

Portuguese Catholic social activists and their translation strategies (early 1900's)

António Almodovar

Faculdade de Economia da Universidade do Porto and Cef.up
Porto, Portugal
amal@fep.up.pt

Abstract

Translations can tell us a lot about the circulation of ideas; but they also offer valuable insights on the working of networks (political, cultural, and so on), on the level of *local* literacy, and also on the instrumental role of books as doctrinal supports for action.

The translations of books and booklets on social and political economy that were sponsored by Portuguese catholic activists in the early 1900's, were seemingly related to a set of phenomena: the impact of *Rerum Novarum*; the growth of Christian democracy and social Catholicism in Portugal; and the growing political importance of the so-called social question. The Portuguese catholic elite's interest in these issues soon revealed the absence of an adequate literature regarding economic and social doctrines, namely one that could be used for the education of the relatively illiterate portions of clergy and lay activists. Besides offering some insights regarding the different strategies that were followed by catholic publishers in order to supply that need, this paper also highlights the main doctrinal views that were conveyed through these translations.

1. Introduction

There is an extensive literature on the complex – and sometimes difficult – relations between Catholicism and Liberalism. Among other aspects, this literature explores the tensions that arose out of the secularization process, the gradual laicization of the society, and the industrial revolution.

One less studied aspect of this overall process regards the relations between political economy and the Christian ethos – which were also less than peaceful. As Anthony Waterman (1991) explained, this quarrel was intense but relatively brief (1798-1833) in England.

A second wave of this particular debate surfaced in France in the 1830's, now having a more distinct catholic tone, and persisting for more than a century¹. From the early works of Villeneuve-Bargemont and Charles de Coux up to the more openly engaged studies by Charles Périn and Charles Antoine, catholic thinkers made a serious effort to build an alternative view to the conventional – i.e. liberal, individualistic – approach to economic subjects.

The initial burst of catholic essays on social and political economy in France was soon to be met by Italian (Luigi Taparelli d'Azeglio, Matteo Liberatore) and German (Biederlack, Pesch) authors. Gradually, an international network of catholic political economists was

¹ This persistence was supported by means of a growing intellectual investment performed both by laymen and some specialized members of the Church's hierarchy (see Almodovar and Teixeira

established, namely by means of systematic cross-references in their works. Besides, this network also benefited from the spread of a number of characteristic institutional arrangements² – catholic newspapers, catholic trade unions, several types of catholic associations, and catholic political parties (Christian democracy).

The national dynamics and (in)successes of both this conceptual endeavour (originally labeled as *Christian political economy* and later on as *social economics*) and the ‘accompanying’ institutional arrangements was diverse.

In Portugal, the need for an openly catholic approach to social and economic subjects was seemingly weaker than in the above-mentioned countries³ (see Neto: 1998, p.440-42). Not that it was completely absent: right from the establishment of political economy classes at the University of Coimbra, catholic writers were consistently mentioned in the bibliographic references – and they were praised by the teacher as fine examples of a suitable (humane) approach to economic and social issues, one that could help to lessen the harsh and soulless views of the English classical political economists.

But under the growing impact of socialist thought (1870), the catholic criticisms of the liberal social and economic arrangements were gradually dismissed to the backstage as mere (and illusory) palliatives. To the average student attending the University of Coimbra in the late 1880’s, the doctrinal alternatives regarding such issues as capital/labour relations seemed to be voiced solely by liberal and socialist thinkers⁴.

The first social encyclical – by criticizing both socialism and liberalism and calling for a catholic approach – was instrumental in highlighting the existence of an alternative to both liberal and socialist social views (Sardica: 2004). According to the orientations provided by Leo XIII, Portuguese catholic activists started to reorient their organizations in order to address the social and economic issues of their time (the so-called social question). But they were also led – albeit indirectly⁵ – to update their command of the social sciences.

² There is an extensive literature on each of these aspects of the catholic movement (both in Europe and outside). Regarding Europe, see for instance Paul Misner’s *Social Catholicism in Europe* (1991).

³ Portuguese catholic militants were active across the second half of the 19th century. Even so, economic and social indoctrination was not paramount. Braga da Cruz showed that Christian democracy surfaced in the 1840’s (Braga da Cruz: 1980, p. 51), grew with the 1870’s emergence of catholic associations – also with their congresses and press – and eventually led to the establishment of a catholic social movement in the last years of the 19th century (Braga da Cruz: 1980, p. 122). But for most of the 19th century the focus of catholic thought and action was the religious question – that is, the analysis of the relations between the Church and the State.

⁴ One of those students – Afonso Costa, who later served as Prime minister – wrote a dissertation accusing the pope of an undue attempt to interfere with matters that solely belonged to social science (Costa: 1895).

