Who Were the Ancestors of the Portuguese?
Portuguese Debate on their National Origins

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As in other European countries, such as Spain, France and Germany, albeit limited here to small clusters and lacking the social, economic and scientific resources available in other regions, we can find in Portugal examples of the search for elements to confirm both the country’s antiquity and its originality, not only in geological strata and stratigraphic units, but also through the knowledge produced by archaeology, history, and anthropology. However, despite having some similarities with other countries, the Portuguese case is differentiable, taking into account its history and its geopolitical situation, as I will expose. The quest for the origins of the Portuguese, centred on the topic of the nation, caught the attention of several authors from the late nineteenth century. However, an interest in its roots could probably be found in Portugal since the establishment of the liberal regime (in the 1820s) and even before that.

In the late nineteenth century, the ideologist Ernest Renan considered that nations do not derive from “races” (in the zoological sense), languages (countries that speak the same language do not form a nation), religious affinities, shared interests or geography. According to Renan, a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle, comprising two elements: the past (the common legacy) and the present (the desire to live together and continue to invest in

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a heritage). He believed the cult of ancestors to be the most legitimate, since they “have made us what we are” and the “social capital upon which the national idea rests” is a heroic past, with great men and glory.³

Studies on the origins of peoples, characterized by consciousness of the existence of a nation and a desire to uphold nationalist feelings, left a permanent mark on the nineteenth century. According to Anthony Smith, “nationalism is an ideology that places the nation at the centre of its concerns and seeks to promote its well-being”.⁴ In Portugal’s case, the issue was not its autonomy, but rather a diagnosis of its decadence and identity, considering the context of the country at a time when other socially and economically stronger European powers were putting the country and its colonies in an uncomfortable position. For Smith, definitions of the concept of nation “range from those that stress ‘objective’ factors, such as language, religion and customs, territory and institutions, to those that emphasize purely ‘subjective’ factors, such as attitudes, perceptions and sentiments”. In his opinion, Benedict Anderson’s definition, in the sense that a nation is “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”, is subjective. Smith proposes that the nation concept should be defined as “a named human community residing in a perceived homeland, and having common laws and customs”; and sometimes a mythical homeland is more important for national identity than the actual territory occupied by the nation.⁵

National identity is also built on a postulate of difference. The Portuguese, for instance, may define themselves as opposed to Spaniards, Romans, Moors or the French at the time of the Napoleonic invasions. In Portugal, in the fields of both history and anthropology, we can find a number of reflections on the nation. According to José Manuel Sobral, despite different readings with regard to the country and the origin of its population, a feeling of “national identity” has been observed throughout history and, al-

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though there are some rivalries, no regional identities have emerged that might be strong enough to compete with the identity of the nation; besides, the perpetuity of national identities is not based solely on the contents of a nation's history, but also on routines and daily life.  

Inspired by George Stocking, who drew a distinction between anthropologies of “empire-building” and anthropologies of “nation-building”, João Leal considers that in Portugal this discipline was consolidated as an “anthropology of nation-building” between 1870 and 1970, committed to the construction of an ethno-genealogical discourse on the country. For Leal, it would be through the study of popular culture, out of its contemporaneous context, that “it was possible to base the existence of the nation on the long duration of its tradition and ethnicity”. However, as elsewhere in Europe, in the second half of the nineteenth century, physical anthropology and archaeology, as well as folklore studies and ethology, were frequently associated with a search for greater knowledge about the origins, history and specific traits of nations. Thus, my analysis departs somewhat from Leal’s analysis which argued that the Portuguese imperial enterprise was weak. Even acknowledging the preponderant existence of the empire in the Portuguese case, Leal argues about its invisibility. However, in the light of other studies (mainly focused on the imperial context) it becomes necessary to review the polarization proposed by Stocking and its application to the Portuguese case. Ricardo Roque, for example, argues that in Portugal the


Johannes Fabian, Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Leal, Etnografias Portuguesas, 64.


Leal, Etnografias Portuguesas.

anthropology of nation-building coexisted with the anthropologies of empire-building.\textsuperscript{12}

According to the historian Alexandre Herculano (1810-1877), Portugal did not have remote origins and was a nation composed of an assortment of invading peoples who had gathered in the Iberian Peninsula, where the Lusitanian were only a small group with which the current Portuguese had no genealogical relationship. Herculano acknowledged Arab influences and this would become the starting point for the theories advocated by the scholars Oliveira Martins (1845-1894), Pinheiro Chagas (1842-1895) and Adolfo Coelho (1847-1919), who “challenged the confirmation of Mozarabs as a defined and distinct ethnic group, and also as a social group”. In turn, both the writer Antero de Quental (1842-1891) and Oliveira Martins thought that “the Portuguese nation, lacking an individualized ethnic base”, was born out of “political will and of institutions, and not as a race understood as a national type”.\textsuperscript{13} As we can see, the idea of “race” had an important presence in discourse on national identity.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, ethnic stereotypes may arise from racial categorizations. This process is associated not only with factors limited to a particular country, but also with aspects that belong to the dynamics that enable ideas to be circulated and appropriated, contributing to the assertion of European race mentalities.

Beyond historiography, literature has also supported “patriotic essences”:\textsuperscript{15} The writer and politician Teófilo Braga (1843-1924), inspired by

\textsuperscript{12}Ricardo Roque, \textit{Headhunting and Colonialism: Anthropology and the Circulation of Human Skulls in the Portuguese Empire, 1870-1930} (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2010), 218.


\textsuperscript{15}Fernando Wulff, \textit{Las esencias patrias: historiografía e historia antigua en la construcción de la identidad española} (Barcelona: Crítica, 2003).
Herculano, acknowledged literature as an “expression or product of the social environment” and of the “national genius” in order to be able to deduce the nature of “a founding [Portuguese] race”; with regard to the ethnic element, he sought to inquire into the “traditional basis” from which national literature would have developed.\textsuperscript{16} Braga did not only defend the decisive role of an ethnic group. He mentioned the Celtic\textsuperscript{17} genius remaining “alive among the Portuguese”; he “attributed to the Semitic component of the Iberian peoples (Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Jews and Arabs) the prevalence of the separatist trend” and he “associated the formation of nationality with an alleged predominance of the Aryan race, in which he included Greeks and Romans, in the northwest region of the national territory”.\textsuperscript{18} What particularly drew my attention was also his ethno-genealogical eclecticism, since his argument started in the realm of Celticist and Mozarabic theories, later reaching steadier ground based on a model that considered the contribution of three successive ethnic layers. However, the occupants of these layers varied and Braga was indifferent to Lusitanist theories. Later on, he concluded that the Portuguese were the result of the blending of several groups, but possessed a perceptible racial specificity, unlike the Spanish, for example.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16}Matos, \textit{Historiografia e memória nacional}, 324.

