

ing that Mircea Eliade, in the article devoted to him, has neglected the ideological and social functions of religion. It is one thing to criticise a scholar of religion like Eliade, and quite another to criticise any religious doctrine or practice. This sort of criticism seldom if ever happens in this dictionary. The article on 'Popular Religion' frankly states that what constitutes a religion should be determined by those who practice it and not by '...the biases of those who determined what the study of religions should be from their elitist or class background...'

To claim to have no biases is of course the greatest bias of all. This dictionary is new not only because it is a new edition or traces new religious movements, but most of all because it openly embraces the new paradigm of pluralism, rooted in the Enlightenment. Standing behind every dictionary is a theory about how and why words have meaning. A *New Dictionary of Religions* is no exception to this general rule. It is somewhat ironic that religious phenomena should be defined based on criteria advanced by a trend of thought, the Enlightenment, that was arguably essentially irreligious, or even anti-religious. Given the need to provide 'objective' definitions, the use of the Enlightenment model was probably inescapable. But it must be admitted that a dictionary of religions of comparable size and ambition, published in Delhi, India and written by non-Westerners, might look very different indeed.

It may be unfair to accuse a reference book of promoting a particular worldview. Yet the sociology of knowledge, itself a product of the Enlightenment, has alerted us that words seldom and probably never have meaning in themselves. Words mean something according to persons, contexts, situations, and events. Understanding the particular intellectual context of *A New Dictionary of Religions* will help interested browsers and students to mine its undoubted riches while yet remaining aware of its definitional presuppositions.

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Galileo and the Church: Political Inquisition or Critical Dialogue?

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RÉSUMÉ

Le livre de Feldhay est l'un des ouvrages les plus récents, venant s'ajouter à ceux qui, selon la tendance actuellement majoritaire parmi les spécialistes, rejettent l'interprétation populaire de l'affaire Galilée opposant Galilée à l'Église ou la science à la religion. Le livre est unique par sa concentration sur la théologie et sur le contexte complexe intellectuel et institutionnel dans lequel l'affaire Galilée s'est développée.

Les Dominicains et les Jésuites représentaient deux orientations culturelles différentes qui divisaient l'Église institutionnellement aussi bien que théologiquement. Galilée, agissant sous la protection d'une cour, menaçait l'équilibre culturel précaire qu'on avait atteint à cette époque. En considérant Galilée à la lumière de ce contexte, Feldhay met en lumière l'importance culturelle de sa perspective et de ses méthodes. Le livre nous laisse sur notre faim en ce qu'il ne parvient pas, à partir de cette analyse perspicace, à donner une bonne perspective sur les développements ultérieurs.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Bei Feldhays Buch handelt es sich um eine der jüngsten Ergänzungen zu der inzwischen dominanten wissenschaftlichen Tradition, die das populäre 'Galilei gegen die Kirche' bzw. "Wissenschaft contra Glaube"-Verständnis der Galilei-Affäre in Frage gestellt hat. Das Buch ist jedoch einzigartig hinsichtlich seiner Konzentration auf theologische Aspekte sowie den komplexen intellektuell-institutionellen Hintergrund, vor dem sich die Galilei-Affäre abspielte. Die Dominikaner und Jesuiten repräsentierten zwei verschiedenartige kulturelle Prägungen, die die Kirche sowohl institutionell als auch theologisch spalteten. Galilei, der unter der Schirmherrschaft des Hofes operierte, bedrohte ein zur damaligen Zeit unsicheres kulturelles Gleichgewicht. Indem Feldhay Galilei in diesen größeren Kontext hineinstellt, zeigt er die kulturelle Bedeutsamkeit von dessen Standpunkt und Methoden auf. Das Buch enttäuscht jedoch darin, daß es versäumt, diese einsichtige Analyse mit der Darstellung späterer Entwicklungen abzurunden.

Since Galileo was forced to recant by the Inquisition in the 17th century, science and religion have been engaged in a bitter sectarian battle for hearts and minds.

