

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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Antunes, Manuel (Abegoaria (Sertã), 1918 - Lisbon, 1985)

Manuel Antunes was born near the town of Sertã, into a family of poor economic and cultural resources. Both his parents were illiterate: his father, José Agostinho Antunes, worked as a farm hand and his mother, Maria de Jesus, was a housewife. Nevertheless, both their firstborn, Manuel, and their second son, José Antunes (1921-1997), completed higher education through the Society of Jesus. José left the seminary and completed his law degree as a worker-student, excelling in local life as a politician and educator to become mayor of the municipality of Sertã (1962-1974). When interviewed on her older brother's trajectory, the couple's last child, Maria do Céu Antunes (b. 1924), referred to how his intelligence and drive to study had clashed with the socioeconomic reality of the household: following his brilliant performance at the elementary school in Sertã, he had attained the "best exam" classification in the fourth grade, but on learning of this result Manuel had been "sad" because "he had been the only child to go there barefoot." Under these circumstances, "on the day of his first communion, Father José Lérias" - a local parish priest who had joined the Society of Jesus - asked the child "if he would like to become a priest and be able to study", to which he "immediately answered yes". The family budget was so tight that they could not afford the clothes he needed to join the seminary, and the money was raised thanks to "the congregation of a few Sisters of Mary who had heard about his predicament". (Biography..., 2011, pp 26-27, 157).

Manuel Antunes completed his lay education at the age of twelve. From then on, the future priest attended only institutions of the Society of Jesus, following a study plan equivalent to the secondary and higher education curricula, which in the Order of Saint Ignatius of Loyola revolved around cycles of humanistic-scientific and spiritual preparation. It took him two decades to be ordained to the priesthood and fifteen years had elapsed since entering the Novitiate.

Between 1931 and 1936, despite several health setbacks, he completed his primary education at the Escola Apostólica [Apostolic School] (Seminário Menor [Junior Seminary]), first at the Seminário da Costa in Guimarães and later at Macieira de Cambra, before proceeding to the Postulancy. At 18, he entered the Novitiate, moving to the Convento de Alpendurada [Convent of Alpendurada] in Entre-os-Rios (Marco de



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Canaveses) for the two years of intensive preparatory initiation in order to enter the Order. In 1938, he progressed to the Juniorate, a cycle of intellectual preparation, normally lasting three years, beginning with two years of studies in Humanities, which the future priest completed in just one year. In the first year, which was taken at the Convento da Costa (Guimarães), Manuel Antunes' Portuguese Literature teacher was Father Lúcio Craveiro. According to his testimony, Manuel Antunes had already distinguished himself in those early days: "Of all the students on the course, he excelled at writing and even published an article in *Brotéria*", the Society's journal. In Craveiro's classes, the students were required to read "many books" in order to "formulate their opinion on them, which led to magnificent dialogues between the teacher and students", representing crucial moments for the future literary critic (cit. *Idem*, p. 37). He then completed his second and final year of the Juniorate in Science at the Seminário dos Jesuítas de Braga [Jesuit Seminary in Braga].

Manuel Antunes then advanced to a new phase in Jesuit education, comprehending two areas of study, one in Philosophy and the other in Theology. In 1943, he graduated in Philosophy from the Instituto Beato Miguel de Carvalho [Blessed Miguel de Carvalho Institute] (from 1947 the Pontifícia Faculdade de Filosofia [Pontifical Faculty of Philosophy]), currently the Faculdade de Filosofia de Braga da Universidade Católica [Braga Faculty of Philosophy of the Catholic University]) with the dissertation *Panorama da Filosofia existencial de Kierkegaard a Heidegger* [Overview of Existential Philosophy from Kierkegaard to Heidegger]. This document was lost but has been partially restored by the articles published in *Brotéria*. Between 1943 and 1946, he decided to proceed to the Magisterium, a stage related to spiritual growth, usually occupied by teaching or missionary work. He had his first teaching experience in the Seminário da Costa in Guimarães where, for four years, as a trainee teacher, he taught Latin Rhetoric, Greek Language, Greek Language and Literature, Latin Rhetoric and Latin Humanities in the so-called Curso Superior de Letras [former Faculty of Arts] (upon completion of the Novitiate). Finally, as the Order offered its students the possibility of pursuing at least one higher degree course abroad, Manuel Antunes was sent to the Faculty of Theology in Granada (Spain) where he received priestly ordination in 1949 and ended the first phase of his theological studies the following year, with the highest mark. He accomplished this theological and spiritual training in Namur (Belgium), completing the year of the so-called Third Probation in a probationary retreat with an international group.