\textsuperscript{17}Although research frequently focuses on archaeology, history and anthropology, genetics has started to offer new perspectives. A team led by Daniel G. Bradley, who is studying the genetic architecture of European populations, claimed that the Irish and Scots have more in common with the people of northwestern Spain than with the people of Central Europe (Rui Martiniano et al., “Genomic Signals of Migration and Continuity in Britain before the Anglo-Saxons”, \textit{Nature Communications} 7 (2016): 1-8). The Celticist ethnogenealogical claim in Portugal dates back to the turn of the twentieth century, although in that period it was mainly the memory of the presence of the Lusitanians that was acknowledged. Nevertheless, it was still in the nineteenth century that debates on the Celticist theories circulating in Europe began to germinate in Portugal (Léon Poliakov, \textit{O Mito Ariano: ensaio sobre as fontes do racismo e dos nacionalismos} (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1974 [1971]); Jon Juaristi, \textit{El bosque originario} (Madrid: Taurus, 2000)). Contemporaneously, it was mainly in the north of Portugal, but also in Galicia (Spain), that the Celts were evoked, but this phenomenon was closely related to the touristification of an idea, in the form of consumer goods and music festivals (António Medeiros, “Trilhos de celtas no noroeste: crenças etnogenealógicas e novos consumos em Portugal e na Galiza”, \textit{Trabalhos de Antropologia e Etnologia} 45 (1-2) (2005): 59-85).

\textsuperscript{18}Matos, \textit{Historiografia e memória nacional}, 325.

\textsuperscript{19}Teófilo Braga, \textit{Cançãoeiro popular coligido da tradição} (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1867); Teófilo Braga, \textit{Romanceiro geral coligido da tradição} (Coimbra: Imprensa da Uni-
The origins of the Portuguese were also analysed in the early twentieth century by Mendes Correia (1888-1960), an anthropologist and archaeologist with a degree in medicine and the main mentor of the Porto School of Anthropology, which existed as such until the 1970s, connected to the University of Porto, where he was a professor and director of the Faculty of Sciences (FCUP). According to Correia, although there were no reliable data to establish the “physical type of the human being” who inhabited the far western areas of Europe during the Palaeolithic, for the Neolithic period it was possible to define osteological characteristics among “primitive types”, which Portuguese prehistorians considered to be the ancestors of the Portuguese. Despite the absence of a consensus among them, it was stated that one ethnic group “might have a Ligurian origin”, while there was another coeval group that would be Celtic. Despite his doubts, Correia was sure that, in the protohistoric and historic eras, there had been interference from several Nordic and Semitic elements in the anthropological composition of the Portuguese:

Phoenician and Carthaginian sailors, Norman pirates (...), and German invaders, Berbers and Arabs, along the coast and by land, have left irrefutable traces of their physical aspect. (...) It was only in the far mountainous regions that the primitive type remained relatively pure and homogeneous.

Other authors have devoted themselves to the topic of the origins of the Portuguese, such as António Sérgio (1883-1969), Jaime Cortesão (1884-1960), António Sardinha (1887-1925), Damião Peres (1889-1976) and Torquato Sousa Soares (1903-1988). The historian Torquato Sousa Soares considered that the nation goes back to the twelfth century. According to the thinker António Sérgio, the origin of Portugal derived from a group of men’s desire for autonomy and from geographical factors, which contributed to its isolation.

20 The FCUP was created in 1911 as part of the republican university reforms at the time.
22 Correia, Antropologia: resumo, 126.
For the historian Jaime Cortesão, the nation’s origin lies in several elements (historical, geographical and anthropological). Cortesão stressed the importance of medieval dynamics, but did not neglect archaic aspects, such as Romanization and prehistoric elements. The historian Damião Peres considered that the creation of the nation, an affective unit based on a political and economic construct, was the product of human action. António Sardinha, writer and advocate of Lusitanian integralism, considered that the ancestry of the Portuguese could be traced back to the inhabitants of the legendary island of Atlantis and did not recognize the presence of Arab blood in the country. Despite this diversity, the theory that the Lusitanians had a central influence on the formation of the Portuguese was one of the strongest, as I will show in the next section.

_Lusitanist theories_

One of the first authors to address Lusitanist theories was Martins Sarmento (1833-1899), after reading ancient sources on the Iberian Peninsula and interpreting archaeological findings (castros and dolmens in the north and centre of the country). With regard to Sarmento’s work from 1876 to 1891, João Leal considers that his initial “exhumation of the Lusitanians”, between 1876 and 1879, was carried out in the light of Celtic theories, relatively fashionable in Europe at that time. From 1880, the Lusitanians began to be seen (maybe due to the impact of Indo-European theories of comparative mythology) as the “representatives of a first wave of migration of Indo-European peoples towards the West, among which were the Ligurians, of which the Lusitanians were supposed to be (...) the most western representatives”.27

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23 Traditionalist and monarchical socio-political movement that arose in a period of State crisis between 1914 and 1932. It opposed the establishment of the Republic (1910), the Estado Novo (1933-1974) and the constitutional monarchy. It was against parliamentarism and defended the decentralization of power, national-syndicalism, the Catholic Church and the traditional monarchy.

24 Matos, “Mendes Correia e a Escola de Antropologia do Porto.”

25 Ruins or archaeological remains of hill settlements from the Copper or Iron Ages, found in the mountains of the northwest Iberian Peninsula.


