discourses and so may deliver very similar predispositions to those discussed above. Unlike the institutions suggested so far, which some readers may understandably interpret as part of the lecturers’ past and therefore as irrelevant explanans, the next institution is not part of the lecturers’ distant background. Next I will discuss an institution that is part of the lecturers’ reported ‘present’; an ubiquitous institution that the lecturers engage with, construct actively in their everyday lives and shapes the lecturers’ academic practices and discourses. After describing this institution and its role, I will then

offer an account of the resemblances and causal links between Catholic and sociological discourses' notions of *power* and *causality*.

III. Asymmetric-epistemic authority institution.

As I reported in chapter 4, 'authority' was a constant topic in my interviews with sociology lecturers. The reader may want to recall Norma's interesting statements on her "epistemic authority" before students and furthermore, her literal account of this authority as '*an asymmetry*' that reportedly equates to her having the epistemic authority that her student do not have and she would not 'share' with them. Norma would not be the only lecturer holding and constructing an asymmetric 'epistemic-authority' position in the university context. In AgC, Michael openly stated during one of our interviews,

I would say, as a confession, that there are moments when it is annoying to debate with students, it is a structure we [lecturers] have [...] it is as if it [debating with students] would not make sense, I mean, *the student does not have the authority to discuss with the lecturer* (emphasis added).

When I asked Peter directly whether he would be an authority figure in the classroom, this lecturer unambiguously replied, "Yes, I am an authority figure". After my explicit question about this topic, a part-time social science lecturer I interviewed in MxC stated that university students do need 'an authority figure' to learn in the classroom, and he added: "I see this not only in my students, but [as a] more generalised [occurrence]" . Interestingly, when I asked an undergraduate sociology student in AgC about whether she was OK with online university courses, she pointed at a difficulty, "I mean, what if we do not feel like working?" Then, the student, rather casually, stated "there should be an [physically present] authority, shouldn't there?". This figure, from the interviewee's perspective, would make sure students complete the work assigned online.

The asymmetric epistemic-authority frame I am describing here would not only represent lecturers-students interactions but also, as the MxC part-time lecturer suggested, further

relationships. This is, for instance, the authority asymmetry behind Michael's statement about 'the boss' that 'controls everything' in one of the sociological sub-fields in Mexico (chapter 4); and behind Angela's critical statements on the heavily 'centralised' authority practices in MxC's university carried out by 'the authoritarians' authority'. Referring to the country overall Brigitte touched upon the 'asphyxiating authoritarianism' in Mexican society. Michael explicitly stated that this type of authority practices would constitute a '*culture with national scope*'. Edward went even further and suggested a generalised 'submission to dogmas' in the country and in its academic field in particular. This 'model' or 'culture' of authority is not strictly homogeneous and has been historically challenged (Zavala, forthcoming) but I want to stress at this point is the reported intensity and extension of this 'authoritarian culture', its corresponding asymmetric-authority frames and its corresponding representative in the educational/university field as a certain model of 'asymmetric epistemic authority' between lecturers and students and among lecturers, researchers and academic staff in general. I argue that this is precisely the type of 'cultural model of authority' I theoretically suggested in chapter 1 –based on Weber (1978) and Smith (2000)– as one of the institutions (Douglas 1986) that may link religious/Catholic discourses with scientific/sociological ones. This 'model' is Weber's 'charismatic authority' after it is 'routinised' and so, just as Weber indicated, does become an *institution* (1978:1121), which, in Mexico's case, is frequently used, practised and openly acknowledged. Now, how exactly is this related to Catholicism and Catholic discourses?

I find appealing Weber's thesis on the early Christian Church as one of the historical origins of the transformation of charismatic authority into an institution *per se* (1978: 1134-1141). Although Weber notes part of the answer I want to offer, I am not particularly interested, as I have discussed in chapter 2, in institutions' chronological origins. What I am interested in is the discourses and practices, and further institutions, that shape this 'cultural model of (asymmetric epistemic) authority' in Mexico and what this 'model' or 'institution' does accordingly. Back to the question above, Brigitte openly argued (chapter 5, section III) that both the country's 'political culture' and 'religious culture', and the Catholic Church particularly, 'have sustained' what she described as an 'asphyxiating' authoritarianism in

Mexico. Peter also shared with me a similar view. He, for instance, stated that the Catholicism brought by Spanish *conquistadores* became a “fear factor in society” (chapter 5, section III). More importantly, after my direct question, Peter agreed on a more specific element: the figure of the priest as a ‘model’ for lecturers’ authority (chapter 6, section II). Actually, Peter did not only answer my question about the priest-lecturer authority link affirmatively, he stated further that ‘there is a *transposition*’ from ‘the priest’s authoritarianism’ to authority figures in the university. The priest is a ‘preacher’, Peter stated, ‘and the lecturer is the same’. The priestly institution then, in Peter’s words, is ‘*an inspiring model, a reference model*’. Angela did not report an ‘authority transposition’ from one figure to the other but explicitly stated the likely relationship between ‘authoritative sociologists’ and ‘the authority *symbol* of the priest’ in Mexico. ‘Yes’ Angela said, ‘our classic [authoritative] authors are like priests’. Moreover, scholar Castañeda (2004) touches, interestingly, upon the idea of both religion and sociology in the country depending “on its Enlightened [spokespersons], *on its priests*, on its privileged interpreters” (2004:233).

Both the lecturers’ statements and the scholarly literature in the paragraph above suggest that the Catholic culture and the priests’ authority model in particular do seem to shape (i) society’s authority practices and, by extension, the authority practices in (ii) higher education institutions and (iii) those between students-lecturers and academics in general. I am not only relying on scholars’ interpretations to assert this (Gilbert and Mulkay 1984). My data from biographical questions to sociology lecturers (chapter 5) and my interpretative analyses further suggest that sociology lecturers’ interactions with priests were relatively frequent, even in cases where the lecturer did not attend Catholic schools. In some of these cases, the interaction lecturers held with priests in the past involved *a conscious recognition of the priest as role model*, e.g. Peter and his appreciation of his priest-friend’s ‘social activism’, or Brigitte’s explicit statement about the occasion when she asked her ‘activist’ friend, former Dominican priest, for ‘advice’. In some individual cases such meaningful interactions between particular priests and lecturers have not really ceased, as in the case of Rita and her current attendance at Catholic Sunday masses conducted by priests who deliver ‘more adequate homilies’.

There are cases as well where lecturers did not report any significant contact with priests or Catholicism in general, e.g., Gregory. This lecturer's reported unfamiliarity with Catholic institutions might be only nominal though. In our interview, Gregory reported his involvement in social-activism movements and, interestingly, referred to himself as '*leader*' in one of those episodes²³¹. Gregory stated his early involvement in social activism was encouraged by his father, who constituted a role model for Gregory, i.e., 'a humanist, a person who always worked for social justice'. Gregory's father grew up in a Catholic background and was reported by Gregory as a person that 'did not believe in saints' but rather 'in something supreme he had faith on', in 'a power beyond us that is present' (chapter 5). Here, again, we meet 'partial' and not 'total' ruptures between official Catholicism/Catholic discourses and people's religious discourses. Having in mind these partial ruptures, I also suggest looking at the ideological-cultural structures around Gregory's and his father's social-justice activism and then spot in this bigger picture both the historical and contemporary Catholicisms I have insisted on previously.

Sociology lecturers follow in practice a model of ('asymmetric-epistemic') authority which is neither given nor self-sustained but is constantly shaped and legitimised by both the cultural domain and corresponding historical, stronger models of authority. Here, again, Mexico's state, as well as its political apparatus, cliques and 'leaders' are an undeniable shaping force and role models. Sociologists' and the Mexican university's own heritage of activism contribute as well²³². But authority models cannot be reduced to those from/by the state or university/sociology itself, not in a society whose colonial, post-colonial and contemporary (Catholic) religiosity has heavily permeated structures, institutions and individuals' discourses and practices in the way I have discussed in previous chapters. In Douglas' view (1986) a mere 'convention' becomes an 'institution' if the reasons given to

²³¹ "Leader of the peasants" during protest movements in his hometown (chapter 4)

²³² The reader may want to recall the beginnings of sociology in the country or its initial stages of institutionalisation and, for instance, what I cited from scholars Girola and Olvera (1995:93) about the pioneer sociological research by Mendieta y Nuñez in the 1940s-1950s which is reportedly "related to an idea of social science in Mexico as panacea [...] as the key to decipher the logic of a society that is to be transformed".

questions about the existence of that convention refer eventually to the surrounding cosmology and so when the newly formed institution has finally found a “fit with the nature of the universe” (Douglas 1986: 46). Gregory’s and his father’s adoption of a “leadership”, or a model/institution of ‘activism’ and ‘social justice’, *takes place, makes sense and works* not only because of the observable circumstances (a peasant community’s deprived conditions and its reasonable demands), family altruism and sociological activism²³³, but also because that type of leadership ‘fits’ (Douglas 1986) into the greater Catholic cosmological context and its salvationist (normative, prescriptive, interventionist) discourses. I therefore argue that sociology lecturers adopt cultural ‘models’ (Weber 1978; Smith 2000) or ‘institutions’ (Douglas 1986) of epistemic-asymmetric authority that are *partly underpinned by Catholicism’s cosmology, its models of centralised asymmetric authority* (Foucault 2007), *and, particularly, the priestly model of salvationist-interventionist authority.*

Now, it is not only that the model/institution of (asymmetric-epistemic) authority adopted by sociology lecturers and generalised in the academic contexts is ‘cosmologically’ underpinned (Douglas 1986) by Catholicism and Catholic discourses. I also propose looking at this authority institution as *another ‘bridge’ between Catholic discourses and sociological discourses.* In the paragraphs above I discussed both the ‘discursive echoing’ and ‘discursive offensive’ by/from rather visible (Catholic) ‘bridge institutions’ and the country’s ideological-cultural structures. Using this explanatory frame I also discussed the resulting predispositions in sociology lecturers to adopt normative, prescriptive and critical stances and dichotomistic views of social phenomena. The model of epistemic authority, i.e., the second type of ‘bridge institution’ I propose here, delivers the same discursive predispositions, with a difference. The family and its Catholic practices²³⁴, Catholic schools and Catholic priests act as direct transmitters of Catholic discourses since their contact with the latter is necessary for the very existence of the institution. ‘Asymmetric-epistemic authority institutions’ and their enactments by sociology lecturers do not require contact with

²³³ An interesting research question here is whether this sociological/university ‘heritage of activism’ has links with the Catholic Church’s colonial legacies in the educational field (Vazquez 1985; chapter 2, section I) and the Catholic Church’s current charitable enterprises?

²³⁴ Here I distinguish between ‘the family’ and ‘the family practices carried out according to Catholicism’. It is the latter which I am referring to in this statement.

Catholic discourses but do echo, in a sense, certain characteristics of those discourses and do mirror the discursive practices of the Catholic institution (priestly authority) whose model they partly borrow. I will explain this next.

If Catholic discourses and priests ‘see judge and act’ (chapter 3, section IV; chapter 5, section I), sociology lecturers may not necessarily ‘act’, but ‘judge’ as well and would do so mostly based on the non-relativistic normative logics I addressed previously. The ‘judging’ in Catholic discourses/priests, as I have discussed in chapter 3, would belong to a specific type, one based on *non-relativistic dichotomistic normativeness* and *all-embracing or integral prescriptiveness*. As I have said before, other than a couple of statements by Peter²³⁵ and perhaps Edward²³⁶ (and Gonzalez Casanova’s sociology as suggested by a speaker in an academic event), I did not find explicit instances of ‘all-embracing judging’ or ‘integralist’ normativeness in the sociological texts I analysed. I did find, however, constant non-relativistic normativeness and criticism *or non-relativistic ‘judgments’*. If we follow Douglas (1986) and then state that institutions deliver classifications and principles of justice, it is perfectly reasonable to state that institutions offer ‘styles of judging’ to individuals –styles which would directly depend on Douglas’ ‘parameters of justice’ but also on further institutionally-spread values, e.g., non-relativistic religious values (see also Cipriani 2011). Furthermore, this judging becomes predictably the perfect ‘fellow traveller’ of social-political criticism and prescriptiveness. That is, if according to the original (priestly) model of authority the socially-expected task is to ‘see’, then ‘judge’ and then ‘act’, the sociology lecturer would analyse (‘see’) phenomena by literally *judging* them and then would *criticise* and *prescribe* sociological solutions as a way of ‘acting’. Even if the model of priestly authority is not based on that seeing-judging-acting stated by a priest in AgC and mentioned by one of the sociology lecturers, I have offered in chapter 3 what I think is enough evidence about the prescriptiveness and interventionist stances systematically found in statements by the Catholic clergy, priests’ homilies and ‘folk’ Catholic discourses in general.

