

# Global Spencerism

*The Communication and Appropriation  
of a British Evolutionist*

*Edited by*

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BRILL

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## Spencerism in Brazil: An Introduction

*Heloisa Maria Bertol Domingues*

The history of a people should provide a complete explanation of its evolutionary march (...) Of all the theories proposed, that of Spencer is what comes closest to the target.

SILVIO ROMERO, 1888



With the above phrase, Silvio Romero,<sup>1</sup> historian of Brazilian literature and teacher of philosophy in Colégio Pedro II, an important school in Rio de Janeiro, introduced his book *História da Literatura Brasileira*, published in five volumes in 1888 – the year slavery was declared illegal in Brazil. Stating that the best theory for the history of Brazil was that of Spencer, Romero explained that “a theory of the historical evolution of Brazil has to clarify the action of the physical environment in all its aspects; study the ethnological qualities of the races which constituted Brazilian people at the beginning of the conquest; take into consideration the biological and economic conditions in which migrants found themselves; determine which old habits had disappeared, like atrophied organs due to a lack of function; follow the appearance of mixed populations; describe the new incentives of national psychology which began in the social organism and determined its future.”<sup>2</sup>

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1 Silvio Romero (1851–1914) was born in a small town called Lagarto, in the Brazilian state of Sergipe. He studied in the Faculty of Law in Recife where he was a student of Tobias Barreto, the great propagator of the evolutionism of Haeckel and Spencer, as well as the positivism of Auguste Comte. He returned to Sergipe where he held political positions. In 1879 he moved to Rio de Janeiro, where he worked as a journalist, initially collaborating in *Revista Brasileira*. He specialized in literary criticism. He was also a teacher of philosophy in Colégio Pedro II <<http://basilio.fundaj.gov.br>, consult. 22/06/2014>.

2 Silvio Romero, *História da Literatura Brasileira*, 5 vols (Rio de Janeiro: Livaria José Olympio Editora, 1943), vol. 1, 43, 55.

He wrote this at an important political and social moment for the representation of Brazilian nationality, because of the transition from the imperial regime to a republican one, the problem of citizenship that had emerged following the end of slavery, and a crisis between Church and State. A few years before controversial positivist thought had been introduced that gave ample space to science and new theories. Darwin's and Haeckel's theories had been widely discussed in scientific circles since the 1870s, as had Auguste Comte's ideas. Spencer's work started to circulate at the same time, but would only really have an impact in the following decades. These ideas appeared in books, newspaper articles, public courses,<sup>3</sup> medical and engineering schools (in the natural sciences), and, most especially, law courses where intellectuals were educated in what were later called the social sciences. The new theories also had an impact on scientific institutions, such as the National Museum (1818), the National Observatory (1827), and the Advanced Schools of Engineering and Medicine (1808), which were undergoing a series of reforms at that time. Law schools introduced new theories for the social environment, similar to what medical schools had done for biology and engineering schools for the natural sciences. This period was called the Scientific Era in Brazil.<sup>4</sup>

According to the Brazilian philosopher, Cruz Costa, Spencerism in Brazil represented the broadest theory of progress and proved the "law of progressive differentiation," which satisfied what the "new nobles" wanted.<sup>5</sup> The historiography of the social sciences in Brazil also shows that sociology was, at the beginning, based mainly on Spencer and Comte.<sup>6</sup> Thomas Glick observed that in Southern Brazil there also emerged a literature based on positivist ideas and on evolutionism in which theories of Darwin, as well as Haeckel, Buckle and Spencer, were the object of debates, partisanship and publications.<sup>7</sup> History,

3 In 1876 the *Cursos Públicos [do Bairro] da Glória* (public courses of [the neighbor] of Glória) commenced in Rio de Janeiro. See Terezinha A. Collichio, *Miranda de Azevedo e o Darwinismo no Brasil* (Belo Horizonte, Itatiaia, São Paulo: EDSP, 1988), 50.

4 João Cruz Costa, *Contribuição à História das Ideias no Brasil* (José Olympio Editora, 1956), 298-300; Maria Amélia M. Dantes, *Institutos de Pesquisa Científica no Brasil in Ciências no Brasil*, ed. Mário G. Ferri and Shozo Motoyama, 3 vols (São Paulo: EDUSP, 1979/81), vol. 1, 341; Angela Alonso, *Ideias em Movimento* (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2002), 37.

5 Cruz Costa, *Contribuição*, 301. The 'new-nobles' to whom Cruz Costa referred were the republicans who took power after the end of the imperial regime and the overthrow of Pedro II in 1889. João Cruz Costa (1904-1978), philosopher and Professor of São Paulo University, studied the History of Philosophy in Brazil.

6 Sergio Miceli et al., *História das Ciências Sociais no Brasil* (São Paulo: Vértice, 1989).

7 Thomas Glick also shows that in the south of Brazil Darwin's theory gained scientific recognition as shown by Darwin himself, drawing on the works of Fritz Muller ("O positivismo brasileiro na sombra do darwinismo," in *A recepção do Darwinismo no Brasil*, ed. by Heloisa M. Bertol Domingues, Magali Romero Sá and Thomas Glick (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Fiocruz, 2003), 181-189.

as a sort of genre of literature, was, according to the sociologist Antonio Cândido, one of the great propagators of Spencer's ideas in Brazil.<sup>8</sup>

This paper will consider the transversality of Spencerism in the historiographic production of two Brazilian historians, the aforementioned Silvio Romero and Capistrano de Abreu.<sup>9</sup> Spencer was also important in the formulation of the Political Science program from the São Paulo School of Law by Alberto Salles.<sup>10</sup> Like the first Brazilian sociologists, historians also graduated from law schools. The books written by these intellectuals were published between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth and even today are representative of their respective specialties.

The three authors gained recognition due to their participation in the movement of ideas at the time. Silvio Romero is considered one of the icons of the so-called 1870s Generation. Alberto Salles is also recognized as part of this 'generation.'<sup>11</sup> Capistrano de Abreu, who arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1878, is usually not included in it. He was a journalist, soon recognized as a leading intellectual who wrote literary criticism and history under the theoretical inspiration of positivism and Spencerian evolutionism.<sup>12</sup> In their repeatedly republished books Capistrano de Abreu and Silvio Romero, who had parallel trajectories, presented different interpretations of the same facts in the history

8 Antonio Cândido, *Iniciação à Literatura Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Ouro Sobre Azul, 2004), 63, 64. Antonio Cândido (1918), important sociologist, professor of São Paulo University, and expert in literature history in Brazil.

9 Capistrano de Abreu (1853–1927), was born in Maranguape, in the state of Ceará. He studied law for two years in Recife, then returned to Ceará, where he remained for some years working as a journalist, afterwards moving to Rio de Janeiro where he was a teacher in Colégio Pedro II. In 1879 he entered the National Library, making it his laboratory. His works contributed greatly to the history of Brazil and to a radical change in the historiography, bringing the hinterland, the *sertão*, and the 'paths of settlement' constructed by simple people, into the stage of history (José Honório Rodrigues, "Capistrano de Abreu e a Historiografia Brasileira," in *Correspondência de Capistrano de Abreu*, vol. 1, 2ª edição (Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, Brasília, INL, 1977), Introduction XXVII–LVI.