27 Leal, Etnografias portuguesas, 65-66.
Another author who addressed Lusitanist theories and criticized Alexandre Herculano’s theory—which claimed that the Portuguese did not descend from Lusitanians—was Leite de Vasconcelos (1858-1941).\(^{28}\) Leite de Vasconcelos’ consideration of these theories was probably also due to his work as an archaeologist, as well as his friendship with Martins Sarmento, with whom he exchanged letters on archaeological and ethnographic matters. For this reason, Leite de Vasconcelos, who up to 1885 had researched mainly in the field of ethnography, from then on also devoted his attention to archaeology.\(^{29}\) At that point he referred to Herculano’s theories in order to claim that before a Portuguese nationality ever existed there had been a Lusitania and, before that, a prehistoric Portugal.\(^{30}\) He argued that factors such as territory, history, “race”, traditions, language and religion, being ancient as they are, can be fundamental for defining a nationality.

Leite de Vasconcelos’ return to ethnography was also marked by the influence of Lusitanist theories, as we can infer from the ethnography journal Revista Lusitana, which he founded in 1897. According to Vasconcelos, the genealogy of the Portuguese did not necessarily go back to the Palaeolithic period; besides, the Portuguese were a result of the incorporation of several groups, including Arabs, Jews and Blacks, and areas such as Alcácer do Sal even exhibited a clear African influence. Nevertheless, according to Leal, in spite of the fact that Vasconcelos died before he was able to finish his work, the material he gathered points to the fact that “on both an archaeological and an ethnographic level (...) it would be difficult to demonstrate the continuity between the Lusitanians and the Portuguese”\(^ {31}\).

Mendes Correia, who sought to determine a racial basis for the formation of the nationality and to characterize “Portuguese ethnogeny”, used the Lusitanist theories to create syntheses on the prehistory of the country.\(^ {32}\) He made use of geology, geography and paleo-ethnology studies and outlined...
the “physical anthropology” of the Portuguese. He believed that Portugal’s origins did not go back to the twelfth century, as claimed, for example, by Damião Peres, but to a remoter past, which included the African element. He argued that Count Henry of Burgundy (father of Afonso Henriques, who became the first King of Portugal in 1139) only needed to channel long-existing forces and that it was Portugal’s political independence that emphasised the differentiation of the ethnic aggregate. In Raízes de Portugal he considered that, since the remote past, “political trends”, the “levels of psycho-social affinity”, “ethnic homogeneity” and “historic personality” could be considered manifestations of an “embryonic nationality”. This theory was at variance with that of Herculano, for whom there was no correspondence between the Lusitanians and the Portuguese, nor between Lusitania and Portugal, and the formation of Portugal had begun in the late medieval period. Correia studied this correspondence in another work and published a map (Figure 1) in order to clarify this issue. In Correia’s opinion, there was no perfect identity between Lusitania and Portugal, nor do the Portuguese originate solely from the Lusitanians, since other ethnic elements had flowed into the region after protohistory; however, the central components of the two territories and the two populations were the same.

Although Oliveira Martins essentially followed Herculano’s theory and denied any connection between Portugal under the House of Aviz (twelfth century) and Portugal at the time of the Restoration (from 1640 on), this
theory was criticized by Mendes Correia. In the opinion of Correia, the Lusitanians, a people he considered to be of pre-Celtic origin and also the least heterogeneous in Europe, formed the most important core of Portuguese ancestors. Like Martins Sarmento, Correia used the castros as a central reference and revised the historical status of the Lusitanians – they were probably pre-Celtic and related to other Iberian peoples who later mixed with the Celts. He also described the relationship of the Belitanos (name given to the Lusitanians by the Greek geographer Artemidorus Ephesius) with the Portuguese territory in a lecture presented at the Portuguese Society of Anthropology and Ethnology (SPAE) in 1934. In the Congresses of the Portuguese World (in 1940), Correia stressed that he was more interested in:

Determining how much the territory’s invaders, in the period from Romanization to the Reconquest, changed the bio-psychological and ethnic structure of the pre-existing population or even if they replaced it, than in knowing (…) whether the Lusitanians were Ligurians, Iberians or Celts.

For Correia, although other peoples had invaded the Iberian Peninsula (Roman legionaries and settlers, hordes of Barbarians from the north and of Saracens, as well as adventurers from beyond the Pyrenees), the homogeneous Lusitanian mass was not replaced, and those migratory waves did not destroy its “indigenous foundation”. According to Correia, this ethnic individuality was confirmed by history and archaeology. The Spanish archaeologist Bosch Gimpera, for example, created archaeological maps of the Iron Age that showed the boundaries of the “Portuguese castro culture”; Correia

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37 Correia, Raízes de Portugal, 146-147.
38 Correia, “Origins of the Portuguese”. For Jubainville, the Celtic predominance in Europe ranges from the north coast of Scotland to the south coast of Portugal, extending also to the north coast of the German Empire and comprising part of Italy (Henry d’Arbois de Jubainville, Les Celtes: depuis les temps les plus anciens jusqu’en l’an 100 avant notre ère (Paris: Albert Fontemoing, 1904).
39 Correia, “A Lusitânia pré-romana”.
41 Quoted in Correia, Raízes de Portugal, 112-113.
further stressed the coincidence, so geographically close, of three facts very distant in time: the Portuguese dolmen culture; the *castros* culture with the epic story of the Lusitanian leader Viriatus (1st century BC); and the history of the Portuguese nation.\(^{42}\)

As noted by João Leal, whether they were Celts or pre-Celts, what several authors take for granted is that “the Lusitanians were the ultimate ancestors of Portugal”. In fact, although initially proposed only by Martins Sarmento, a certain consensus grew around the Lusitanist theories. The ethno-genealogical narrative, which was based on the Lusitanians to justify the existence of an ethnically identifiable prehistory, became solider with the arguments of originality and antiquity. It therefore seemed that, in the same way that the current people of Germany descend from the ancient Germans, the French from the Gauls and the Greeks from the Hellenics, the Portuguese must also have descended from the Lusitanians. According to Leal, consensus on the Lusitanian theories was reinforced in three ways: 1) in archaeology, by Leite de Vasconcelos and Mendes Correia; 2) in areas where the voluntarist theories of Alexandre Herculano did not seem to adapt to the prevailing climate of cultural nationalism; 3) and in cultural journals with titles referring to Lusitanians.\(^{43}\)