⁵ As Pius XI mentions in *Quadragesimo Anno*: “19. It is not surprising, therefore, that many scholars, both priests and laymen, led especially by the desire that the unchanged and unchangeable teaching of the Church should meet new demands and needs more effectively, have zealously undertaken to develop, with the Church as their guide and teacher, a social and economic science in accord with the conditions of our time. 20. And so, with Leo’s Encyclical pointing the way and furnishing the light, a true Catholic social science has arisen, which is daily fostered and enriched by the tireless efforts of those chosen men whom We have termed auxiliaries of the Church. They do not, indeed, allow their science to lie hidden behind learned walls. As the useful and well attended courses instituted in Catholic universities, colleges, and seminaries, the social congresses and ‘weeks’ that are held at frequent intervals with most successful results, the study groups that are promoted, and

Since the university of Coimbra was by them more receptive to liberal and socialist influences (not to mention the influx of positivism), Catholics had no choice but to find other venues for the doctrinal enlightenment on the social sciences of their activists.

The catholic elite could of course read the original works (either in French or other languages); but there were many that could only read in Portuguese.

Translations were therefore necessary. Some of those translations were needed in order to give a simple summary of the basic doctrinal issues to the masses; but there was also a need for a few more scholarly works, which were to be used for the education of the leaders of the catholic movements – either laymen or members of the clergy.

The following sections offer three examples of this translation activity.

2. The choice of a political economy handbook for the use of priests: the translation of Charles Antoine *Cours d'économie sociale* (1904)

Choosing books to translate for the use of the catholic leaders was a fairly complex exercise. There was an extensive and diversified array of foreign books, ranging from the treatises that were utilized at the catholic universities up to numerous essays and pamphlets. And the approach followed in those books and booklets was also diversified, namely because Catholic authors were still divided regarding not only political issues (the *intransigents*, the Christian democrats, etc.) but also on some basic tenets of the catholic social science.

These divisions led to the surfacing of two major schools of thought – Angers and Liège⁶.

The main differences between them regarding the economic and social orientation to be followed can be briefly highlighted: the supporters of Angers believed that some excesses of the liberal economic system should be corrected essentially by means of private initiatives, imbued by charity and a sense of personal responsibility. In their interpretation, the poor should be resigned and adopt good mores, while the rich should be caritative and adopt a paternalistic stance towards the feeble and destitute. As for the supporters of Liège, they believed that the kind of reform that the liberal system needed couldn't be achieved unless the State would also engage in the overall effort to achieve social justice and social concertation.

Predictably, the Liège acceptance of a meaningful role for the State was at the origin of an accusation of socialism by the Angers supporters – even if the former cared to make a proviso clearly stating that the action by the State should always comply with the ethical directives provided by the Church. Even if only temporarily, Leo XIII *Rerum Novarum* managed to appease this divide.

In Portugal, the debate between these two schools was less noticeable. Evidence about one of the most active catholic groups in the 1870's (Policarpo: 1977) shows that up to 1881 they seem to go along the general views of the Angers school, namely by emphasizing paternalism and preaching the duty of charity to the employers, while preaching

finally the timely and sound publications that are disseminated everywhere and in every possible way, clearly show, these men bring their science out into the full light and stress of life.”

⁶ These schools were also known as Freedom and Authority schools, their supporters being labeled as conservative and reformists. The major authors of Angers were Charles Périn and Frédéric Le Play, father Félix and Hervé-Bazin; the authors belonging to Liège were Charles Antoine, Landelin Winterer, Viktor Cathrein, Paul Naudet, Charles Calippe and Joseph Biederlack.

resignation, economy and good mores to the workers. But this approach seemed to change after the *Rerum Novarum*, references to the concept of social justice becoming more frequent. By the late 1890's, this group acknowledged a role for the State in establishing a legal framework for the protection of the workers.

Even so, one may consider that the priest Miguel Ferreira de Almeida, owner and editor of the *Revista Católica de Viseu*, made a tactful choice when he picked for translation the lengthy *Cours d'économie sociale* by Charles Antoine⁷.

As stated in the preface by the priest António de Santa Maria, this translation was intended to "fill a long time felt shortage, also meeting a first class need" (1904: p.5). The *shortage* was of "a good scholar, able to guide us in the path to follow, one that bases his teachings in the Christian morals and uses everything that is usable in the social and scientific fields" (1904: p. 5-6). The *first class need* was an educational upgrade of the Portuguese clergy:

"If the priest doesn't care to know the social organism and to inoculate it with the vivifying sap of catholic morals what will happen? Society, once by itself and without a principled guide, is exposed to thousands of errors, either because no one cares to guide it, or because the natural guides, who are the priests, do not care to know the evils and apply the necessary remedies (...) However, if the priest doesn't acquire the necessary knowledge to guide the consciences, his authority is not recognized, and his apostolate will be, at least in part, sterilized by the presupposition that the priest only knows how to read in Latin, to make a more or less flowerily sermon, and to listen the confessions of the devout persons of the female gender. In order to prevent such inconvenience, the priest must study social economics, learn by heart its principles, deducting by a rational nexus the conclusions that he should apply to the exercise of his sacerdotal munus. Lacking this knowledge, the priest will be an unarmed soldier, and we all know that an unarmed soldier is nothing but a target for the enemy". (8-9?)

