Review of *Galileo and the Church: Political Inquisition or Critical Dialogue?* by Rivka Feldhay

James B. South
*Marquette University, james.south@marquette.edu*
reste insatisfait devant les idées défendues, qui demeurent trop souvent programmatiques. Ce livre en appelle un autre, qui, on l'espère, pourrait réunir et approfondir les idées de l'auteur sur cet important débat.

Michel Désy
Université de Montréal

Rivka Feldhay
Galileo and the Church: Political Inquisition or Critical Dialogue?

In this important new study, Rivka Feldhay challenges the predominant scholarly and popular view of the conflict between Galileo and the church. Such conventional views are based on the notion of ‘conflict’ between the Church and Science or, more generally, reason and irrational faith. In the place of these conventional accounts, Feldhay provides a convincing narrative that situates Galileo’s eventual silencing ‘as a plausible result of the pursuit of rational truth, forever entangled in power play of groups with competing interests’ (8). A review of this nature can provide no more than an outline of her argument. In support of the argument, Feldhay provides rich historically nuanced information that allows the reader to see the trajectory of conflicting elite cultures active during the early seventeenth century.

The first part of the book provides an overview of the official interactions between Galileo and the Church beginning with the first ‘trial’ in 1616 and concluding with the second ‘trial’ in 1633. In trying to uncover the conditions behind the inquisition’s decision of 1633, Feldhay points out the importance of the conflicting interpretations of Pope Paul V’s decision concerning Galileo. Paul V had decided that, in accordance with traditional inquisitorial control, Galileo should be officially ‘warned’ (moneat) to abandon his views concerning the position of the sun and the movement of the earth. If Galileo refused to abandon these views, he was then to be issued an injunction (praeeceptum) to abstain from teaching, defending, and discussing the views. If Galileo refused to acquiesce in the injunction, he was to be imprisoned. Feldhay points out that what was crucial in this decision was the requirement that Galileo abandon the views held. In the context of educational practice, this would only limit Galileo from claiming the truth of these views, but would not prevent him from teaching and discussing them. Accordingly, it was only
in case Galileo refused to acknowledge the mere probability of these views that he was to be enjoined and effectively silenced. Despite the apparent unambiguous nature of the pope's decision, Feldhay shows that in the communication of this decision to Galileo, not only was he told to abandon his views, but immediately he was enjoined not to hold, teach or defend the views in any way. This apparently clear violation of the pope's decision, marks the point of departure for the remainder of Feldhay's study. She remarks that it is important to notice that in the warning issued to Galileo, Cardinal Bellarmine, a Jesuit, only reported the admonition concerning holding the views as true, while Cardinal Segizzi, a Dominican, actually issued the injunction. While this injunction did not consist of a complete silencing, it explicitly ruled out any possibility that the Copernican views could be true. It is noteworthy that Bellarmine's report of the admonition to Galileo omits any mention of the further injunction. Feldhay's compelling central thesis consists in delineating the conflicting attitudes towards new knowledge claims among the Dominicans and Jesuits prior to 1616 and also showing what caused a change in the Jesuit position between 1616 and 1633.

The remaining two sections of the book provide an account of the competing interests of the elite cultures of the counter-reformation Church. Particular attention is focused on the Dominicans and Jesuits. Feldhay shows the challenge presented by the Jesuits to the traditional Dominican position as the intellectual elite of the Church committed to a fairly strict form of Thomism. In contrast, the Jesuits as a recent group active in the education of those members of society with essentially secular interests provided an alternative to the traditional Dominicans. Central to Feldhay's account of the differing outlooks of the two elite groups is the controversy De auxiliis concerning God's knowledge of future contingents. Feldhay argues that the Dominican position that developed out of the controversy involved the claim that God's knowledge of contingents, based on absolute omnipotence that involved both the will and knowledge of God, provided a 'transcendental limit' on the possibilities of human knowledge. Since knowledge of the order of the universe can be non-hypothetical only if the order necessarily proceeds from God's knowledge and will, the only thing that constrains God's creative possibilities is the principle of non-contradiction. Thus, Copernicanism becomes unprovable and hence cannot be true.

By contrast, the Jesuit position allowed for the possibility of separation between God's knowledge and his will through the notion of scientia media. According to Feldhay, this fit nicely with the claims of Jesuit mathematicians and astronomers to have certain knowledge of hypothetical entities through causes. These knowledge claims also led Jesuits such as Clavius to urge a reorientation in educational practice that in effect would upset traditional thomistic boundaries between mixed sciences such as astronomy and natural philosophy. Feldhay believes that Bellarmine's position in 1616 is ambiguous in the sense that he both upheld the thomistic boundary but at the same time encouraged Jesuit astronomers to continue their dialogue with Copernicanism.
The events between 1616 and the second 'trial' of 1633 are the result of the continuing dialogue between Jesuit mathematicians and astronomers and Galileo. In this dialogue, exemplified by the exchange with Christopher Scheiner, Galileo does not merely 'transgress' the fixed boundaries of disciplines erected by the Jesuit ratio studiorum of 1599, but actively defies them. Jesuit astronomers were careful to try to carve out a place for themselves in the educational hierarchy, but deferred to the preeminent place of natural philosophers. Galileo's ridicule of institutional boundaries made possible by his position as court philosopher to Cosimo II, as well as his emphasis on the importance of the astronomer as philosopher left the Jesuits in a real bind. Feldhay concludes that there was real 'affinity' between Galileo and the Jesuits. At the same time, the Jesuits were unable to defy the boundaries of their educational practice without becoming themselves subject to Dominican claims of unorthodoxy. Ironically, on this reading, Galileo himself forced the Jesuit reaction by acknowledging the real progress and advancement of Jesuit scientific practice. Due to the watchful Dominicans, the Jesuits were forced to modify the approach set out by Bellarmine and sided with the Dominicans in condemning Galileo.

**James B. South**
Marquette University

**Michael Gagarin and Paul Woodruff, eds.**
*Early Greek Political Thought from Homer to the Sophists.*
New York: Cambridge University Press.
Pp. lxi + 324.
US $54.95 (cloth: ISBN 0-521-43192-1);

The study of Greek political thought earlier than Plato and Aristotle has long been hampered by the extreme diversity of the sources. They cover some 300 years, down to ca. 400 BC, and are scattered in numerous authors (over 30 are excerpted here), who write in widely varying genres and styles and for very different purposes. The texts are often fragmentary, and call for reconstruction and exegesis; they are not always easy to track down in libraries, and some few have rarely if ever been translated. Most crucially, many are acutely difficult to interpret. From this vast mass of material Gagarin and Woodruff have made a selection so generous that one could easily carve out one's own more limited selections, according to one's special theme or purpose.