²³⁵ On the ‘re-valuation of nature by all the inhabitants of the world’.

²³⁶ His work on a *holistic* “theory of social action” which would account for a “new totality” (2009c:2) and appears based on cultural-studies literature, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, games theory, Geertz’ ‘culture as meaning’ and a ‘semiotic’ approach to the concept of culture.

I have discussed above the ways in which these discursive features would be predisposed by the bridge institutions – family Catholic practices, Catholic schools and Catholic priests– sociology lecturers did have contact with in the past and would be directly shaped by the state’s – and sociology’s – explicit demands of normative-prescriptive-interventionist scientific knowledge. Lecturers’ adoption of the model of authority I discuss here operates as yet another ‘bridge institution’ that may not be a ‘Catholic institution’ as such yet mirrors the ‘priestly authority’ institution and, along with the other ‘bridge institutions’ and the country’s (partly Catholic) cultural-ideological structures, eventually shapes lecturers’ sociological arguments. The above, though, are not the only cognitive properties of sociology lecturers’ authority models.

IV. Power-over notions and mono-causality.

Unlike the two pairs of discursive features discussed previously, mono-causality and power-over ideas may not necessarily follow from normative, critical and prescriptive standpoints for it is perfectly reasonable, from a strictly rational/cognitivist point of view, to expect *multi-causality* and ‘power-to’ notions (Hearn 2008, 2012) out of heavily normative, prescriptive and critical sociological thinking. However, mono-causality and power-over notions are intrinsically related to a feature discussed above: *dichotomistic and non-relativistic logics*. Instances of such logics are Rachel’s statements on ‘family violence’ as the ‘power males exert over females’ or ‘violence’ as a ‘conduct exerted over those who are inferiors’; Peter’s statements on a ‘subaltern culture versus a dominant culture’; or Suzanne’s statements about an ‘international hegemony’ and ‘domination over dependent countries’. Here the underlying *dichotomistic/non-relativistic reasoning* is clear. Firstly, there would only be two opposed types of ‘entities’ (males/females; superior/inferior individuals; subaltern/dominant cultures; hegemonic/dominated countries). Secondly, one of those entities would precede, dominate or control the other in what are implicitly reported as ‘absolute/non relativistic’ relationships, frames or arrangements. Now, in these dichotomistic,

asymmetric and non-relativistic power-over statements, *mono-causality* is not necessary but does emerge easily as a rather expected logical accompaniment. Thus from Rachel's dichotomistic and asymmetric power-over views of social reality, it makes perfect sense to say that it is 'this modernity' *here* the asymmetric power that causes 'the reduction of mortality rates, increasing in expectancy life' and so on *there*. Similarly, from what seems Gregory's non-relativistic and dichotomistic power-over *logics*, it also make sense to state that 'the neo-liberal model' as such is the powerful entity that 'trains' apparently powerless individuals 'to satisfy the labour market'. In Peter's dichotomistic and non-relativistic power-over *reasoning*, it makes perfect sense to state, mono-causally, that the 1992 constitutional reform in Mexico was carried out after a presidential decision which unfolded '*from the top and not from the bottom up*'. It is the same case in Norma, who amid this pervasiveness of asymmetric-dichotomistic power-over logics, understandably spots and cites from other authors, the idea that 'Marxist concepts' (e.g. 'consciousness', 'reason') were, literally, 'suppressed by' not only 'the II International's leaders', but, even more specifically or mono-causally, 'by the economic-like thought of the II International's leaders'. My point here is that mono-causality and power-over notions are *mutually-reinforcing* references whose meanings 'leak' (Sayer 1992, 2000; Douglas 1986), rather effortlessly and accurately, into the dichotomistic/non-relativistic logics I have previously addressed and so gain further discursive strength and extended presence.

Now, the power-over and mono-causal notions I have referred to above (e.g. Peter's rather typical statement on President Salinas reforming the constitution by a top-down and not a bottom-up decision) are certainly part of the 'common-sense' logics that surrounds sociology lecturers, at least those in this country. Common-sense is actually addressed and criticised by Castañeda (2004: 206) as one of the elements that permeates "empiricist sociology" in Mexico (chapter 4). This is a view shared by Angela, who stated the following during our interview:

What is it that makes us [sociologists] distinctive from others who ask questions about social reality? We distinguish ourselves precisely because we have got from the discipline a conceptual scaffolding that allows us to see things others do not. [...] What happens in this [MxC] school?... I think there is a confusion of ordinary language with sociological language. Researchers are mixing them up.

This is not all. Right after stating the above, Angela went further and, interestingly, gave the following example:

For example they [sociologists] do research on power and businessmen, but they understand power as lay people, they do not understand power from, let's say, Foucault's perspective or Weber's domination, which do not have the same semantic content as that of common people.

Angela's statements do not only confirm the use of common-sense in sociological discourses but also touch, interestingly, upon common-sense *power notions*. Sociology lecturers are surely 'bombarded' by social discourses out-there that do contain systematic mono-causality and power-over messages. For instance, the 'historical episode' that followed the discovery of America and most kids learn at school in Mexico –and many adults echo in everyday talks – usually boils down to a popular 'common-sense' (dichotomistic) narrative: the ['mono-caused' and utterly 'power-over'] *Conquista* of Mexico by Spain²³⁷. This is obviously not the only common-sense *power-over/mono-causal* discourse that surrounds sociology lecturers in Mexico. What I argue is that Catholic discourses' power and causality notions surround sociology lecturers as well and eventually breach into their empiricist and common-sense sociologies. I see three non-mutually exclusive ways this discursive breach takes place.

Ideas of God's 'infinite' *power*, God's *will*, God as *creator*, the Virgin's/saints' *intercessory powers* as well as the reported belief, rather generalised, of *a God that provides*, are all discursive instances that I have presented in chapter 3 as frequent and ubiquitous elements of both *official* and *folk* Catholic discourses. This set of particular ideas and statements, stemming from these religious discourses and so flowing across the society's religious-

²³⁷ 'Official' primary school history textbooks (e.g., Secretaria de Educacion Publica 2010) refer invariably to the '*conquista*' of 'Meso America' by 'Spanish *conquistadores*'.

cultural spaces, shape, I argue, *common-sense* notions of *power* and *causality*. This is so because these apparently ‘parochial’ Catholic messages are echoed and further augmented in a cultural domain in which there is an *absence of alternative religious discourses and institutions with a comparable historical ideological strength*. The outcome of such a steady, intense, extensive and *exclusive* supply of Catholic discourses, practices and their ‘power-over’ and ‘mono-causality’ messages can be seen in practice in the *Cristero* war I referred to in chapter 3. Catholicism’s ideological strength and its power/causality references are, in a sense, put to work in this 20th-century historical episode. As scholar Meyer (1993) would state, the result is a group of Catholic individuals accepting, and indeed materialising in actual warfare, the idea that “the legitimacy of established powers” and “even the anti-Christ’s authority” came from God, for “not even a tree’s leaf can move without God’s will” (1993: 286). Whereas these and other similar power/causality statements stand far from the sociological field in Mexico, they are not far from the common-sense that sociology lecturers in a daily basis meet outside (and perhaps inside as well) their academic workplace. In brief, I argue that Catholic discourses’ notions of power-over and mono-causality shape common-sense and then enter, as common-sense ideas, into sociological discourses in general and the so-called ‘empiricist sociology’ in particular.

Additionally, lecturers may be ‘besieged’, more or less subtly, by mono-causality and power-over notions emerging from their own personal religious *backgrounds* and religious *beliefs*. Gregory’s statements on his father’s religiosity are revealing in this sense. As I have reported in chapter 5, Marxist lecturer Gregory described his father as he would probably describe his colleagues too, ‘a free thinker’ a ‘very liberal’ individual. After this, though, Gregory reported that his father did not *believe* in ‘that God’ or in ‘saints’ but in ‘*something supreme*’, ‘*a power beyond us*’. Moreover, some sociology lecturers explicitly referred to their beliefs in God and implicitly referred to what God’s power would/can do, that is, God as ‘an *explanation* we cannot materialise’ and hands out ‘goods’ and ‘love’ from Joseph’s view, or as an entity that does exist and has the power to intervene in social reality (e.g. applications for research funding) in Peter’s opinion²³⁸. If we isolate these statements and see them as

²³⁸ It is also revealing Michael’s explicit account of the Catholic Church as “a power” (chapter 5).

casual phrases by ‘secular social scientists’, we would end up overlooking the ideological-cultural *contexts* I have tried to illustrate and draw from repeatedly. These statements by Gregory, Joseph and Peter are not, I argue, casual and irrelevant statements, but statements that are perfect representatives of Mexican society/ies’ main religious beliefs. Gregory’s father, Joseph and Peter are actually echoing, with some (secularist) reserves, what the greater religious and cultural contexts hold in terms of God’s power and ideas of what God does/can do with that power. At this point, however, I (and others) might say ‘so what?’ Sociological discourses would be used/produced by humans who unavoidably possess a minimum of religious beliefs and that fact would not mean they mix those beliefs up with their scientific work. My data and inferences, as I have shown above, indicate the opposite.

Both the historical and contemporary flow of religious messages and their divine power/causality references impact society’s common sense and enter sociological (empiricist) discourses as common-sense power-over and common-sense mono-causality. And yet these common-sense references and their epistemological charge may not only enter, on their own, sociological discourses but also enter flanked by not necessarily the very God-related beliefs of the authors, but by the *underlying* power-over and mono-causality *logics* underpinning these beliefs, forming thus a peculiarly solid and “contagious” (Durkheim 1915) pattern of thought (or pattern/model of causality and power), which is not really dependent on Durkheimian religious ‘imitative rites’ but on the structural and institutional ‘discursive offensives’ which I have depicted in this and previous sections. Eventually, the divine-power ‘bombs’ from Catholic discourses, reinforced by the *underlying logic* of the lecturers’ God-related beliefs, ‘land’ in sociological discourses and influence them by predisposing lecturers to adopt and produce strikingly corresponding power-over notions and interpretations of social reality where phenomena tend to be interpreted as caused by one single entity with an abstract and ‘transcendental’ identity and omnipotent capacities, e.g. “global economy”. “modernity”, “neoliberalism”.

The ‘power/causality discursive predispositions’ that I propose here may be confirmed as well by a particular cluster of theoretical arguments and empirical findings in the field of

psychology. In his psychological theory of “causal processing” White (1989) distinguishes between “automatic” (unconscious) and “controlled” (conscious) causal thinking. According to the author, automatic causal thinking “utilizes existing beliefs about causal powers in perceptions of causal connections” (1989:438). Research done with infants, White argues, indicates that these beliefs presuppose a “transfer of (causal) properties” (1989:439) from one situation perceived by the individual to another similar situation. White then states that conscious causal thinking may be directly shaped by both the individual’s “practical concerns”, e.g., personal interests, and also by “the applicability of an existing causal belief”, that is, that “the only things that a person can identify as causes are things that that person already believes can be causes” (1989:445). Fugelsang and Thompson (2000) tested White’s ‘causal processing’ hypotheses and found evidence that suggest that individuals do pay attention to covariation between phenomena (e.g. lung cancer and smoking) in order to establish causal explanations and do so specially if they think the phenomena include a “believable” candidate cause, and, by contrast, “when the candidate [cause] is unbelievable, evidence supporting a causal link may be downplayed because it fails to confirm the initial belief” (2000:20). After a couple of years and further experiments²³⁹ with samples of adult population, the same authors (2003) connected White’s ‘automatic’ and ‘controlled’ type of ‘causal processing’ and stated that “the recruitment [or acquisition] of causal beliefs” by the individual “may occur unconsciously” and that “these [acquired] beliefs constrain the deliberate analytic processes needed to evaluate the empirical evidence that was provided” (2003:812) to the individuals in the experiment. White (1989) and Fugelsang and Thompson (2000, 2003) did not analyse ‘religious beliefs’ as such. White defined beliefs as knowledge of phenomena arising from the individual’s past “perceptions” and “familiarity” with certain phenomena (1989:438). Fugelsang and Thompson (2000:19) operationalised the concept of ‘beliefs’ in their experiments as the most frequent answers by a pilot sample of individuals that selected plausible causal scenarios out of a list of different phenomena (e.g., depleted fish caused by insecticides; allergic reactions caused by homework). These two authors, however, make a crucial sociological remark in another publication (2003); they conclude

²³⁹ Fugelsang and Thompson’s empirical evidence also indicates that “the [individual’s] belief that two events are causally related produces the belief that they covary” (2000:29)

that a promising research avenue may focus on the “cross-cultural differences” among individuals’ causal beliefs as the latter are “constructed within the cultural constraints of the social environment” (2003:813).

