

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ENGLISH INFLUENCE ON POMBAL
POMBAL SEEN THROUGH HIS LIBRARY

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The Marquess of Pombal is by far the most important Portuguese statesman of the 18th century. It is fair to say that he was the only Portuguese minister of that century whose influence extended beyond Portugal, and who acquired a European stature. He was certainly the most controversial statesman of his time: execrated by Camilo Castelo Branco in *Perfil do Marquês de Pombal*, adulated in *Príncipes de Portugal* by Aquilino Ribeiro, who perhaps had a greater sense of historical reality. This controversy is apparent even in the *New Cambridge Modern History*: in volume VII, chapter XII, Pombal's policies are praised, and in volume VIII, chapter XIII, they are condemned.

At a time when, despite many hesitations, Europe is being created, and Portugal is playing an important part in this creation, it is not without interest to reflect not only on the European influences to which Pombal was subject as a result of his sojourns in London and Vienna prior to his becoming prime minister of Portugal, but also on the manner in which Pombal himself influenced the Europe of his time. The contents of Pombal's library in London, the inventory of which was drawn up in French in 1743, is perhaps the starting point, because it is indicative of the influences to which he was subjected in London. A selection from this inventory, made by José Barreto, is to be found in the Biblioteca Nacional's edition of Pombal's *Escritos Económicos de Londres 1741-1743* (Lisbon, 1986).

There had been remarkable figures in the history of Portugal. The most famous was Henry the Navigator, the son of Philippa of Lancaster, and an early Knight of the Garter, followed by the explorers, Vasco da Gama, Bartolomeu Dias, Fernão de Magalhães (Magellan), Pedro Álvares Cabral, to mention only the foremost, whose fame extended beyond Portugal.

There had been statesmen towards the end of the Middle Ages, such as Dom Dinis, who besides being a great administrator was also

a poet, the Master of Avis, the founder of the House of Avis, Nuno Álvares the Constable, the victor of Aljubarrota. These men however were of another epoch and thus they preceded the tragic era in the history of Portugal known as "sebastianismo", that state of melancholia into which Portuguese society sank following the disappearance of the young King Sebastian in 1578 after the battle of Alcácer-Quibir in Morocco. This state was only compounded by the short reign of the Cardinal-King Henry, Sebastian's great-uncle, followed by sixty years of Spanish rule, from 1580, when Philip II became Philip I of Portugal. ⁽¹⁾

It was from this nightmare that Pombal was determined to free Portugal.

Little is known about Pombal's youth. It is known that he was a quarrelsome student at Coimbra. It is probable that he had not been outside Portugal or at least outside the Iberian Peninsula before his appointment in July 1738, at the age of 39, as Minister Plenipotentiary in London. Unlike Alexandre de Gusmão, Pombal in his youth was not subjected to the liberal ideas which were then spreading through Europe, but this does not mean that once he left Portugal he did not assimilate new ideas.

On 8 October 1738 Pombal left Lisbon for London, where he arrived on 19 October and stayed until May 1743, when he returned to Lisbon. He stayed in Lisbon until December 1744, when he returned to London; in August 1745 he left London for Vienna.

Thus Pombal spent some five years in London, five years which were his political apprenticeship, especially as before going to London it appears that Pombal had never previously held any political appointment, or if he had it was of no significance.

The guiding principles of three aspects of Pombal's subsequent policy as prime minister can be traced to his stay in London.

Firstly Pombal's commercial policy, in that he realised the need to enrich the country by commerce, land ceasing to be the sole source of wealth;

Secondly his religious policy, in that he realised the importance in the modern state of preventing the Church, whether it be the Roman Catholic Church or any other religious institution from having political power;

Thirdly his educational policy, to a great extent intertwined with his religious policy in a country where the Roman Catholic Church maintained its stranglehold on education which it exploited to keep its political power.

Before considering these questions in detail, a summary of the political situation in Portugal and in England may be useful.

Portugal, at the western extremity of Europe, was then an inward looking country, cut off from new ideas which were fast gaining ground in Europe. Economically it was on the verge of bankruptcy: it survived largely due to the imports of gold, diamonds and other

(1) Respeitou-se aqui (como, aliás, em todo o texto) o ponto de vista do autor.

precious stones from Brazil. But this wealth was squandered under João V, the glaring symbol of wastefulness being the Palace-Convent of Mafra, so brilliantly satirised by José Saramago.