10 Alberto Salles (1857–1904), born in Campinas, São Paulo, son of coffee planters, graduated from São Paulo School of Law, where he worked as a professor. He was important in journalism and a great publicist of politics. He was considered an ideologue of the federalist republic, a regime he ardently defended, having written in 1885, the Republican Catechism, which had enormous repercussions, with up to 10.000 copies being printed. His writings still have an impact today, as shown by the facsimile edition of his book one hundred years later. He was the brother of the Brazilian president Manuel Ferraz de Campos Salles, elected in 1898, whose mandate lasted until 1902 (Fernando Cardim, "Preface," *Alberto Salles, Ciência Política* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 1997), III–XXIV).

11 Alonso, *Ideias em Movimento*, 23.

12 Rodrigues, *Capistrano de Abreu*, XXXIX.

of Brazil based on theoretical principles drawn from Spencer's concept of social evolution. For Romero, as for Spencer, Brazil was part of the march of civilization. According to Romero, the Brazilian people originated from three races, but the white conquerors imposed their habits and culture, as could be seen in the history of Brazilian literature. For Abreu, Brazilian historical evolution was expressed by the social habits and culture of the simple men that lived in the countryside. He reinterpreted Spencer's evolutionism making an analogy with the process of the evolution of intelligence, as a part of the nervous system, saying that the intelligence of the Brazilian people was formed in the struggle and adaptation to colonial life. This shows that historical representation is not exempt from the injunctions of the present as to how a theory, in this case Spencer's evolutionary theory, served as scientific argument. Romero represented the colonization ideology, while Abreu, an anti-colonialist, draws a type of cultural nationalism. Political positions were translated that were subject, above all, to the publishing industry, creating representations for the future. More than Romero and Abreu, Salles publicized politics, his journalistic specialty. Can they be considered as the 'popularizers of sciences' like the British figures identified by Bernard Lightman?<sup>13</sup>

It can be noted that although Spencer's thought had provided a foundation on which intellectuals could build their ideas, Spencerism was not a term used at that time, unlike Darwinism '*tout court*,' 'Social Darwinism' and on a lesser scale, Hackaelianism. Positivism was more than an idea. The positivist church had been active in Brazil since the end of the nineteenth century. The adepts of positivism were divided into orthodox, liberal, and republican.<sup>14</sup> Romero, who was well educated, called himself a Darwinist, though he looked to Spencer for theoretical guidance. Salles included himself among the non-orthodox Comtean positivists in relation to the non-autonomy of the field of cultural production.<sup>15</sup> Abreu abstained from self-classification, and although he emphasized the ideas of Spencer, he also acknowledged the impact of the positivism of Buckle and Comte on his ideology. Spencer's ideas served to corroborate different representations of the same historic facts, as in the cases of political organization and the ethnic formation of Brazilian society. Appropriating Spencer's ideas gave these authors scientific credibility. As a

13 Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers Science. Designing Nature for New Audience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). See also James A. Secord, "Knowledge in Transit," *Isis* (2004): 654–672.

14 Ivan Lins, *História do Positivismo no Brasil. Coleção Brasileira* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1967).

15 About non-autonomy of a field of cultural production see Pierre Bourdieu, *Campo Intelectual e Projeto Criador. In Problemas do Estruturalismo* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Ed., 1966).

result, their appropriations oriented Brazilian social thought and became influential as historical accounts of the development of the nation.

### Spencer's Ideas and the Context of Circulation

Acknowledging the importance of what James Secord said, quoting Robert Westman, that “books and letters,” and not *isms*, “passed hands,” and considering that libraries are sites where books circulated, a survey was carried out of the records of Spencer's books in the Brazilian National Library and in the Minerva Database of the libraries of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. This includes all the libraries of that time from the medical and engineering school, as well as that of the National Museum [of natural history]. It also includes libraries of social science courses, which were established during the twentieth century. With these records it was possible to observe the dates of book editions, if they were original, and to discover who were the publishers.

It was found that Spencer's books are scattered among various university libraries, as well as the National Library. Some can be found in original editions, in English, though the majority of first editions are in French.<sup>16</sup> It can also be seen from the publishing dates that the circulation of Spencer's works intensified between 1880–1890, when the first Portuguese translations of his books appeared in Brazil (Table 9.1). This means that Spencer's ideas gained greater importance with the republican government and the emergence of the question of citizenship following the abolition of slavery.<sup>17</sup> The importance for the history of Brazil by Silvio Romero and Capistrano de Abreu, on the one hand, and the theoretical approach of Alberto Salles on the other, will also be looked at here. They are representatives of that political moment. Spencer continued to shape social thought in Brazil throughout the twentieth century. In the libraries consulted, his publications ranged from the 1920s to the 1940s, especially those about chemistry and biology.

A dynamic book trade flourished in Brazil at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Many newspapers circulated, and

16 The importance and popularity of French in Brazil can be seen in Romero's note about the *Classification of the Sciences*, stating that he had translated the book because there was no previous French translation, leaving it understood that Brazilian readers dominated this language. See attached table 9.1.

17 Herbert Spencer, *Educação intelectual, moral e física* (Education: Intellectual Moral and Physical) (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Laemert, 1901); *A Justiça* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Francisco Alves, 1891); *O que é a moral?* (Lisboa: J. Bastos, 1879); *O progresso, sua lei e sua causa* (Lisboa: Inquérito Ed., s/d).



TABLE 9.1    *Translations of Herbert Spencer's works into Brazil (1879-19??)*

Years	Language	Original	Title	Publisher	Translator	Comments
1878	French	<i>Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical</i> (1861)	<i>Educação intelectual, moral e física</i> (1879)	Paris		BN
1901	Portuguese			Rio de Janeiro, Livraria Laemmert	From English	Library MN
1879	Portuguese	<i>What is moral?</i>	<i>O que é a moral?</i>	J. Bastos, Lisboa		
1939	Portuguese	"Progress: Its Law and Cause" (1857)	<i>Lei e causa do progresso</i>	Ed. Inquérito		PGG/IFCS/UFRJ Library
1891-98	French	<i>The Study of Sociology</i> (1873)	Principes de Sociologie	F. Alcan, Paris	M. E. Cazelles	Obras Raras da Escola de Belas Artes/UFRJ Library
1871	English	The Classification of the Sciences	<i>Classificação das Ciências</i>	Rio de Janeiro, Jornal do Comércio		BN
1885	Portuguese			Paris, Alcan	Silvio Romero	Published in the newspaper shared in parts
1897	French		<i>Classification des Sciences</i>		F. Rethore	Library MN , Input record 1965
1886	English	Principles of Biology		New York, D. Appleton,		CCS, Health Sciences Center/ UFRJ Library
1893	French		<i>Principes de Biologie</i>			Library MN
1880	French		<i>Les Bases de la Morale Evolucioniste</i>	Paris, G. Ballière		Library MN Also Ed. 1901 and 1905, ed. Paris, Alcan; Input record 1910
1896	French		<i>La morale des différents peuples et la morale personnelle</i>	Paris, Guillaumin	E. Castelot, Etienne Martin Saint-Léon	Library MN Input record 1958

TABLE 9.1 Cont.