It is perhaps not too risky to attribute to ‘religious beliefs’, that is, to *personally significant and highly emotional ideas*, an equivalent role to the one the authors attributed to the certainly less personal and less emotional ‘beliefs’ they analysed –e.g., past perceptions, familiarity, not-personal assumptions. Now, if Fugelsang and Thompson (2003) find evidence of an ‘unconscious recruitment’ of causal beliefs which ‘constrain deliberate analytic processes’ (2003:812), and if White (1989) argued that ‘unconscious causal thinking’ does involve the ‘transfer of causal properties’ between similar contexts, I then argue that the personally significant and highly emotional ideas of God’s powers/capacities in sociology lecturers, may then play a significant role in the lecturers’ ‘automatic’ (common-sense) causal processing (White 1989) and, therefore, in their sociological ‘analytic processes’ (Fugelsang and Thompson 2003) as well. The psychological literature I am citing in these paragraphs may be further interpreted as consonant with Sayer’s ‘leakage of meaning’ (1992, 2000) and Douglas’ ‘politically charged’ conventions-analogies (1986), in terms of the *transferability* or ‘contagion’ (Durkheim 1915) of cognitive patterns and discursive features. The data I have presented and analysed in these chapters does not suggest that *religious beliefs* are ‘transferred’ verbatim to the sociological causal models I have referred to above. However, the psychological, sociological and anthropological literature above, as well as the data I have presented, do suggest that sociology lecturers’ religious beliefs in God’s powers or God’s capacities (‘supreme’, asymmetric, omnipresent, omnipotent) may be playing a subtle, not-exclusive yet crucial role in the attribution of particular causal/power properties to certain social institutions and social phenomena, e.g., ‘modernity’, ‘globalisation’ and ‘presidential figures’, and their apparently ‘supreme’, asymmetric and omnipotent capacities to shape social reality.

Furthermore, this set of God-related beliefs found not only in ‘official’ and ‘folk’ Catholic ; discourses but also in the very personal beliefs of sociology lecturers, do shape sociological

discourses not only because they breach through society's greater common-sense patterns but also because, as I have argued before, *they do fit into the very asymmetric-dichotomistic logics* of lecturers' non-sociological and sociological judgements and statements. I have previously discussed the influence (predisposition) of Catholic discourses upon both sociological discourses' *normative* dichotomistic thinking and, by extension, sociological discourses' *non-normative* dichotomistic reasoning . By logical extension, power-over notions and mono-causality, insofar as framed on, or dependent of, asymmetric-dichotomistic logics, would be reinforced by Catholic discourses in a similar manner. This extended reinforcement from Catholic discourses would be actually additional to the epistemological effects by both common-sense ideas on divine power/will I have suggested and the very beliefs in God reported by lecturers.

And yet there is another shaping force I want to address. Perhaps Durkheim's 'imitative rites' are, after all, a relevant link. My data suggests, though, that it is not the 'religious rite' that may play a role, but more 'profane rituals' performed in the daily lives of sociology lecturers, that is, the *practices* of asymmetric (epistemic) authority explicitly reported by Norma and Michael and indirectly mentioned by most of the sociologists as their experiences in/with a 'centralised' and 'hierarchical' university field (chapter 4). These practices, or rather this institution (Weber 1978; Douglas 1986), which mirrors Catholicism's (priestly) patterns of authority and so predisposes sociology lecturers to adopt dichotomistic logics/judgements and non-relativistic normative, critical and prescriptive sociological stances, actually entail the *enactment of power asymmetries in real life*. When lecturers like Norma hold, deliberately, epistemic authority before students in classrooms or when social researchers get actively involved in research communities where there is 'a boss' that 'controls everything', they are actually closing and reinforcing the cognitive circuit of power-over thinking and mono-causality. These are sociological discourses, or parts of, partly reinforced by practices and vice versa: *sociology lecturers do what they think about, and they think about what they do, and then produce sociological discourses accordingly*. In other words, they generate what Barry Barnes (1988) calls a power-related 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (see also Mackenzie 1998: 58; and Hearn 2012:86-7).

In chapter 1 I argued that, in principle, a cultural model of authority may constitute a bridge institution whose emergence would depend on the use of “binary rhetorics” as scholar Smith (2000) proposes, and would as well ‘produce’ (binary) classifications, as Douglas (1986) would likely assert. I state that this asymmetric-epistemic authority model may not just depend on binary rhetorics and produce binary classifications but does represent *materially* those binary classifications *by enacting in practice* the power-over dichotomies that, thus far, I have reported as part of cognitive-discursive instances. In a sense, the ‘practice of’ power-over dichotomies by individuals would close the circuit and produce a set of *asymmetric practices* and *dichotomistic discourses* strongly connected to each other. This accounts for the discursive coherence of Mexico’s a sociological field/s, which some scholars may describe as ‘epistemologically weak’ – e.g. De la Garza (1989); Gimenez (1995) – but I rather characterise as perfectly consistent with the social discourses and practices of Mexican society –Catholicism included! The case of Marxism in Mexico is a perfect example of the discursive interplays I have accounted for above.

V. Marxism and Catholicism

In chapter 4 I concluded that whereas Marxism cannot be described as the only sociological school in Mexico from the 1960s to the 1990s, it was reportedly one of the more extended sociological paradigms and a decisive theoretical frame in the sociology lecturers’ intellectual development. This is not a coincidence and Catholic discourses, I argue, had to do with this. Sociology lecturers Edward and Michael stated that Marxism, indeed, became “a church” or “a doctrine” in Mexico (chapter 6) for this sociological paradigm and its supporters in Mexico held “beliefs without reflection” as well as an “orthodoxy” and a fundamental concern for “social transformations” that were strikingly similar to the beliefs, orthodoxy and interventionism of Mexico’s Catholic Church and Catholicism. Norma rejected the idea of Marxism having links with Catholicism in Mexico; however, she actually stated that Marxism in this country “served the same functions” as Catholicism in terms of

“the good and the evil” and “salvation”. Although I am not interested in discussing whether Marxism and Catholicism in this country are orthodox, non-reflexive or detrimentally interventionist, I do agree with the lecturers’ characterisation of Marxism *as a* ‘church/doctrine’. In my account, however, the similarities between Marxism and Catholicism go beyond mere resemblances.

In this section I will argue that Catholicism and Catholic discourses did shape Marxism in Mexico in two ways. Firstly, Marxism appealed with a peculiar force to sociology practitioners in Mexico because it was a paradigm whose surface discourse was novel and suitable for the then tense socio-political context of the first half of the 20th century in Mexico and Latin America²⁴⁰ but also because its underlying discursive structure (Parsons 1979; Boli 1981) actually fit into the changing discursive templates (normativeness, prescriptiveness, salvationist discourses, ontological dichotomies) laid and reinforced by Catholic discourses in the country since colonial times. Secondly, once introduced in Mexico, Marxism adopted, by means of the institutional-structural discursive mechanisms I have noted above, most of the characteristics of the Catholic discourses I have repeatedly discussed here.

In chapter 4 I presented Brigitte’s statements about her abrupt transition from Catholicism to Marxism. This, according to the lecturer, was a trend in her generation and the previous generation as well. Brigitte’s first impressions of Marxism reportedly meant for this lecturer, and likely for many others, a ‘diametrically opposed world’. It could not be otherwise if, as Michael recalls (chapter 4), students had to read ‘Louis Bonaparte’s Eighteenth Brumaire’ or if undergraduate sociology curricula also included, as Norma stated during our interview, reading authors such as Vladimir Lenin. This ‘opposed world’ was also pointed out by

²⁴⁰ Mexico experienced a series of major events such as the ‘Mexican revolution’ in 1910s; political and economic instability afterwards; the *Cristero* war in the late 1920s; a sudden upsurge of a socialist political (especially educational) trend in the state apparatus in the late 1930s; the collateral, rather macro economic, effects of the I and II World Wars, and a shocking protest-massacre of students and protesters in the late 1960s –somewhat similar but not necessarily linked to the May 1968 protests in France (see also chapter 4, section III). Dictatorships in South American countries such as Uruguay, Chile and Argentina (Thorp 1998) during the second half of the 20th century are also examples of the tense and volatile times in Latin American societies.

Edward who explained to me that Marxism in Mexican universities was related to the idea of revolutions and *guerrillas* launching (more figurative than actual) attacks on society's conservatism, religious conservatism included (chapter 4). That popular 'Mexican Marxism' was radical, anti-authoritarian and radically 'secularist'. However this Mexican Marxism may have been closer to Catholicism than Marxist and secular sociologists believed, or still believe. And that closeness to Catholicism, I argue, accounts for its appeal to 'generations' of sociology students, lecturers and practitioners.

In his analysis of the ideological forces and "symbolic environments" that shape "modern economies" –reportedly one of his last publications– Parsons (1979) focuses on Western Christianity and argues that there is "a notable resemblance" between "the 'scenario' of Marxism and the basic pattern of Christianity" (1979:441) –see also Erich Fromm's Marxist exegesis (1961) for a similar yet distinctive view²⁴¹ and Boli's (1981) interpretation of Marxism as a 'modern' theology. In Parsons' view although Marxism is a paradigm that focuses on earthly instead of transcendental matters, its "scenario" includes elements that are equivalent to the Christian paradigm. Whereas the 'evil' is represented by the figure of the sin in the Christian scheme, a parallel 'evil' element is represented in Marxism by the forces of capitalist production and the "state of alienation" of both "capitalistic men" and those members of the proletariat who have "not yet been awakened to class consciousness" (1979: 442). Just as it is in Christianity, this state of affairs in Marxism is meant to be transformed not by a "second coming of Christ" but by a likewise 'salvationist' revolution led by the awakened proletariat and conducive to a rather heaven-like "state of communism" (1979:442-3). Parsons also notes what he literally calls a "sharp dichotomy" that may be found in both the Christian and Marxist contexts, "the saved and the damned". Just as believers who have not experienced the "mission of Christ" are not meant to have access to heaven, members of the Marxist proletariat –and perhaps bourgeoisie too– who have not yet

²⁴¹ In his exegetic analysis of Marx's work and his concept of socialism, Fromm (1961) gives a more radical interpretation of the ideological influences upon Marx. He argues first that Marx's utopian socialism actually echoes the Old Testament's "Messianic hope" and Greek and Roman "humanism" and then concludes that Marxism and "other forms of socialism" became the very "heirs of prophetic Messianism, Christian Chiliastic sectarianism, thirteenth-century Thomism, Renaissance Utopianism, and eighteenth-century enlightenment" (1961:68)

acquired “class consciousness” cannot be saved by the communist heaven build by the freed proletariat (1979:443)²⁴². Boli (1981) also notes how Marx elaborated the view of a proletariat ‘technological progress’ as a ‘secular’ path to liberation that nonetheless ‘retained’ the dichotomistic good-versus-evil struggle customary in Christianity and Western thought (1981: 511).

