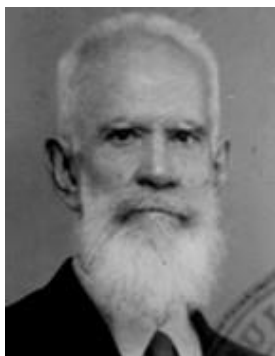


# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

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**Altamira y Crevea, Rafael** (Alicante, 1866 – Mexico City, 1951)

Rafael Guillermo Vicente José Miguel Altamira y Crevea was born in Alicante on 10 February 1866 and died in Mexico City on 1 June 1951. His family belonged to the middle class; his father, José Altamira Moreno, originally from Murcia, was a military musician, while his mother, Rafaela Crevea Cortes, born in Alicante, dedicated herself to household duties (*Rafael Altamira*, 1968, pp. 8-9). Rafael Altamira married Pilar Redondo on 19 June 1899, and they had three children: Rafael, Pilar, and Nela.

He began his education at the San José School in Alicante and later completed his secondary education at the Jorge Juan Institute in the same city. During these years, he focused on learning languages and claimed to have mastered both English and French. He then studied law at the Faculty of Law and pursued various degrees at the *Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Valencia* [Faculty of Philosophy and Philology of the University of Valencia] from 1881 to 1886, graduating in Law on 16 June 1886. He continued his studies for a doctorate at the *Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad Central de Madrid* [Faculty of Law at the Central University of Madrid] (UCM) from 1886 to 1887. On 16 December 1887, he obtained his doctorate in Civil and Canon Law with a thesis entitled *La propiedad comunal en la Edad Media* [Communal Property in the Middle Ages].

While in Madrid, he became involved in the liberal-progressive environment, associated with notable figures such as Francisco Giner de los Ríos, Joaquín Costa, Leopoldo García-Alas ("Clarín"), Benito Pérez Galdós, Adolfo González Posada, Buylla, Gumersindo de Azcárate, and Nicolás Salmerón, among others. This group believed they were working for the "good of Spain" and maintained that the ideal of the republican state was not merely about profound structural changes but rather about a theoretical-idealist rebellion expressed through books, pamphlets, and memoirs. Their guiding principles included "overcoming societal problems through education led by a conscientious elite with a strong moral sense, alongside a project aimed at regionalisation while maintaining a sense of unity." They also shared an evolutionist view of access to culture and a keen interest in the development of experimental science ("Aproximación intelectual e ideológica...", 1987, p. XII). For Altamira, these years were formative, during which he absorbed the ideas of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* [Free Institution of Education] (ILE) and enhanced his training through his work with the *Museo Pedagógico Nacional* [National Pedagogical Museum], an institution with which he collaborated for several years. This collaboration allowed him to visit various European universities, primarily in France, where he was influenced by French historical positivism ("Estudio preliminar", 1988, p. 10). In France, he attended classes at the Collège de France and met scholars such as Ernest Lavisse, Charles Seignobos, and Langlais



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at the Sorbonne, while also being a pupil of Renan. His education took on a distinctly scientific-positivist character, diverging somewhat from the tendencies prevalent at ILE, ultimately shaping his intellectual framework as a positivist krausist. Altamira y Crevea adopted many characteristics of these French historians, as she explained and developed in *La enseñanza de la historia* [The Teaching of History] and *La Historia de España y de la civilización española* [The History of Spain and Spanish Civilisation], where a series of concepts were applied for the first time, placing him in an advanced position within historical methodology. "He defines the integral character of society and its interdependence, as well as the combination of *external and internal* historical factors. He also articulates his ideas on education and establishes the starting point for a history that encompasses all the elements and *causes* of society, utilising other sciences such as sociology and psychology, while integrating economics, institutions, culture, and all other aspects that contribute to this concept of totality." He seeks similarities among models, affirms the necessity of auxiliary sciences in history, such as literature, the analysis of group psychology, and views humanity as an organic collective that struggles against itself, where moral and social elements are variable, unpredictable, and uncontrollable. "He clearly differentiates between two types of knowledge: disseminative knowledge and that belonging to the realm of specialisation, both of which are complementary tasks" ("Aproximación intelectual e ideológica...", 1987, pp. XII-XIII).

