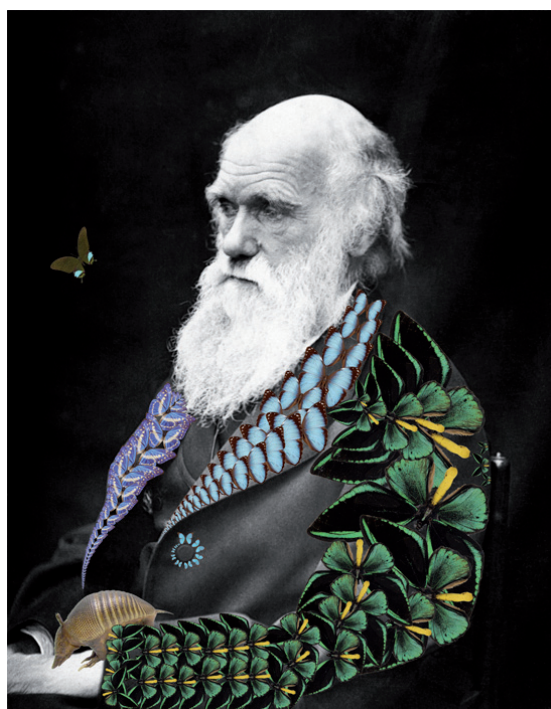


Ana Leonor Pereira
João Rui Pita
Pedro Ricardo Fonseca
(eds.)

Darwin, Evolution, Evolutionisms

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FROM THE ARIAN MYTH TO THE LUSO-TROPICALISM:
ECHOES OF SOCIAL DARWINISM IN PORTUGUESE FOREIGN PRESS

In the beginning it was not the word anymore, but the long cosmic silence of the unpopulated Earth, followed by the painful screams of life breaking through. With the most diverse shapes. Without an all-powerful entity. Evolving and adapting. Without a final and metaphysical objective. Not necessarily culminating in the human being...

Revolutionary, mainly in biology, Charles Darwin's theory¹ became known within numerous scientific domains. Even art reflected this impact, and Gustav Mahler could, in 1895-1896, write a Third Symphony as a tribute to evolutionary hypotheses. On the other hand, human sciences, as well as common knowledge, saw themselves enriched by new concepts which redefined the way in which the Other overseas was perceived. Natural selection, influenced by Herbert Spencer's sociological formulations, Francis Galton's Eugenism, Ernst Haeckel's Monism and the so-called "Arian myth"², was maybe more than any other theory, a product of its time. In fact, if Darwin tried to answer the questions "where are we from?" and "who are we?", social Darwinism as a result of the thinking of those authors revealed itself to be more attached to "where are we going?", having debated with the beliefs and conceptions of those who defended the colonial imperialism solution as the path to follow through nineteenth-century Europe³. Certainly, social Darwinism set other questions regarding its application. First: who were the competing groups and what was the nature of the dispute? Was it at a socio-economic level? At a national level? Racial level? And extinction, was it a reality to consider?

The lecture hereby proposed aims to trace, in a comprehensive manner, the way social Darwinism was present in some Portuguese periodical publications of a colonial theme. This is, in what way these important sources of knowledge of overseas mentality accompanied, integrated or ignored the appeals from a theory that, at first sight, seemed to legitimate the occupation of inhabited territories of "races" considered less capable.

¹ See: Ana Leonor Pereira, *Darwin em Portugal. Filosofia. História. Engenharia Social*. Coimbra: Alameda, 2001.

² See: Léon Poliakov, *O Mito Ariano. Ensaio sobre as fontes do racismo e dos nacionalismos*. S. Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1985.

³ See: Fernando Costa, "A Política Externa. Do Ultimatum à República", in *Diplomacia & Guerra. Política Externa e Política de Defesa de Portugal do Final da Monarquia ao Marcelismo*. Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 2001, pp. 45-67.