Years	Language	Original	Title	Publisher	Translator	Comments
1907		<i>First Principles</i> (1862)	<i>Les Premiers Principes</i>	Paris, F. Alcan	M. E. Cazelles	Library MN
1879	French		<i>Essates Scientifiques, suivue de réponses aux objections sur les Premiers Principes</i>	Paris, G. Ballière	M. A. Burdeau	Library MN
1905	French		<i>Principes de Psychologie</i>	Paris, Alcan	Th. Riboi end A. Epinas	Obras Raras/UFRJ Library
1909-1912						
1888	French	<i>The Man Versus the State</i>	<i>L'Individu contre l'État</i>	Paris, Alcan	Gerschel	Library MN
1904	English	<i>An Autobiography</i>	<i>Une Autobiographie</i>	Paris, Alcan		Faculdade de Letras/UFRJ Library
1907	French			Paris, Alcan		Library MN
1875	French		<i>Introduction à la Science Sociale</i>	Paris, G. Ballière		Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas/UFRJ and MN Library, 1908 edition
1909	Spanish		<i>Las ceremonias de la Vida</i>			Faculdade de Ciências Sociais/UFRJ

*Note.* BN – Biblioteca Nacional / National Library; MN – Museu Nacional/National Museum (Museum of Natural History); UFRJ – Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (Federal University, Rio de Janeiro). The National Library has many books by Spencer about biology published in the twentieth century.

publishers printed works by Brazilian authors.<sup>18</sup> Leuzinger, a Swiss company in Rio de Janeiro since 1832, was one of the great book producers during the Empire. Leuzinger published Capistrano de Abreu's book, even after his death, for *Sociedade Capistrano de Abreu*.<sup>19</sup> Livraria Laemmert was also in Rio de Janeiro since 1827. The German owner of this publishing house, Eduard Laemmert, had studied in Karlsruhe, where there were bookselling schools. Laemmert was the publisher of numerous Brazilian intellectuals. In 1901 he published the first translation of a book by Spencer in Brazil, *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*. At the end of the century he published various journals, including *Revista Brasileira*, which included many articles by Silvio Romero. In 1909 he closed down his business, selling the copyrights he owned to Francisco Alves, who would be one of the most important Brazilian publishers in the twentieth century, alongside José Olympio.<sup>20</sup>

Although the original books of Spencer, Comte, Darwin, and so many other theorists circulated through the country, the new ideas gained popularity principally through newspapers and cultural magazines. Silvio Romero published many articles at the end of the century in magazines, including *Revista Brasileira*, and in newspapers, such as *Jornal do Comércio* from Rio de Janeiro, where he published the first Brazilian translation of *The Classification of the Sciences* in 1885.<sup>21</sup> Capistrano de Abreu published numerous journalistic articles, which after his death were collected in five volumes, entitled "*Ensaios e Estudos*."<sup>22</sup>

The great impact of Spencerian evolutionism could be felt when it was considered that Brazil was one of the important sites for Charles Darwin's own

18 Laurence Hallewell, *O livro no Brasil, São Paulo* (São Paulo: EDUSP, 1985), 158. Specialized scientific journals and those from scientific societies, such as *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* (IHGB–1838), *Sociedade Auxiliadora da Indústria Nacional* (SAIN–1825), and *Revista do Imperial Instituto de Agricultura* (1860), or scientific institutions, such as *Archives do Museu Nacional* (1874) or *Anais do Observatório Nacional* (1876), journals which were exchanged with numerous similar international institutions, stuck to the scientific work and specialties of each institution; no references to Spencer call attention.

19 Hallewell, *O livro no Brasil*, 160.

20 Ibid.

21 Silvio Romero, "Herbert Spencer," *Jornal do Comércio* (October 27, 1892): 7 and 15. *Jornal do Comércio* published many articles about the sciences, naturalist journeys in the hinterland of Brazil, the theory of evolution, and even the descent of man from apes.

22 Abreu initially published in Ceará, where he was born, in Maranguapense newspaper and in *Escola Popular do Ceará*. In Rio de Janeiro he published in various magazines, notably *Gazetinha*, *Revista da Academia Brasileira de Letras*, and *Revista Brasileira*. He published in newspapers such as *Gazeta de Notícias*, *O Jornal*, *O Globo* and especially *Jornal do Comércio*, whose articles form the second volume of *Ensaios e Estudos*.

voyage, for Alfred Russel Wallace's and Henry Bates' expeditions to the Amazon, as well as for the research trips of the anti-Darwinist Louis Agassiz, who wanted to prove *in loco* that Darwin's theories were scientifically flawed. However, Brazil was not the stage for the application of Darwin's theory. One of the first works that proved the theory of natural selection was 'born' in Brazil. It was written by a German immigrant and naturalist, Fritz Müller, whose book, entitled *Für Darwin*, was published in Europe in 1863, and translated into English in 1869, by recommendation of Darwin himself.<sup>23</sup> The same book was translated in Brazil only in 1907, in a cultural magazine, *Kosmos*, by a zoologist from the National Museum, Alípio Miranda Ribeiro, under a pseudonym.<sup>24</sup> Spencer's books were already circulating in Brazil, including the Portuguese translations published in 1878 and the first Brazilian translation from 1901. Considering these facts it is possible to say that, although Spencerism was not talked about, it was actually behind the so-called Darwinism that oriented social thought.

### Spencer and Brazilian Historiography: Silvio Romero and Capistrano de Abreu

By the end of the nineteenth century, when scientific ideas had become an integral part of the intellectual milieu, the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (*Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* – IHGB) had already built up a tradition in Brazilian historiography. IHGB was created in 1838 as a private scientific society, whose most important 'patron' was Emperor Pedro II. It was created to write the history of Brazil and in this way give shape to the image of the nation and 'found' the Brazilian nationality.<sup>25</sup> The first question raised was to define who the first inhabitants of the country had been. In other words, what was the founding historical landmark of Brazil? The indigenous past or the arrival of Portuguese colonizers in the sixteenth century? The first Brazilian history written from the perspective of IHGB was *Historia Geral do Brasil* by Adolpho Varnhagen (1854). It was a history of 'civilization' in Brazil, where the Portuguese were the principal actors, with blacks playing a supporting role.

23 Domingues, Sá and Glick, *A recepção*, 98; About Fritz Müller: Patrick Tort, *Pour Darwin* (Paris: PUF, 2001), Introduction; David A. West, *A Naturalist in Brazil* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Pocahontas Press, 2003).

24 Domingues, Sá and Glick, *A recepção*, Introduction.

25 Domingues, H. M. Bertol, *A noção de civilização na visão dos construtores do Império* (UFF, Niterói, 1991, Masters Thesis). Chapter 1.

Indians were ignored.<sup>26</sup> This vision emphasized colonization and provoked great debate within the IHGB. Even the Emperor spoke against it and the author made some changes in later editions. In Brazilian literature at this time the *Indianism* movement emerged. At the end of the century, when the equilibrium of political forces had changed, the new scientific ideas served to reinterpret society and consequently history. Silvio Romero and Capistrano de Abreu were representatives of this 'new' vision of Brazilian History. In the 'evolutionism wave,' indebted to Spencer's ideas of different social classes, they considered the ethnic diversity of Brazilian society in the historical evolution of the political and social organization of the country.

Although identified by the same theoretical approach, Romero and Abreu appropriated Spencer's theories for their own distinct political and social positions. In discussing the origin of Brazilian society they adopted a political position towards the republican state, imperialism (in relation to colonialism), and to their peers regarding the reality of the 'three races' (Indians, blacks, and whites). Although each had different positions, they shared the theme of the origin and formation of Brazilian society. Furthermore, both published articles entitled "Herbert Spencer" in the mainstream press.

In his unsigned article,<sup>27</sup> Abreu acknowledged the importance of Spencer although he was somewhat critical of him.<sup>28</sup> He commented that Spencer gained recognition only after the appearance of Darwin's theory.<sup>29</sup> Abreu ended this article comparing Spencer and Comte: "[Spencer] was one of the greatest spirits of the century, one of those whose ideas most agitated and who exerted most influence. His place is alongside the great lights of the human spirit, together with Comte, who formulated the subjective synthesis, while Spencer provided the architecture for the objective synthesis; the springs from which there originate all the philosophical currents of our times." Nevertheless, he leaves it understood that he did not agree with all of Spencer's ideas (Fig. 9.1).