Upon returning to Spain, Altamira began a series of works and activities focused on the history of Spain, its methodological techniques, and the challenges of teaching it. During this time, he also analysed the history of colonisation and the Laws of the Indies, pedagogy, its social applications and scientific dissemination, the national problem and regenerationism, Spanish-Americanism, its expansion and consolidation as a culture of unity, international law and pacifism, as well as literary criticism, narration, and journalism ("Estudio preliminar", 1988, p. 10). On successive trips abroad, he connected with Hispanists such as the British Fitzmaurice-Kelly, the French Desdevise du Désert, and the Italian Arturo Farinelli, as well as historians like H. Pirenne and H. Berr. In line with his intellectual interests, he founded and directed the *Revista Crítica de Historia y Literatura Españolas* [Critical Journal of Spanish History and Literature] in 1895, initially with Luis Ruiz y Contreras and later with Antonio Elías de Molins. The title was later expanded to include *Portuguesas e Hispano-Americanas* [Portuguese and Spanish-American] (*Diccionario Akal...*, 2002, pp. 73-74). This publication was dedicated, "in a special way," to reporting on the books, pamphlets, and articles published in the Peninsula or abroad that addressed the general history or literature of Spain, Portugal, and "the ancient and modern Spanish colonies," as well as scientific facts relevant to this subject. Issues of this magazine featured articles, communications, and news from Spanish, Portuguese, and other writers. Among the Spanish contributors, we can mention Leopoldo Alas, Gumersindo de Azcárate, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, Manuel Bartolomé Cossío, Joaquín Costa, Francisco Giner de los Ríos, Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, Ramón Menéndez Pidal, and Miguel de Unamuno. The first issue of the magazine announced the contributions of Portuguese scholars J. de Araujo, Teófilo Braga, T. Adolpho Coelho, J. García Peres, J. Leite de Vasconcellos, Bernardino Machado, J. Martins Sarmiento, and Reis Damaso. The foreign contributors listed included A. Butler Clarke (Oxford), B. Croce (Naples), A. Farinelli, E. Hübner (Berlin), and E. Mérimée (Toulouse) (*Revista crítica de historia y literatura españolas*, 1895).

In 1897, he was appointed as the chair of History of Law at the University of Oviedo. During this period, he



experienced University Extension, which he continued after moving to Madrid. The aim of this initiative was to disseminate the knowledge generated at the university through lectures, courses, and other activities to social classes that could not access them ("Aproximación intelectual e ideológica...", 1987, p. XIII). This was also when he produced his most significant scientific work, a time marked by deep social commitment and the consolidation of his political and patriotic aspirations. As a delegate of the University of Oviedo, he travelled extensively (1909-1910) to countries in the Americas, including Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Cuba, and the United States, where he gave lectures and courses at various universities and cultural centres. He achieved considerable success, which reinforced his hypotheses regarding the future of a common cultural identity. Additionally, this experience enabled him to establish "personal relationships with many prominent figures in American intellectual life. These connections fostered an understanding shaped by university exchanges and collaborative work between Spanish and American intellectuals, leading to greater attention from the latter towards the issues faced by the nations of the New World" ("Don Rafael Altamira y Crevea.", 1951, p. 453). A few years later, in 1914, a doctoral chair was established for Altamira at the *Universidad Central de Madrid* [Central University of Madrid] (UCM), titled *Historia de las instituciones políticas y civiles de América* [History of Political and Civil Institutions in America] ("Estudio preliminar", 1988, p. 14).

He enjoyed a distinguished career, engaging in various roles including historian, jurist, international judge, politician, writer, journalist, literary critic, and university professor. He served as the second secretary of the *Museo Pedagógico Nacional* (1888) and was a professor at both the University of Oviedo and the University of Madrid, where he also held the position of Dean of the Faculty of Law. He served as the Inspector General of Primary Education in 1910 and as the Director General of Primary Education in 1911. Altamira was elected Senator for the University of Valencia in 1916, 1918, 1919, 1921, and 1923. In 1919, he began his involvement in international justice, being appointed as an arbitrator at the Mining Disputes Tribunal of Morocco in Paris. He served as a judge at the Permanent Court of International Justice from 1921, was re-elected in 1930, and remained with the Court until its activities were suspended. In 1921, he was appointed a member of the *Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios* [Board for the Extension of Studies] (JAE). He represented the Spanish government at several international congresses, including those held in Rome in 1903, Berlin, Brussels (1911), London (1913), and Oakland, California, in 1915. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize on two occasions, in 1933 and 1951.