The periodicals consulted were *Revista Colonial Portuguesa e Marítima* (1897-1910), *Revista Colonial* (1913-1923) and *O Mundo Português* (1934-1947) – which include the chronology involving the last years of the Constitutional Monarchy, part of the First Republic and the initial period of the *Estado Novo* (New State).

Archaeology of racism and racism in Anthropology

The so-called “scramble for Africa” towards a “place in the sun”, metaphor of nineteenth-century colonialism, was preceded and accompanied by various attempts of getting to know and cataloguing the Other found in those territories. Such coincidence should not be perceived as strange. The “Arian myth”, which has the stamp of those times, came to intertwine with social Darwinism, being famous the *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853-5), of Arthur de Gobineau, almost an exact contemporary of *On the origin of species* (1859). On the other hand, Phrenology and the growing proliferation of taxonomies of different human groups encouraged the development of racism⁴, having been recovered the stereotypes – already existing – on miscegenation and degeneracy. As so, science, pseudo-science, myth and tradition, hand in hand, tried to paint colonialism with more bright colours.

In Portugal, we know that the colonial ideology invoked indisputable historical rights consecrated by fifteenth and sixteenth-century discoveries. In the same way, this ideology claimed a special talent in the relations with the Other as a result of the many centuries of contact, which would compensate the lack of economical and demographic capital to occupy, “civilize” and explore the overseas territories⁵. Besides, these were the only arguments which Portugal, as a second class power, could use against the other colonizing nations, when the division of the African continent took place in the Berlin Conference of 1884-5.

Besides the reduced influence in the international political scene, to which accusations of continuing to maintain situations of dissimulated slavery were added, a third aspect weighed in the disdain given by the other nations. It consisted in the belief that the successive invasions of the Iberian Peninsula, during the Ancient days by African people and Semites, as well as the miscegenation of Portuguese people during the maritime expansion, had usurped the purity of their, supposedly, Arian blood.

Various Portuguese authors tried to develop these ideas but also valued the role of ethnic multiplicity in the construction of national identity. The writings of some members of the Geração de 70 (Generation of the 1870's) are remembered, such as Teófilo Braga and Oliveira Martins, who discussed the mingling among the invaders of the Peninsula⁶; or, two generations later, although in another perspective, the poet Teixeira de Pascoaes, considering the idiosyncratic “saudade”(longing/nostalgia)

⁴ Léon Poliakov, *ob. cit.*, p. 137.

⁵ Cf. Valentim Alexandre, “Prefácio” in Cláudia Castelo, “O Modo Português de estar no Mundo” – o luso-tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa (1933-1961). Porto: Edições Afrontamento, pp. 5-6.

⁶ Cf. Fernando Catroga, “História e Ciências Sociais em Oliveira Martins”, in *História da História em Portugal*. Lisboa: Temas e Debates, 1998) 137-185.

as a product of the desire of the Arian people (Greeks, Romans, Goths, Celts) and the hope of Semites (Phoenicians, Jewish and Arabs)⁷. In fact, until today, History manuals of the first cycle of Primary education maintained the famous “list” which includes, among others, Celts, Iberians, Lusitanian, Phoenicians, Carthaginian, Greeks, Romans, Alani, Vandals, Suevi, Visigoths, Jewish, Berbers and Arabs – proving, therefore, that at least at an ideological level, the “racial fusion” which operated on peninsular soil always had some credit. In any case, the testimonies of the time explain that miscegenation resulting from the overseas colonization continued to be faced as a sub-product and/or necessary evil of previous centuries. The end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century did not mark great differences in the view of what regards the colonized. The assimilation measures were always timid and only the inhabitants of Cape Verde, India and Macau enjoyed full citizenship. The schooling was at an early stage and the establishments of teaching took time to arrive overseas: some primary schools, few high schools, no university. In the end, the idea was to stop the appearance of native cultured elites, more capable of fighting for their rights of equality and even a hypothetical decentred autonomy⁸. There were actually authors who considered the schooling given to the colonized unnecessary, since the latter “is condemned to not advance beyond some certain limits”⁹. Due to this, it was not until the 1950’s/1960’s period, in which the international pressure to decolonize started to gain strength, accusing Portugal of not developing the colonies, the successive political regimes little invested in the overseas education. Furthermore, the concession of citizenship to all colonized peoples – S. Tomé and Príncipe and Timor (1953) and Guinea, Angola and Mozambique (1961) – did not go beyond a cosmetic operation, aimed to convince the international community of the supposedly benign and modernizing character of Portuguese colonialism¹⁰.