Leal agrees that “interest in Lusitanist theories in Portuguese anthropology is undeniable”; he nevertheless considers that “this fascination is eventually contradicted by unfulfilled promises”, in which the Lusitanian process becomes a “story of unsuccessful events”.\(^{44}\) And yet, Mendes Correia’s work in particular, by promoting the Lusitanians as the main ancestors of the Portuguese and by contributing to the creation of an individualized image of the nation and of the homeland, gained extensive acceptance during the *Estado Novo*\(^{45}\) period (1933-1974). Furthermore, the topic of the “origins of the...
nation” did not cease to generate interest among other authors. Correia noted that after the publication of his own book and that of Damião Peres, other works were published in which this topic was addressed: by Alfredo Pimenta, Torquato Sousa Soares and João Ameal (historians), José de Oliveira Boléo (geographer), Luís Vieira de Castro (writer) and Canon Bernardo Xavier Coutinho.

Later on, the anthropologist Jorge Dias (1907-1973) was also keen on Lusitanist theories, particularly in the first texts he wrote after returning from Germany (in 1946), where he obtained his doctoral degree. Jorge Dias’ preference reflected his theoretical education, influenced by German diffusionism, but also his closeness to Mendes Correia, who was decisive in ensuring institutional support for his work. Moreover, Correia was then the most important advocate of Lusitanist theories in Portuguese archaeology, filling a space that, in a way, had become vacant when Vasconcelos returned to ethnography. It was probably then, due to his closeness to Correia and to the success of his Lusitanist theories in archaeological narratives focused on the ethno-genealogy of the Portuguese, that Dias started to favour a search for the “origins of the Portuguese popular culture” in an approach that was “characterized by the centrality of references to the Lusitanians”. Dias revealed the influence of North American cultural anthropology, which had begun to develop “national character studies” in the 1940s, and took part in a debate between anthropologists and other intellectuals that aimed to approach the Portuguese national identity with a set of specific and easily identifiable spiritual, or psychological, characteristics. However, according to Leal, the Lusitanist theories eventually proved a disappointment, in the works of both Vasconcelos and Dias:

Lusitanians might have even existed, however not only does it seem scientifically improbable that their existence deeply affected Portuguese nationality, but this influence, were it to exist, would have been shared with other ethnic influences equally or more important than those of the Lusitanians.

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46 Peres, Como nasceu Portugal; Correia, Raízes de Portugal.

47 Leal, Etnografias Portuguesas, 76, 77.


49 Leal, Etnografias portuguesas, 81-82.
Nevertheless, here Leal seems to refer only to Vasconcelos and Dias and does not expressly mention Sarmento or Correia. Beyond the Lusitanian explanation, other authors sought alternatives in more “subjective” factors, such as ethnic psychology, or more “objective” factors, such as geography, “race” or language, as I will demonstrate.

Ethnic psychology and other factors of differentiation

Ethnic psychology has been an important topic in the nationalist imaginary. Debate on the Portuguese national identity as something based on an ethnic identity, which would turn this nation into a collective individual characterized by specific spiritual qualities, dates back to the late nineteenth century. Those involved in this debate included Teófilo Braga, who highlighted the country’s maritime vocation, its capacity to easily adapt to new environments and the assimilation of new ideas, Adolfo Coelho, who designed a syllabus, at the request of the Lisbon Geographical Society, in which he included elements from demography, social pathology and physical anthropology, outlining factors of degeneration of the Portuguese people and nervous depression of the nation, and Rocha Peixoto, a naturalist, ethnographer and archaeologist who gave a negative characterization of the national soul. However, according to Leal, while Teófilo Braga mentioned positive characteristics and emphasised feelings (lyricism, nostalgia and spirit of adventure), Adolfo Coelho and Rocha Peixoto highlighted negative intellectual characteristics (laziness and mental poverty) or moral characteristics (lack of tenacity and consistency).

In the 1910s and 1920s, the issue of ethnic psychology was restructured. Teixeira de Pascoais, poet and writer, played a key role, by proposing saudade (a feeling of loss, distance and love) as a “central structuring theme in the national Portuguese character.” Pascoais’ theories were criticized by António Sérgio and Carolina Michaelis de Vasconcelos (1851-1925), who con-

50 Leal, *Etnografias portuguesas*, 90.

51 Leal, *Etnografias portuguesas*, 91.
sidered that the term *saudade* could indeed be translated into other languages, but elsewhere they were generally well received. Mendes Correia also contributed to the subject of ethnic psychology based on “criminal anthropology”, “physical anthropology”, and geographic factors. In his work, we often find a pessimism similar to that of Adolfo Coelho. However, these approaches were inspired mainly by negative aspects of the Portuguese and by the need to minimize them.

For Correia, organic and biological factors, such as crossbreeding, selective restrictions and degeneration, which also influence the “psychology of a people, the historic behaviour of a nation”, should be considered whenever seeking to study “the origin, formation and evolution of a State”. Even today, the fracture between biological and sociocultural elements sometimes still generates more problems than solutions for anthropological thinking. Some contemporary authors have focused on this topic from a more interpretative point of view, as in the case of Sahlins, while Tim Ingold has sought to “bridge” biological and social elements. The terminology used over time might also be valid for analysis of the distinction between the study of natural facts and the study of social facts. In the case of Mendes Correia, his work was influenced by evolutionary thinking and sought explanations for human progress, not only in biological aspects, but also in cultural phenomena, since he believed that anthropology could not simply be a natural science, limited to the biological and physical study of human beings. In the context of the positivist crisis, he highlighted the need to additionally consider social aspects of human life, as well as its historical and cultural aspects. In 1920, at the inaugural ceremony of the International Anthropological Institute in Paris, he proposed that the branch of anthropological studies, studying the relationships between psychosocial facts and the anthropological composition of the peoples, should be designated ethnic psycho-sociology.