Although my view of social phenomena is not that of Parsonian clear-cut systems and subsystems and although Catholicism and Marxism in Mexico do not obviously correspond, entirely, to the Marxism and the Christianity Parsons, Fromm and Boli analysed, I do agree with the parallels these authors draws between Marxism and Christianity. What Parsons argued in terms of the ‘salvationism’ in Christianity and Marxism and what Boli suggested as the theological bases of Marxism, are two complementary ways to illustrate the links I have drawn between Catholic discourses’ normative prescriptiveness and interventionism and the equivalent ‘teleological’ rationales (chapter 4) and statements (chapter 7) in sociological discourses in Mexico. I argue that Marxism in Mexico was appealing and turned into a popular sociological paradigm precisely because it matched Catholic discourses’ normativeness, prescriptiveness and interventionism. If, as I have argued above, Catholic discourses predispose sociology lecturers to adopt particular stances that have epistemological impact, Marxism in Mexico is precisely an example: *Catholic discourses successfully predisposed –via the structural and institutional echoes and offensives I have previously accounted for– sociology lecturers and students to adopt and embrace Marxism’s interventionist frame and teleological charge.*

These discursive (epistemological) features were not the only ones that Catholicism and Catholic discourses underpin and Marxism in Mexico, in a sense, ‘exploited’. Dichotomistic logics appear in the stage, again. Parsons’ (1979) ‘the saved-the damned sharp dichotomy’ and Boli’s (1981) good-versus-evil may have not been the only dichotomistic discursive references flowing from/within Marxism in Mexico. After Edward reported his experiences

²⁴² Referring to ascetic Protestantism in particular, Parsons also argues that the Christian concept of suffering may find continuity, or “resonance”, in the Marxist concept of “labour” as exploitation (1979:446-7)

as curriculum advisor in a university that had designed a sociology programme which included ‘Marx one’ up to ‘Marx six’ courses (chapter 4, section III), this lecturer also told me about a conference he attended, where the speaker, a Mexican Marxist scholar, reportedly stated that

in the university context, the authorities represented the bourgeois and the lecturers were the proletariat, and, in the household, men were the bourgeois and women and kids were the proletariat, *just because it had to fit* (emphasis added).

Indeed, dichotomies such as the above had to fit with the Marxist bourgeois-proletariat core frame, but, beyond this sociological/academic Marxism in the university, *they also ‘fit’ within the dichotomistic logics of Catholic discourses flowing pervasively between/from the society’s cultural-ideological structures, the Catholic Church itself and other less obvious ‘bridge institutions’*. These Catholic discourses, I argue, ‘prepared’ sociology lecturers, students and practitioners to identify easily those *Marxist dichotomistic-asymmetric references* and adopt them –and perhaps ‘believe’ in them as well. And this (epistemological) correspondence takes me to the third Mexican Marxism-Catholicism parallel I want to draw.

Fromm (1961) states that one of the commonalities between 13th-century “Christian thought”, 18th-century Enlightenment, and 19th-century Marxism-socialism may be found in their shared idea of the state/politics as a field that “cannot be divorced” from “spiritual” or “moral values” (1961: 66). In chapter 4 I presented one of Michael’s statements about his ‘Marxist’ experiences in the undergraduate sociology programme he attended. Marxism by then, Michael stated, “was about saying ‘no’ to everything: not to watch TV, news, not to read the newspaper, not to go to night clubs”. In Michael’s view Marxism was therefore ‘orthodox’. Now, Michael’s statement here is strikingly similar to both Joseph’s statement about the priest that advised him ‘do not kill, do not do that’, as if ‘everything was prohibitive’ (chapter 5 and section above) and to the series of *non-relativistic* normative and prescriptive messages in the Catholic discourses I presented in chapter 3. If, as I have constantly repeated, there is a continuity between (official and folk) Catholic ethics and AgC and MxC lecturers’ personal set of non-relativistic ‘moral values’ and if there is, therefore, a

clear indication that Catholic discourses predispose lecturers to adopt a non-relativistic type of sociological normativeness, then Marxism is, again, an actual example. Whether as heir of Fromm's '13th-century Christian thought' or not, Catholic discourses in Mexico were one of the external ideological forces which, rather indirectly through the structural-institutional discursive mechanisms I have discussed, made Mexican Marxist sociologists ready to adopt and embrace *non-relativistic* normative standpoints and issue corresponding *non-relativistic* Marxist-sociological prescriptive statements²⁴³.

The last 'predisposition' I want to propose is related to the 'power-over' and 'mono-causal' references I have also discussed above. Parsons (1979) states that Western Marxism was based on the idea of an utopian society where "any form of coercion or alienation [such as] [t]he state as the symbol of coercive authority [...] will 'wither away'" (1979:441). As I presented in chapter 4, when Edward in AgC referred to the 'Marx-one-up-to-Marx-six' courses in a university's curricula, he also said that the programme in question contained 'all about what was already known' from a Marxist perspective, that is, the occurrence of a 'determination by economic infrastructure on ideological and political structures' and 'everything depending on class struggle'. Further power-over ('determination') and mono-causal statements ('everything depending on class struggle') were found not only in the sociology lecturers' references to their past experiences with Marxism/Marxists, but also in openly Marxist lecturers such as Gregory and his sociological arguments, e.g., his statements, presented in chapter 7, about the 'mechanical transference of knowledge' in 'the traditional teaching-learning system' leading to 'the *submission* of individuals'; or 'modern life' ending

²⁴³ During my field work in MxC, I attended an undergraduate research workshop led by Marxist lecturer Gregory. At some point during the workshop this lecturer told the students a personal anecdote that was meant to illustrate the practical issues researchers have to solve while doing research in the field. Gregory so reported that he was once introduced, by people he had worked with, to a popular female performer in the country. The performer, after realising Gregory was a researcher and had written a book on life stories, reportedly asked him to write her biography. Gregory explained to the students he had to decline the performer's offer as he was not interested. Then he stated "My concept of beauty is not that of [female performer's name], she is even vulgar for me, honestly. [...] It is not the femininity one would like to see [...] *she might have physical beauty but not spiritual or cultural beauty* [...] as sociologist you have to be tolerant though" (emphasis added). The reader may want to recall the likewise non-relativistic dichotomistic values mentioned by priests in AgC (chapter 3) who preached about 'passion/lust' ('the physical', 'the wrong') *versus* 'love' ('the spiritual', 'the right').

up ‘*inhibiting* communication at home’; or his statement (not presented previously) on ‘outcomes of scientific research’ being ‘*impregnated by the dominant classes’ ideology*’ (2006: 23). If Western and Mexican Marxism rest partly upon a series of power-over and mono-causal interpretations of social reality, Catholic discourses and their mono-causal and power-over references, i.e., God’s absolute powers, God as creator, or the Virgin’s intercessory powers, did definitely play a role in the spread of Marxism in Mexico and its particular causal/power discursive bases.

This role, as I have stated earlier, is directly related to the ‘transferability’ (White 1968; Fugelsang and Thompson 2000, 2003), the ‘contagion’ (Durkheim 1915) or the ‘leakage’ (Sayer 1992, 2000; Douglas 1986) not of the idea of divine will, but of the *underlying* power-over *logics* and mono-causality *frames* which flow structurally and institutionally in Catholic discourses and are then echoed by sociology lecturers –who do believe in a God that ‘explains’ reality and hands out ‘goods and love’ (Joseph) or has the power to intervene in social reality and events such as research funding applications (Peter). Such a combined role of both Catholic *discourses* and *personal beliefs*, echoed and augmented by the institutional-structural arrangements I have previously illustrated, *made Mexican sociologists particularly receptive to similar causal/power models and therefore predispose/d Mexican sociologists to adopt Marxist deterministic views of social phenomena*, for example, the Marxist view of the bourgeoisie’s dominance (‘morally wrong’ indeed) over the proletariat. Even if the original western Marxism is read as being rather free from power-over and mono-causal assertions, the ‘Mexican Marxism’ I have referred to here, as the lecturers themselves pointed and their own sociological texts indicate, was not. Catholic discourses and beliefs, therefore, not only predispose/d Mexican sociologists to adopt Marxism’s original economic determinism, *but also predisposed, or in a sense ‘prepared’, Mexican Marxists to develop further power-over and mono-causal discourses* in which the omnipotence of God, along with more earthly clerical models of ‘asphyxiating’ (Brigitte) authority, breached into Mexican Marxism’s statements and claims about both parallel omnipresent/omnipotent social entities – e.g. neoliberalism – and corresponding coercive

social realities –e.g., Gregory’s and Suzanne’s Marxist view of the wicked omnipotence of the ‘neoliberal model’ (chapter 7, sections II and III).

Waggoner (2009) states that Marx eventually reduced religion to an epiphenomenon determined by socio-economic conditions and utilised by the state in its ideological control. In a sense, Marxist academics in Mexico aimed at ‘expelling’ the religious out of society (Edward), yet they – and possibly other Marxist academics in other Latin American regions – on the other hand ended up drawing from the same religious discursive structure and religious underlying rationales in such a way that they produced a parallel ‘salvationist’ (Parsons 1979), ‘theological’ (Boli 1981) and ‘messianic’ (Fromm 1951) discourse or, as lecturers Edward and Michael noted, another ‘church’ or another ‘doctrine’ –with perfectly equivalent normative, prescriptive and dichotomistic logics and power-over and mono-causal core references.

VI. Causal links in brief.

My methodology consisted of two apparently opposite case studies (sociological discourses in/by AgC lecturers and sociological discourses in/by MxC lecturers) that would, in theory, deliver opposite findings. Eventually, the opposition between the findings was not conclusive. Except perhaps for some rather minor differences – more prescriptiveness and less mono-causality in MxC than in AgC – all the six discursive features I have discussed above can be systematically found in both MxC and AgC university sociological fields. These sociological discourses, which cannot be reduced to the set of six features but do emerge from them, are shaped not only by the Mexican state’s explicit (funding-related) and implicit (ideological) demands and by what seems is the Mexican sociology/ies’ own teleological rationales but also by the Catholic discourses I have repeatedly addressed above.

Despite a couple of individual cases suggesting the opposite – e.g., Peter’s ‘universalist prescriptiveness’, Hernandez’ (1999) explicit use of Catholic dichotomies – what I argue is

that Catholic discourses do not determine sociological discourses by making them reproduce exactly the same discursive (epistemological) characteristics. Catholic discourses may not even ‘determine’, in any sense, sociological discourses. Catholic discourses, however, *predispose* sociological discourses and sociology lecturers to adopt equivalent epistemological stances – normative, prescriptive, critical, non-relativistic, power-over and mono-causal – by means of ‘bridge institutions’ – Catholic family practices, Catholic school, Catholic priest, priestly authority/academic ‘epistemic’ authority – whose ‘echoes’ of Catholic discourses turn into an actual ‘discursive offensive’ when those bridge institutions – along with the ‘official’ Catholic Church as well – invariably get combined with the partly ‘Catholic’ cultural-ideological structures that surround lecturers, students, universities and Mexican society/ies overall. I argue that Catholicism has a central role in these structures not only because it operated as the only religious-cultural institution (with economic and political attributions as well) in colonial Mexico (1500s-1800s) but also because its *ideological powers* and *central cultural roles* (Poggi 2001; Zavala forthcoming) were barely contested by independence movements (1810s) and by the state’s adoption of secularist laws in the 1850s-1860s. Catholicism in Mexico, despite the ‘religious-diversity’ arguments of some Mexican scholars, remains today as a religion that represents 83% of the country’s population and still has no major religious rival within the ideological horizon of Mexican society/ies.