The *Cours* was therefore perceived by those who decided to translate it as a powerful weapon, one that, if properly used, could help to turn the ongoing course of events:

"This science offers a priceless weapon to the catholic priest. It is time to put an end to the idea that the priest is ignorant of Political economy; and that, as a consequence, he is not competent to talk about social evils. (9?)

The ultimate audience of this translation being the Portuguese priests, it was only natural that the publishers would wish it to "incite the Portuguese and Brazilian bishops to open a new course in their seminaries to address the momentous issues that are examined in this book! They would even not lack a textbook in our beautiful language" (15?).

One could hardly be more explicit regarding the underlying reasons for a translation. Within contemporary society, the church could no longer ignore social issues; but in order to be heard, in order to be respected and have a effective influence in the social field, the education of the priests had to be updated. Otherwise, they would only be easy targets for both the liberals and the socialists.

Accordingly, the priests had to learn political economy. Why couldn't this necessity be met by means of the existing treatises and classes?

⁷ Before entering the Company of Jesus, Charles Antoine took a degree on engineering at the École des Mines of Paris. He taught moral and dogmatic theology at St. Hélier, at the Catholic Institute of Angers (1897-1901), and at Canterbury (1901-1907). Before the *Cours d'économie sociale* (1st edition in 1896), he had already written the *Éléments de science sociale* (1892). He collaborated with several journals (namely with *L'Association catholique*) and with the *Semaines sociales* de France. His *Cours d'économie sociale* was reedited until 1921.

The needed doctrinal upgrade wasn't that simple. The education on social and economic subjects that the priests needed couldn't be provided by the ethically misguided political economy that was offered either by the liberals or by the socialists. What Catholics needed was an ethically correct political economy. And that was precisely what Charles Antoine was supposed to offer in his *Cours*.

The catholic view on social and economic issues was therefore an attempt to bridge the gap between the Christian ethics with the teachings of political economy – or, to be more precise, an attempt to identify what was ethically acceptable within the array of human actions that political economy described.

This view was only feasible if the science of political economy was pervaded by ethical choices. This was one of the first issues that Antoine cared to explain:

“Does political economy deserve the title and dignity of science? Surely, because it offers a series of general conclusions rigorously deduced from ascertained principles, it explains the general laws of a specific object. As M. Charles Périn remarks, in the economic order where at the beginning one could not see but variety, divergence and confusion, one now sees the universal and persistent character of a number of facts that evidently correspond to general laws. Of these persistent facts, some belong to the constitution of man, others to the nature of the outer world. (...) all these facts and many other clearly indicate that the economic order is founded upon fixed bases and obeys to general laws. (1904: I, 34-35).

But, even if political economy was a science, one should never forget that it was a moral – not a physical – one:

“By being an human science, that is, moral, political economy is not the science of wealth in itself, it isn't the science of production of wealth by all available means, by theft, by fraud, by plunder, but only the science of wealth in regard to men. Of these considerations results an important spontaneous conclusion: every law or economic principle at odds with the moral law doesn't belong to the true economic science and must be energetically repudiated – as the science of stealing, counterfeiting, or practicing usury would be.” (1904: I, 39)

These statements allow us to understand how Charles Antoine viewed economic laws:

“In general terms we identify three types of laws: compulsory moral laws, regulatory or historical moral laws, and physical laws. Since the object of political economy is the free action of men at the level of their material interests, it is obvious that this science is solely governed by compulsory and by regulatory moral laws. Physical laws are only considered within political economy as auxiliary. To submit this science to inescapable laws, to the blind determinism of the material world, is tantamount to eliminate its character of a social and moral science.” (1904: I, 15-16)

This approach to political economy is thus marked by a strong emphasis on its inescapable moral content – by the idea that all the economic activity is necessarily permeated by a number of moral choices.

Thus, there was a meaningful difference between the liberal and catholic views:

“ According to the principles of economic liberalism, we do not need to investigate what production should be, for it suffices to acknowledge and describe what production is. Society doesn't have to ask itself what to produce and how to produce, but just what it produces. Knowledge of individual needs is enough to understand what is useful to demand, to establish the production of this utility. Society produces by itself whatever it should produce; the mission of science is to acknowledge this fact, and the sole practical advice it can give is to produce as

plenty and cheap as possible in order to stimulate the needs and cause demand to grow. This view seems inexact because production isn't the sole and main goal of an economy. What really matters to the true prosperity of a nation aren't so much the amount of wealth that is produced but the distribution of goods among the different social classes." (1904: I, 63)

So far we have highlighted some of the basic differences between the liberal and the catholic views on political economy. Once persuaded by these arguments to part with the liberals, the Catholics should also be warned against joining the socialists – something that some had allegedly done by welcoming State intervention in social and economic issues

Now according to Charles Antoine, the State should always act as a warrant of the real interests of society. Its main functions are thus two: to protect the individual rights (determining them, allowing for their exercise, and managing the supervening conflicts); and to help the pursuit of the (legitimate) interests. In performing this last function the State is supposed to remove the obstacles that prevent the creation of wealth by the individuals – namely by developing the means of communication, regulating foreign trade, spreading technical knowledge and establishing prizes and exemptions.