On the other hand, England was the leading nation in Europe. It had already rid itself of two tiresome kings, one at the end of a civil war, the other even more stupid than his father, by means of a bloodless revolution which brought his daughter and his son-in-law to the throne. This second revolution, known as the Glorious Revolution, ensured the supremacy of the Liberal Party, known as the Whigs, for seventy years and hence during the time that Pombal was in England.

Not only was England the most politically advanced country: it was also the commercial leader. The flag of the United Kingdom, then England and Scotland, dominated the seas, a mastery which the Dutch had challenged in the 17th century but which was no longer disputed by Pombal's time. Thanks to John Locke, the official philosopher of the Whigs, and Isaac Newton, who pioneered a revolution in scientific thinking, England was the intellectual leader of Europe: much of Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot and Condorcet was inspired by English thought.

It is odd that a man with such intellectual curiosity as Pombal never according to his own admission learnt English. However, as will be seen, many of the books in his library were in English, so that one presumes that he must have been able to read it. But at this time French was the *lingua franca* of diplomacy and, as has been stated, the inventory of Pombal's library was drawn up in French.

Firstly, let us consider Pombal's books on politics and allied subjects including law:

Grotius, *De Jure Belli et Pacis* (Droit de la Guerre et de la Paix)

(Pombal appears to have owned an edition in Latin of Grotius published in Amsterdam in 1631 and a translation in French published in Amsterdam in 1729).

Noodt, *Du pouvoir des Souverains et de la Liberté de Conscience*

Jean Daumat, *Les Lois Civiles dans leur Ordre Naturel*

(this author's name is more usually spelt "Domat": he was a close friend of Pascal)

Montesquieu, *Extrait de Deux Lettres Persanes*

Considérations sur les causes de la Grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence

Histoire du Ministère du Cardinal Duc de Richelieu sous Louis XIII

Testament politique de Jean Baptiste Colbert

Testament politique du Marquis de Louvois

Testament politique du Cardinal Duc de Richelieu

Ministerium Cardinalis Mazarini: ab anno 1643 usque 1652

A Short History of Parliament

Arthur [Earl of] Anglesey, *The Privileges of the House of Lords and Commons Argued and Stated* (his father is said to have been the first English nobleman to have collected a great library).

Although Pombal was apparently an admirer of Grotius and was to some extent influenced by him, the significant works in this section are the histories of Richelieu's Government and Mazarin's Government together with the political testaments of Richelieu, Colbert and Louvois. Notable by its absence is Locke's *Two Treatises on Civil Government*. Whatever else Pombal may have learnt in England, as Lúcio de Azevedo has noted, he did not assimilate either the principles of tolerance or respect for the rights of the individual. Politically he was the disciple of Richelieu, Colbert and Louvois. He was just as absolute as they were and indeed more so because José I did not dominate the political scene as did Louis XIV. At every point Colbert and Louvois had to take into account the wishes of the Monarch and, unlike Colbert and Louvois, who were continually fighting each other, Pombal had no rival.

The great Portuguese historians of the 19th century, particularly Alexandre Herculano and Oliveira Martins, criticise Pombal for his absolutism. These criticisms are perhaps not entirely justified. In Pombal's time, only the Protestant countries of North-West Europe, particularly England and its bridge-head in Europe, Holland, were on the road to democracy, although still far from universal suffrage. In practice, they were oligarchies: what distinguished them from other European countries was their rejection of absolutism, incarnated in the person of the sovereign. In 1750 France, which pretends to be the inventor of political liberty, was still forty years away from the Revolution.

Not only did Pombal learn nothing in England about tolerance, sad to say that even in an age when cruelty was commonplace, Pombal was exceptionally cruel. The extent of Pombal's cruelty may be gauged from the barbaric execution of the Távora family and even more from that of Malagrida, denounced as an ignominy by Voltaire, whom one could hardly accuse of tenderness towards the Jesuits.