Having accounted for this structural element in my explanation of ‘causal links’, I want to emphasise that (i) the ‘epistemic-authority’ institution enacted by lecturers in the academic context, as well as (ii) the lecturers’ Catholic-like non-relativistic values and (iii) God-related beliefs, deserve a special mention. The lecturers’ “epistemic authority” is not a ‘Catholic institution’ as such yet *mirrors* greater authority patterns, including those in Catholicism and those exerted by Catholic priests in particular. As a consequence of this intentional or unintentional mirroring, sociology lecturers end up issuing discourses that follow the same mainstream authority institutions and their types of discourses –Catholic-like non-relativistic ‘judging’, normativeness and prescriptiveness included. Furthermore, when sociology lecturers enact these asymmetric-authority models they are, in fact, materialising the *power-*

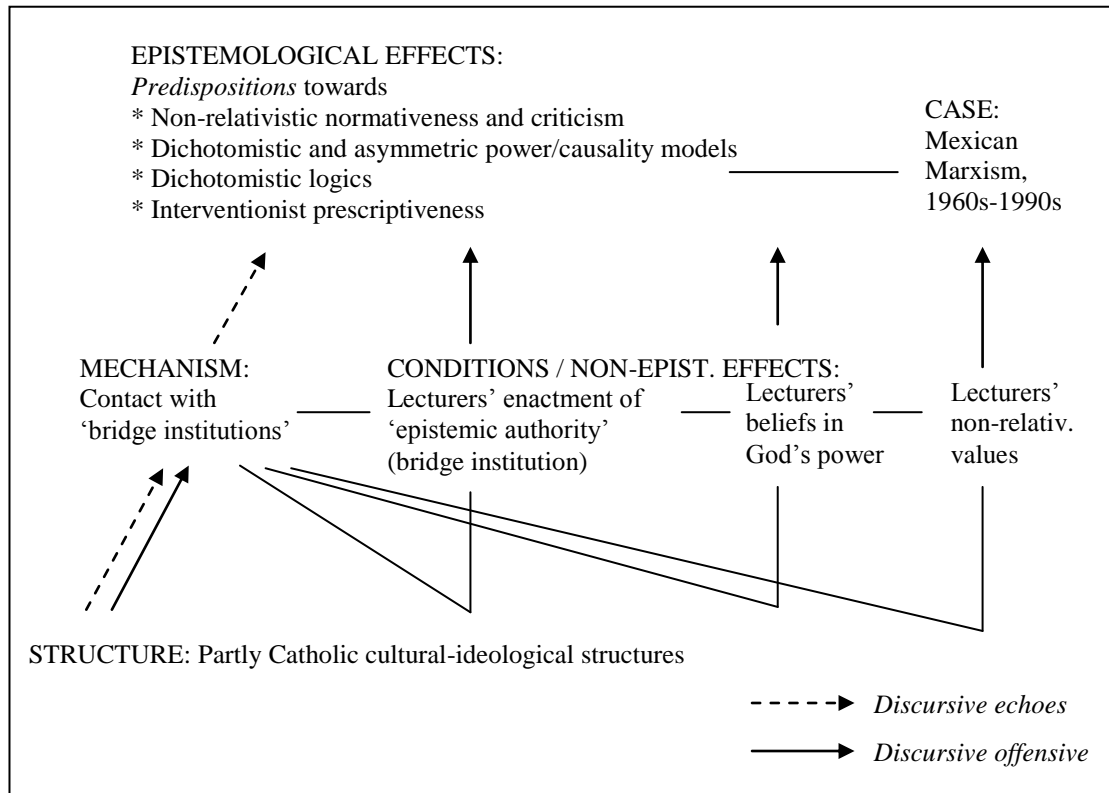
over instances they write about in their sociological discourses and so reinforce further this discursive component and its corresponding ‘mono-causality’ (or centralised power) logics.

Additional to this, the ‘discursive offensive’ *via* the structural-institutional ensemble noted above, also finds, in terms of power-over and mono-causality, an influential ‘ally’ in what the data indicates are the very sociology lecturers’ current beliefs in God’s powers and, namely, in the asymmetric and non-relativistic models of (unidirectional, deterministic) causality and (supreme, omnipotent) power that underlie these beliefs. Moreover, the non-relativity and asymmetry of these particular models as well as the inherent normativeness-prescriptiveness of sociological discourses, find further reinforcement, of a moral kind, in what does appear as the lecturers’ Catholic, or Catholic-like, stock of non-relativistic moral values once instilled by the ‘bridge institutions’ they interacted with in the past and currently bolstered by the very cultural-ideological structures of society. This series of discursive predispositions I have discussed here can be found neatly in the ‘Mexican Marxism’ reported by the sociology lecturers themselves, that is, in a sociological paradigm whose ‘successful’ introduction and, reported ‘orthodox’ development in Mexico was subtly yet effectively shaped by Catholicism and the structural-institutional discursive echoes/offensives I have accounted for.

The reader may find these series of causal links illustrated roughly in Figure 8.1 below – based on Sayer’s (2000) critical-realist model of causation. This graphic is meant to illustrate the structural and institutional mechanisms accounted for, their epistemological effects (predispositions) and the conditions (or non-epistemological effects) by which those effects occur. My illustration is neither meant to distinguish an exact sequence by which these complex phenomena and their final epistemological impacts take place nor to convey an impression of fragmented and static social elements; it is rather intended to offer to the reader a visual of a general causal framework in which the various *observable and unobservable entities* previously discussed –structures, institutions and individuals– and their *emergent properties* and *particular social actions* (Sayer 2000:12-3) hold fluid

multidirectional relations²⁴⁴ and thus produce emergent effects over the sociological discourses dissected in chapter 7.

Figure 8.1. Causal links between Catholicism and sociology in Mexico.



Adapted from Sayer (2000:15).

²⁴⁴ The graphic, for instance, may also include arrows connecting Mexican Marxism back to the proposed causal “conditions”, e.g., lecturers’ values and beliefs in God, or even back to the society’s ‘cultural-ideological structures’, in order to suggest the possible effects of Marxism as sociological paradigm over the lecturers’ religiosity and society’s cultural domain – which are certainly different research subjects/objects to those discussed in this dissertation.

Chapter 9

Final conclusions

Although I have previously stated that I share the critical-realist principle of the partial scientific knowledge we can gain from an ontologically stratified, and necessarily complex, social reality, (chapter 2), I must mention a series of limitations in my research findings. My findings about the cultural-ideological structures in Mexico are limited since my analyses of historical and contemporary Catholicism as well as the country's cultural history certainly did not include all the events, phenomena, institutions and agents that figure in the whole spectrum of academic sources –historical and sociological. Similarly, I cannot claim in this research to have completed a thorough registry of absolutely every single text, practice and (macro and micro) phenomena related to sociology in Mexico and Latin America. However, the fact that the data collected in two apparently differing contexts (AgC and MxC) did not deliver the expected opposing findings, and rather portrays two sociological and two religious fields holding only minor differences, is methodologically, empirically and theoretically significant. Having similar findings from two 'theoretically' opposite local/regional contexts, does provide a solid empirical base for inferring with confidence that the findings above do represent the range of discourses that flow, and the relevant phenomena that occurs, not only in these locations but also in other local/regional religious and sociological fields across Mexican society/ies –and possibly in other Latin American societies as well.

My account of the causal links between Catholic and sociological discourses in the chapter above is certainly an approximation to the underlying causal mechanisms between Catholicism and sociology in Mexico. Yet, even as an approximation, it *may* complete the empirical and explanatory puzzles that were left untouched by Milbank (2006), Sahlins (1996) and Cannell (2005, 2006). These authors carefully analysed the epistemological similarities between theological/religious knowledge and social sciences and then, mostly

theoretically and through genealogical approaches, advanced various theses about the epistemological ‘influence’ (Evans and Evans 2008) of (Western) Christianity over (Western) social science. These authors, however, did not account for how this influence develops and eventually takes place, for how theological/religious knowledge lands in social science and ends up being echoed by secular social thinkers and scientists. My account of how Catholicism in Mexico shapes sociology cannot certainly be used to fill such an explanatory gap in these three authors’ works, since the religious and social science contexts I analysed carry not only a socio-geographical specificity but also socio-historical particularities and, as I have illustrated in chapters 3 and 4, both may resemble, but also stand rather far from, the specificities of Western religious and scientific *contexts* (Sayer 1992:108; Asad 1983, 1993). However, my account may offer the bases of possible answers if we broaden and refine our understanding of religion and the ‘porosity’ of social sciences, e.g., sociology, in the ways I have suggested. I will unpack next the key explanatory elements in my account and will connect them back to the relevant literature in order to offer such a broader and refined perspective.

My research findings do suggest that the Catholic and sociological discourses I have dissected here confirm Durkheim’s theses (chapter 1, section III), with a series of key reservations though. A century ago Durkheim studied the so-called ‘categories of thought’ and, just as Aristotle and Kant did (Schmauss 2004), he aimed at finding their very *origins* – exactly the same analytical target the reader may find in Milbank (2006), Sahlins (1996) and Cannell (2005, 2006) and other mainstream Western scholars and their archaeological/genealogical approaches, e.g. Foucault 2003, 2005. With such an ambitious target, Durkheim (1915) put forward his apparently awkward (Lukes 1973:448; Schmauss 2004:123) set of *religion/society-knowledge-science* theses –that there is a ‘genealogical’ relation between religious thought, that is *society’s* thoughts, and people’s ‘lay’ thinking or ‘categories of thought’ and this relation can be extended further so that there is also a genealogical relation between *religious* and *scientific logics*. This proposal would be rather forgotten, perhaps deliberately neglected, by mainstream scholars and so was eclipsed or possibly ‘replaced’ by his *society-knowledge* thesis (Durkheim and Mauss [1903] 1963), a

thesis that lacks the religious element and therefore seems to be more acceptable in secularist (Casanova 2009; Calhoun et al. 2011) mainstream scientific discourses. It may be said that *unintended* exceptions to this neglecting or eclipsing can be found in Milbank (2006), Sahlins (1996) and Cannell (2005, 2006), who, I argue, corroborated to some extent, and rather implicitly, what Durkheim (1915) had declared in terms of the religious origins of scientific *classifications*, notions of *power/force* and *causality* models. I cannot state, however, that the epistemological features or ‘scientific logics’ I found in sociological discourses in AgC and MxC (e.g., dichotomistic logics, power-over notions and mono-causality and their corresponding non-relativistic normativeness, criticism and frequent prescriptiveness) are *originated* in/by Catholic discourses. What I do state is that religion, Catholicism in this case, does shape, that is *predispose* (Elder-Vass 2011), sociology’s epistemological bases in subtle, almost imperceptible, yet remarkably effective ways.

Durkheim (1915) might have stated that this shaping process would occur because Catholic *rituals* (Rawls 2005) would provide a ‘mould’ to connect elements of social reality with each other and because it would provide as well an impersonal and diffused notion of force that would turn into a prototype for sociology’s concepts of power/force. He might have suggested as well that Catholic rituals, given their centrality and reflection of Mexican society per se, would include the imperative enactment of ‘necessary connections’ that would, on the one hand, allow for the Mexican society’s reproduction and, on the other hand, would be taken further as prime examples of how to conceive further causes and corresponding effects in social reality. Perhaps my account of causal links (Sayer 1992, 2000) between Catholicism and sociology is less ritualistic and it is, definitely, less deterministic.

My causal account includes the ritualistic enactments of certain ‘authority models’, but it also includes Catholic discourses flowing across institutions and carrying specific discursive constituents (dichotomistic logics, causality and power notions included) that are echoed by a series of particular bridge institutions which, once combined with the society’s cultural-ideological structures, turn those echoes into subtle yet pervasive discursive offensives. My account thus might seem to over-stress ‘structured’ social action and a series of sociological entities *acting upon* the individual and leaving no room for individual agency. It is from

Douglas that I take the idea of institutions working in the reduction and processing of complexity (knowledge, information) and the idea of institutions echoing ‘patterns of thought’. However, unlike Douglas seems to do at times, I would not go as far as to state that an institution equates to “a machine for thinking and decision-making” that operates in “automatic pilot” (1986:63) mode –see also Coser (1988b) and Latour (1988). The ‘bridge institutions’ I have accounted for are not ‘automatic machines’ and do not determine sociological discourses in Mexico. Firstly, a few sociology lecturers and their *multi-causal*, socially-politically *uncritical* and *not-prescriptive* sociological discourses indicate that this ruptures from institutional mainstream patterns of thought may and do occur. Secondly, even if these ruptures do not take place and patterns of thought remain rather untouched and echoed, almost verbatim, by certain (bridge) institutions, their epistemological effects cannot be overstated. My research findings indicate that sociology lecturers do ‘use’ the social discourses around them –including Catholic discourses– yet ‘transform’ them and so produce emergent social science/sociological discourses while simultaneously being not ‘rigidly determined’ but ‘subtly predisposed’ (Elder-Vass 2011) by those discourses.