Charles Antoine portrays this action not only as necessary, but also as having a suppletive and conditional character:

"conditional, since it presupposes the absence or deficiency of private, individual or collective causes; suppletive, because it completes or replaces the action by those causes, for the action by the State should be minimal and directed at helping to perform than to directly performing." (1904: I, 263)

Aware that this is a subtle – and possibly confusing – distinction, Charles Antoine cares to explain it in more detail:

"Far from leading to the omnipotence of the State, the theory of the functions of the supreme power necessarily leads to a minimum of interference in social life. Do you doubt? Remember that the State power is suppletive and conditional. Accordingly, the more the social organs were sane, vigorous and autonomous, the more the society will replace egoism and individualism, and the more the action by the State will confine itself to a higher vigilance. (...) When listening to the magical word State intervention, some imagine that the role of the State is mainly to perform economic functions. That is a mistake. The main mission of the social authority is that of guiding, by means of a wise legislation, the wills of the individuals towards the common good." (1904: I, 136-137)

These basic principles regarding the role to be played by the State do surface in several parts of the *Cours*. For instance, while dealing with the social question, Charles Antoine explains that

"The State not only must protect the rights of the citizen, but it must also help them in performing those rights, reinforcing the social activities whenever the good of society demands it. Hence the double role of power in the field of assistance: 1st to protect; 2nd to supply. A duty of protection and a duty of supplying: protection of the beneficent institutions that were erected by society through the initiative of either the individuals or the church; supplying of those institutions that are missing, establishing or maintaining those institutions that the individuals alone are unable to ensure" (1904: II, 538)

The fulfillment of duties is still limited by the rule of being conditional and suppletive, that is, the interference by the State is only justified by the powerlessness – or the unwillingness – of the individuals to solve specific problems that may jeopardize the social fabric:

“The public power is the warrant of the social order. This is severely compromised when a major part of society is sunk into misery while others live in unbridled luxury and opulence. Therefore, if private charity is powerless or inefficient, the State must intervene – and he can only gather the necessary resources by means of taxes. (...) The rich have the duty to help the starving destitute as far as their superfluous belongings allows it. And, if they don’t comply with this duty, the State may enforce it, by transforming a moral duty into a legal obligation.” (1904: II, 542)

The rationale for State intervention was therefore different from the socialist one. It was depicted only as a sort of last – and temporary – resource to meet the menacing ongoing social and economic problems. Its role could always be lessened, as long as the individual initiatives would prove to be able to cope with them.

3. The choice of a guide for catholic social activists: Artur Bívar and the translation of Joseph Biederlack’s *Die Sociale Frage* (1905-1907)

One year later, the very active catholic publicist Artur Bívar⁸ started a second noteworthy translation. However, instead of a book, the translation of Joseph Biederlack’s *Die Social Frage* (1895) appeared in a series of numbers of the catholic journal *Estudos Sociais*⁹.

Once again, there is a note justifying the translation:

“It is urgent to start among us a methodic formation of social fighters. Your journal, aiming particularly at the schooling youth, is by its own nature the shared class of the sons of the church. We needed a professor: at short notice we couldn’t find one at home, and we had to get one abroad. We found the splendid lessons of the father Joseph Biederlack at the university of Innsbruck, in Austria, and we believe that they were precisely what we were looking for.” (1905: nº3, p. 130)

As their title shows, these lessons were more focused in the doctrinal battle that was fought around the social question than in explaining the basic concepts and laws of political economy¹⁰. Biederlack goal was solely to explain the Christian social theory and to defend it from its enemies – the corresponding liberal and socialist theories.

The structure of the original book has two parts: a general one, presenting and discussing the essential tenets of the liberal socio-economic doctrine, the varieties of socialist doctrines, and the socio-economic Christian doctrine; and a special part, discussing the different aspects of the social question by dealing with their manifestations at different

⁸ After studying Philosophy at the Gregorian university of Rome, Artur Bívar began a career as journalist in Portugal, writing for several different catholic newspapers.

⁹ The journal *Estudos Sociais* was intended since its inception (1905) to be an organ of Christian democracy. Its goal was to support “the Christian social theory”, using it to “fight every error and social utopia” (1905: nº1, p.2). The translation of Biederlack, signed under the alias of “Diógenes” took place between 1905 and 1907. But it was left incomplete, ending a few pages before the exposition of the above-mentioned Christian social theory. The Portuguese readers were therefore only taught about the erroneous theories – i.e. liberalism and socialism. A German Jesuit, Joseph Biederlack (1845-1930) had a degree in Canon Law; he taught Morals and Canon Law at Innsbruck and at the Gregorian university of Rome.