There were in Pombal's library a considerable number of works on trade:

Commerce honorable, ou considerations politiques contenant les motifs de nécessité, d'honneur et de profit qui se trouvent à former des compagnies de personnes de toutes conditions pour l'entretien du negoce de mer en France, Nantes, 1646

Mémoires sur le commerce des Hollandais dans tous les Etats et Empires du Monde

Ordonnances de Louis XIV Roi de France et de Navarre sur le Commerce des Négociants et des Marchands

Recueil des règlements généraux et particuliers concernant les manufactures et fabriques du Royaume

Jacques Savary, *Dictionnaire Universel du Commerce*

Samuel Ricard, *Traité Général du Commerce*

M. de la Porte, *La science de négocians (sic) et teneurs de livres de comptes*

Thomas Mun, *England's Treasure by Foreign Trade*

Charles King, *The English Merchant or Trade preserved*

William Petty, *Political Arithmetic*

William Wood, *A Survey of Trade*

Some impartial thoughts on the Woollen Manufacturers (perhaps the inspiration of the Superintendência das Fábricas de Lanifícios?)

Advantages of the East India Trade to England considered Free Trade, or the means to make Trade Flourish.

Sir William Petty, *Political Arithmetic*

Thomas Mun, *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade*

Sir Josiah Child, *A New Discourse of Trade*

The inclusion of *A New Discourse of Trade* by Sir Josiah Child, *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade* by Thomas Mun and *Political Arithmetic* by Sir William Petty is interesting. Child (1630-1699) was the omnipotent leader of the East India Company and its most skilful advocate, to quote John Maynard Keynes. Thomas Mun's work, published in 1664, is generally considered the classic exposition of English mercantilism. Sir William Petty, educated by the Jesuits at the University of Caen and by the Calvinists at Leyden, was one of the founders of the Royal Society in 1662 and an inventor of the science of statistics. His work *Political Arithmetic* was published in 1690.

If during his stay in London Pombal did not absorb English political philosophy, he certainly grasped the significance of England's commercial strength. Before Pombal, in the second half of the seventeenth century, the Marquess of Fronteira and, in particular, Dom Luís de Menezes Count of Ericeira had attempted to introduce a mercantilist policy, but their efforts were timid and met with much opposition. Indeed, in despair, in 1690, the Count of Ericeira committed suicide. They must surely have been forgotten well before Pombal came to power, although Francisco Xavier, 4th. Count of Ericeira, helped Pombal early in his career.

Pombal understood clearly that England was wealthy because of its trade. At the same time, he realised that Portugal was being impoverished as the result of English commercial activities, that is to say that Portuguese trade, such as it was, and in particular, the trade in port wine, was under English control. Pombal therefore decided to challenge English commercial dominance and hence to restrict English activities in Portugal. But if Pombal understood that England had enriched itself by its trade, certainly the way in which he applied the knowledge which he acquired during his stay in London was not English.

On the contrary, in matters of commercial practice Pombal was inspired by France. If in politics Pombal thought of himself as the Portuguese Richelieu, in commerce he copied Colbert and Louvois and it is significant that included in his library were, as already said, the political testaments both of Colbert and of Louvois and also the ordinances of Louis XIV on Trade and Merchants. He envisaged industrial manufacture and the encouragement of trade as necessarily under the control, or at least under the protection, of the State. In support of this view one can cite many examples: the Superintendência das Fábricas de Lanifícios (Superintendance of Wool Manufacture),

the Real Fábrica das Sedas (Royal Silk Factory), the Real Fábrica de Vidros da Marinha Grande (Royal Factory for the Manufacture of Glass) which was managed by Guilherme Stephens, an Englishman, the Sugar Refinery (Refinaria de Açúcar) at Janelas Verdes, another factory managed by an Englishman, Henry Smith: in agriculture the Companhia das Vinhas do Alto Douro, (Alto Douro Wine Company) which was the cause of serious riots in Oporto, and for fishing the Companhia Geral das Reais Pescas do Algarve (Royal Fisheries Company of the Algarve). Like in France, all these enterprises were state-owned or state-controlled.