From a young age, he contributed to local, national, and international periodicals such as *Ilustración Valenciana* [Valencian Illustration], *La Época* [The Era], *El Liberal* [The Liberal], *La Vanguardia* [The Vanguard], *La Ilustración Ibérica* [The Iberian Illustration], *El Heraldo de Madrid* [The Herald of Madrid], *El Sol* [The Sun], and *La Nación de Buenos Aires* [The Nation of Buenos Aires]. At the age of 15, Altamira published his first texts in *La Antorcha* [The Torch] of Alicante in 1881, including *Gazul el guerrillero* [Gazul the Guerrilla]. That same year, he also wrote pieces such as *La marcha de la civilización* [The March of Civilisation] and *La exposición internacional de electricidad* [The International Exhibition of Electricity], alongside a few poems like *En el campo* [In the Countryside] and *A la señora C.E.* [To Mrs C.E.] However, it was not until he completed his doctoral studies that Altamira produced his first major scientific work, his doctoral thesis titled *Historia de la Propiedad comunal* [History of Communal Property], published in Madrid in 1890. Among the international journals in which he contributed were *Revue Historique* [Historical Review] (1890), *The Athenaeum*, *Bulletin*



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Hispanique, and *Anuario de Ciencias Históricas de Berlín* [Yearbook of Historical Sciences of Berlin]. He also wrote for legal journals such as *Revista de Derecho Internacional* [Journal of International Law], *Legislación y Jurisprudencia* [Legislation and Jurisprudence], *Revista Jurídica de Cataluña* [Legal Journal of Catalonia], and *La Administración* [The Administration] (*Diccionario Akal...*, 2002, p. 74). During his years of exile in America, he collaborated with publications including *Revista de Historia de América* [Journal of American History], *Revista de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras* [Journal of the Faculty of Philosophy and Philology], *Boletín de la Academia de Historia y Geografía* [Bulletin of the Academy of History and Geography], *Revista de la Escuela Nacional de Jurisprudencia* [Journal of the National School of Jurisprudence], *Criminalia*, *Cuadernos Americanos* [American Journals], *Revista Cubana* [Cuban Journal], among others.

Rafael Altamira is considered "the most prominent figure in Spanish historiography during the first third of the 20th century. His work combines a great diversity of themes with a unifying criterion that remained constant throughout his life: specialised research, alongside a commitment to dissemination and teaching." Altamira was recognised as a historian embodying Spain's most advanced methodological approaches at the time. His work displayed unique characteristics, including "a modern concept of history that sought to integrate all its elements; an interest in historiography and methodology; efforts to consolidate scientific history by promoting it through textbooks or committees; and a patriotic use of history, aimed at fostering peace and understanding among nations" ("Estudio preliminar", 1988, pp. 17 and ff.). As a specialist in the History of Law, he developed a further specialisation in the Laws of the Indies. His approach to this field was marked by particular features: a focus on source criticism; the pursuit of scientific and conceptual categories; a scarcity of rigid definitions, as he preferred description over risky definitions when handling sources; and an emphasis on seminar-style learning ("Relaciones e influencias entre la masonería...", 1996, p. 385). It has been said that "much of the rapprochement of Spain to the New World, and of America to the old Peninsula, has been achieved through Don Rafael's efforts, directly or through his students and their successors" ("Las clases de Don Rafael Altamira", 1966, p. 60). Altamira is also celebrated as a historian who played a critical role in the professional transformation of university historiography and in the ideological reshaping of national culture. He sought to use his work to "restore the Spanish people's faith in their native qualities and their capacity for civilised life," highlighting their significant contributions to humanity. According to Altamira, the challenge was to help Spaniards become aware of these qualities through the study of their own history. He proposed shifting the focus towards *Spanish civilisation*, particularly in popular culture, rather than concentrating solely on political achievements (*Historiadores en España...*, 2013, pp. 87 and ff.). Altamira sought to uncover the internal history of the Spanish people through the methods and sources of critical scholarship. He proposed a transformation of Spanish historiography, calling for a new, "objective" and "scientific" approach, one that moved away from the traditional focus on the biographies of great men to study instead the histories of social collectives. For Altamira, the historian's role was to understand and explain peoples as "social units, organically, in all aspects of their activity and in all the functions of their energy." He believed that "the essential psychology of a nation" emerged from the interaction between its enduring characteristics and the ever-changing pressures of historical events. Altamira identified a range of attributes that characterised Spanish civilisation, including "both the well-known commonalities about the Castilian character and the 'European' and 'popular' characteristics... racial and geographical diversity, austerity, the tradition of communal and customary law, intuitive knowledge,