¹⁰ Biederlack mentions regularly Charles Antoine *Cours* as a fine reference for those interested in an in-depth explanation of those issues.

social and professional levels (agrarian crisis, the labour question, industrial question, commercial crisis, and the feminist question).

The overall orientation followed by Biederlack is openly in favor of the Liège approach. As he points out, the Angers supporters are persuaded that they should make some concessions to liberalism; that is precisely what he criticizes in their approach to the social question:

“In the economic field, this catholic liberalism is, like its atheist counterpart, in contradiction with the proved experience of Christian centuries, and, by accepting economic freedom, it adopts almost all social and political freedoms. Thus, it also doesn’t understand the true mission of the State and the true nature of men, and becomes lost in a vain optimism regarding the results that could be reached through economic freedom.” (1906: n°5, 203-204)

Once again, the liberal view on political economy is criticized on account of its limited scope:

“The mission of political is to find the way for the people to reach a state of material happiness, that is to say, the possession of those goods that are required for the satisfaction of the material needs of life. It searches for the general rules that ought to moderate the production and distribution of wealth, according to the general advantage of the nation. If it would concern itself solely with wealth, it would only imperfectly fill its role.” (1905: n° 3, 133)

One of the most interesting arguments that Portuguese catholic activists could find in Biederlack work regards the proper (and most effective way) way to fight socialism:

“The social question is not tantamount to the specific question of how to oppose a wall to the invading socialism; this can be confirmed by the fact that the social question already existed long before the emergence and development of social democracy or socialism. Socialism presupposes the existence of harsh social conditions, and therefore the existence of a social question.” (1905: n° 3, 131).

According to this view, socialism was to be considered as an unsurprising consequence of the socio-economic iniquities that had been long fostered by liberalism; thus, if those iniquities were removed – if the social question was effectively solved – socialism would wither away.

The path to be followed was to be based in the acknowledgement of two essential principles: first and foremost, people had to acknowledge that there is a moral law imposed by God to all mankind, a law that encompasses and governs all economic activity (1905: n° 3, 136); secondly, people had to acknowledge that the State couldn’t exempt itself from the duty of ensuring the common good, thus having the duty to actively participate in the process of Christian healing of the current social order.

According to Biederlack, this necessary role of the State was already acknowledged by the more recent and moderate versions of liberalism, namely by those that admitted that “the State has the right to intervene in order to settle the economy by means of an opportune social legislation.” (1905: n° 10, 478)

As we have mentioned before, the translation of this book stopped in 1907, thus preventing the readers of the Estudos Sociais from reading the chapters on the Christian socio-economic doctrine. But the essential ideas were already stated in the criticisms addressed both to the liberal and socialist doctrines. The readers could therefore conclude that the social question could not be solved without the engagement of the State.

4. How to reach the crowds: Artur Gomes dos Santos and the translations in the “*Colecção Sciencia e Religião*”

The main goal of the translations made by both Miguel Ferreira and Artur Bívar was the proper instruction in the modern catholic socio-economic theory of a very specific set of people, namely future priests and potential catholic leaders. Being scholarly, lengthy treatises, none of these translations was therefore likely to be appealing to all those that belonged to the less educated layers of catholic activists. There was, of course, a considerable number of catholic newspapers; but the ongoing attempt of reorganization of catholic opinion on socio-economic matters asked for other doctrinal venues.

The reinforcement of the literature aiming at this type of audience was soon to be undertaken by Artur Gomes dos Santos¹¹, for he decided publish in Portugal a series of booklets alike those that were published in the French collection *Science et Religion. Études pour le temps présent*¹². Both the original collection and its Portuguese counterpart had an unmistakable popular character, thus making the diffusion of some fundamental catholic views easier (each booklet had some 90 pages) and relatively affordable.

Gomes dos Santos published one booklet a month, each one addressing a specific theme. Concerning socio-economic themes, the first twelve included one on Socialism by Viktor Cathrein (nº 3), one on Christian democracy by Giuseppe Toniolo (nº 7), one on Usury by Léon Dehon (nº 8), and one on the Rerum Novarum by Jules Didiot (nº 12). The next twelve volumes only included the Principles of catholic sociology by Paul Naudet (nº 15). In the third year, Gomes dos Santos published a volume on the social question by Biesa y Pueyo (nº 26), and the Principles of political economy by Henri Rubat du Mérac (nº 36). The analysis of socio-economic issues continued in the following years with the Principles of social economics also by Henri Rubat du Mérac (nº 40), an analysis of socialism by Gabriel Ardant (nº 46), a study on corporatism by Georges de Pascal (nº 50), and a study on the philosophical theory of taxation by Domet de Vorges (nº 65).