26 F. Adolpho de Varnhagen, *História Geral do Brasil*, 1st edn (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Laemmert, 1854). The first edition of his book was more radical in relation to his view of Indians and was modified in later editions, although his personal position did not change.

27 Capistrano de Abreu, "Herbert Spencer," *Gazeta de Notícias*, 4 June 1887, in Abreu, *Ensaios e Estudos*, 1976, 4th vol., 173–176. This volume of *Ensaios e Estudos* includes a compilation of various articles by Abreu, some of which were unsigned, and whose authorship was attributed by scholars of his work and by his son.

28 According to Abreu, Spencer began to develop his philosophy before Darwin. In 1852 he published *Social Statics*, which did not have a great repercussion and Spencer spent a long time without income.

29 Abreu, *Ensaios e Estudos*, 4th vol., 174.



FIGURE 9.1

*Capistrano de Abreu. Obras de Capistrano de Abreu Correspondência, Volume 1, 2ª edição (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1977), book cover.*

Silvio Romero, on the other hand, wrote a series of articles in *Jornal do Comércio* in 1893, entitled “Herbert Spencer e a Classificação Positivista das Ciências.” The first article was the translation of Spencer’s book *The Classification of the Sciences*. However, the final articles in this series were commentaries with harsh criticism of the orthodox vision of Brazilian positivists and of Littré, which he called *systematic idiotification*. In one of these articles he wrote, “Anyone who has read Spencer on the classification of the sciences translated by me and published here, must have noted the perfect lucidity of the argumentation of the great British philosopher (...).”<sup>30</sup> (Fig. 9.2.)

Silvio Romero and Capistrano de Abreu studied in the same university, Olinda School of Law (in Pernambuco). Both were journalists and professors.<sup>31</sup> Romero presented his ideas about Brazilian history in his book *História da Literatura Brasileira*, published in five volumes (1888).<sup>32</sup> In this work he

<sup>30</sup> Silvio Romero, *Jornal do Comércio*, Rio de Janeiro, Aug. 7, 1893.

<sup>31</sup> Among the Law Schools in Brazil the most traditional in the nineteenth century were the school in Olinda, Pernambuco, followed by São Paulo, both created in 1827. In the middle of the nineteenth century Law Schools were created in Porto Alegre (Rio Grande do Sul), Rio de Janeiro, and Salvador (Bahia).

<sup>32</sup> By tracing a history of romanticism and its end, Romero explained that “only the agnostic concept of the universe, which is the great achievement of modern science, a concept which is based on the triple supports of the positivism of Comte, the evolutionary ideas of Spencer, and German religious criticism, can, in my opinion, be the inspiration for the actual art” (Romero, *História da Literatura Brasileira*, vol. 4, 139).

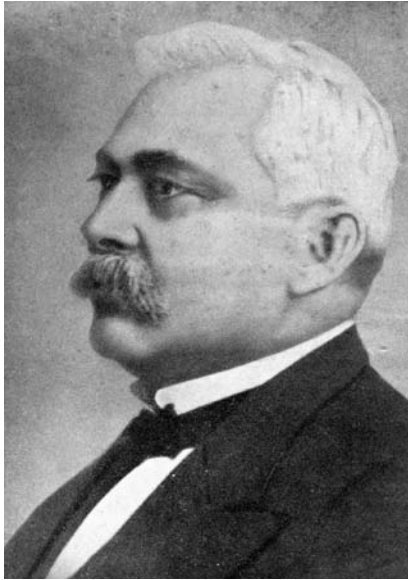


FIGURE 9.2

Silvio Romero. *Silvio Romero, História da Literatura Brasileira*, 5 vols., 3ª edição aumentada (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria José Olympio Editora, 1943), Tomo 1, p. 1.

developed the idea of a mixed nation of whites and blacks, excluding Indians. Abreu published various books, notably *Chapters of Colonial History* (First Edition 1906),<sup>33</sup> *First Peoples in Brazil*,<sup>34</sup> and *Caminhos Antigos e Povoamento do Brasil* (First Edition 1899),<sup>35</sup> in which he described the lives of 'simple' men in the Brazilian countryside and their 'struggle for survival' in the inhospitable hinterlands, making them a part of a history which previously had only been seen from the perspective of the Portuguese conquest.

Romero's and Capistrano's books were republished continuously during the first half of the twentieth century. An association was formed to remember Capistrano de Abreu (*Sociedade Capistrano de Abreu*). It organized, edited, and republished all his work, including his correspondence and articles published in journals, in which his Spencerism emerged.<sup>36</sup> Romero, however, was more eloquent in showing his Spencerism. At the beginning of *A História da Literatura Brasileira* he said that social studies should begin with Herbert Spencer:

33 Capistrano da Abreu, *Capítulos de História Colonial*, 3rd edn (Rio de Janeiro: F. Briguiet 1934 – Published by Sociedade Capistrano de Abreu).

34 Capistrano de Abreu, *Primeiros Povoadores do Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1954).

35 Capistrano de Abreu, *Caminhos Antigos do Povoamento* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1975).

36 Capistrano de Abreu, *Correspondência*, vol. 1 (Brasília: INL, 1977); ---- *Ensaio e Estudos: crítica e história* (Brasília: INL, 1975); 2ª Série, 1976; 4ª Série, 1976.



We have to start with Herbert Spencer, because he is excellent for showing the general foundations of society, its internal and external factors, and how the fundamental laws of evolution were applied. After reading *Principles of Sociology* we understand how society was formed and how it had created its various manifestations, customs, ceremonies, religion, family, politics, law, professions, economic institutions, etc.”<sup>37</sup>

Paraphrasing Spencer, Romero saw history as the supreme receptacle of the march of all ideas – the evolution of thought – which was also modified by the moral sciences, which come from the physical and natural sciences.<sup>38</sup> In his *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical*, Spencer stressed that history should be concerned with the phenomenon of social progress. It is necessary to know how society was created and organized itself with its own forces. For Spencer, historians needed to make wide-ranging descriptions of the manifestations of life in society, politics, economy, beliefs, aesthetics, music, and science. The facts had to be observed as mutually interdependent parts of the whole and be presented in such a way that the existing consensus between them could be rapidly traced, in order to discover which social phenomena coexisted. And lastly, to connect the whole, should exhibit the morals, theoretical and practical, of all classes: as indicated in their laws, habits, proverbs, and deeds. All these facts, given with as much brevity as possible in combination with clearness and accuracy, should be so grouped and arranged that they may be comprehended in their *ensemble* and thus may be contemplated as mutually dependent parts of one great whole.<sup>39</sup>

Spencer believed that the “highest office which the historian can discharge, is that of so narrating the lives of nations, as to furnish materials for a Comparative Sociology; and for the subsequent determination of the ultimate laws to which social phenomena conform.”<sup>40</sup> However, without the generalization of biology and psychology, the rational interpretation of social phenomena would be impossible. Romero followed these ideas when he analyzed the history of Brazil based on three aspects of Spencer’s ideas. First, he considered the history of literature intertwined with the history of Brazil as a concatenated march of humanity, subject to the law of development of civilization – that was Spencer’s concept of social progress toward the complexity of social relations. Romero wrote, “All and any historical and literary problem has to have two principal faces in Brazil: one general and the other particular, one influenced by the European moment and the other by the national environment... Literature throughout the Americas has been a process of the adaption of

37 Romero, *História da*, vol. 5, 406.

38 Romero, *História da*, vol. 2, 307.

39 Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Social, and Physical*, 69.