pragmatism, and artistic genius" ("Las historias de España...", 2013, pp. 505 and ff.). For him, the Castilian language held considerable importance — even more so than race — as it was essential to the Spanish people's identity and central to their historical development. Another key term in his work was patriotism, which, he felt, "brought together his political, social, regenerative, and educational attitudes." In his writings, he introduced the concept of *people's psychology* which he saw as a nourishing complement to the idea of *civilisation* and as scientific support for the concept of the *Spanish soul...*) (*Historiadores en España...*, 2013, pp. 87 and ff.)

Politically, Altamira's ideology could be summarised as a modernising vision inclined towards compromise and gradual evolution towards a modern and impartial state. He assigned law a kind of revolutionary role as the organiser of reform. His vision for the state included the depersonalisation of power, a secular government, clear separation of powers and functions, and rationalised administration. Socially, he championed tolerance, cultural access, and universal suffrage. Altamira was deeply concerned with the accountability of government, believing that while a ruling class should exist, it should govern on behalf of the whole nation, not merely for its own interests. Reflecting on his life, we can trace an evolution beginning in 1898, marked by a regenerative and optimistic reaction expressed through University Extension, patriotism, and the Americanist proclamation. From 1918 onwards, Altamira embraced an idealised vision of a future international order, a goal represented by the League of Nations and the Permanent Court of International Justice. However, with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, he witnessed the collapse of his ideals. After a long period of reflection, he ultimately reaffirmed his commitment to the same values and the model of society he had fought for throughout his life ("Aproximación intelectual e ideológica...", 1987, p. XV). Altamira has been characterised as an "allyophile, pacifist, and advocate for Spanish neutrality during the First World War." Later, he firmly rejected Miguel Primo de Rivera's coup d'état and was a supporter of the Second Republic, which he accepted without taking on any political office (*Diccionario Akal...*, 2002, pp. 75-76). After the Civil War, Altamira's political affiliations were scrutinised by the "Nationalist" faction. On 9 September 1939, the *Tribunal Regional de Responsabilidades Políticas de Madrid* [Regional Court of Political Responsibilities of Madrid] requested information from the rector of the UCM regarding Altamira's position on the Nationalist movement and whether he could be considered "affected by the ideals of the New State." The rector responded that Altamira was "a person educated in the liberal school, associated with the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, and of leftist ideas," and thus could not be viewed as aligned with the ideals of the new regime. This label, unsurprisingly, led him into exile. Altamira's exile began with the military coup of July 1936, which caught him at his residence in Riaza, Segovia. Taking advantage of diplomatic immunity, he left Spain, settling first in The Hague until 1940, when the Peace Palace closed. With the German occupation of the Netherlands, he moved to Bayonne, where he resided from 1940 to 1944. In 1944, he relocated to Portugal under the diplomatic protection of Argentina, initially with plans to move to the United States; however, he remained in Lisbon for a year, during which time he collaborated for several months with the University of Coimbra. Altamira's connections with Portugal were longstanding. His interest in the Americas naturally extended to the intertwined histories of Spain and Portugal, particularly during the colonial era in America. These intellectual inclinations led him, in 1895, to establish the *Revista Crítica de Historia y Literatura Españolas, Portuguesas e Hispano-Americanas* [Critical Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Spanish-American History and Literature], and later, he collaborated on the *Anuario*