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“Race” was one of the biological elements. According to Correia, the “para-scientific doctrine” that attributes to a “race” a monopoly of the best faculties derived from theories advanced by Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882), as well as Otto Ammon, H. S. Chamberlain, Ludwig Woltmann and Vacher de Lapouge. The pseudo-anthro-po-sociology employed by these authors was followed by the false eugenic ideas of Madison Grant and by the pro-moter of Hitlerian aspirations, Hans Günther (1891-1968), an exponent of Nazi racial theory whose theories Correia extensively criticized. Correia noted that Grant’s The Passing of the Great Race (1916) was very successful in the US and had influenced the Johnson-Reed Act (1924), a law that regulated immigration, under which the Portuguese and Italians were not considered desirable ethnic elements. As we know, anthropologists such as Franz Boas, Herkovitz, Ruth Benedict and Kroeber were also victims of racism in the US.

After de Gobineau, ideas of inequality were sustained through Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection adapted to the human species. Paul Topinard and Armand de Quatrefages took hold of these ideas to describe and classify human groupings. Paul Broca leveraged them to draw up a theory of social selection that aimed to explain social phenomena. Mendes Correia did not mention Topinard, de Quatrefages or Broca, but he directed harsh criticism towards de Gobineau and de Lapouge. In Correia’s opinion, “the Aryan issue was a mystification”; besides, “in the differentiation between races, the cephalic index is not the exclusive element”, and these authors “were blinded by German dolichocephaly and did not see other features in race”; they therefore could not explain the presence of dolichocephaly in the Black race. According to Correia, Aryans (Nordic, dolichocephalic, blonde, blue-eyed) were not necessarily superior to brachycephalic (light-skinned, from Central

56Correia, Raça e Nacionalidade, 10. According to de Gobineau, European civilizations, with the exception of Assyria, originated among the populations related to the Aryan “race” – a group that spoke Indo-Germanic dialects and whose blood ran in the veins of the “dominating peoples”, whose “purest” representatives were the German people (Arthur de Gobineau, The Inequality of the Human Races (Sussex: Historical Review Press, 2006 [1853])).
Europe) and Mediterranean (darker-skinned) types, as demonstrated by history.  

Correia also criticized the lack of exhaustive and systematic analysis, considering not only somatic and morphologic characteristics, but also characteristics related to the environment and social conditions. He called for consideration of several different physical characteristics in order for an “anthropological type” to be established, although he was opposed to the Lombrosian doctrine on the anthropological type of the criminal, since “crime is a relative concept (…), being often an accident in the life of an individual”, and there was no rule to connect “anatomical signs” and “criminal tendencies”. His criticism of Pan-Germanism should be considered separately from the influence of some German authors on his work, such as the geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), since he was greatly inspired by the field of anthropo-geography (also connected to archaeology). For example, he positioned Portugal geographically in a place he called the “old Lusitanian mansion” with specific characteristics in terms of physical and human geography. Correia was also influenced by Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), considered the father of social psychology, who advocated the notion that some psychological traits are as permanent as physical features; Le Bon, defending the innate inequality between races, genders and social groups, tried to describe the psychological features that formed the soul of races and to show how the history of a people and its civilization were determined by these features.

Correia pondered the existence of connections between “race” and culture and debated the role of the environment in influencing the “race” factor. He criticized de Lapouge’s anti-Lamarckism, as he considered that “a

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58Paul Topinard, L’Anthropologie (Paris: C. Reinwald et C.ière, 1876); Armand de Quatrefages, L’espèce humaine (Paris: Librairie Germer Baillière et C.ière, 1877); Paul Broca, Instructions craniologiques et craniométriques de la Société d’Anthropologie de Paris (Paris: G. Masson, 1875); Georges Vacher de Lapouge, Les sélections sociales: cours libre de science politique (Paris: Librairie Thorin & Fils, 1896); Correia, Raça e nacionalidade, 11-12, 155. Swiss anthropologist Anders Retzius (1769-1860) developed the measurement of the cephalic index in 1840. The classification was based on the width and length of the head (width/length of the head × 100): dolichocephalic (long, narrow heads), mesocephalic (medium heads) or brachycephalic (short, wide heads).

59Correia, Os criminosos portugueses, 114.

physical race type is the palpable completion of a long past of ecological influences”; however, he defended that this influence was applied in a limited context, since it “is determined by the internal conditions (...) of a living being.” He therefore recognized the importance of the environment, but did not give it an exclusive role. Besides, he believed that the action of the environment lessened as inferior (less complex) biological beings evolved into superior beings. This was one of the reasons that he mentioned as a justification for some authors denying the role of the environment as an evolutionary agent. From Hippocrates to Buffon, some authors have attempted to explain human differences through the influence of the environment, mainly in terms of their skin and hair. However, Correia noted the fact that there are “races with relatively light skin in tropical regions, such as the American Indians, and others with dark skin in polar regions, such as the Laplanders and the Eskimos”, therefore reinforcing the role of “race”.

Correia did not forget Franz Boas’ conclusions that “the physical type of American immigrants underwent, among their immediate descent, modifications attributable to the influence of the environment and perhaps to selection, falling mainly upon the form of the skull”. He presented examples of physical race type is the palpable completion of a long past of ecological influences”; however, he defended that this influence was applied in a limited context, since it “is determined by the internal conditions (...) of a living being.” He therefore recognized the importance of the environment, but did not give it an exclusive role. Besides, he believed that the action of the environment lessened as inferior (less complex) biological beings evolved into superior beings. This was one of the reasons that he mentioned as a justification for some authors denying the role of the environment as an evolutionary agent. From Hippocrates to Buffon, some authors have attempted to explain human differences through the influence of the environment, mainly in terms of their skin and hair. However, Correia noted the fact that there are “races with relatively light skin in tropical regions, such as the American Indians, and others with dark skin in polar regions, such as the Laplanders and the Eskimos”, therefore reinforcing the role of “race”.