40 Ibid., 70.



European ideas to the societies of the continent (...) From tumultuous imitation and old mental servilism, we want to move on to choice, to literary and scientific selection.”<sup>41</sup>

According to Romero, and expressed in Spencerian language, “literary selection, in analogy with biological, was the result of the Law of Vital Competition divided into adaptation and heredity. The latter represented stable static elements, energies of races, fundamental predicates of people; it was the national side in literatures. Adaptation expresses the mobile, dynamic, genetic elements, transmissible from people to people; it was the general, the universal face of literatures. Two forces blend themselves both indispensable, natural products of the physical and social environment.”<sup>42</sup> Understanding hereditarianism as a static element, as did Spencer, Romero annulled one of the principles dear to Darwinian evolution. At the same time, by accepting adaptation [to the environment] as a mobile and dynamic transmission element, he followed Spencer, as well as Lamarck. Romero believed there was a continuity between nature and society taking into account the survival of the fittest. According to Patrick Tort this idea of continuity between nature and culture was anti-Darwin.<sup>43</sup>

Secondly, another important idea of Spencer – the ‘struggle for existence’ – appeared in the work of Romero. Taking as a backdrop the ideas of civilization and progress, Silvio Romero considered the ‘struggle for existence’ in the history of Brazil as a struggle in which “the Portuguese superseded the *caboclo* (culturally and biologically mixed workers of the land). The black served as weapon and support – this was his great historical title in the New World.” In turn, the Portuguese represented the connection with European civilization (“though his Iberian-Latin origin caused him prejudice” because, according to him, Portuguese was considered a backward country in Europe).<sup>44</sup> Following Spencer, Romero explained that the superiority of the white race was inevitable, since it had expanded at the cost of the inferior races.<sup>45</sup>

In the second chapter of the first volume of *History of Brazilian Literature*, entitled “Theories of Brazilian History,” Romero stated that literature in Brazil, and in all of the Americas, had been a process of adaptation of European ideas to the societies of the continent. However, this ‘adaptation’ of ideas had been more or less unconscious in colonial times, resulting in a tumultuous imitation of the old mental servility, which, following independence in 1822, came to be

41 Romero, *História da Literatura Brasileira*, vol. 1, 45.

42 Ibid.

43 Tort, *Pour Darwin*, 32.

44 Romero, *História da Literatura*, vol. 1, 91.

45 Citing Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, 1876–1896.

an adaptation of choice, representative of the ‘natural literary and scientific selection’ of the newly created political regimes. Therefore, according to Spencer, the thought of the Old World had to be known, in addition to a precise idea of the past and current state of the nation. In other words, it was necessary to know the whole to understand the process of adaptation of doctrines and European thought to the Brazilian social and literary environment.<sup>46</sup>

Third, in relation to the ‘biological’ origin of the people, Romero recognizes the fusion of races as a characteristic of the evolutionary formation of Brazil, but does not admit monogenism, which was fully accepted by Darwin.<sup>47</sup> Although Spencer did not talk about this, Romero, followed his approach in explaining the whole mechanism of society. The theory of the history of Brazil had to compute the whole and “elucidate the action of the physical environment, in all its aspects.” History, according to Silvio Romero, should show the reasons for the origins of a people, their particularities, and not be restricted to saying what a certain people has in common with others.<sup>48</sup>

During the 1870s, Brazilian anthropology, as a natural science, also interpreted the formation of Brazilian society – whether indigenous or white European – and the inclusion of populations scientifically classified as inferior.<sup>49</sup> In the National Museum [of Natural History] anthropometric anthropologists discussed the origin of Brazilian and/or American man. Naturalists specialized in anthropology, João Batista de Lacerda and Rodrigues Peixoto, drew on the study of craniums discovered by Lund in Lagoa Santa, in the state of Minas Gerais (cited by Darwin in *Descent of Man*), and contrasted the polygenism of Agassiz to monogenism.<sup>50</sup> This debate echoed the discussion in the Academy of Science of Paris where it was discussed by Quatregafes de Bréau, archenemy of the theory of natural selection by Darwin.<sup>51</sup> Romero

46 Romero, *História da*, vol. 1, 45, 46.

47 Although Spencer was not concerned with this question, this idea was a watershed.

48 Romero, *História da*, vol. 1, 54.

49 Lilia K. M. Shwarcz, “Usos e abusos da mestiçagem e da raça no Brasil: uma história das teorias raciais em finais do século XIX.” *Afro-Ásia* 18 (1996): 77–101; Heloisa M. Bertol Domingues and Magali Romero Sá, “Controvérsias evolucionistas no Brasil,” in *A recepção*, 103.

50 Agassiz had visited Brazil in the 1860s to prove that Darwin was wrong. See Domingues and Sá, “Controvérsias evolucionistas no Brasil,” in Domingues, Sá and Glick, *A recepção*, 97–123; Gastão Galvão de C. e Sousa, “Conferências de Agassiz após seu retorno da Amazônia,” in *Darwinismo, meio ambiente, sociedade*, edited by Heloisa M. Bertol Domingues, Magali Romero Sá, Miguel Angel Puig-Samper, Rosaura Ruiz Gutierrez (Rio de Janeiro: MAST, São Paulo, Via Lettera, 2009), 101–112.

51 Domingues and Sá, “Controvérsias evolucionistas,” in Domingues, Sá, Glick, *A recepção*: The scientists from the National Museum, João Batista de Lacerda and Rodrigues Peixoto

said that according to them it was necessary to end the habit of reducing the American races to a single type. – “The American races are a product of the American environment.”

Based on the arguments of Brazilian anthropologists, Romero concluded that the origin of the Brazilian came from three different races, which in its evolution became mixed and was heading towards whitening, due to growing European immigration – essentially Germanic, which had begun in the 1820s. He concluded that Brazil was becoming mixed, but emphasized that the socio-historical domination of the Portuguese was undeniable. He thereby adapted Spencer's ideas. For Spencer, those born in a particular social class never moved into a different social class. Romero agreed when he spoke about Portuguese dominant inheritance in literature, language and power. Cross-breeding, a contingency of the environment, resulted in white domination: biologically Germanic and socially Portuguese. But conceiving of the social heritage as a static element, as claimed by Spencer, was rejected by Romero, because he didn't ignore the different colors of Brazilian people. The “mestiçagem” was a reality: that wasn't in any of Spencer's writings.

Silvio Romero and Capistrano de Abreu differed about the historical interpretation of the three races, which formed the Brazilian ‘people.’ Applying Spencerism, Abreu produced a political interpretation of the historical relationship between the three races. Unlike Romero, Abreu criticized the idea that the Portuguese were responsible for the development of the history of Brazil. To explain the question of Brazilian social formation and (Portuguese) colonial domination the idea of race had to be used and for this Abreu drew on Spencer. An article dated 30 November 1875, in which he discusses Brazilian nationality, starts with an epigraph from Spencer, taken from a French translation of *Introduction to Social Science*. Here Spencer explained that social progress is the action of ‘great men’ – for Abreu, the conqueror. Spencer wrote, “Si vous supposez qu'un Newton puisse naître d'une famille Hottentote, qu'un Milton surgit au milieu des Andamans, qu'un Howard ou un Clarkson puisse avoir des Fidjenspour parentes, alors vous réussirez facilement à expliquer le progress social comme amené para les actions du ‘grand homme.’”<sup>52</sup> He makes

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were polygenists. They concluded that Indians that they studied had “such intellectual inferiority that they were close to anthropomorphic monkeys.” Their work was presented in the Academy of Sciences in Paris, and was commented on by Quatrefages.