Why did Pombal follow the French example which even by his time had failed? In the circumstances, it seems that he had little choice. The commercial success of England and of Holland depended on the freedom of their merchants from government interference, a freedom which was indivisible from political freedom and from a relative religious freedom. Even if Pombal had intended to introduce a liberal commercial policy, he did not have at his disposal a personnel capable of implementing it. Above all he did not have a competent and ambitious middle class, a situation which has been endemic throughout Portuguese history.

In his *History of Portugal* Oliveira Martins claims that the Portugal of Pombal was "a false Portugal into which had been imported ideas, institutions and men". Oliveira Martins proceeds to enumerate the foreigners whom Pombal invited to come to Portugal. Incidentally, he is guilty of a grave historical error: he says that many of the officers of the army were German, French and principally English. A study of the names quoted - Monro, MacDonald, Anderson, Maclean, leads one to suppose that they were Scots.

However, as Oliveira Martins himself says, even in the reign of João V, Portugal had to bring not only from Lyon experts in silk-weaving, but also from other parts of France, clock makers, metal founders, cutlers, dyers and hatmakers. This was because Portugal lacked skilled labour, and it is in this respect that one sees most plainly the influence on Pombal of the time he spent outside Portugal.

Was Oliveira Martins correct when he says that the Portugal of Pombal was a false Portugal? Probably not: the reason why it can be claimed that the Portugal of Pombal was false is that his reforms did not survive the death in 1777 of José I and the accession of his daughter Maria I, married to her uncle Pedro III. With the passage of time, these foreigners, or their descendants would have been assimilated and rendered great service to Portugal, in the same way as the Huguenots who left France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 were assimilated in England, Holland, and above all in Prussia. Indeed the Huguenots were largely responsible for transforming Prussia from an uncouth barracks to an important industrial state: not the least consequence of Louis XIV's disastrous policies which later came back to haunt France. Who knows if these very foreigners would not have contributed to a transformation of Portugal, a country which after the fall of Pombal rapidly returned to the state

of "fanaticism and ignorance" in which, as Lúcio de Azevedo says, Pombal found it when he came to power. As early as 1779 Captain Arthur Costigan, in *Sketches and Manners of Portugal*, quoted by Rose Macaulay in *They Came to Portugal*, described the state of Portugal as one of "ignorance and barbarism".

What was the influence on Pombal of English philosophy, other than political philosophy? Whatever the French may claim, the English were well in advance in science and philosophy. The so-called "grand siècle" produced certain writers of great quality, such as Racine and Molière, certain of lesser merit but in harmony with the pompous spirit of the age of Louis XIV, such as Corneille. It is typical of the evolution of the two nations that the members of the Académie Française, founded in 1637, were mostly literary men. When in England in 1662 Charles II founded the Royal Society, the members were mostly eminent scientists, Boyle, Sydenham, Halley, to name only a few, but also the great philosopher Locke, himself a medical doctor, and these erudite men had been preceded by Francis Bacon, the founder of modern English philosophy.

Going back to the inventory of Pombal's library are to be found:

Pufendorf, *De Jure Naturae et Gentium* (Le Droit de la Nature et des Gens)

De Officio Hominis et Civis, (Les Devoirs de l'Homme et du Citoyen, tels qu'ils sont prescrits par la loi naturelle)

Elementa Jurisprudentiae Universalis (Introduction à l'Histoire Générale et Politique de l'Univers)

Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées sur la Religion*

Fra Paulo Sarpi, *Les Droits des Souverains défendus contre les Excommunications et les Interdits des Papes*

John Locke, *Essay on Human Understanding* (Essai philosophique sur l'entendement humain)

Thomas More, *Utopia* (Utopie)

Voltaire, *Lettres écrites de Londres* sur les anglais et autres sujets, generally known nowadays as *Lettres Philosophiques* published in 1734.

And, what is surprising:

Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity as professed by the Quakers* (Apologia de la Verdadera Theologia Christiana como ella es professada por los Trembladores).

So far as concerns the relationship between Church and State, two authors are of particular interest. Firstly, Fra Paulo Sarpi (1552-1623), a Venetian who despite the fact that he was a Dominican was the erudite champion of the Venetian Republic against the political pretensions of Pope Paul V following the Council of Trent. It was in great measure thanks to Sarpi's polemical skills that the Republic was able to maintain the full independence of its secular government from clerical interference.