Upon his return to Portugal, he taught at the Escola Apostólica [Apostolic School] and at the Noviciado da Companhia de Jesus [Novitiate of the Society of Jesus] (located in Soutelo, near Braga), between 1951 and 1955. Meanwhile, in 1954, he was admitted to the solemn profession of the Four Vows in the Order of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the entrance rite in which an oath of obedience to the Pope is taken. In 1955 he was appointed editor of *Brotéria* and sent to Lisbon. He moved to the Casa dos Escritores da Companhia de Jesus [House of Writers of the Society of Jesus], the journal's headquarters building, while also teaching Theology on the Curso Superior de Religião para Religiosas [Higher Education Course for Religious Women] and the Religious and Spiritual Direction of religious and lay people (*Idem*, pp. 41-65).

In 1957, on the recommendation of Marcelo Caetano, Chancellor of the University of Lisbon, he was invited



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by Professor Vitorino Nemésio to teach at the Faculdade de Letras de Lisboa [Faculty of Arts of Lisbon], which he initiated as second assistant in January 1958 and embraced until the end of his life, alongside his priestly life (e.g., spiritual direction, etc.). The high scientific level coupled with the students' satisfaction led the new director of the Faculdade, Orlando Ribeiro, to propose hiring Manuel Antunes as a permanent member of the teaching staff in August 1959, however, this recommendation was not met with equal enthusiasm and did not come to be. Shortly thereafter, in correspondence with his friends Mécia and Jorge de Sena, the priest confessed his difficulty in keeping up with university life and, above all, his inability to continue his research. This latter factor eventually led him to submit his resignation, which was turned down by the intervention of Marcelo Caetano himself. Around 1959, as written to Jorge de Sena and later confessed to Manuel do Carmo Ferreira, he considered writing an unprecedented doctoral thesis entitled "Mística e Filosofia em Plotino" ["Mysticism and Philosophy in Plotinus"], for which he had completed all the readings. Another moment of uncertainty emerged in 1978 when there was an inquiry into the fact that he was not in possession of an official academic qualification, despite, as recalled by one of those consulted in this process, having "the entire background of the Society of Jesus, from Classical Humanities to Theology and Philosophy". (Um pedagogo..., [A pedagogue...] 2011, p. 180). Notwithstanding these setbacks, university teaching was his main occupation, and he was responsible for the chair of História da Cultura Clássica [History of Classical Culture], an interdisciplinary first-year subject for almost all the courses of the Faculdade de Letras, which was later renamed Introdução à Cultura Clássica [Introduction to Classical Culture]. In 1978, he moved to the Philosophy Department. In general, among other subjects, he taught seminars and open courses, História da Civilização Romana [History of Roman Civilisation], História da Filosofia Antiga [History of Ancient Philosophy], Platão I and II [Plato I and II], Aristotle, Ontologia [Ontology], and Pensamento Filosófico em Portugal no Século XX [Philosophical Thinking in Portugal in the 20th Century]. (Idem, pp. 89-95; Padre Manuel Antunes [Father Manuel Antunes], 1985, pp. 8-9).

Within the scope of his academic trajectory and intellectual output, the abundance and regularity of his study trips, as well as his advanced mastery of a broad spectrum of dead and living languages are noteworthy. His study trips began in the 1940s. The longest was initiated in 1946 with his trip to Granada. From 1950, after a stay in Namur, followed by a visit to the Society's main houses in Belgium and France in the summer of 1951, he grew accustomed to using the summer vacation period to deepen his knowledge. ("Antunes, Padre..." ["Antunes, Father..."], Grande Enciclopédia... [Great Encyclopaedia], vol. 38, s.d. [undated], p. 437). It was mainly within the scope of university teaching that he embarked on numerous journeys, both solo, whenever possible for the purposes of research and bibliographical updating (the most well-known were to Belgium, France, Germany and the United Kingdom), with the sponsorship of the Instituto de Alta Cultura [Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture] or the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian [Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation], and with students to places of historical and cultural interest (excursions to Asturias, Greece and Italy are documented). In any case, he usually capitalized on summer courses, participation in congresses or the official



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representation of the country abroad in the context of the mission of the Order or the University (Padre Manuel Antunes [Father Manuel Antunes], 1985, pp. 9-10).