As this illustrative sample shows, the collection *Sciencia e Religião* supplied the readers with a somewhat more encompassing panorama of the authors engaged in the formulation of catholic socio-economic views, some of which were closer to the so-called catholic liberalism.

In order to grasp the main overall doctrinal orientation of this collection regarding this specific theme let us focus on a sub-set composed by the two volumes authored by Henri Rubat du Mérac¹³ (*Princípios de Economia política e Princípios de economia social*) and those by Paul Naudet¹⁴ (*Princípios de Sociologia Católica*), Edmond Domet de Vorges¹⁵ (*A teoria filosófica do imposto*), and Léon Dehon¹⁶ (*A usura no tempo presente*).

¹¹ He was a catholic publicist and a publisher. See Pinharanda Gomes (1987)

¹² The French collection “Science et Religion. Études pour le temps présent”, published by Bloud & Barral, was advertised as “the most recent, vast and encompassing religious, philosophical and scientific encyclopedia”. It counted 703 volumes in 1922. Gomes dos Santos only translated some of the those volumes, also adding a few written by Portuguese authors – like Sena de Freitas, Jacinto Candido and he himself.

¹³ Henri Rubat du Mérac was a lawyer; he taught at the Law school of the Catholic Institute of Paris.

¹⁴ One of the so-called ‘abbés démocrates’, who authored, among other works, *Le christianisme social, propriété, capital et travail* (1898), *Notre devoir social, questions pratiques de morale individuelle et sociale* (1899) and *Premiers principes de sociologie catholique* (1899). Gomes dos Santos included an abridged version of this last work in his collection *Sciencia e Religião* (nº 15).

The two volumes by Henri Rubat du Mérac were supposed to make clear the difference between political economy and social economics, the former dealing with “genuine laws that act upon men with the rigor of a scientific principle”¹⁷, the later being concerned with the theories that “allow for the intervention of free will, their study being impossible if we ignore their moral aspect” (1907b, p.6).

In view of this criterion, one would expect the second volume to be definitely doctrinal. However, the general tone of the second volume is surprisingly neutral – exception made for the pages that deal with socialism and pauperism.

As Rubat du Mérac explains, poverty is a natural phenomenon, for every society has a number of indigents due to a number of unfortunate accidents – disease, old age, the premature death of the head of the family, natural accidents, lack of work, laziness and drunkenness. However, when this poverty turns into a permanent and hereditary situation, societies are faced with a new phenomenon, pauperism:

“Religion tells us, and no one disputes this, that the rich have the moral duty to help the poor. Everybody also agrees that social interest leads the State to intervene in order to minimize or extinguish misery. However, when indigence assumes the form of pauperism, assistance, no matter how laudable it may appear from a sentimental viewpoint, is nevertheless objectionable from a cold rational perspective. Pauperism has the distinctive character of a population used to misery, accepting that state, unwilling to make an effort to leave it, and passing to their offspring the habit of depending from public assistance. Without going to far, we may say that charity without discernment should not apply to such situations.” (1907b: p.91)

This perspective about the social question is much more closer to the views of the liberal economists than to the approach followed by either Charles Antoine or Joseph Biederlack, the only catholic clue in it being the defence of the important role that was allegedly played by the – unfortunately proscribed – religious congregations, also by the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Paul Naudet approach is significantly different:

“We don’t hesitate to say, even at the cost of being cursed by the liberal school, that labor lives, today, under an oppressive regime. The capital, said Lassalle, ‘suffocates labor’. ‘It is something dead that devours the living beings’, wrote Benoit Malon. Evidently, there is some exaggeration in these formulas; but it is no less true that the roles were inverted, and money, by taking the place of men, became the value of values. Thus we watch the incredible spectacle of growing pauperism and slavery for some, while wealth grows for other, the worker suffering from ever harder laboring conditions as the machinery that ought to help and aid him progressed. We don’t need to be much clever to conclude that the famous freedom of contract, that icon of the liberal school, is nothing but the freedom to oppress because the parties are not equal, neither in rights nor in real

¹⁵ Count Edmond Domet de Vorges was one of the leading figures of French 19th century Neo-Scholasticism who taught at the Catholic Institute of Paris. His best-known work was an *Essai de Métaphysique positive* (1883).

¹⁶ Chanoine Dehon, *L’usure au temps présent: étude sur l’usure au double point de vue de la morale et de l’économie sociale*, Paris, Maison de la bonne presse, s.d. Léon Dehon founded the Congrégation du Sacré-Coeur. He acted as canon at Val-des-Bois and at the Œuvre des Cercles Catholiques Ouvriers.