52 H. Spencer, *Introduction à la Science Social*, 35–36. “If you assume that Newton could be born a Hottentot family, a Milton arises among Andamans, a Howard or Clarkson could have Fidjenspour parent, then you easily manage to explain the social progress brought as the actions of the great man.”

an analogy between ethnicity and the evolution of the nervous system stating, as Spencer did, that intelligence was manifested through the nervous system, implying predispositions, and was thus an intellectual, super-organic factor.<sup>53</sup> According to Spencer, “Those however, who recognize the truth that the structural changes are the slowly accumulated results of the functional changes, will readily draw the corollary, that a part cause of the evolution of the nervous system, as of other evolution, is this multiplication of effects which becomes ever greater as the development becomes higher.”<sup>54</sup>

To study the different people that formed Brazilian society Abreu began with the Portuguese. They had conquered kingdoms, founded empires, discovered worlds, which had led to the “heaven of History.” However, they had declined and the fall was terrible, creating an “emotion of inferiority” and it was this emotion which characterized the primitive times of Brazil, and which had established “our trajectories.” There were fights and the interests of the kingdoms and colonies divided, becoming antagonistic. “Little by little the emotion of superiority erupted, grew, and gave us 7 September” (Brazilian independence).<sup>55</sup> The colony created a feeling of superiority due to their struggles, independence movements, and cultural manifestations such as popular songs, inspired by contempt of the oppressor. Independence modified that feeling and had to be considered as the translation of awareness of superiority over Portugal. He explained that this established the unity of the history of the country, showing the role of the people in its evolution. He then stated that: “When the movement is so general and persistent, it is not improvised, it is not ordered: it emerges slowly, like a coral reef in the secular architecture of the people. The influence of great men is forcefully limited and directed by the influence of the social environment.” He stated this citing of Herbert Spencer at length in a phrase which ended: ... “an interpretation of social phenomena, while insisting on the importance of the changes consummated by great men, forgets the vast accumulation of latent force which serves as a valve and the immense number of prior facts from which comes the strength and the great men.”<sup>56</sup>

Abreu also said that the independence movement was political, hence its strength and its insufficiency, since a revolution could have modified the relations between the states and the conditions of the governed would not have modified the social structure. Although 7 September 1822 transformed the

53 Abreu, *Ensaio e Estudos*, 1ª Série, 48.

54 Spencer, *First Principles*, vol. 1, 43–44.

55 Abreu, *Ensaio e Estudos*, 1ª Série, 47–48.

56 Citing Spencer, *Introduction to Social Science*, in French translation, 37.

colony into a sovereign nation it did not abolish the other more profound, industrial, mental, and social dependency on Europe. "Our current status reproduces a feeling that flourished in primitive times. Then Brazil deemed itself inferior to Portugal. Now it deems itself inferior to the other European countries." He insinuated that this was the feeling of a colonized people and that the same had been observed in the United States. Abreu was an anti-colonialist.

In Abreu's vision, the originality of Brazil was due to the climate and the Indians, not the Africans, as Romero argued. The influence of the environment was helped by another factor: the great mass of the Tupi population who had been incorporated by the Portuguese colonists and their descendants.<sup>57</sup> He saw the Indian as being segregated, despite the cultural legacy in language and customs. He also observed that the Indians were numerous when the Portuguese arrived in Brazil and that they were unstructured, which confirmed Spencer's idea that only an organized society could survive.<sup>58</sup> However, in relation to this point it was Romero who disagreed, claiming that indigenous society was not complex: "There being no complex society, the community could not be big." To which Abreu responded: "Replace the words *great people* with the words *small but numerous tribes*, which were mutually hostile, irreconcilable, without a core of common resistance, and all difficulty disappears; Spencer's law is saved, the law of anthropology is respected and historical truth is obeyed."<sup>59</sup> Spencer was the theoretical instrument for Abreu to define independent Brazil, free of colonization, as an autonomous country. However, such interpretation of facts was absolutely contrary to the key idea of Spencer, in the sense that people never change their social status. An aristocrat will always be in the upper class, and people of the inferior class never will be in a superior class.

One of the political objectives of Abreu's historiography, based on Spencerian evolutionism, but also on Buckle and Comte, was to combat the colonialism built into the vision of the history of Brazil. Spencer's ideas also served to corroborate the history of the political dominion of the Portuguese. Similar to Romero's view, Brazil was mixed and evolving toward whitening, but for Abreu

57 Abreu, *Ensaaios e Estudos*, 3ª Série, 104–108.

58 Ibid., 109.

59 Anthropology was also immersed in the debate about Brazilian social formation, discussing evolutionism and the ideas of Indians and blacks, racial inferiority, and superiority. See: Lília K. M. Schwarcz, "Usos e abusos da mestiçagem e da raça no Brasil: uma história das teorias raciais em finais do século XIX," *Afro-Ásia*, 18 (1996): 77–101; Domingues and Sá, "Controvérsias evolucionistas," in Domingues, Sá, Glick, *A recepção*, 97–123.

this served to show that diversification was the mark of an independence which could not be reputed to the colonizer, but to the people who had evolved and won this. Spencer actually had the merit of facilitating debate about the ethnic diversity of Brazilian society and although these historians had not absorbed the term 'social class,' as Spencer did (in his *Principles of Sociology*), the idea permeated the concept of 'race' they used.

### Spencer and a Proposition of Political Science by Alberto Salles

From a different perspective than Romero and Abreu, Alberto Salles also relied heavily, and uncritically, on Spencer. In 1891, he published a book entitled *Political Science*, one of the first studies of political science in Brazil (Fig. 9.3). Salles sought inspiration in Spencer to compose his own political theory, inscribed in liberal capitalism.<sup>60</sup> *Political Science* appeared at the beginning of the republican regime in Brazil, but it has a very intriguing feature in that a commemorative edition was published on its centenary in 1997, organized by a Professor of Political Science from the National University of Brasília (UNB). The publisher was the Federal Senate Press. According to the organizer of this facsimile edition, Salles' book was pioneering, as it served as a basis for political science in the São Paulo law school, when this science was also being organized in other countries.<sup>61</sup> Law courses were the gateway for the entrance of new scientific ideas in Brazil, which allowed the social to be thought about and structured the first social science courses in the country.<sup>62</sup> Disciplines like Sociology, Political Economy,<sup>63</sup> and Political Science<sup>64</sup> were introduced in these courses as scientific interpretations of society, thereby spreading the so-called "social Darwinism"<sup>65</sup> as a theoretical orientation of the Brazilian social sciences. Although this book cannot be considered a historiographical book, it was a textbook in a school which produced many who became historians, writers or journalists, as was the case of Romero, Abreu and even Salles.<sup>66</sup>

60 Fernando Cardim, "Presentation of Political Sciences," in Alberto Salles Salles, *Sciencia Política*, XIII.

61 Ibid., III–XXIV.

62 Micelli, *História das Ciências Sociais no Brasil*, Introduction.

63 Aprígio Guimarães, *Estudo de Economia Política* (Recife, 1902).

64 Salles, Alberto, *Sciencia Política*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, São Paulo, Teixeira & Irmão, 1891 (Edição Fac Similar: Brasília, Gráfica do Senado, 1997), 297.