As his former student Arnaldo do Espírito Santo recalls, Manuel Antunes had "perfect knowledge of Greek and Latin, of the classical authors in the original, and of a vast bibliography which was also read in the original, whether Spanish, French, Italian, English or German". Such erudition and up-to-date knowledge had a strong impact on the school culture of the Faculdade de Letras, since this professor "did not need to wait for a particular work (...) to be translated in order to read, analyse, comment or generate discussions and the confrontation of ideas". (Obra Completa...[Complete Works...], t. 1, vol. 1, 2007, p. 1). Moreover, he was assistant librarian in Soutelo and Granada, and in the Brotéria lodgings his room was known as a "cafarnaum of books", from which the intellectual would spring forth (Padre Manuel Antunes, 1985, p. 18; Um pedagogo..., 2011, pp. 100-101;).

From the 1950s, Antunes committed himself to three major activities: teaching, the priesthood and writing. Indeed, part of his life was also absorbed by his participation in the Brotéria journal. In 1955, he was appointed editor, in charge of the literary criticism and culture sections, and ten years later he became director and held this post from January 1965 to the end of 1982, with an interruption between 1972-1975, most likely due to strong pressure from censorship, and perhaps, as noted by Mário Sottomayor Cardia, resorting to a pseudonym in the masthead (Idem, p. 245). His first article, published in 1940, "A poesia modernista de Orpheu a Altitude (Modernist poetry from Orpheu [journal] to Altitude [journal]), focused on controversial authors such as Mário de Sá Carneiro, Fernando Pessoa, Teixeira de Pascoaes, and José Régio. From 1963, he began to make extensive use of pseudonyms, taking a total of 124 different names in the 410 identified articles. This strategy enabled him to "conceal himself from the public eye" while at the same time granting the journal "the aura of having a broad range of contributors". For a period of almost fifty years he broached topics as diverse as theology, philosophy, aesthetics, politics, international relations, education, and literary criticism. (Biografia... [Biography...], 2011, pp. 103-105; 243-270).

Manuel Antunes also collaborated in other academic periodicals. Between 1963 and 1980, he participated in the redaction of twenty volumes of the Enciclopédia Verbo Luso-Brasileira de Cultura [Luso-Brazilian Verbo Encyclopaedia of Culture] (23 vols., 1963-1995). He wrote around two hundred and fifty entries on a variety of subjects ranging from theology, philosophy, politics, literature, and classical culture. He also published extensively in the Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia [Portuguese Journal of Philosophy] (Braga) from 1950 to 1958, resumed later in 1982, in the Revista da Faculdade de Letras de Lisboa [Journal of the Lisbon Faculty of Arts] (1963), and in the journal Euphrosyne of the Centro de Estudos Clássicos [Centre for Classical Studies] of the same institution (1959-1967) (Idem, pp. 271-280, 327-336).

In 1960, he launched his debut publication *Ao encontro da palavra: ensaio de crítica literária* [Towards an encounter with the word: literary criticism essay] (Livraria Moraes [Moraes Bookstore and Publishing House]), a collection of articles on philosophy, literature, and the sociology of culture. With a philosophical and



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theological slant, in the same year he published *Do espírito e do tempo* [On spirit and time] (Ática Publishing House). In a separate work, *O mundo de hoje e a religião* [Today's world and religion] (1964) and *Função da teologia no mundo de hoje* [The role of theology in today's world] were disseminated (1967, under the pseudonym Carlos Outeiro Cruz). From the 1970s onwards, his monographs focused on current political, educational, and literary topics. Thus, in 1972, *Indicadores de civilização* [Indicators of Civilization] (Editorial Verbo [Verbo Publishing House]), *Educação e sociedade* [Education and Society] (Editora Sampedro [Sampedro Publishing House]), and *Grandes derivas da história contemporânea* [Major drifts of contemporary history] (Edições Brotéria [Brotéria Publishing House]) were published; the following year, *Grandes contemporâneos* [Great Contemporary Figures] (Editorial Verbo); in 1979, his civic intervention work, *Repensar Portugal* [Rethinking Portugal] (Editora Multinova [Multinova Publishing House]); and, in 1980, his last publication in life, *Occasionalia: homens e ideias de ontem e de hoje* [Occasionalia: men and ideas of yesterday and today] (Multinova). All his published and unpublished writings have been compiled and brought back to light since 2005 in a critical edition of his *Obras Completas* [Complete Works], in seven tomes and a total of fourteen volumes, covering thematic areas (Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian). The last tome includes a biography and detailed indexes.

Rather than markedly historiographical, Manuel Antunes' work may be characterised as the consolidation of a line of thinking with a historical slant. As confirmed by Luís Reis Torgal, "though not a historian per se", Father Manuel Antunes "is of special significance in the field of teaching the history of culture, besides his very interesting reflections in the area of the history of culture" ("A história em tempo..." ["History in time..."], *História da história...* [History of history...], 1998, p. 295). Considering his manifold scope of action, his work is remarkable in three fields: contemporary history, history of Portuguese literature, and history of classical culture.