(Peter Stanford)¹

The persisting dominance of the Galileo myths is reason enough for *EJT* to take note of a book on Galileo. Indeed, in the science and religion debates, the 'Copernicus/Darwin/Freud' dogma is very much alive and well. Interestingly, the latter was actually launched by Sigmund Freud himself:

the psycho-analytical view of the relation of the conscious ego to an overpowering unconscious was a severe blow to human self-love. I described this [in 1917] as the psychological blow to men's narcissism, and compared it with the biological blow delivered by the theory of descent and the earlier cosmological blow aimed at it by the discovery of Copernicus.²

What is therefore so remarkable is that the scholarship of the last 30 years has thoroughly debunked the myths and revealed how very complex the Galileo affair really was.³ A simple 'Galileo versus the Church' or 'Science against Religion' reading of the affair simply can no longer be sustained. Feldhay's excellent book is one of the most recent additions to this scholarly tradition. But with thousands of titles in the bibliographies of 'Galilean studies' can yet another book be justified? Indeed it can, and it is a remarkable achievement. The book stands firmly in the modern tradition in its deconstruction of the binary oppositions underlying the myths – between reason and faith, knowledge and authority, Scripture and Nature. But in other respects it is unique. Feldhay is a female Jewish scholar and that alone is a very welcome confirmation of changing times. More remarkably, this is a book with a major focus on theology; specifically on the complex intellectual/institutional field in which the Galileo affair unfolded.

Feldhay begins her account with the well-known contradictions among the documents of Galileo's trials. Disdaining the temptation to interpret these in terms of forgery or duplicity, she rereads them as expressions of contradictions within the Counter-Reformation Catholic Church itself. The bulk of her book is then a detailed analysis of the documentary evidence to sustain that thesis. She paints a picture of a Church with deep institutional and theological divisions. Throughout the period, the traditional intellectual elite of the Dominicans defended medieval Thomist orthodoxy with its synthesis of Christian belief and Aristotelian philosophy. They supported the received organisation of medieval culture with its clear demarcation and hierarchy of disciplines. Their emphasis was on the contemplative life and their training was for

separation from the world. For them speculative knowledge was purely preparatory and they rejected innovation in the name of Thomist rationalism. Their reaction to the challenges raised by the Counter-Reformation was doctrinaire Thomism.

The Jesuits reacted to the same challenges by developing their vocation as educators of the entire Catholic society. Active life was central, entailing involvement in the world, especially in the variegated scientific culture of the time. They did not hesitate to reconstruct the Thomist synthesis by assimilating new scientific knowledge and by reinterpreting the theology. Their Thomism was pragmatic. Here were two different cultural orientations, two rival intellectual elites engaged in a struggle for cultural hegemony. The interrelationships of these traditions with each other and the wider Church evolved during this period in ways that had important implications for Galileo and his science.

Feldhay traces the developments, dealing en route with key theological controversies (especially over grace and free will) which divided the two orders. In the late 16th century, Jesuit educational practices appeared to endorse new forms of knowledge which threatened the Thomist synthesis. However the Dominicans triumphed (temporarily) in the succeeding power struggle and by the end of the century the Jesuits were legitimating their cultural position and programme by re-imposing Thomist orthodoxy. Jesuit mathematicians and philosophers (which latter includes what have now become known as 'scientists') might accept the new scientific perspectives, but had to operate circumspectly within strict institutional constraints. Galileo, by contrast, was a court mathematician and philosopher. His patrons set a premium on discoveries – spectacles and marvels – that would fit in with their desire for power. Galileo naturally looked to the Jesuits for intellectual interaction and support, but his unyielding insistence on attempting to construct a 'new science' that trampled over the old cultural boundaries, could only embarrass the Jesuit scholars. In their eyes Galileo was threatening what was then a precarious cultural balance, and so they finally collaborated with the Dominicans in his condemnation.