¹⁷ As examples of these laws Rubat du Mérac lists “the division of labor, the phenomenon of income (sic) the changes of value, the role of paper-money” (1907b: p. 6).

independence. Thus labor, which should prevail over capital, became less than its mercenary; most of the times, it became its slave. A slave that upraises sometimes, but a slave that soon surrenders under its yoke because he is resourceless and also because he usually doesn't know other means of livelihood. We assert that a man is not free whenever he is forced to accept slavery to escape dearth." (1905: p. 17-18)

Besides these obvious differences regarding the evaluation of the causes of pauperism, Paul Naudet was also much more sympathetic regarding the role to be played by the State:

"Intervention by the State! This thesis raised so many objections when we presented it, long before the *Rerum Novarum*; and so many protests does it still raises today, even among Catholics that believe themselves to be 'thinkers'! – 'State intervention! Don't think about it! The Atheist State, the persecuting State! (...) And the Pope, who saw the situation lucidly, who doesn't ignore neither that 'the State is atheist' nor that he is in charge of the church and the souls, keeps asking for State intervention. The Vicar of Christ sees further, because he sees from above. Besides the present, which is dismal, he sees the future, which is bright; and even if the State is 'persecutor and pagan' the Pope doesn't want to deprive it from its natural and sublime function of being 'minister Dei in bonum', that is to say, the agent of progress and the intelligent promoter of social welfare. To reduce the sovereign to nothing but a policeman or a night watchman is tantamount to ignore the essential character of power, 'which comes from God'. But Leo XIII goes further and openly asks for an international labor legislation." (1905: p. 49-51)

The 'extreme' catholic views by du Mérac and Naudet could be somewhat counterbalanced by the volume authored by Edmond Domet de Vorges. According to this author,

"Some still say that capital is immoral by nature, because it drives the capitalist to diminish as much as possible the workers wages, thus bringing misery and slavery to the masses. The danger is real, but may and should be effectively fought. The Pope shows how in the encyclical on the means that should be used to reunite capital and labor. He lists those means, which are: the influence of religion over capitalists and laborers, thus bringing forth the virtues that are necessary for the prosperity of all social classes; a wise intervention by the State, according to the circumstances; finally, the efforts from both employers and employees, joined in different kinds of associations dedicated to the development of the welfare of the destitute. Therefore, the capitalist system and private property can – and ought – subsist without violating the laws of justice or condemning the workers to misery." (s/d: p. 103-104)

These long excerpts have the advantage of highlighting one essential aspect of this type of literature on the catholic socio-economic theory: even if they offer a number of insights on what Leo XIII 'actually' meant to say in the encyclicals, the main goal of these authors is to point out a specific course of action for catholic organizations to follow.

The last volume of the sub-set that we are analyzing here provides us with a good example of this attitude. In order to analyze the problem of modern usury (*usura vorax*, one of the themes that were mentioned in *Rerum Novarum*), Léon Dehon starts by offering an historical assessment on the doctrine of usury, just price and just wage. Then, he embarks on a lengthy discussion of the several manifestations of usury within contemporary society, always caring to highlight what should be done to counteract its harmful effects.

Adopting a broad definition of usury ("all the unjust demands and profits in commerce and industry", all the practices that "take advantage of either the disgraces or the needs of others in order to increase someone wealth"), Dehon identifies a number of ensuing injustices within contemporary society such as monopolies and collusions, stock exchange speculation or the practice of commercial loan sharks. Then he addresses the oppression

of the worker, which he equates not only with the payment of wages that are insufficient for the commodious living of the worker and his family but also with the disrespect for the other sacred rights of the worker – the safeguard of his health, the wellbeing of his family, the stability of his livelihood (1905: p. 59-60).

These being the main evils, what are the appropriate solutions? Dehon lists them in the end of the volume:

“Regarding speculation, the running of share companies, and share emissions, we must use the law. The other nations have a wiser and prudent legislation concerning share emissions and commercial societies; we should imitate them. Regarding long-term markets, several social programs want to forbid them. We must achieve it. Regarding monopolies and collusions, we already have laws; it suffices to ask for a little more courage of magistrates and little more honesty of government.” (1905: p.83)

This last goal was to be met by means of an organized and active public opinion – one of the modern weapons that could be used for inflecting government behavior: therefore, not only the ‘Christian economists’ should publicly reveal the iniquities and dangers associated with modern financial practices, but it was also necessary that “the clergy, following the path opened by Leo XIII, studies the issue of social justice and starts using his considerable doctrinal and moral authority against all injustices and abuses” (1905: p.84). According to Dehon, this kind of strategic lobbying was also applicable to private businesses (1905: p. 60-61), for every catholic shareholder should make sure that the rights of the workers were actually respected – or otherwise sell his shares and invest the money in an ethically sounder business venture.

5. Concluding remarks

The rationale for the translations that we have analyzed here seems quite clear. They were stirred by a change of circumstances – at the political and doctrinal levels – that called for a more significant engagement of the Portuguese Catholics in the social and economic realms.

When this change took place, the leaders of catholic activism took the necessary measures in order to prepare their hosts for a new course of action, one that required not only a more significant engagement with the social question, but also some knowledge of the doctrines of the social sciences – and particularly of political economy.

