Luís António Verney (1713–1792) asserted in his *De re metaphysica libri quatuor ad usum Lusitanorum Adolescentium* of 1765 that all that scholastic metaphysics had in common with Aristotle was the attributive adjective “Aristotelian”.

A robust conviction such as this could hardly lead to a more merciful judgment when he discussed the Jesuit commentators on Aristotle who took medieval scholasticism as a model and tried to develop it further. The Jesuit commentaries are only quoted twice in this work, and only in order to be refuted.

Verney’s view has to be seen within its 18th century context. The political power of the Jesuits was unsurpassable. By the middle of the 18th century their monopoly on education in the colonies and on higher education in the mainland was overwhelming. Moreover, the Jesuits had the exclusive right to teach Latin and philosophy in the College of Arts (Colégio das Artes) in Coimbra, the only school that prepared students to theology, canonical and civil law, as well as medicine at Coimbra University, a privilege given them by King João III (1502–1557) in 1555. This power would gradually be eroded over the next two centuries. The issues the country was confronted with were no longer the Reformation and the reestablishment of Aristotelian philosophy. The campaign initiated by Verney in 1746 finally led to

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2 Sometimes also referred as *Royal College* (Colégio Real), cf. Rodrigues F., *História da Companhia de Jesus na Assistência de Portugal* 1 (Oporto: 1931) 336.


The Pombaline Reforms (Reformas Pombalinas) of the University in 1772. The Jesuits were at that moment considered less as true philosophers than as responsible for the impediments in the advancement of learning.

Although this judgment on Jesuit education is peculiar to the 18th century, it might be applied as a pars pro toto to the whole of Renaissance philosophy. Trapped between medieval and modern philosophy, the realm of Renaissance philosophy has to be defined with respect to these two major periods. It can be variously interpreted as a development of medieval thought or as preparing modern philosophy, including the so-called scientific revolution. This consideration will guide anyone trying to introduce into any field of Renaissance learning.⁶

The question of novelty or traditionality of these commentaries has therefore to be considered dispassionately by focusing on punctual evidence.⁷ This is the reason why we chose to address this difficulty by analysing the influence of the new geographical discoveries on the Aristotelian imago mundi they continued to defend. This has been considered as a minor issue by historians of philosophy,⁸ as very few passages on this topic are known to exist. Historians of mathematics,⁹ however, drew their attention to the mathematical skills necessary to achieve such discoveries. We try to relate these discussions on philosophy and mathematics, as they cannot be considered independently, since they are intimately linked with the comment on the De coelo, permitting us to witness their capacity of evolving even within the Aristotelian system.

Nonetheless this cannot be done adequately leaving aside the preliminary discussions that led to the redaction of these commentaries.

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⁷ The 18th century reaction to the Jesuits provoked a deep schism in the historiography of learning in Portugal, reaching its peak in the 19th century. The newer generation of historians tries finally to break up this schism by punctual research.


⁹ The most important scholars for our research are Ugo Baldini, Henrique Leitão and Luís Saraiva.