

heliocentricity” (61–62). The false rhetoric about the impossibility to conciliate science and Christian doctrine continues to exert a powerful influence on the interpretation of modern history and, more in detail, the understanding of the Galileo affair. This booklet is just a helpful reading to know the truth.

William R. Shea. *Galileo Interviewed*. Zurich, Zurich Press, 2013. vi + 66 pp. Review by ALESSANDRO GIOSTRA, STANLEY JAKI SOCIETY.

“No one extended the vision of humankind so much as he did. No one ever put more stock in perception than Galileo” (4). The importance of Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) in the history of science led the author to publish this brief essay, which includes a foreword by Dava Sobel, a well-known expositor of scientific matters. William Shea, Galileo professor of History of Science at the University of Padua, is author or editor of many books concerning Galileo and the Scientific Revolution. The outcome of his work is a very pleasant reading, which finds the way to present the father of modern science from an original perspective. It consists, indeed, in an imaginary interview made to Galileo by the English writer John Milton (1608–1674) in 1638. During that period, Galileo was spending his last years in Arcetri and he had already published his *Discourses and Mathematical Demonstrations Relating to Two New Sciences*, namely his greatest work. His unfortunate personal vicissitudes are the basic point of this book, which also deals with the seventeenth-century Italian context, the relevance of Galileo’s scientific achievements, his difficult relationship with the Catholic Church, and his own familiar burden. Therefore, in addition to the illustration of the main contents of Galileo’s scientific research, this book includes many details of his personality, which are often disregarded by historians of science.

At the beginning of this publication we find *A Short Account of Galileo’s Life* (7–20), where the basic moments of his biography are highlighted. In that initial section the author not only lays stress on the essential steps of Galileo’s career as a scientist. Other specific situations, indeed, are focused, such as the job of his father, a gifted man with little business sense, and his encounter with mathematics, when he

started listening to the lessons delivered by Ostilio Ricci (1540–1603). A conclusion can already be derived from this early section of the book. Galilei was not simply an enthusiastic researcher, but a character who was fully integrated into the seventeenth-century social context. Throughout his life, he asked for the support of influential people and some of his decisions were influenced by the economic problems of his family. That was the reason why in 1610 he decided to abandon the University of Padua and go back to Florence.

The treatment of the *Evils of Censorship* (21–24) represents the beginning of this interview, in which Galileo shows his situation during the years he was spending in Arcetri and the difficulties due to his condemnation in 1633. Galileo never married, although he had three children. A special devotion was given to the eldest daughter, Suor Maria Celeste (1600–1634), a nun in the convent of San Matteo who died at the age of 33. The mother of his sons was Marina Gamba (1570–1612), a woman he met in Venice, whom he could not get along with him when he got his appointment as Mathematician and Philosopher to the court of Tuscany. In the seventeenth-century Italy, professors were not well paid, so Galileo managed to meet his expenses by giving lessons to young noblemen. Most of his private students were young aristocrats who were going to start a career in the military. Galileo did not make real money with the construction of the telescope, but he was surely pleased with the sales of his geometrical and military compass, namely a very helpful instrument to arrange troops on battlefields.

Historians of science often describe Galileo as a rational man, interested in science alone. Astrology, however, was actually a source of income and a discipline in which he believed: “I consider astrology one of my main skill [...] denying that heavenly bodies influence human behavior is as foolish as denying that the Sun influences the growth of plants” (37–38). In Galileo’s mind the new celestial bodies discovered through the telescope did not change the principles of traditional astrology, as the description of the action of stars refers to the general influence of a part of the heavens and not only to the influence exerted by the stars visible with the naked eye. Another aspect, almost unknown to students and forming part of Galileo’s character, consists in his cultivation of arts and literature. He was

fond of drawing and the milieu in which he received his basic training was more humanistic than scientific. His own realistic view of nature also influenced his artistic vision, which rejected any kind of painting that distorted reality. Galileo wrote some comedies, even if they were never performed on the stage, and satiric poems. During his first teaching at the University of Pisa he had lectured on Dante's *Inferno* and that was just a clear demonstration of his literary skill. A curious fact can explain this situation. The painter and Galileo's friend, Ludovico Cigoli (1559–1613), took part in a debate on the relative superiority of sculpture and painting, and turned to Galileo for help. Galileo suggested to Cigoli some arguments regarding the superiority of painting, such as its being more real to the eye and ability to make a flat surface seem three-dimensional. The relation of art and science is evident in his investigations. For instance, perspective contributed to his description of the Moon as "its surface looked like a black-and-white chiaroscuro drawing, and this made me curious" (62). Thus, we can establish that drawing disciplined Galileo's hand for science and the observation of the Moon was made in accordance with geometrical perspective.

The last pages of this work are devoted to Galileo's claim to fame (63–66). In that final section the author deals briefly with Galileo's most important discoveries about motion, namely the law on the free falling bodies and the parabolic path of projectiles; both of them were illustrated in the above-mentioned *Discourses*.

In sum, different accounts of Galileo's thought and personal events have been offered and they usually present some aspects of his story at the expense of other relevant questions. Moreover, the father of modern science has been often deemed to be a clear instance of the opposition between science and scientific rationality. The merit of this imaginary interview consists in offering an objective look at Galileo's character and including some particulars that are often ignored by historians.