Secondly Pufendorf, the son of a Protestant clergyman, who saw the Church as a part of that more comprehensive body the State, but

who also conceived of every organised political community as Christian. But for Pufendorf the term Christian was synonymous with Protestant. In particular the State had no right of compulsion in matters of faith. Neither of these authors was English, but obviously Pombal studied them in the atmosphere and under the influence of a country where for some two centuries since the Reformation the clergy had been kept under control. It is true that under Charles I certain bishops, particularly Archbishop Laud and Matthew Wren, the uncle of Christopher Wren, had attempted to regain political power, but Cromwell put an end to these pretensions. Similarly, the Glorious Revolution put an effective end to the schemes of the Catholic Church to gain power.

Again, Voltaire was not English, but his *Lettres Philosophiques* set out with admirable clarity English ecclesiastical policy, specifically stating, in the Eighth Letter, that the Church was established by the Law ("établie par la Loi").

It is perhaps no accident that just as in England in the 16th century the Jesuits were the principal target of the Reformers, so they were the principal target of Pombal's ecclesiastical policy. He realised that they were all the more powerful because they exercised their power discreetly, as confessors to kings and queens and as the almost exclusive educators of the nobility. The expulsion of the Jesuits from Portugal in 1759, commemorated on the pedestal of Pombal's statue which dominates the Avenida da Liberdade, was the logical consequence of Pombal's understanding that to create a modern state the power of the clergy must be suppressed.

It was no doubt in the same spirit that Pombal suppressed the Inquisition, the other pillar of the political power of the Catholic Church. Although the Suppression of the Inquisition is another of Pombal's achievements commemorated on the pedestal of his statue, it appears that he was, in fact, not sufficiently powerful to suppress it entirely. The Inquisition was replaced by the Real Mesa Censória, a much less vicious institution.

Thus, although in commercial practice Pombal was influenced by France, in ecclesiastical policy he was influenced by England. It would never have occurred to Richelieu, or to Louis XIV, Gallican though he may have been, to crush the political power of the Roman Catholic Church. On the contrary, to please the Church, or perhaps more accurately his mistress, he revoked the Edict of Nantes, to the great detriment of France.

So far as concerns Pombal's personal views, what is one to deduce from this list of books? Is it that just as Locke was a Christian more by concession than from conviction, Pombal, although formally Roman Catholic, was, like many of his epoch, a Deist? Included in his library was Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* which had been translated into French in 1700 in Amsterdam by Pierre Coste, a Huguenot refugee from Uzès. This translation was supervised by Locke himself, as presumably was the Latin translation made in 1701 by Richard Burridge. These two translations are referred to in the

judgment of the Real Mesa Censória of June 1768, when its sale was restricted to those persons who obtained a licence from the Real Mesa Censória to read it. As the work was on the Index the judgment is not perhaps surprising. However, it is generally supposed that Pombal encouraged the reading of Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* and it seems that he was well versed in it himself.

Pombal was presumably interested in the Quakers, hence the inclusion in his library of Robert Barclay's work, which was dedicated to Charles II in 1675, and to which Voltaire refers in the third letter of his *Lettres Philosophiques*, another work in Pombal's possession. Was Pombal attracted by a sect which had no clergy, no ritual, and in the ordinary sense no churches?

What was the English influence on Pombal in the matter of education? If one consequence of the expulsion of the Jesuits was a notable diminution of the political power of the Catholic Church, another was necessarily the need to reform education. In the same year as the Jesuits were expelled, 1759, the University of Évora, which was controlled by the Jesuits, was closed, not to be reopened until more than two centuries later, in 1976, when the political climate in Portugal was very different.

In 1761 Pombal founded the Colégio Real dos Nobres in Lisbon. Its curriculum was ahead of the times: it included arithmetic, geometry, history and geography. It did not limit itself to the useless repetition of lines of long dead languages and it emphasised the importance of moral and physical education.

This curriculum, and in particular the stress on the importance of moral and physical education, is clearly inspired by Locke's *Some Thoughts concerning Education*.

Was Pombal acquainted with this work? Directly, probably not. Locke published this book in 1693: in 1695 it was translated into French by the same Pierre Coste as translated the *Essay on Human Understanding*.