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62 Correia, Raça e nacionalidade, 17-18.
64 Correia, Raça e nacionalidade, 20; António Mendes Correia, Homo: os modernos estudos sobre a origem do homem (Coimbra: Atlântida, 1926 [1921]), 266 and following.
67 Correia, Homo, 263. Some recent studies argue that Boas was generally correct, but others did not. Modern analytical methods provide better support than those he used. There are authors who contradict Boas’ original findings (Corey Shepard Sparks and Richard Jantz, “A Reassessment of Human Cranial Plasticity: Boas Revisited”, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 99 (23) (2002): 14656-14659). Other authors advocate that Boas was right (Clarence C. Gravlee et al., “Heredity, Environment, and Cranial form: A
other authors on this matter, but concluded that, despite the “more or less plausible” explanations, the “direct causes of an infinity of somatic variations” remained unknown. For Correia, while the determinism of biological phenomena was already obscure, the determinism of social phenomena was even more complicated. In this sense, he criticized descriptions of Europeans by their fellow countrymen as hard-working, sober and honourable and he highlighted the role that study of “races” could play in the fields of human geography, political economy and the study of social facts.

Mendes Correia introduced new elements for analysis, such as the influence of North Africa and the Mediterranean and the determining characteristics of some historical and geographic factors. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Portugal and Spain were frequently seen by other European countries as being closer to Africa than Europe. Correia considered this unfair and to attest to the European characteristics of the Portuguese he recovered the formulation of Homo europæus mediterraneus, connecting it to Europe and to megalithic culture, highlighting the specific characteristics of the Mediterranean peoples: “Centuries of independent life, in special geographical conditions, gave us rights, a special psychology, an ethnicity of our own, and (…) a distinct somatic facies.”

Correia was therefore referring to “geographic conditions” as influencing the characteristics of human groups, revealing his regard for the theories conceived by Lamarck (1744-1829). He also admitted that Iberians and Berbers shared a common origin. That might be due, however, to the fact that Berbers were associated with a culture often considered superior to or more


Correia, Homo, 254.


Correia, Raça e nacionalidade, 26-27.

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), for example, compared hierarchically northern Europeans (mainly Protestant) and southern Europeans (mainly Catholic).


Previously, Oliveira Martins had already advanced the theory of the Berber origin of the Iberians (Joaquim Oliveira Martins, História da Civilização Ibérica (Lisbon: Europa América, 1879)).
complex than that of other North African peoples. The author even defended the inclusion of the Portuguese in a block that included North Africa, admitting affinities with Berbers, just as Teófilo Braga had.\textsuperscript{74} He also cited anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957), according to whom:

The same skulls, the same nasal indices (…) can be found in all of the West Mediterranean region (…). Between a Sardinian, a Sicilian, a Portuguese, a Spaniard, a Berber from Tunisia, Algiers and Morocco, there is an infinitesimal difference.\textsuperscript{75}

Mendes Correia concluded that “there is no Arabic race, just as there is no Berber race nor an Iberian race”, since the “variety of types that have been observed in the Iberian west and in the northwest of Africa seems (…) to defy all attempts at systematization”.\textsuperscript{76} However, while Correia admitted some influence of the African element in the Portuguese, archaeologist Manuel Heleno (1894-1970), on the contrary, considered that “European races” (Cro-Magnon, Combe-Capelle and Chancelade), by eliminating the \textit{Homo neanderthalensis (Neanderthal)}, comprised the most important stratus in Portuguese ethnogeny.\textsuperscript{77} Nevertheless, Heleno and Correia shared the opinion that the \textit{Neanderthal} was not an important ancestor of the Portuguese. Correia was opposed to the idea that there were surviving “neanderthaloid” features in the Muge skulls and in the provinces of the north of Portugal, which belonged to \textit{Homo sapiens}.\textsuperscript{78} According to Ana Cristina Martins, Heleno determined “Portuguese ethnogeny in the Cro-Magnon, as a European race connected to Franco-Cantabrian artistic production; thus isolated from any presumptive African ascendancy, which was estimated to be connected to a “less elaborate” industry.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{74}Correia, \textit{Raça e nacionalidade}, 114-115.
\textsuperscript{75}En Algérie, 1914, 159, quoted in Correia, \textit{Raça e nacionalidade}, 116-117.
\textsuperscript{76}Correia, \textit{Raça e nacionalidade}, 125.
\textsuperscript{77}Manuel Heleno, “Um quarto de século de investigação arqueológica”, \textit{O Arqueólogo Português} 3 (1956): 221-237.
\textsuperscript{78}Correia, “Estudos da etnogenia portuguesa”. Muge is a parish in the municipality of Salvaterra de Magos, in the Ribatejo region.
In another article, Correia included the Portuguese in the European block, denying their genetic proximity to any Black ethnicity, and considered that the Portuguese did not directly descend from the populations found in Muge. His ideas persisted, as can be confirmed in subsequent publications. He later recognized that, when studying five skulls from Moita do Sebastião (Muge), originating from the excavations led by the archaeologists Octávio da Veiga Ferreira and Jean Roche, there was the possibility that the people of Muge could be part of the “Mediterranean race” and therefore modern Portuguese; however, he suggested that the matter required further study.

Mendes Correia eventually came to value ethnic miscegenation, stating that it probably contributed to civilizational development. Despite concluding that the Neolithic population of western Iberia did not possess “an ethnic individuality”, he emphasized that this population “included ethnic elements that were significantly integrated into the anthropological composition of the country’s current population”. Although he did not concern himself with the role played by “Jews and Gypsies, the African Negro and other overseas populations” in the metropolitan ethnogeny, he mentioned that Jews are mainly defined by their “special psychology”. However, while they had lived in Portuguese territory “since Barbarian times”, their endogamy, the legal restrictions, their expulsion by King Manuel I (1469-1521) and the action of the Inquisition had not created ideal conditions for their influence in Portuguese ethnogeny, the same being the case with the Gypsies.