65 Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

66 Law courses existed since 1827, in Olinda, Pernambuco, and in São Paulo and since the middle of the century in Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre and Salvador. Many of those who



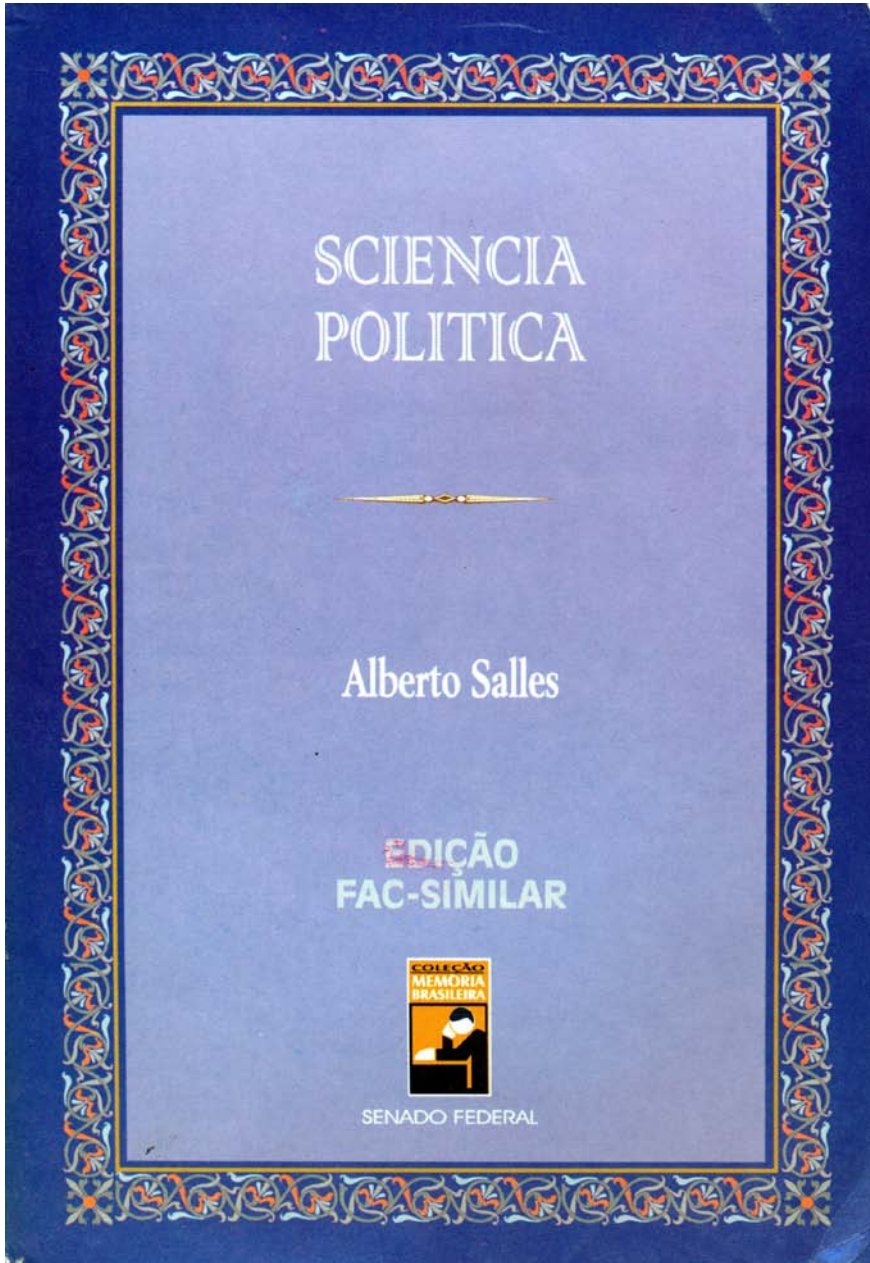


FIGURE 9.3 *Alberto Salles' Sciencia Politica. Alberto Salles, Sciencia Politica (Brasília: Editora do Senado Federal, 1996), book cover.*

In the prologue of his book Salles presented his vision of the state, saying that democracy should be its foundation. "Democracy organized itself in the influxes of the *natural law of equivalence*. It is equality in reciprocity. The whole reacting harmoniously to the parts and these to the whole, in an admirable set of functions which are equilibrated, without being excluded...."<sup>67</sup> The organization of government, according to Salles, is formed from the will of the people ('desires'), reflection on it ('opinion') and implementation of this, which should be distinct and independent: "There is a scale of desires, as there is a scale in social culture and in the needs, which is an elementary phenomenon. Opinion, however, is by its nature complex and special, because it refers to thought (synthetic concept)."<sup>68</sup> Therefore, "it was absurd that the masses wanted to reason. Opinion has to want, publicists have to propose the means of implementation and the government has to implement (...). In summary, when politics had become a positive science, the public had to necessarily give to publicists the same amount of trust that they currently give to astronomers in relation to astronomy, to doctors in relation to medicine, etc."<sup>69</sup> He cites the positivism of Pierre Laffitte to reaffirm the need for a [political] 'doctrine' as an opinion forming element.<sup>70</sup>

In relation to the most adequate means for the preparation of this policy, Salles has no doubt that it was the organization of public education, as also explained by Spencer in his book on education. Showing himself to be a liberal, he stated that economic prosperity and education are intertwined, since 'social capital' increases to the extent that it operates the economic evolution (of industry and agriculture). In other words, "intellectual and moral aptitudes are perfected to the extent that civilization progresses, in such a way as to develop education and to compete directly for the elimination of prejudices and to prepare ever more the spirits for the establishment of a doctrine."<sup>71</sup> He appropriated Spencer's idea of fixed heredity and applied it to men, seeing them as an economic instrument: "Man is a fixed capital capable of producing utilities, exactly like a field, a machine... His superiority consists of being a utensil susceptible to being improved by himself. The more improved he is the greater is his capacity for utilities; as a consequence the greater is his value."<sup>72</sup>

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graduated from them worked in what are now called the human and social sciences.

67 Salles, *Sciencia*, 7.

68 Ibid., 13.

69 Ibid., 17. It is interesting to observe that the term 'publicist' refers to those who translate the will of the public, the masses, in other words it defines political science intellectuals.

70 Ibid., 19. Emphasis added.

71 Ibid., 23.

72 Ibid., 24.



Perfection, which was an economic problem of labor, came from the valorization of human aptitudes and efforts; it depends on the resolution of the problem of education, concretely professional teaching. Economic prosperity was linked to the level of intelligence and the use of labour, "It is a civilizing mission."<sup>73</sup>

Salles criticized beliefs of all sorts, religious, superstitions, etc., calling them the inhibitors of the emancipation of the human spirit. In this point he managed to share somatometric anthropology and the social thought of Spencer. According to Salles, these prejudicial manifestations of the human spirit were nothing other than atavisms of primitive anthropomorphism, "sustained by naïve incredulity and exploited with pertinence by clerical imposture."<sup>74</sup> In this field it was necessary to carry out the fight, or to involve education. Like Spencer, he did not enter the discussion which divided monogenists and polygenists. He accepted the conclusions of the polygenistic anthropology of Quatrefages, who stated, like some Brazilian anthropologists, that there were differences between inferior and superior races, measured by cranial capacity, however, he disagreed when he said that the latter had no capacity for improvement by external stimulus, such as by example of education. Salles then accepted another line of anthropological interpretation, citing Paul Broca whose research led him to state that the "evolution of the social environment is parallel to the anatomical evolution of the brain, which becomes heavier and rougher as civilization progresses."<sup>75</sup> Salles also stated that teaching could not dispense with the knowledge of the moral and intellectual capital of society. He wrote, "What general anatomy does for animal organisms, politics does for national organisms (...) There is political and social evolution, as well as anatomical and biological."<sup>76</sup>