I would like now to extend and refine the ‘patterns of thought’ that Douglas (1986) discussed as institutional properties. I argue that individuals may draw not only from the ‘classifications’ and ‘parameters of justice’ offered or echoed by institutions but also from the ‘causalizations’ and ‘religious/moral values’ likewise made and offered. In chapter 1 I presented the theoretical possibility of causality models or conceptualisations of causality being interpreted as *higher-complexity classifications* where certain elements (cause/s, effect/s, mechanism/s) had to be distinguished and then arranged, or *classified*, into an intelligible frame. My research findings do suggest that these higher-complexity classifications, or ‘causalizations’, do flow among institutions as distinctive discursive constituents and are eventually offered to the final users, sociology lecturers in this case. The process does not necessarily involve Durkheim’s strictly religious-ritualistic principle of ‘the like produces the like’ (1915) but discursive echoes/offensives, structural-institutional ensembles and, as for the case of ‘causalizations’, what the psychological literature may call the intrinsic ‘transferability’ of causality patterns (White 1989; Fugelsang and Thompson

2000, 2003) and sociological and anthropological literature may generically refer as ‘contagious’ or ‘mutually reinforcing’ patterns of thinking (Durkheim 1915; Douglas 1986; Sayer 1992, 2000; Zerubavel 1999)

The idea of institutionally-transmitted ‘religious/moral values’ (see also Cipriani 2011) is merely an extension of Douglas’ idea (1986) about the institutionally-transmitted principle of justice. Here, though, I want to refine further this concept and its explanatory role. Since Weber’s (2003) classic analysis of Western capitalism and the Protestant (Calvinist) ethic, the idea about religious values having certain ideological efficiency and long-term oblique practical effects became a relatively well known argument. Merton (1938; chapter 1) applied this thesis to the British-science context and thus offered an account of how the (non-dichotomistic) Puritan values of post-Reformation British society underpinned the atmosphere conducive to the rise of British science during the 17th century. In my account, Catholic values (e.g., heaven/hell; love/passion; god/devil; right/wrong) do have a crucial role as well, however, their role is not necessarily as building blocks of, say, ‘pro-scientific’(or ‘pro-sociology’) ideological atmospheres which then ‘encourage’ scientific thought and practices from the distance and obliquely. My findings demonstrate that religious values may additionally be conceived as cognitive devices *per se*, that is, as *contagious classificatory models* (Durkheim 1915; Douglas 1986; Zerubavel 1999) which do flow outside their apparently ‘parochial-religious’ grounds and become not only criteria for anchoring social interactions in predictable ethical frameworks but also patterns for ‘classifying the world’ and its various constituents. These ‘*values-classifications*’ may merely impact common-sense or religious beliefs and thoughts. But, in contexts such as Mexican society/ies, and either as part of common-sense or on their own, religious ‘values-classifications’, *additionally predispose*, not exclusively yet effectively, sociological discourses’ adoption of equivalent classificatory logics (e.g. dichotomistic) by means of the mechanisms previously accounted for. Next I will address another ‘condition’ I included in my account –perhaps the oddest one from a secularist perspective.

In one of his publications Yearley (2005) reviews the various contributions to the area of social studies of science and so identifies the debates that in this multidisciplinary field have focused on “beliefs” and “interests” and their “mutually supportive” (2005:41-3) relation as drivers of scientific knowledge enterprises. The beliefs Yearley addresses, though, are not those that may be called *religious*. ‘Religious beliefs’, as Evans and Evans (2008) show, have been consistently conceived in scientific/academic contexts as inherently, and ‘naturally’, opposed to scientific reason. In this sense my research findings are neither extensive nor conclusive, yet do suggest that there may be indeed a complex relationship between some religious beliefs and some aspects of ‘scientific logics’. A century ago, Durkheim (1915) noticed that the scientist believes in his/her scientific data just as the believer believes in religious rites and their efficiency –the former, according to Durkheim only “introduces more method” (1915:361). I cannot state that lecturers’ God-related beliefs cause, say, a discursive ‘sublimation of energies’ which are then translated straight into the lecturers’ sociological statements about social power and causality . However, there is evidence in my data set that does indicate that there is a finer, subtler, non-deterministic and complex interaction between *religious models of causality/power* as embedded in *societies’ and individuals’ beliefs in an omnipotent and omnipresent God* and those individuals’ *scientific conceptions of power-over and mono-causality*. Pushing this argument further I also argue that, based on what I have discussed in the paragraph above and previous chapters²⁴⁵, it is possible to read religious ‘values-classifications’ as *religious beliefs* as well, and so include in my account both *beliefs* in heaven/hell, love/passion, god/devil –which may carry in themselves further notions of ‘coerciveness’, ‘discipline’, ‘control’ and ‘oppression’, e.g., Sahlins (1996: 404-7)– and individuals’ *beliefs* in God as a ‘supreme’ omnipotent entity. Having thus specified the relevant religious beliefs in this research, I can confidently state that clear-cut separations between ‘religious *beliefs*’ and ‘scientific *reason*’ as naturally antagonistic ‘systems of truth’ rather underestimate the intricate, almost

²⁴⁵ The reader may remember one of the surveys whose results I drew on in chapter 3. IMPLAN’s report (2004) indicates that the questions “Do you believe in hell?” and “Do you believe in heaven?” were answered affirmatively by 63% and 89% of the respondents that participated in the survey in Aguascalientes.

imperceptible interplays that, in specific contexts within 21st-century societies, may actually take place between both ‘religious and ‘scientific *beliefs*’.

I want now to expand on the theoretical contributions of another Weberian element in my account, i.e., authority and the practice of ‘epistemic-asymmetric’ authority in the academic-sociological fields I researched. Unlike Weber²⁴⁶ (1978), I am not attributing the *origin* of this epistemic-asymmetric authority to the ‘Catholic Church’ that arrived and developed in Mexico since the 16th century –unlike Weber (and Durkheim), and as I have explained previously, I am not interested in the search of ‘chronological origins’. What I do argue is that the Catholic Church’s model of centralised, vertical and asymmetric ‘moral authority’, and particularly Catholicism’s priestly model of authority in Mexico, do represent influential yet neglected *tacit role models* which partly, and symbolically, legitimise the sociology practitioners’ acts of ‘epistemic authority’ in classrooms and universities (Zavala, forthcoming). In Douglas’ terms (1986:45-53), such an authority institution would find part of its ‘cosmological foundation’ in Mexican Catholicism and its authority models. Both help in the construction of that ‘epistemic’ authority’s halo of ‘naturalness’. Furthermore, what I want to emphasise is not this merely abstract and intangible ‘symbolical legitimisation’ of ‘academic authorities’ by transcendental and earthly Catholic-authority models. I also want to insist on the cognitive function of these authority models and therefore stress *their epistemological effects*. It is by means of the sociology lecturers’ enactments of this authority institution/model that certain epistemological features of Catholic discourses are echoed and eventually predispose sociology lecturers, because (i) the model partly mirrors in its own the heavily normative and prescriptive (value-related indeed) discourses of what might be described as its ‘original religious matrix’ (Poggi 2001; Weber 1978) or rather one of its culturally-heavier and more extensive model ‘partners’; (ii) because the enactment of the model adds to the other bridge institutions (Douglas 1986) and cultural-ideological structures (Weber 2003, Merton 1938) and so delivers ‘emergent’ (Sayer 1992, 2000) discursive echoes and offensives that eventually reach and shape sociological discourses; and (iii)

²⁴⁶ Who attributed the *origin* of the charismatic authority to the institutionalisation of the Roman Catholic Church (1978: 1134-1141).

because the enactment of the very institution/model actually materialises power asymmetries in ‘real life’ and so closes the cognitive circuit in terms of power-over thinking, generating a power-related self-fulfilled prophecy (Barnes 1988) which, according to this research and my findings, spreads its dichotomistic and non-relativistic logics across sociology practitioners’ scientific discourses. And this leads me to one of my last final conclusions.

I agree with both Poggi’s (2001) definition of religion as one of the main representatives of ‘ideological power’ and its material embodiment in organised and institutionalised ‘churches’, and with Hearn’s (2012) view of religions as arenas for power interplays and as patterns of beliefs, ideas and practices fundamentally grounded on references to divine or supernatural powers. However, despite my research not being designed to offer a novel definition of religion, I want to offer an alternative sociological reading of societies where religions are not necessarily, or not only, mirrors upon which societies’ structures and patterns of organisation are reflected²⁴⁷, but where these non-linear and complex ‘reflections’ also happen in a different, perhaps opposite, direction. That is, a view of 21st-century ‘secular’ societies where certain dimensions of social reality –‘scientific reason’, the sociological field and sociological knowledge in this case– constitute the mirrors where both organised churches –however despised or neglected– and, more importantly, *religious discourses* –however overlooked or taken for granted– are partly reflected upon. I accept that by claiming a change in the direction of the ‘reflexion’, I am opening the gate to troubling views that directly challenge secularist (and western-centric) views of social and religious modern realities (Asad 1983, 1993). If so, one of my dissertation’s main objectives would be accomplished. I argue that even in so-called ‘secular’ contemporary societies, religions may be alternatively conceived as constituting *plastic* discourses (Asad 1993; Foucault 2003, Fairclough 2003; Elder-Vass 2011; Casanova 2011) which are not only embedded in organised ‘churches’ (Poggi 2001) but are flowing imperceptibly and pervasively across both society’s ideological-cultural dimensions (Weber 2003, Merton 1938; Waggoner 2009; Cipriani 2011) and religious, non-religious, material and non-material institutions (Weber 1978; Douglas 1986; Smith 2000) and thus actively constitute *a diffused* (Cipriani 2001,

²⁴⁷ An anthropological view of religions that is also put forward by Douglas (1986:57)

2003, 2011), *subtle or soft yet particularly efficient ideological power* (Asad 1993; Poggi 2001; Hearn 2012) which, in certain contexts and under certain historical conditions, has the capacity to shape not only people's 'common-sense logics' and political (Poggi 2001) and economic phenomena (Weber 2003) but, additionally, the epistemological bases of scientific discourses (Durkheim 1915; Sahlins 1996; Milbank 2006; Cannell 2005, 2006), such as sociology lecturers' non-relativistic, normative and prescriptive 'scientific logics', and their very sociological conceptions of power and causality!

My last final conclusion is rather a question. If the causal account I have offered in the previous lines explains Catholicism and sociology in Mexico, what about the 'West/s' and 'Western science'? In a recent BBC science documentary (*What happened before the big bang?* 2010) the narrator begins by referring to our notions of "cause-effect" as a "simple yet powerful idea" that allows the human mind and, physicist in particular, to "stray from the present [...] [and] boldly stride into the future and confidently travel back in time". The narrator then presents Michio Kaku, a theoretical physicist who was born, raised and educated in the United States. Kaku states in front of the camera how "preposterous" the idea of a universe created out of nothing is –the big bang theory does not tell the whole story, he claims. Kaku goes on and then introduces his own account based on the distinction between 'two types of nothingness'²⁴⁸. More physicists, who have worked on alternative pre-big bang theories, are then presented and interviewed²⁴⁹. By the end of the documentary, the narrator goes back to Kaku, who states the following

My parents were Buddhists. In Buddhism there is no beginning, there is no end, there is just nirvana. But as a child I also went to Sunday school where we learned that there was an instant where God said "Let there be light". So I have had these two mutually contradicting paradigms in my head. Well, now we can meld these two paradigms together into a pleasing whole. Yes there was a genesis, yes there was a big bang, and it happens all the time.

²⁴⁸ An "absolute nothing", which the scientists defines as "no equations, no space, no time, [an] absence of anything that the human mind can conceive of", and "the vacuum", which is, Kaku says "nothing but the absence of matter".

²⁴⁹ Andrei Linde, Param Singh, Lee Smolin, Neil Turok, Laura Mersini-Houghton.

However subtle, soft or imperceptible this epistemological influence might have developed, may I ask whether Kaku's Buddhist family practices and Christian lessons at Sunday school as well as the Christian and Buddhist religious "paradigms" –or 'contagious causality models' – of the creation of the universe he reportedly learnt within the United States' socio-religious contexts, shaped eventually his 'western' pre-big bang theory, its underlying causal frame and its two different types of 'nothingness'? I admit how absurd, and politically-incorrect, this question may appear to scientists and secularist minds. I do think, however, that this and similar questions are entirely pertinent and may be perfectly applied to other Western scientists and social scientists –and so address, for instance, the latter's genealogical, and at times compulsive, searches of 'chronological origins'. Such research questions are, I do *believe*, urgently waiting for thorough sociological answers.