*legislativo Hispano-Portugués-Americano* [Hispano-Portuguese-American Legislative Yearbook]. The time he spent in Portugal in 1944 enabled him to rekindle old relationships and produce several publications, among which his work *Cartas de hombres 1927-1941* [Letters from Men 1927–1941] stands out (Lisbon, Livraria Luso-Espanhola, 1944). The background to his article *Autonomía y descentralización legislativa en el régimen colonial español. Legislación metropolitana y legislación propiamente indiana. (Siglos XVI a XVIII)* [Autonomy and Legislative Decentralisation in the Spanish Colonial Regime: Metropolitan Legislation and Legislation Specifically for the Indies (16th to 18th Centuries)] is also dated 1944, and was published in the *Boletim da Faculdade de Direito da Universidade de Coimbra* [Bulletin of the Faculty of Law of the University of Coimbra] in 1945. Later, during his years of exile in the Americas, he continued collaborating with Portuguese individuals and institutions, publishing his work *La extraña historia de la recopilación de Antonio de León Pinelo* [The Strange History of Antonio de León Pinelo's Compilation] in the aforementioned *Boletim da Faculdade de Direito da Universidade de Coimbra*. He eventually managed to secure passage to the United States after receiving an invitation from Columbia University (New York) to deliver a course. However, this plan did not come to fruition, and instead he travelled to Mexico, entering the country in November 1944 as a political refugee, invited by the Secretariat of Public Education. On 16 April 1945, he began his collaboration with the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* [National Autonomous University of Mexico] (UNAM), joining the *Facultad de Filosofía y Letras* [Faculty of Philosophy and Philology] in the History department, where he taught the History of Spanish Civilisation. At *El Colegio de México* [The College of Mexico], he was appointed to the chair and seminar of *Preparación para las investigaciones históricas* [Preparation for Historical Research] (i.e. *Técnica de la Historia humana* [Techniques of Human History]). Exile provided him with a fresh opportunity for intellectual creation and allowed him to immerse himself in research. Although the working conditions were less than ideal — due to his age, lack of resources, and the anxiety stemming from his situation — the results were nonetheless remarkable. During these years, he worked on memoirs and reflections on the human condition, the methodology of the Laws of the Indies, and definitive editions of his earlier works (“Estudio preliminar”, 1988, p. 17).

Altamira was affiliated with numerous cultural and scientific societies internationally. He served as President of the Historical, Philosophical, and Philological Sciences department at the *Asociación Española para el Progreso de las Ciencias del Ateneo de Madrid* [Spanish Association for the Advancement of Sciences at the Athenaeum of Madrid] and was a corresponding member of the *Real Academia de la Historia* [Royal Academy of History] (1894). He was also associated with the Geographical Society of Lisbon, the Institute of Coimbra, and the Spanish Society of New York and the Massachusetts Historical Society, and became an honorary member of the Royal Society of Literature in London (1908). Additionally, he was an honorary member of the *Academia Central Mexicana de Jurisprudencia y Legislación* [Central Mexican Academy of Jurisprudence and Legislation] (1910), as well as the *Real Academia de Ciencias Morales y Políticas* [Royal Academy of Moral and Political Sciences] (1912), the Hispanic Society of America, and the International Institute of Sociology in Paris (1915). His memberships extended to the Academy of Jurisprudence of Toulouse (1916) and the Institute of France (1918). He was president of the *Instituto Iberoamericano de Derecho Comparado* [Ibero-American Institute of Comparative Law] (1919) and the *Círculo de Bellas Artes de Madrid* [Circle of Fine Arts in Madrid] (1920). In 1922, he became a full member of the *Real Academia de la Historia* and later held positions with



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the *Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Carlos* [Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Carlos] in Valencia (1923), the *Real Sociedad Geográfica de Madrid* [Royal Geographical Society of Madrid] (1924), and served as honorary president of the *Sociedad de Instrucción de San Claudio* [Society of Instruction of San Claudio] in Havana (1926). He was recognised as a distinguished member of the *Real Centro de Estudios Históricos de Andalucía* [Royal Centre for Historical Studies of Andalusia] (1927) and a full member of the International Academy of Comparative Law at The Hague (1928). In 1930, he served as president of the Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle in Paris, followed by membership with the *Sociedad de Geografía e Historia* [Society of Geography and History] in Guatemala (1933), and later, he served as president of the *Casa de Valencia* [House of Valencia] in Madrid (1935). In the same year, he also joined the Czech Academy for Sciences, Literature, and Arts and the Society of Dutch Literature in Leiden as an honorary member. Later roles included honorary director of the *Centro de Cultura Valenciano* [Valencian Culture Centre], president of the *Unión de Profesores Españoles Universitarios en el Extranjero* [Union of Spanish University Teachers Abroad], and honorary president of the *Casa Regional Valenciana* [Valencian Regional House] in Mexico (1948). Since 1950, he was an honorary member of the *Ateneo Español de México* [Spanish Athenaeum of Mexico.] Altamira was awarded several honorary doctorates, including from the Universities of Santiago in Chile, San Marcos in Lima (1909), La Plata (1909), Mexico (1910), Bordeaux (1923), Sorbonne (1928), Cambridge (1930), the *Centro de Cultura Valenciana* (1930), and Columbia University in New York (1935).

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