In the same sense it should be understood as an apparent change in ideological paradigm: social Darwinism gave way to the luso-tropical theory of the sociologist Gilberto Freyre. This thesis defended that the “success” of the colonising action was due to the “plastic” character of the Portuguese, which stimulated the ethnic-cultural miscegenation and healthy racial interaction¹¹. Inspired by the theories of mixed race population of the “Generation of the 1870’s”, the teachings of anthropologist Franz Boas and in many aspects Brazilian colonization, luso-tropicalism was a foundation of the Estado Novo when the anti-colonialist campaigns directed toward Portugal started during the decades of 1950-1970¹².

⁷ Cf. Teixeira de Pascoais, *A arte de ser português*. Lisbon: Assírio & Alvim, 1998, pp. 56-57.

⁸ Mário Pinto de Andrade, *Origens do Nacionalismo Africano. Continuidade e ruptura nos movimentos unitários emergentes da luta contra a dominação colonial Portuguesa (1911-1961)*. Lisboa: Publicações Dom Quixote, 1997.

⁹ *António Lourenço Farinha*, “A mentalidade do preto V”, in *Revista Colonial*. Lisboa: Junho 1917, no 54, p. 132.

¹⁰ Cf. Luís Reis Torgal, “‘Muitas Raças, uma Nação’ ou o mito do Portugal multirracial na ‘Europa’ do Estado Novo”, in *Estudos do Século XX*. Coimbra: Quarteto, 2002, no 2, pp. 147-165.

¹¹ Cf. Gilberto Freyre, *Casa Grande e Senzala*. Lisboa: Edições Livros do Brasil, 1957, pp. 18-29.

¹² Cláudia Castelo, *ob. cit.*

Social Darwinism and the colonial issue

The *Revista Colonial Portuguesa e Marítima* presented some impressions which were more relevant than the ones in the overseas themed periodicals regarding the end of the Constitutional Monarchy due to the exception made to the *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*. The *Revista Portuguesa Colonial e Marítima* started publishing in 1897, “under the high protection of His Majesty the King D. Carlos” and practiced studying the overseas in a perspective related to the exploration of local potentialities, attributing, therefore, less importance to the ethnographic aspect. Even so, some articles did not avoid making some considerations about the evolution/education/civilization of the Africans.

For example, in “O Negro perante a Pedagogia” [The Black before Pedagogy], the author said that the fact that “Africans were lazy” made the European observer “think them incapable of superior inclinations”¹³, because they “have received from Europe, centuries ago, more prejudicial than beneficial influxes”. However, based on contemporary researchers, which affirmed that Black Africans were “susceptible to improving and even capable for intellectual culture”, the author established that the multiplicity of schools could improve “some qualities of the race”. However, to lead to that desire to the wanted point, it was necessary to “psychologically study [...] the different ethnic types of the colonies”¹⁴.

Another number of the same magazine remembered that, despite the different “races” not having “the same ability to evolve”, that in no way would compromise the colonial work. In his words, “the white race before reaching the degree of development that it has nowadays” would have been “much inferior to other races”¹⁵. Praising, mainly, the “perfect and elegant” type of the Cape-Verdean, but without referring to miscegenation as the possible origin of their “talent” and “knowledge”, the author did not disdain the other Africans, guaranteeing that “the African of today is not the African of our predecessors [...] judged as an unconscious being and a despicable thing”¹⁶. It was important to, thus, “elevate the indigenous mentality [...] maintaining the sympathy that it always had for the Portuguese”, in order to guarantee a better economic improvement of each colony¹⁷. More radical opinions could be found in *Revista Colonial*, published during the First Republic. If most of the articles directed appeals to colonists and potential colonists, indicating the conditions and impediments they found and would find, the fact is that the “indigenous” was also studied. In general, the tone was similar to that followed by the *Revista Colonial Portuguesa e Marítima*, which did not impede one or other opposing voice, which was the case of primary teacher António Lourenço Farinha. Farinha, in a series of five articles, resorted to a generalisation, describing the “character” of all Africans based on the inhabitants of the south of Mozambique. Attributing to them various flaws and vices,