As Dr. Joaquim Ferreira Gomes, Professor of Psychology and Education at the University of Coimbra, points out in the many erudite works which he has published on Pombal's educational reforms, Martinho de Mendonça (1713-1743) was well acquainted with Locke's work, probably the French translation. Mendonça's *Apontamentos para a Educação de um Menino Nobre* is almost a Portuguese translation of the work.

It is almost certain that Pombal was acquainted with the works of Mendonça, if only because the curriculum of the Colégio Real closely follows his recommendations, and it may fairly be assumed that he was acquainted with the works of Luís António Verney (1713-1793), who was his protégé. In particular Verney's *Verdadeiro Método de Estudar* and *Introdução sobre a Lógica*, part of which is substantially a copy of the *Essay on Human Understanding*, were greatly influenced by Locke's ideas.

These ideas on education have a European aspect. Montaigne was an influential predecessor of Locke's ideas on education. Indeed, in his

third edition of the French translation of *Some Thoughts concerning Education*, Coste drew up a list of similar passages, and it is known that Locke owned the 1669 French edition of Montaigne and the English translation by Florio of 1603. However, Montaigne's ideas are scattered through his essays, whilst Locke set out his ideas systematically in his book.

Unfortunately the Colégio Real ran into difficulty, precisely because, of necessity, most of the teachers were foreigners. In any event, it would surely not have survived the fall of Pombal after the death of José I in 1777.

In fact Pombal's educational reforms were ahead of their time. Although both Montaigne and Locke were widely read by the intellectuals in Europe, admittedly numerically a small fraction of the population, and Rousseau's *Emile* borrows many ideas from both Montaigne and Locke, the English influence was one of precept rather than practice. At that time, Fielding, who had been at Eton, wrote in *Joseph Andrews* "The public schools are the nursery of all vice and immorality". Fielding died and was buried in Lisbon in 1754: there is no record of his having met Pombal, and as he was ill and dying when he reached Lisbon it is doubtful if he did so.

Equally, one may well doubt whether the reforms of the University of Coimbra, started in 1772, were inspired by the English. On the contrary, in the 18th century Oxford was in a state of stagnation so well described by Gibbon in *Memoirs of my Life and Writings*. Cambridge was only saved from this lamentable state due to the influence of Isaac Newton, appointed Lucasian Professor of Mathematics in 1669. Thus, the reforms of Coimbra were the logical continuation of the reforms of secondary education which Pombal had already started.

So far, it is the English and to some extent the European influence on Pombal which has been considered. The influence was largely English in the sense that Pombal's political apprenticeship was spent in England, but many and indeed perhaps most of the books known to have been in his library were not English. Further it is to be remembered that Pombal spent some four years between 1745 and 1749 in the Vienna of Maria-Teresa. In what manner did he himself influence the European policies of his times?

It is perhaps a paradox that it was Pombal's religious policies which gave him a reputation outside Portugal. He was the first statesman in the Catholic world to throw a stone against the political influence of the Catholic Church, in particular by the suppression or more accurately the part suppression of the Inquisition and the expulsion of the Jesuits, the necessity of which he undoubtedly learnt in England.

In 1773, fourteen years after their expulsion from Portugal, Pope Clement XIV, a Conventual Franciscan, suppressed the Society of Jesus. By this time, both Charles III of Spain, perhaps the only enlightened king whom Spain has ever known until Juan Carlos I, and Louis XV of France had added their voices to that of Pombal.

However, finally the policy of Pombal failed. Under Maria I and her uncle Pedro III Portugal rapidly sank back into the deepest obscurantism. In 1814 Pope Pius VII, in the ultra conservative reaction to the French Revolution and the Napoleonic reforms which followed them, revived the Society of Jesus, at the same time suppressing street lighting and vaccination in the Papal States as dangerous French innovations. Now, one-hundred-and-eighty years later, thanks largely to Pedro Arupe, a Spaniard, the Jesuits have become one of the most progressive orders and are an honour to the Catholic Church.

Pombal's career is a Greek tragedy: his retention of power depended entirely on his sovereign's pleasure. The very absolutism from which he derived his power and did so much to strengthen was the instrument of his downfall under Maria I, to the detriment of Portugal and of Europe.

"Mal por mal, melhor Pombal!"