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Appendixes

Appendix 2.1



Aguascalientes State

Mexico City

Appendix 3.1

Explicit reference to the Franciscan order's cultural legacy in AgC' downtown



Appendix 3.2

Mexico City's Northern Bus Station. Virgin of Guadalupe. September 2010



Bookshop in Aguascalientes. Textbooks and religious books. March 2012



Appendix 7.1

Literal analysis of sociological texts.

This appendix is part of chapter 7. It comprises the main results from the *content-analysis* of texts by both AgC and MxC sociology lecturers. In order to portray fairly both the lecturers' individual work and the more general sociological themes and topics, I will first refer to individual texts and then to ideas/statements by groups of authors. First though, I must acknowledge that the respondents' anonymity can be compromised in this appendix –as in chapter 7 in general. Whereas I cannot proceed properly without making reference to the respondents and their sociological texts, I will offer only partial (minimal) bibliographical references of the works cited here in order to decrease the possibilities of a full identity disclosure. These references can be found at the end of the appendix.

AgC texts

Despite the AgC sociology department having only two main “research areas” in official terms²⁵⁰, most of the themes found in the sampled texts were unsurprisingly diverse from both individual and collective points of view. Rita's texts, for instance, are focused on varied aspects of culture such as folk music (2003) and corruption (2010). Laura's texts focus on religion in general (2010) and Catholicism in particular (2005, 2006, 2007). Julia's texts focus on topics such as corruption in primary school children (2010a) and minority Christian religious groups (2010b). Brigitte's latest texts cover topics such as local urban development (2007) and urban immigrants' experiences (2009b). Edward's texts are varied too, it ranges from organizational culture (2002), and the religious field in Mexico (2001, 2009a, 2009b), to social action theories (2009c, 2010). Michael's texts about labour studies cover topics such as female labour in multilevel companies (2005, 2006), and graduates labour market (2010). There are, obviously, commonalities across the lecturers' individual publications. For example, I found a relatively constant type of statements along Rita's texts, regardless their location and the texts' main topics. These statements may be described as ‘narrative-style’ statements, constituted by a chronological arrangement of names of places, persons

²⁵⁰ The administrative base of research activities in Mexico's higher education institutions follows the Ministry of Education's regulations on the matter. So, in theory, (discipline-specific) university departments, centres or schools are composed by (thematic-specific) “academic bodies” and a set of “research lines” by academic body.

and dates, for example, Rita's review of the history of *bolero*²⁵¹ songs in Latin America, where she goes through the "golden", "pink" and "black" 'ages of *boleros*' and mentions popular *bolero* singers, bands and some of the countries, cities and years they develop or recorded some of their most famous songs (2003); or Rita's description of the first radio station in Aguascalientes (2007a), where she includes names of key businessmen, important dates, famous singers and bands as well as personal anecdotes on the radio industry by local respondents. A relatively frequent idea in Laura's texts is 'authority', as in the structure of authority or 'hierarchical authority' some Catholic groups have (2005) or as in the authority and legitimacy members of those groups hold (2006) or the bishopric's authority to grant permission to female religious orders to be established (2009) or how some results from a survey on beliefs in Aguascalientes²⁵² are related to figures of 'parental male authority' (2010). Models and taxonomies were also frequent in Laura's works, either as conclusive statements, i.e. a variety of Greimas' actantial model²⁵³ to explain and conclude about the work and structure of Catholic Groups (2005, 2006); or as descriptors, e.g. types of female members within the Catholic Church, types of systematic activities in female religious orders (2007), or models of female religious orders (2009). A set of relatively constant ideas in Julia's texts was (i) 'the homogeneous/homogeneity', e.g. the past homogeneous population in Aguascalientes (2009), the evolving homogeneity of the Catholic Church (2010b); and (ii) 'the hegemonic/hegemony', e.g. the 'past hegemony' of the Catholic Church, or the continuous perception of the Catholic church as hegemonic (2009) or 'the hegemonic culture of those who have power' (2010c). A complex notion of 'distance/distancing' appears more or less constant in Brigitte's texts. In one of her co-authored text on urban/community development, Brigitte et al. write about the "differentiation and *distancing* among households inhabited by social groups that do not meet each other and do not cohabit" and thus fragment the city and make it inhabitable (2007:214). In the introduction she wrote to a book she co-edited with Julia, Brigitte states that a useful concept discussed in the volume is the notion of "distance" between social agents and social institutions (2009a:11) and the need of the concept of distance Parsons, Touraine and Manheim theorised about. In her chapter published in the same book, Brigitte refers to individuals' "capacity of *distancing* themselves and elaborating alternative life styles"; right after this she states the interviews they got data from helped the respondents to "do an exercise of *distancing* and assessing of their migration experience". In a third consecutive statement, Brigitte said they found

²⁵¹ A type of slow-tempo music by single performers or groups.

²⁵² Here she refers to the same survey (IMO 2009) I quoted in chapter 3. Laura, in fact, kindly gave me access to the results of the survey.

²⁵³ Laura does not cite or quote Greimas, but both another scholar who Laura presents as the author of the model, and Edward, her colleague, who is presented by Laura as the author of an adaptation of "Gimenez Montiel's model".

“different levels of distancing in respondents” (2009b:122). Another concept that seemed to entertain Brigitte’s thoughts especially in her publications before 2000 is the concept of ‘democracy’²⁵⁴. A glimpse of this can be found in Brigitte (2009a) where she presents this co-edited volume as a collective effort “to strengthen a true democracy” (2009a:15). “Equity” seems or seemed to be a relatively constant idea in Brigitte too. She wrote about “equity relations” between men and women in an article published in 2006, where she concludes that it is not about men and women being equals but about holding equity between them (2006b: 59). Earlier in a 1999 commentary Brigitte stated “justice and equity” would provide “the dignity” for Mexico to enter “the 21st century’s global village” (1999:26). ‘Beliefs’ is a notion Edward constantly refers to, this concept is an understandable base for his paper on the relationship between beliefs and actions (2010)²⁵⁵; or his book chapter about Pentecostal and Catholic beliefs and practices and their relationships to poverty (2009c). However, Edward also refers to this concept in other texts such as his article on organisational culture, where he cites three authors that refer to ‘beliefs’ as part of culture in societies or culture in organisations (2002: 16-17, 23). There Edward reflects further about the relationships between shared meanings, beliefs, social values and culture (2002: 26, 28). In his seminar paper on corruption and culture (2009d), Edward associates the concept of culture to the concept of social action “through the concept of beliefs”. After this he states that culture as meanings is both meaning-producer and action-determining “when the meaning becomes a belief” (2009d: 414). At the end of this text, Edward states corruption “is part of our beliefs” (2009d:417).

From a collective point of view I found as well a set of relatively frequent ideas addressed almost invariably by two or more sociologists. For example ideas on ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ –or ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ individuals, circumstances, institutions- that can be found in the texts by Rita, Laura and Michael. In Rita’s texts there are frequent instances of ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’ as concepts used to explain or describe either bolero songs or their social context (Rita 2003), the local radio industry (Rita 2007a), or the type of gender roles bolero songs reinforce in Rita’s view (2007b). I found in Laura’s texts frequent mentions on “modernity” as well, e.g. the Catholic Church getting modern or modernity driving competition among religions (Laura 2005) or Laura’s quotes from scholar Blancarte who touches upon religion in Mexico developing in a modern context, and a quote from Parker who characterises societies as modern or rather ‘hemimodern’(Laura 2006). Apart from his ‘labour studies’ research interests, Michael seems to address systematically notions

²⁵⁴ Texts with this concept are not part of these analyses: Brigitte’s PhD dissertation and a series of papers related to it and theoretical articles she published afterwards in the 1990s.

²⁵⁵ Where he states that knowledge may become a belief/beliefs and that it is the latter and not just the former what drives social actions.

of 'tradition' in his works. For example, in the book he published from his doctoral dissertation, Michael states the "traditional modality of human work has changed rapidly" (2006:11), later on he states "there is a discourse aimed at protecting and preserving the family as a traditional structure" (2006:81). In the same book there are references to 'modernity' too, e.g. unemployment in the "modern world" (2006: 22) or "risk" in societies being "a modern characteristic" (2006:28). In his book published in 2008, Michael refers to the same concept in terms of multilevel companies "bringing modernity" to small towns in late 19th century (2008:99). This statement was actually found in both the book chapter Michel published in 2005 and his 2006 publication²⁵⁶.

Another often-mentioned concept by a group of lecturers is 'diversity'. Laura addressed more or less constantly this concept, e.g., diversity in folk religious representations, diversity of the Mexican Catholicism, diversity of non-Catholic minorities in Mexico (2005); or a diversified religious market (2006); or the 'diverse society' where female religious congregations have contributed to form a social identity (2009a; 2009b). Julia mentions diversity often too, e.g., the 'diverse' religious practices of one of Julia's research subjects – a woman that converted from Catholicism to 'Marian Trinitarian Spiritualism' in Aguascalientes; or 'the mix of diverse religious traditions' by today's social actors; or the whole paragraph where she discusses the concept of religious diversity as such, all the above found in her book chapter (2009). Julia also refers to the 'incipient religious diversity' in Mexico (2010b). In Julia's texts, sometimes the concept of diversity comes with parallel concepts:

This [religious] *diversity* shows clearly that there is not a single religion determining all the actions of subjects, but that everyday life is driven by *different* religious elements. Such *plurality*, supports the identification with other religions" (Julia 2009:213 –emphasis added)

Another relatively frequent concept or family of concepts, in some of AgC lecturers is 'power'. Notions of power and domination were understandably frequent in Michael's work on female empowerment (2008), where one may count 22 instances of the word 'domination' and a similar number for the word 'power', for example Michael's statement on "the family as survival strategy or the factor that structures the worst forms of domination" (2008:18). These ideas and the idea of empowerment as such were also frequent in those texts where power or empowerment were not main topics. In his early article (2005) on multilevel selling, Michael mentions the idea of "people becoming able to face power"

²⁵⁶ With minor changes, the whole paragraph or passage where the statement is located –related to the history of 'multilevel business' in United States– is reproduced in Michael 2005, 2006, and 2008.

(2005: 193). In his unpublished paper on female work Michael addresses “asymmetries of power” in men-women relationships (2009/2010:4); asymmetries of power in the household (2009/2010:5); women’s “soft way of taking over power” (2009/2010:21); and some women “not breaking away violently with traditional schemes of domination” (2009/2010:22). In his book, published from his doctoral dissertation, Michael states there are “social structures that determine, culturally and based on a domination order, the allocation of spaces for men and women” (2006:53). There too Michael wonders about the reasons why women earn less income than men and then he states “the answers makes us to look at the power, domination and meaning relationships that exist in the social space” (2006:106). Edward, whose research interests are different to Michael’s, writes frequently about ‘power’ as well, either with his own words or by citing other authors. For instance, in the last paragraphs of his article on ‘organisational culture’, Edward highlights “the relationship between culture and power, particularly the resistance from the working class” (2002:21). In the same text Edward addresses another author’s “Marxist concept of ideology which emphasises the relationship between ideology and power” (2002:24). After this Edward cites yet another author’s ideas on “changes in organizations [...] interests, conflicts and power” (2002:29). In his 2001 book chapter, Edward refers to Bourdieu and “his concept of symbolic power” (2001:11). In his analysis of Catholic and protestant practices, Edward writes about “the [Christian] saints’ power and knowledge” as well as Jesus’ “power to heal” that are taken for granted by believers (2009a: 158). References to power are numerous in Edwards’ book on social action. There Edward reviews Geertz’s “analysis on charisma and symbolic power” (2009c:38). He also tells the story of French revolution’s supporters and how they sought “power alliances” with Napoleon and how they were betrayed by “the political power” afterwards²⁵⁷. (2009c:54). Edward states too that there has to be a distinction between “power of the State” and “State’s apparatus” in the Marxist theory of the State (60). In another section in the same text Edward writes about the ‘cultural studies’ field and cites an author that states cultural studies “focus on everything that is meaningful, usually related to power relationships” (81); then Edward wonders whether any study of power relationships could be considered ‘cultural studies’ (84). In subsequent lines, Edward refers to Bourdieu’s book ‘Reproduction’ and describes it as the text where Bourdieu “defines the concept of symbolic violence as the power to impose meanings in a legitimate way, disguising the power relationships at the base” (102). Finally in his seminar paper on ‘beliefs’ Edward cites Berger and Luckmann and their reported ideas on how “the power in society includes the power to determine crucial processes of socialisation, and therefore, the power to *produce* reality” (2010:10 – emphasis in original).