Geographic factors were considered by other authors. Silva Teles defended that Portugal was a “geomorphic unit”; Amorim Girão, Ferraz de

82 António Mendes Correia, “Notice préliminaire sur les squelettes préhistoriques de Moita de Sebastião (Muge)”, in Crónica del IV Congreso Internacional de Ciencias Prehistóricas y Protobastónicas (Madrid, 1954) (Lisbon: Casa Portuguesa, 1956), 133-139. Jean Roche’s participation in the excavations in Portugal was also intended to contribute to knowledge of the Mesolithic period.
83 Correia, Raça e nacionalidade, 53, 56.
84 Correia, Raízes de Portugal, 97.
Carvalho and Damião Peres insisted upon “the close geographical relationship between Portugal and Spain”. But Mendes Correia recalled that the geographers who spoke authoritatively on Portugal’s geographic autonomy and the role of ecological factors in the formation and independence of the country were often foreigners. This was the case with Élisée Reclus (1830-1905), Hermann Lautensach (1886-1971) and Theobald Fischer (1846-1910). Contrary to what geographer José de Oliveira Boléo had claimed, Correia defended himself by saying that he did not agree with Fischer, Silva Teles or Reclus as to the “exclusivism or predominance of geographical factors in the genesis of the Portuguese nationality”; or to the “alleged geographical individuality of Portugal”. Correia did not reject the intervention of certain geographical factors, such as oceanity, but he considered that such factors were not exclusive, since they alone could not explain the autonomy of the country, highlighting the need to also consider ethnic, linguistic, psychological, political, religious, social and historic factors.

Regarding ethnic psychology and folklore, Correia pondered the possible existence of a “common Iberian legacy” that did not impede Portuguese independence. However, the basis for the country’s political autonomy did not lie in territorial differentiation, but rather in history. Furthermore, he recognized the existence of a common spirituality in the Portuguese nation, an idea that is similar to the spiritual principle defended by Renan in the late nineteenth century. However, it was not possible to admit that its “ethnic personality” might owe nothing to “particular conditions in the physical environment”. With a vision that contradicted that of Damião Peres, he argued that a State does not depend solely on “human willpower with no roots in the land and in the blood of this people” and insisted on the particularity of material and spiritual forces to explain the existence, independence and, in a way, the fate of the Portuguese.

Correia sought to differentiate the Portuguese from the Spanish. Although there were common traits, one could find differences, namely in their somatological characteristics. Damião Peres did not consider this aspect.

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85Correia, Raízes de Portugal, 31.
87Correia, Raízes de Portugal, 138, 34, 106-108; Peres, Como nasceu Portugal.
to be significant: some elements generated inaccuracies, such as the assumption by phrenologists that it was possible to establish connections between morphologic particularities of a skull and certain faculties and psychological tendencies. However, for Correia, the cephalic index was still a “stable biological characteristic”. Furthermore, the Portuguese population, despite not presenting a “perfect anthropological homogeneity”, was one of the “most homogeneous in Europe”; compared not only to Spain, but indeed to the whole of Europe. In previous studies, he had concluded that there was no overlap in average anthropometric measurements between different regions of Spain and Portugal, between identical limits. Besides, in Portugal the district averages for height were never as high or low as the averages from the Spanish provinces, although among the Spanish, the Valencians were closest to the Portuguese. He suggested that there might have been a remote connection between the ancestors of the Lusitanians and those of the Iberians on the Valencian coast.

Correia also searched for psychological differences. These differences were reflected in language, literature, history, family life, temperament and character. The Portuguese language was distinct and independent, not a Spanish dialect and this independent glossological evolution may have been a consequence of Portugal’s political independence. In fact, the history of the Portuguese language goes back to a time before the Portuguese state, its ancestor being the Latin language of the Roman Empire, of which the Iberian Peninsula formed a part. However, a Portuguese language that was different from Leonese to the east and distanced itself from Galician to the north only existed after the existence of a Portuguese kingdom. Finally, Correia highlighted the different modes of greeting and gestures. However, his main conclusion was that the Portuguese population, at several levels, was more homogeneous than the Spanish population.

88Peres, Como nasceu Portugal; Correia, Raízes de Portugal, 94.
90Correia, Raízes de Portugal, 104.
91Sobral, Portugal, Portugueses, 25.
92Correia, Raízes de Portugal, 86.
According to João Leal, it was only in the 1950s, with Jorge Dias\(^{93}\), that the subject of ethnic psychology was once again addressed, although Dias had already reflected on the topic previously.\(^{94}\) In his text from 1953, Dias wrote that it was not possible to draw safe conclusions and that he had encountered paradoxes regarding the Portuguese temperament, its contradictory character having been responsible for periods of both decadence and grandeur. He returned to this subject in 1968\(^{95}\), highlighting Portuguese ethno-genealogical pluralism, while emphasizing the particular capacity of Portuguese culture for miscegenation. In this article, he presented his idea in rather contradictory terms (unity and plurality at the same time):

Portuguese ethnic unity resulting from the mingling of several sub-races of the Caucasoid race, to which elements from other races were later added (...), such as the Negroid and the Mongoloid race, [would contribute] to give the Portuguese great human plasticity and an uncommon ecumenical spirit.\(^{96}\)

In Leal’s opinion, unlike the Lusitanist theories, ethnic psychology studies were a success, despite the indifference of current anthropologists.\(^{97}\) However, Leal makes no mention of the important contribution of Correia to the debate that sought to characterize the Portuguese, prior to that of Dias.

Conclusion

A concern with national origins, as found in the work of Portuguese intellectuals from the late nineteenth century up to the mid-twentieth century, was shared with the work developed at the time by other European authors. Some sought to claim the superiority of the group they belonged to, adopting an almost ethnocentric positioning.\(^{98}\) Several authors reflected on these origins in studies that were sometimes articulated with the theme of the nation and the possible fate of the Portuguese. Their studies derived from geo-

\(^{93}\)Dias, “Os elementos fundamentais”.


\(^{95}\)Jorge Dias, “O carácter nacional português na presente conjuntura”, in Estudos do carácter nacional português (Lisbon: JIU, 1971), 35-49.

\(^{96}\)Dias, “O carácter nacional português”, 39.

\(^{97}\)Leal, Etnografias portuguesas, 245.

\(^{98}\)George Lachmann Mosse, Il razzismo in Europa: dalle origini all’ olocausto (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1992 [1978]).
logy, geography, physical anthropology, folklore, popular culture, history and archaeology.

The theories developed included Lusitanist theories, favoured by Martins Sarmento, Leite de Vasconcelos, Mendes Correia, and Jorge Dias. Generally speaking, Lusitanians were associated with the idea of freedom and independence from other peoples and this notion was also used to explain the country’s eight centuries of independence. Correia recognized that many peoples must have crossed the Iberian Peninsula, including Gypsies and Jews, but that some may have lingered longer, having a greater influence on the origins of the Portuguese. The Lusitanians would allegedly be among the groups said to have played a preponderant role. Portugal also came under the influence of peoples from North Africa, but the contact was not considered significant enough to alter the ethno-genealogic profile of the population, considering hereditary and ecological factors. However, these theories faced opposition from Alexandre Herculano and Oliveira Martins, among others.