His constant engagement in political reflection went beyond the duties of a Jesuit, and that perspective, as expressed in the *Brotéria* and in his monographs, was considered by Mário Sottomayor Cardia as an essential page in the history of the reception of Marxism in Portugal. He was, at the same time, a problematiser and a witness to his contemporaneity. (*Um pedagogo...*, 2011, pp. 246-263).

Formally invested in 1952, he became known as a literary critic and historian in the *Brotéria*. Through his innovative themes and approaches, he remains a reference to this day, in particular of the Portuguese modernist and surrealist movements, of which he was one of the first and leading scholars (*História crítica...*, vol. 7, 409-ss; vol. 8, pp.73-ss, 311-ss; vol. 9, pp. 73-ss [Critical history..., vol. 7, 409-ff; vol. 8, pp.73-ff, 311-ff; vol. 9, pp. 73-ff]; *História da literatura...*, 1992, pp.1009-ss, 1957-ss [Literary History 1992, pp.1009-ff, 1957-ff]). He disseminated the new Portuguese and European literature, granting a place for poetry and the literary journals of young artists. (*Um pedagogo...*, 2011, p.251). This interest had a methodological impact, since it also followed the path of the dialectical sociology of literature, with a vision that was very similar to that of Lucien Goldman, who considered the work not as a 'reflection' of society or an author's line of thinking, but as



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the mental structure of a period. In 'genetic structuralism', the single author or collective consciousness are surpassed by 'the highest level of consciousness possible', the moment when, through conceptual reflection or artistic creation, the individual - who belongs to and moves between different social groups - expresses himself from a univocal point of view; in literary works, an empirically sound expression of a cohesive social group may thus be found. This method was mainly geared towards the analysis of great literary works and Antunes used it explicitly in the analysis of important classical culture works.

Finally, and more in line with historiography strictu sensu, he may be considered a historian without works since his thinking was developed in actu at the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa. Although his idea of history may be recovered through dispersed texts, only one major work can be identified in this context: his subject coursebook for the História da Cultura Clássica [History of Classical Culture] where, in addition to a reflection on the theory and philosophy of history, he discusses the origin, development and decadence of Greek and Roman civilisations and culture. This coursebook was constructed from notes taken in class and circulated among the students, which were then corrected and further developed by the professor and finally published in the printing services of the Faculdade.

This document left its print on around fifteen thousand students who, at some point between 1958 to the early 1980s, had taken his classes. The crucial publication, which circulates under the seal of the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, is based on the last version of 1970 and takes into consideration the various versions since the 1961/62 academic year. This means that Father Manuel Antunes' level of historical reflection increased during this decade between his forties and fifties. His idea of history was woven at the crossroads of the great issues of the time and is symptomatic of the debates that took place on the unitary character of academic knowledge, the nature of the sciences, and the epistemology of history.

As regards the first factor, the defence of indivisible knowledge points to a continuity of the Central European philosophy of the 19th century, adopted fundamentally by the progressionist Catholic university sectors. Manuel Antunes' eminently Thomistic discourse was often expressed in a binary and dialectic manner in order to achieve synthesis. In historiography, this principle had a singular application: to avoid the depletion of knowledge, themes from the past were addressed by problematising the present (Idem, pp. 41, 205, 246).

"Is history a science?" - was the question posed by the intellectuals of the time, to which Antunes had a sui generis answer: it is a science, but also an art. Its 'scientific' characteristics being objectivity, positivity (i.e., it focuses on facts), operability, rationality (i.e., legal and regular, restricting itself to a single historical law of progress), and approximateness (Obra Completa [Complete Works], t. 1, vol. 2, 2008, pp. 30-38). An approximation among the sciences was envisaged, in the wake of Goldman, with a notion of 'knowledge' that encompassed not only scientific knowledge but also technical, literary, philosophical, etc., whereby all the spectrums of knowledge were called upon. As such, the notion of history was woven conceptually in a philosophical dimension (e.g., history as 'time'), functionally with other areas of knowledge, such as mathematics (e.g., Georg Cantor's set theory, with Goldman's notions of 'structure' and 'genesis', applied to



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Hellenistic and Roman civilizations, in order to conceive of progress in history), and critically in relation to the prevailing historiography (e.g. 'Darwinism' revisionism in Arnold Toynbee's theory of the rise and fall of civilisations).