¹³ Ferreira Desusado, “O Negro perante a Pedagogia”, in *Revista Portuguesa Colonial e Marítima*. Lisboa: 1897, p. 583.

¹⁴ Idem, *ibidem*, p. 585.

¹⁵ José de Macedo, “A Educação do Negro”, in *Revista Portuguesa Colonial e Marítima*. Lisboa: 1901, p. 239

¹⁶ Idem, *ibidem*, p. 297.

¹⁷ Idem, *ibidem*, p. 288.

with a harsh language, full of improper words, Farinha affirmed that “anthropologically the black is of an extreme inferiority” and that, due to the new diseases which arrived with the colonizers, actual “civilization annihilates them”. Quoting Darwin, he concludes that the assimilation would take a long time, if it wasn't impossible, announcing that “the inferior species in the vegetal and animal kingdom, tend to disappear, to give way to other superior species selected by nature”¹⁸.

The end of the 1920's and beginning of the 1930's, coincided with the agony of the First Republic and the affirmation of the Estado Novo, after the “interval” of the Military Dictatorship, and were marked by the development of the periodical editorial activity with the overseas theme. *O Mundo Português* was published for the first time in 1934 by the Secretary of National Propaganda (SPN) and by the General-Agency of the Colonies (AGC); this magazine embodied the so-called “imperial mystique” sustained by Salazar's regime during the 1930's and 1940's.

The magazine published apologetic articles of colonization, stories and “exemplary” poems, photographs of “indigenous” and of “virgin” landscapes, small ethnographic essays and idealized “portraits” of each of the colonies. To preserve are the narratives versing the “indigenous” and their idiosyncrasies. Presented with the usual mottos – indolence, brutality, lack of knowledge of the colonizing language –, the “indigenous” continued to be seen as a big child.

However, certain tales explored a less depreciative aspect, looking to insert them in their “natural” environment without the presence of the white man. Usually, a moralist conclusion ended these texts, being as a sort of literary version of those essays which recovered the myth of the “good savage”. Also normal was the collecting of “indigenous” proverbs and thoughts, not contradicting the value of the popular knowledge there manifested.

Despite the omnipresent paternalism and disdain for the colonized, *O Mundo Português* started to insert some apologetic articles of miscegenation. In general, the articles were ambiguous: they did not censor it openly, but did hesitate in recognizing any usefulness. However, one of the first Portuguese followers of Gilberto Freyre, the writer José Osório de Oliveira, gave the name for the future adoption of the luso-tropical theory by the Estado Novo, not inhibiting to demonstrate great interest in the human reality in Cape Verde. It was, however, an exception.

Conclusion

Social Darwinism marked the Portuguese overseas ideology until the 1950's of the 20th century. Despite Darwin, Spencer and Haeckel scarcely being quoted, their teachings gained followers among doctors, publicists and colonists. The inability of the colonised peoples to acquire the beginnings of the industrial civilization was believed. This fact cannot be viewed as strange since science started the dialogue with the “Arian myth”, with ancestral beliefs about the Africans as crystallized in the Middle Ages and during the maritime expansion. Thus, the referred periodicals limited themselves to developing and advertising, according to the dominant thought at the time, a racist ideology fixed on stereotypes.

¹⁸ António Farinha, “A mentalidade do preto V”, in *Revista Colonial*. Lisboa, June 1917, no 54, p. 132.