With these premises Salles then formulated his theory of social organization based on Spencer, saying that political organization is born out of the "struggle of one society against another." Still inspired by Spencer he concluded that contemporary nationalities emerge from social evolution, which, even with the refinements of civilization, were born in simple, savage and primitive hordes, capable of founding a nationality – constructing a factor of social cohesion which varied from one society to another – the first stage of political evolution.<sup>77</sup> "An empire, which is usually painted with such strange colors,

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 116–126.

enlightened by the scientific criteria of political evolution, becomes a natural fact, perfectly explicable by the laws of evolution.”<sup>78</sup> Repeating Spencer he stated: “a nationality only becomes possible through the feeling that the units nurture towards the whole. It is this sentiment which constitutes the principal strength of a nation....”<sup>79</sup> With this statement he shows that Spencer’s discussion of the idea of the nation was included in the thought of the theorists of the nation-state.<sup>80</sup>

Nationality therefore had to be studied through social and political evolution, looking at its historical past, and focusing on the factors of the law of evolution: environment, race, mental constitution, and the struggle for existence. First, the environment, which included the physical and biological conditions that affected the general process of political integration and differentiation, i.e., political evolution. In this case climate, alimentation, physical aspects, health, orographic soil relief and the special condition of the region.<sup>81</sup> Second, race “has an uncontestable relationship with the formation of nationality; it is a preponderant social and political factor of evolution.”<sup>82</sup> Races, according to Salles, are produced by the environment, by crossbreeding and by heredity. He quoted Spencer to say that the mixing of two different races produces a worthless mental type. To the contrary, people of the same origin produce a superior mental kind – an English ‘sub-race’ was an admirable case of perfect homogeneity, because in England crossbreeding happened among similar groups, “fusion by crossbreeding.”<sup>83</sup> When crossbreeding happened between very different individuals it did not allow a general fusion of characters, consequently a unique nationality was not formed, but diverse regional types. However, mental constitution allowed the progress of civilization.

In relation to the third political and social factor of evolution, mental constitution, Salles considered linguistic and ethnic differentiation. Salles, agreeing with Littré, stated that “all peoples are more and more susceptible to intellectual and moral culture, however, in mental evolution some people can precede others. A background of ideas and sentiments that forms the national character of each people according to the mental capacity and to the past.”

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78 Ibid., 132.

79 Ibid., 138.

80 See George Gusdorf, *Les principes de la pensée au Siècle de Lumières* (Paris: Payot, 1971); Jean Plumyene, *Les Nations Romantiques* (Paris: Fayard, 1979).

81 Salles, *Sciencia*, 145.

82 Ibid., 159.

83 Salles, *Sciencia*, 1897, 157.

Salles then repeated Spencer in criticizing the common belief that the governmental forms by themselves were capable of promoting the progress of a nation. For Spencer, Salles said, only those forms that sprouted naturally from the national character were efficient.<sup>84</sup>

In the fourth and final factor of political evolution Salles evoked Spencer's idea of the struggle for existence, seeing this as a 'law' which all organized beings obey. In this struggle, it is always the strongest, the best constituted, those who best adapt to the general conditions of existence, who survive. In short, war is a means of improvement, which has led to civilization. Repeating Spencer, he stresses that it is a truth found at all times and in all places that without war neither the formation of large agglomerations of individuals would not be possible, nor a developed industrial state.<sup>85</sup> The conquering of a semi-civilized or savage race by another signified a step towards civilization. Furthermore, the organization of labor has to be taken into account, so that the performance of any task given to the incapable at the cost of the capable signifies multiplying the former at the expense of the latter, lowering the level of the social and organic capacity of the race.<sup>86</sup> The state itself is subject to the factors of evolution.

These Spencerian interpretations, both of history and of political science were based on the inequality of races. However, the emphasis on war, on the 'struggle for existence,' stressed by Salles, did not appear in the same way either in Romero or in Capistrano de Abreu. Spencer's aristocratic doctrine, predominant in the social sciences since the nineteenth century, was founded on this idea, seeing race as peoples or society.

## Conclusion

The writings of Romero, Abreu and Salles cannot be considered as the popularization of science, from the perspective of Lightman. They used scientific ideas to popularize historical, political and sociological ideas that shaped the social imagination on one hand, and to lay the groundwork for a political science.

As a materiality of ideas, books generate cultural representations guided by the authors and also by various interests of agents that leave traces of their interventions in the bibliographical resources, in the texts and beyond the

84 Ibid., 166, 167.

85 In relation to this, see Antonello La Vergata, "Darwinismo, evolução e guerra," in Domingues et al., *Darwinismo, meio ambiente*, 237.

86 Salles, *Sciência*, 170.

texts.<sup>87</sup> Spencer's ideas and their strong influence remained invisible in the representations of the social and political imagination of the country. They were so invisible that Spencerism never was a coherent term; it survived in the shadow of Darwinism in Brazil.

Evolutionism oriented the natural and social sciences, which were also intertwined in the debate about historical and social formation. Spencerism introduced into the thought of those intellectuals common questions about the evolution of intelligence, resulting from the stimulus of the environment, from education, and principally providing a foundation for the debate about racial (actually social) inequality. However, each author used Spencerism to make different interpretations of the same historical facts, affirming, with this, political positions. In the case of Romero and Abreu the aim was the construction of the history of Brazil, in the case of Salles, it was the rationalization of politics. All of them analyzed the same historical facts or social situations, applying the ideas of Spencer, which they used in part or integrally according to their own point of view of the facts or of their social and political ideologies. This was the case of the interpretation of social evolution of the Brazilian people. Although Salles did not refer to the history of Brazil, it is possible to say that all of them agreed that the history of society resulted from a process of social evolution, as Spencer stated. In the case of Brazilian society, formed by different "people," the political position and ideology determined the way Spencer's ideas were appropriated. The publications in question emerged in the context of important political and social moments of the representation of Brazilian nationality.

Despite having remained invisible in representations which emerged, Spencer's ideas constituted cultural baggage which still intervened in the image which Brazilian society created of itself. These ideas corroborated social differences and, although he made education a way of instituting 'social evolution' this would never erase the differences between one or other ethnic group.

87 Roger Chartier, *Autoria e História Cultural da Ciência*, Ed. by Priscila Faulhaber and José Sérgio Leite Lopes (Rio de Janeiro: Azougue, 2012; Gustavo Sora, *Brasílianas: José Olympio e a gênese do mercado editorial brasileiro* (São Paulo: EDUSP, 2010); The third and final edition of *História da Literatura Brasileira* by Silvio Romero is from 1943. According to a list Romero himself prepared, between 1880 and 1913, he published 17 books about literary criticism, including *História da Literatura Brasileira*; four about folklore; four on ethnography; seven about political and the social condition [of Brazil]; three about philosophy; two of poetry, and 17 which he called *Pamphlets*. Abreu's books were republished until the 1970s by *Sociedade Capistrano de Abreu*. While he was alive his books on the history of Brazil were republished three or four times. Salles wrote about politics and while he lived he published many pamphlets which sold well, as mentioned. However, his book only seems to have been republished on its centenary in 1997.

The full scope of the impact of Spencer's ideas on Brazil is immeasurable, because when the country in the 2000s instituted *Racial Quotas* to minimize the persistent racial issue as an impediment to higher education for many young people, regardless of economic differences, it was unthinkable that these differences were due only to [wild] Capitalism. There was an ideological reason for recognizing the social inequality as racial inequality. Spencerian thought was widespread and remained intertwined in Brazilian social thought.