²⁵⁷ This story is included in a section where Edward addresses “the sociology of knowledge and the theory of ideology developed by Marxism” (2009c:54).

MxC texts

In terms of themes, texts by MxC lecturers were diverse as well in both individual and collective sense. For example Norma's texts range from a review of the founders of Critical Theory (1999), to an analysis of Durkheim's concept of culture (2002), a review of "reductionist projects" on causality and explanation (2005), more reviews of sociologies of culture (2009) as well as an analysis of technological-scientific public controversies (2010). Angela's texts focus on theory and different authors such as Durkheim (1989), Weber (2001) and Schutz (2002) and Suzanne's texts focus mostly on education practices in Mexico (1993, 1998, 2003a, 200g). Rachel's texts address sociology of gender (2000, 2010) and childhood (2007). Peter's publications include the themes of racism, indigenous groups, (1997) social identity (2003) and social research methodology (2007, 2008, 2009). Joseph's sampled texts contain topics such as sociology in Mexico, and education (2003, 2006a). Gregory's texts, mostly based on an openly-Marxist stance, are as different as 'illness in capitalist societies' (1999c), theory and research (1999b) and the life stories of a death-sentenced man (2005).

Amid these diverse set of individual research interests, topics and themes, I found *discursive similarities* across the texts of each sociologist, apart of the texts' themes. For example, most of Norma's texts were aimed, almost exclusively at presenting or summarising the work of classic or contemporary sociologists. In her book chapter on 'critical theory', Norma goes briefly over Adorno's mass culture (1999:242), Korsch's idea of society as a totality (243) and Adorno and Horkheimer's "universalisation of instrumental rationality"²⁵⁸ (247). In her article on Durkheim Norma mixes summaries of Durkheim's theorisations on culture with a series of critique of those theorisations, e.g. criticism of Durkheim's dualistic understanding of everyday practices and culture (2002:100). In her 2005 article Norma goes over the work of Davidson, Fodor, Weber, Durkheim, Maturana and Luhmann. In her book published in 2009, Norma presents the work of Weber, Durkheim, Parsons, Bellah, Whutnow, Alexander, Archer and Habermas. In the journal where Norma published an article on scientific controversies (2010), she published another text about a colleague; the text is a presentation of the colleague's work²⁵⁹. In terms of ideas *per se*, the most frequent term I found in Rachel's texts was 'law/s'. For example, in her master dissertation on family violence²⁶⁰,

²⁵⁸ Actually one can find references to ideas of 'universes/universalisation' not just in this text, but also in Norma's article on Durkheim's concept of culture, where she mentions Bruner and Durkheim's hypothesis on "narratives" as a "universal cognitive structure". A similar notion was found in Norma's article on beliefs, minds and systems (2005), there Norma draws from the concept of "autopoietic systems" and refers to them as "totalities" (2005: 86). The frequency of these ideas was not outstanding though.

²⁵⁹ A researcher based at another department within MxC's university; one of Norma's doctoral tutors.

²⁶⁰ Rachel's master dissertation – submitted when Rachel was in her late 40s-early 50s – is not part of a sociology degree but a 'pedagogy' programme (Chapter 2, table 2). Therefore the ideas in that text cannot be taken as originated in, and representing, a strictly sociological discipline. What I claim

Rachel states from the outset that “there are laws that do not take into account the protection of all members of the family” (2000:2). In the next page Rachel states family violence is explained by ‘the power’ men have imposed over women and children by drawing support “from ecclesiastical and common law” (2000:3). In the second chapter Rachel goes over the definitions of violence and family violence in Mexico’s ‘penal codes’. In her article published in 2007 Rachel addresses the topic of ‘migrant children’s ‘rights’; in this article’s abstract Rachel states there is a lack of “constitutional guarantees” in Mexico in general. In this text, Rachel mixes her emphasis on ‘laws’ with particularly critical statements; she states for example that November 20th 2004 marked the “15th anniversary of the children’s rights convention” and so she, sarcastically, suggests to “celebrate” that anniversary by tagging all the children with “their names and [the words] violence, rape, hunger, injustice, robbery, kidnap, mutilation, exploitation, incest, work, pornography, omission, silence, impunity [...]” (2007:6). Interestingly, when I attended an undergraduate lecture/workshop on sociology of gender that was given by Rachel, there I listened to her going through the Mexican constitution’s individual rights and encouraging students to discuss the importance of them. I met Rachel after the lecture and asked her about her emphasis on the ‘legal framework’ or ‘rights’ in her course, and she replied: “because it [law/rights] is ignored and it is fundamental, everything has a legal reference”. Then she told me how many of the students’ dissertations she has examined lack “legal frameworks”.

There is one word Suzanne wrote four times in the abstract of her 1993 article: ‘problems’, e.g. “problems between teaching and research”, “educational problems”. In this article Suzanne uses the term further as in: “diverse problems from the inefficiency of the national educational system”, or “problems of higher education” (1993:2); the problems of the training of lecturers (1999: 3); “problems-needs” on research activities, and research policies’ prioritisation “of what is taken as national problems” (1999:6). Moreover there is a passage where Suzanne defines research activities as “bringing up problems, looking at reality with different eyes, reflecting about it and trying to transform it” (14). Understandably so, Suzanne concludes in that article about the need to discuss “the problems academics face in their everyday activities” and the relations between the academic’s research and “the most urgent problems of the nation” (1993:17). Further references to ‘problems’ were found in Suzanne’s book on education: “poverty as the most critical problem in the world” (2006:19); “the central problems which is the setting of criteria to fund higher education” (89); or the “financial problems which affect Latin America” (144). References to a “neoliberal economic model” or a “neoliberal economic policy” are

though is that the ideas in that dissertation constitute reliable evidence of Rachel’s current sociological thinking, explicit or assumed.

relatively frequent in Suzanne's texts as well. In her book (2006) about education practices in Mexico she addresses the concept in negative or critical terms (2006: 19, 27, 45, 28, 86, 95). This style may be found too in the book she co-authored with Gregory (1998). There she refers to the educational field "seen from the neoliberal perspective of groups that have economic and political power" (1998:13); or the "backwardness produced by the establishment of the neoliberal economic model in the country" (1998:27). In the chapter authored by Gregory in the same book, this type of statements, openly Marxist, appear even more radical: "we can organise ourselves to fight against the neoliberalism that is openly represented in the educational sector" (1998:96); or "despite there being enemies of Marxism and attacks by neoliberalism, Marx's famous eleventh thesis is still in force" (1998:113). If Suzanne's critiques of neoliberal economic policies and citations from Gramsci and Freire are frequent, Gregory's critiques to neoliberalism and citations from Marx and Gramsci are constant in his texts as well. Understandably so, the vocabulary Gregory uses in his books is openly Marxist, e.g. how "the scientific conception of the universe triumphed because of the use of dialectic materialism in the understanding of nature and society" (2006:36); how to operationalise hypotheses "from a historical and dialectic materialism perspective" which "even Marx carried out in *The Capital*" (2006:177); the necessary presence of "the hegemonic groups' ideology" in the social research process (1999b:62); "capitalism as the dominant production mode" that "imposes life and work material conditions" (2002:46); or health and illness in society being "caused by the ways society organises itself to produce and reproduce, that is, the dominant mode of production: capitalism²⁶¹" (1999c: 9). Similar critical statements, without explicit Marxist vocabulary, were located systematically in Gregory's colleague Peter as well. In his article on racism and the Zapatista movement, Peter states

Genocide, racial segregation and apartheid are forms of social relations that still prevail in the world. However, the most dramatic expression of human cruelty is with no doubt represented by German Nazism (1997:141).

In one of his conference paper, Peter explicitly argues:

For hundreds of years, Indians [Mexico's indigenous population] have never been heard, they are always stripped of their land, they are exploited, discriminated. [...] I am convinced that Mexican society, specially in urban areas, is terrible racist and discriminatory (2003: 257)

Peter stated later in the same text:

²⁶¹ Literal translation

Dominant groups nowadays are not precisely the richest in terms of pro-environment values, they generated economic systems based on the exploitation of nature, not on respect of nature. (2003:275)

Whereas there was no identifiable tread of constant concepts in Joseph's texts – other than frequent references to “education” and “methodology”, which constitute Joseph's research interests – critical statements in his texts were readily identified too after my first literal readings. For example:

Nation, nation-state and nationalism are concepts that re-emerged in contemporary social sciences and political discourse as theoretical proposals [...] to counter the so called neoliberalism and its monster: globalisation. (2005: 211)

In his journal presentation Joseph states that universities and educational institutions in Mexico

strive to get a ‘good ranking’ instead of fulfilling their historical social functions [...]. It is all about efficiency, productivity, vision, mission and other marketing concepts aimed at increasing the confidence for international investors, thus ignoring the formative, human, civic and national aspects of education (2006)

I take the statements above and others with the same explicit purpose, as enough evidence to describe texts by MxC lecturers as particularly *critical* from a collective point of view. The quotes above from the texts by Rachel, Suzanne, Gregory, Peter and Joseph are examples of the particular targets and the different levels and types of criticism. Whereas neoliberalism and its variants seem to be a common target among Suzanne, Gregory and Joseph, it was rather male domination and discriminatory-racist attitudes some of the targets in Rachel's and Peter's texts respectively.

Interestingly, the two Mexico-City authors whose sampled publications could not be described as particularly critical, seem to share, on the other hand, a different common feature. Angela's texts resemble Norma's (above) in the sense of focusing, almost exclusively, on presentations or summaries of classic or contemporary mainstream sociologists. In 1989 Angela wrote an article on the concept of causality in Durkheim. The article consists basically of a summary of the concept of causality in Durkheim's ‘Rules of the sociological method’ and ‘The suicide’. In her article on positivism and hermeneutics (2001), Angela's presents authors such as Durkheim, Weber, Hempel, Merton and Schutz, and summarises their debates on social sciences as dependent or independent from natural sciences (2001: 200-204) and whether scientific knowledge is based on reliable observations of phenomena or interpretations of them (2001:2003-2008). In her book chapter (2002),

Angela presents Schutz' work on social action. First Angela goes over Marx and Weber's ideas on the conscious and rational aspects of social action (2002: 176-177), and then sums up the disagreements between Weber and Schutz on the subjective nature of social action and social actors' motives (2002:180-183). In our interview, Angela referred explicitly to her "*doing studies* of sociological theory" and her "*studying* European and American sociological theory" (italics added).

In short, whereas I found constant references to notions and concepts about modernity, tradition, diversity and power in the texts by AgC lecturers, I could not find visible series of constant concepts in texts by MxC lecturers –other than explicit and implicit Marxism-related vocabulary in Gregory and Suzanne. However, I did find in MxC texts commonalities in terms of critical statements and review-types of content.

Minimal bibliographical references

AgC's university	Texts							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Brigitte	1999	2006a	2006b	2007	2009a	2009b	2010	
2. Edward	2001	2002	2007	2009a	2009b	2009c	2009d	2010
3. Julia	2009	2010a	2010b	2010c				
4. Laura	2005	2006	2007	2009a	2009b	2010		
5. Michael	2005	2006	2008	2009	2010			
6. Rita	2003	2007a	2007b	2010				
MxC's university								
1. Angela	1989	2001	2002	2005				
2. Gregory	1999a	1999b	1999c	2001	2002	2005	2006	
3. Joseph	2003	2005	2006a	2006b				
4. Norma	1999	2002	2005	2009	2010a	2010b		
5. Peter	1997	2002	2003	2007	2008	2009		
6. Rachel	2000	2007	2010					
7. Suzanne	1993	1998	2003a	2003b	2006			