Feldhay's story is told well and I find its major thesis convincing. Where she is disappointing – and here there is still plenty of room for further research and further books! – is that she makes no attempt to relate her story to science and culture today. To anyone

familiar with the modern literature,⁴ the parallels are striking and cry out for scrutiny.

In her story, Feldhay focuses (ch 13) on the dispute on sunspots that took place between Galileo and the Jesuit astronomer Scheiner. Both scholars embraced the new scientific (observational and experimental) possibilities, both used mathematical proofs, and both were seeking truth and reality (not just hypothetical explanations (such as epicycles) that would 'save the phenomena'). But in the end, Scheiner observed his institutional constraints, affirming the traditional discipline boundaries and hierarchies and looked for a consensus among astronomers and philosophers. In contrast, Galileo erased the boundaries and set out to establish the cultural authority of a new kind of astronomer-philosopher.

Galileo reinterpreted the image of 'God's Two Books' (Scripture and Nature).⁵ The image had fitted well with the medieval Nature/Supernature dualism. Scripture (Revelation) belonged to Supernature and thus its interpretation was the sole preserve of the Church theologians. In this realm certainty was attainable. Nature was the realm of reason and the preserve of the philosophers, but the resulting knowledge was probable rather than certain. Galileo disagreed. He claimed not only nature as his preserve, but also all Scriptural passages that deal with nature. The book of nature, he claimed, was much easier to understand than Scripture, once one knew its language – that of mathematics. And it was not – as with Scripture – a matter of interpretation (and thus disagreement and dispute), but rather of decoding (Feldhay, p 281). If the right procedures were followed, then certainty, proof, was attainable. Galileo was claiming cultural hegemony for the scientists and their mathematical methods.⁶

In the Galileo affair lie the roots of the tradition of scientific objectivity and neutrality that has dominated Western thought in recent centuries⁷ and has wrought much havoc in fields as diverse as Biblical criticism⁸ and education.⁹ Feldhay's fascinating book uncovers those origins and sets them in a much fuller context than ever before. I hope she or others will soon fill out the story into

the present. The time for some radical reflection and reconsideration is long overdue.

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Notes

- 1 P Stanford, *Scientific Schism*. Guardian, 4 Jan 1997.
- 2 S Freud, *The Resistances to Psycho-analysis* (1925) In J Strachey (Ed), *Collected Papers*, Vol V, *Miscellaneous Papers, 1888–1938*. London: Hogarth Press, 1950, p 173.
- 3 For a short and very readable survey, see Stillman Drake, *Galileo* (OUP, 1980); for detailed analysis see Maurice Finocchiaro's, *The Galileo Affair: a Documentary History* (University of California Press, 1989).
- 4 See, eg, Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: the Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Free Press, 1990), and Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (University of Chicago Press, 1994); *The Scientific Revolution* (University of Chicago Press, 1996) For Christian critique see Roy Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality: an Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Belief in Theories* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1991) and Jitse van der Meer (Ed), *Facets of Faith and Science* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996, 4 Vols).
- 5 See, eg, James R Moore, *Geologists and Interpreters of Genesis in the Nineteenth Century*. In D C Lindberg & R L Numbers (Eds), *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, pp 322–350.
- 6 Francis Bacon's agenda was very similar, predated Galileo and may well have influenced him. See Moore *ibid*. However it was Galileo who developed it and became the dominant influence.
- 7 See especially George M Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (OUP, 1994); G M Marsden and B J Longfield (Eds), *The Secularization of the Academy* (OUP, 1992).
- 8 For the history see Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (SCM, 1984) and Klaus Scholder, *The Birth of Modern Critical Theology: Origins and Problems of Biblical Criticism in the Seventeenth Century* (SCM, 1990). For critique of the underlying faith in rationalistic science, see the books listed in footnote 4.
- 9 See Arthur Jones, *Common Schools: A Christian Reflection on the Issues*. Spectrum, 27 (2), 1995, 125–144.