Those leaders were the first to acknowledge that the Portuguese priests were poorly prepared for the tasks ahead; accordingly, they suggested that the seminaries should include the study of political economy in their curriculum. Hence a first initiative: the translation of Charles Antoine’s *Cours d’économie sociale*.

The training of the future leaders – namely those attending the university – was another concern. Although some of them might acquire some notions of both political economy and sociology while attending the university, the fact was that those courses were more or less openly at odds with the socio-economic Christian theory. Hence a second initiative: translating Joseph Biederlack’s *Die social Frage*, which was published in several installments in the journal *Estudos Sociais*.

Besides these two specific groups, it was also important to spread the new concerns and doctrines of the church amongst other strata of the population, namely among those that were accustomed to read the catholic press. Hence a third initiative: to publish the

collection *Sciencia e Religião*, where a few important books on social and economic issues were included.

The overall doctrinal orientation followed by the authors that were selected for the two first translations is quite similar, being close to the basic tenets of the Liège school; the views of those translated for the collection *Sciencia e Religião* are less homogeneous, namely because some of them were closer to the 'catholic liberalism' that was sponsored by the Angers school.

It is difficult to assess the actual impact of these translations. All we can tell is that a few years later, the 1910 republican revolution forced catholic activists to change their short-term concerns and priorities. But then again the supervening *Estado Novo* may perhaps be seen as a sort of belated consecration of these early nineteenth century doctrinal efforts.

References

- Almodovar, António e Pedro Teixeira (2008a). The Ascent and Decline of Catholic Economic Thought, 1830-1950s. History of Political Economy, Annual Supplement to Volume 40, Duke University Press, Durham and London.
- Almodovar, António e Pedro Teixeira (2008b). Catholic economic thought. In Steven N. Durlauf and Lawrence E. Blume (eds), The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics, Second Edition.
- Antoine, Charles (1896). Cours d'économie sociale. Félix Alcan, Paris
- Antoine, Charles (1904). Curso de economia social. Imprensa da "Revista Católica", Viseu.
- Biederlack, Joseph (1895). Die Sociale Frage: Ein Beitrag Zur Orientierung Uber Ihr Wesen Und Ihre Losung. Innsbruck.
- Biederlack, Joseph (1905-1907). A Questão Social. Estudos Sociais, revista católica mensal. nº. 3 (1905) a nº. 10 (1907), Imprensa da Universidade, Coimbra.
- Costa, Afonso (1895). A Igreja e a Questão Social. Análise crítica da Encíclica Pontifícia De Conditione Opificum, de 15 de Maio de 1891. Dissertação inaugural para o Acto de Conclusões Magnas na Faculdade de Direito. Imprensa da Universidade, Coimbra.
- Cruz, Manuel Braga da (1980). As origens da democracia cristã e o salazarismo. Editorial Presença, Lisboa.
- de Vorges, Edmond Domet (s/d). A Theoria Philosophica do Imposto. Coleção Ciência e Religião nº.65, Livraria Povoense, Póvoa do Varzim.
- Dehon, Léon (1905). A usura no tempo presente. Coleção Sciencia e Religião, nº 8. Livraria Povoense, Póvoa do Varzim.
- Dehon, Léon (s/d). L'usure au temps présent: étude sur l'usure au double point de vue de la morale et de l'économie sociale. Maison de la bonne presse, Paris
- du Mérac, Henri Rubat. 1907a. Princípios de economia política. Coleção Ciência e Religião nº.36, Livraria Povoense, Póvoa do Varzim.
- du Mérac, Henri Rubat. 1907b. Princípios de economia social. Coleção Ciência e Religião nº.40, Livraria Povoense, Póvoa do Varzim.

- Gomes, Pinharanda J. (1987). Gomes dos Santos (1881-1918): doutrinador do Movimento Social Católico. Póvoa de Varzim. Separata de: Boletim Cultural Póvoa do Varzim. Vol. XXV, nº1, 1987
- Misner, Paul (1991). Social Catholicism in Europe. From the onset of industrialization to the First World War. Darton, Longman and Todd, London.
- Naudet, Paul (1905). Princípios de Sociologia Catholica. Colecção Ciência e Religião nº.15, Livraria Povoense, Póvoa do Varzim.
- Naudet, Paul (1899). Premiers principes de sociologie catholique. Librairie Bloud et Barral, Paris.
- Neto, Vítor (1998). O Estado, a Igreja e a Sociedade em Portugal (1832-1911). Imprensa Nacional–Casa da Moeda, Lisboa.
- Pius XI Quadragesimo Anno.
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno_en.html
- Policarpo, João Francisco de Almeida (1977). O Pensamento social do grupo católico de “A Palavra” (1872-1913). Vol. 1. CHUP, Universidade de Coimbra.
- Sardica, José Miguel (2004). A recepção da doutrina social de Leão XIII em Portugal. Lusitânia Sacra, 2ª série, 16 (2004) 367-383.
- Waterman, Anthony M. C. (1991). Revolution, Economics & Religion. Christian Political Economy, 1798-1833. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.