

succeeded strategy as demonstrated by the fact of the author, a *Ponts et Chaussées* engineer with a PhD on urbanism and a large background on planning, having been awarded the Jacques de Fouchier prize by the French Academy for the originality of the argument of the present work

**Luís Miguel Carolino, *Ciência, Astrologia e Sociedade. A Teoria da Influência Celeste em Portugal (1593-1755)* (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, 2003). 431 pp.**

*By Henrique Leitão\**

No century is as poorly known in Portuguese scientific history – and in cultural history at large – as the seventeenth century. Even conscious and well informed historians usually treat this period merely as a sort of hiatus, compressed between the always praised sixteenth century and the "enlightened" eighteenth century. Scientific activities in the seventeenth century in Portugal are mentioned, if at all, only by way of contrast. This tells us more, of course, about the historians' preferences than about the real scientific history of the country. Indeed, despite the fact that studies on the scientific practice in Portugal in the seventeenth century are nearly inexistent, historians are hardly ever shy

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to utter strong opinions about the (poor) status of science in Portugal at that time. If not by anything else Luís Carolino's book would be commendable just for the fact that it is a scholarly investigation about a very poorly studied topic.

In this book – a slightly revised version of the author's doctoral dissertation of 2001 – Luís Miguel Carolino provides the first in-depth study of the theory of celestial influence in Portugal in the period 1593 to 1755. The theory of the influence of celestial bodies upon events and beings on the Earth was not only astrology's most important conceptual foundation, but also a basic notion in the interpretation of the relations between man and the cosmos. Carolino documents in detail the intellectual changes that took place and affected these ideas, from the end of the sixteenth century to mid eighteenth century, a period during which the status of this theory altered radically. Celestial influence changed from being seriously treated in the most learned texts of natural philosophy to being considered a fantasy tainted with superstition. The declining importance of this theory – its later apparitions in books and in debates serve only to elicit refutation – signals drastic changes in the theoretical framework, the institutional contexts and the social background where the theory was used and discussed, and the author follows and examines all these evolutions.

The book is divided in three parts. In Part One the author discusses the fundamental theoretical concepts of natural philosophy associated with the theory of the celestial influence. In Part Two he broadens the focus of the analysis by considering the social impact of these ideas and what he calls the "imaginário cosmológico" ("cosmological imagery")

is an approximate translation) of Portuguese society. Finally, in Part Three the author studies the crisis and collapse of the older cosmological notions. A prominent place throughout the book is given to Jesuit works and Jesuit themes which are studied in great detail. It is indeed one of the more appealing features of the work the fact that the author systematically avoids the vague characterizations of Jesuit intellectual production as monolithic or uninteresting. On the contrary, Carolino courageously enters the complex and sophisticated world of Jesuit debates and materials, especially Jesuit seventeenth century textbooks of natural philosophy. What he finds is much more interesting than he (or any of us), judging from the general utterances of traditional historiography, could have anticipated. As he puts it: "Contrary to what the historiography of Portuguese culture has stated one finds an intellectual tradition that does not exhaust in repetition, in sterile and barren speculation about worn-out and old-fashioned themes. Contrary to what has been stated, from our study emerges a lively and creative philosophical trend that, above an aristotelian-thomistic basis, finds new synthesis, and incorporates new elements as strange as certain notions directly inspired in corpuscular theories" (p. 346).

This book is a most welcome addition to the history of science in Portugal. Based on a thorough investigation of archival materials and other primary sources, and written with a sound command of the secondary literature, this work will remain a reference for those interested in its subject. It should be compulsory reading for those trying to understand not only the history of astrology but also the history of

natural philosophy in Portugal in this period. One can only hope that other studies will soon follow along the new avenues of research that this book has opened.