Besides the Lusitanist argument, some authors sought explanations in the field of ethnic psychology. Teófilo Braga highlighted the positive characteristics of the Portuguese, while Adolfo Coelho and Rocha Peixoto emphasised the negative characteristics. Mendes Correia also mentioned negative aspects, but his formulations were inspired by the need to mitigate them. In the 1950s, the topic of ethnic psychology was revived in the work of Jorge Dias, who underlined the ethno-genealogic pluralism of the Portuguese and the paradoxical nature of their personality, which he believed also contribute a certain specific character. However, Mendes Correia was to play a fundamental role in this field, mainly due to his linking of different branches of science. João Leal omitted Correia’s input on this topic. This might be due to Correia’s overrating of biological characteristics, most notably skull shape, and how he saw the role of “race”, with hierarchies defined in terms of civilizational development. Although Leal stated that ethnic psychology was successful and this might be true in the case of Jorge Dias, the same cannot be said for Correia and this is probably another reason for the aforementioned omission. In fact, Correia did not greatly value formulations based on ethnic psychology, considering that some of them derived from determinisms and prejudice, stating that neither the determinism of biological phenomena or the determinism of social phenomena were good starting points. When he
debated whether the influence factor might have been hereditary or environmental, despite recognizing the importance of the latter, he did not consider it to be exclusive in nature. He therefore reached out to hereditary and biological factors as grounds to support his conclusions.

Despite its deficiencies, Correia’s work, highlighted in this article, effectively stands out from other work of the same period due to its approach and method. Besides the position of Portugal, with its location exposed to influences from North Africa and the Mediterranean, he argued that other historic and geographical factors would have been decisive. Although he recognized that historical circumstances had led to different human groups arriving in the Iberian Peninsula and their consequent miscegenation, he believed that this crossbreeding was not nearly as widespread as is sometimes claimed and that the Portuguese remained one of the less heterogeneous nations in Europe, enabling it to be differentiated from other European peoples, including the Spanish. Among its distinctive aspects, he registered the presence of a majority of dolichocephalic among the Portuguese. That is, although Correia criticized European racialist thought, he used some of the elements proposed by physical anthropologists in order to protect the Portuguese from an unfavourable position in a possible “race” hierarchy.

Correia’s racial nationalism led him to concur with the existence of what were supposedly the most important ethnic elements in the formation of Portugal. The nation resulted from a “deep, hereditary instinct, with remote and permanent particularities”; and from a “genotypical legacy”\(^9\), therefore considering both hereditary and environmental factors. Over time, the dialectics involving these two factors became increasingly competitive. Although previously, in his anthropology lectures at university, he had praised Neo-Lamarckian doctrines, he later considered that heredity was the strongest vital principle.\(^10\) In the 1940s, despite recognizing the complexity of phenomena such as “phyletic and ethnogenic problems”, “classifications”, “affinities” and “racial hierarchies”, he stated that it was necessary to “consider the morphogenetic role of the environment as less important than previously supposed”\(^11\). As such, while in other scientific traditions the emph-
is was then placed mainly on environmental factors (in Europe [by British social-anthropologists] and in the US [by the Boasians]), in his book *Gérmen e Cultura* (1944), for example, the spotlight had moved to hereditary factors.

This occurred because previously he had been referring to factors that influenced all humanity in general and not specifically the Portuguese. As a consequence, he subscribed to a national identity that did not depend only on environmental factors and, in this sense, he also sought to highlight biological factors. For instance, speaking of the origin of independence, he argued that neither “race” nor bio-ethnical factors were “predominant or exclusive in the history and the life of peoples and nations”, but that scientifically he could not consider them as non-existent. Biological elements were frequently sought to reinforce historic and socio-cultural elements, the significance of which he recognized as a principle, but he always aimed to support them based on knowledge closer to natural science (considered more scientific), in order to better sustain his theories and gain credibility. In this respect, his academic training in medicine must have been valuable, but his explanations were almost invariably supplemented with elements from archaeology, geography, and history.

All these theories must be understood considering the context in which they were produced. Both in the US and in Europe, and specifically in Portugal, the authors quoted had more in common than might be initially assumed. They identified, more or less, with the “white race”, considered superior and recognized as having the obligation to conquer and rule over other peoples. To a certain extent, these authors were already privileged and distinguished themselves from those who, due to their history or geography, were in a less favourable geopolitical position. Moreover, they believed that their position could also be maintained and affirmed through history, heritage and science, and this was also the *raison d’être* of these theories. In this way, the formulations about the national ancestors were also a way of seeking to strengthen Portugal’s political position in Europe and in the world.

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Part of the explanatory argument for the alleged originality and homogeneity of the Portuguese was based on a set of myths (such as the Lusitanian myth) or on debatable topics (such as ethnic psychology), which led in turn to a belief in the existence of a set of easily identifiable behaviours. As Le Bon reminds us, the most important thing is often not to know if certain ideas are true or false, but rather to recognize their social influence on people’s minds. And when these ideas become feelings, their effects (whether dangerous or not) are recognized to all intents and purposes.

If we consider the current geopolitical and economic situation, we can see that among European countries, for example, there is not exactly a cultural hierarchy (although there might be cases in which one country seeks to control another), but more an economic hierarchy, which broadly leads to some countries to subdue others. It is not my intention to imply that phenomena such as racial hierarchies have reappeared in Europe, but rather that there are other forms of hierarchizing peoples, such as through religious choices or economic power, and we know, for example, that some countries have suffered a certain humiliation in the recent economic crisis. And it is sometimes during these times of economic and social crisis that some myths of the past, such as the idea that southern European people are lazy and therefore poorer, may re-emerge. Some of these myths derive from para-scientific concepts, which can be manipulated and gain social power, for which reason they can take on a life of their own and pass from generation to generation. We must therefore remain attentive.

104 Le Bon, Les lois psychologiques.