The third stance is related to the European historiographical debate, permeated by Marxism, structuralism, and even positivism. It may be said that while Manuel Antunes criticised, he also integrated a part of each one of these strands. In the manner of Henri-Irenée Marrou, the most constant author in the texts of the *História da Cultura Clássica* coursebook, he considered history as "the consciousness" - a notion to be highlighted here - "of the intentional recovery of Man's past", thus underlining how "historical knowledge is, as such, prior to its consignment in writing". Marrou's 'presentism' or 'relativism', alongside other references of the same sphere, such as R.J. Collingwood and Raymond Aron, are the currents of thought in which Antunes can best be integrated and classified. In their wake, he rejected positivism, but once again frequently to adopt the opposing position. For example, he took up Leopold Von Ranke's motto "what really happened" as the ideal of the "true historian", even if only as an aspiration. He also incorporated premisses of total history, as advanced by Fernand Braudel, and throughout the various versions of the text, increasingly adopted structuralist language, borrowed from Lévi-Strauss and Paul Ricoeur, until he came to conceive history as the analysis of political, social and anthropological structures, etc. (Idem, pp. 28-38, 93-107).

Manuel Antunes' legacy is still difficult to grasp. While, as mentioned by Eduardo Lourenço, he did not create a school among the Jesuits or the academics, he had followers and remained a steadfast cultural reference, especially for the students of the Faculdade de Letras. Among his historian pupils, António Reis has expressed his indebtedness to the discussion of the theory of history and, specifically, the use of the concept of culture. Matos Ferreira, in turn, recalls the master as the transmitter of the awareness that the "intellectual or historian" must first and foremost "understand what is being said by others or by the document" (Um pedagogo..., 2011, pp. 377-378, 189-190, 229).

As also emphasized by this same historian, "one cannot place him in the framework of the priests who, at the end of the 1960s, protested against the political society and the Catholic Church", but Father Manuel Antunes "brought the possibility of reflecting on certain themes" which, according to Luís Barreto, were approached "with different and even opposite theories and schools, methods and results", therefore, with total "freedom to discuss Marxism, Freud and Lacan, anarchism and atheism". (Idem, p. 212). Nothing is known of his political inclination, neither before nor after 1974. The students refer to his "superiority in relation to the regime" and strength of character to keep the agents of the Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado (PIDE) [International and State Defence Police] out of his classes. In this regard, Fernando Dacosta describes Manuel Antunes as "neither orthodox nor heterodox, but rather a paradox", someone who sought to "analyse one part of reality and then its opposite" (Idem, p. 141-142; 182). Politically, Ramalho Eanes considers that "he was open to dialogue with everyone, whether from the right or the left", but Medeiros Ferreira is inclined to consider him a "left-wing man". (Idem, 348-349; 364). In 1976, "at the request of Vítor da Cunha Rego (Mário Soares'



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right-hand man)” he was invited to found the centre of a short-lived Fundação de Ciências Políticas [Political Science Foundation], which was launched the following year with the support of Bernardino Gomes (Socialist Party), Francisco Pinto Balsemão and Manuel Castelo Branco (Social Democratic Party). It is now known that he was invited to become Minister of Education in 1978 to replace Sottomayor Cardia, although not much is known about the circumstances of this invitation, which he declined for health reasons. Despite not holding any office, his advice was sought by President Ramalho Eanes (1976-1986) (Idem, pp. 330; 350-ff).

His election as Corresponding Member of the Academia Portuguesa de História [Portuguese Academy of History] (1967), his Doctorate Honoris Causae (1981) awarded by the Universidade de Lisboa, and his decoration as Grande Oficial da Ordem da Torre e Espada, do Valor, Lealdade e Mérito [Grand Officer of the Order of the Tower and Sword of Valour, Loyalty, and Merit] (1983), granted by the President of the Republic, in recognition of his value as an educator and intellectual are worthy of mention.

Notwithstanding his particularly fragile state of health, due to which he was not infrequently in convalescence, he followed through on his commitments until he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. He progressively relinquished his intellectual tasks, and by 1983 had abandoned all his positions. He died two years later at the Hospital de Santa Maria [Saint Mary's Hospital] (Lisbon).

He was consecrated to posterity by Vasco Berardo in a statue inaugurated in 2005 in Sertã. In the same year, the international conference “Padre Manuel Antunes (1918-1985) – Interfaces da Cultura Portuguesa e Europeia” [“Father Manuel Antunes (1918-1985) - Interfaces of Portuguese and European Culture”] was held, which brought together former students, colleagues, and friends. The Instituto Europeu de Ciências da Cultura [European Institute of Cultural Sciences] was also founded and named after him, in a partnership between the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa and the Escola Superior de Artes Decorativas da Fundação Ricardo Espírito Santo [School of Decorative Arts of the Ricardo Espírito Santo Foundation].

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