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Author: Mário S. de Carvalho

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Philosophy at the Geopolitical Service of Mission: The Coimbra Jesuits' "Wirkungsgeographie" (1542–1730)

MÁRIO S. DE CARVALHO

Almost as soon as it had been born, the Society of Jesus rapidly transformed into a “geographical network that virtually encircled the world.”¹ This essay examines one of its early philosophical instruments, the *Commentarii Collegii Conimbricensis Societatis Iesu* (1592–1606)—hereafter the *Cursus Conimbricensis*. This course circulated throughout the world and played an important role in the spread of Western philosophy to distant regions.

Geopolitically, the dissemination of the *Cursus Conimbricensis* can be explained in the following way: up to 1640, a total of fifty-eight missionaries, or six percent of those sent to China, and eighty-three missionaries sent to Brazil, or four percent of the total, belonged to the Portuguese assistancy.² These numbers contrast with the ninety-two thousand square kilometers of the Portuguese territory and its small population, which did not exceed 1.3 million people.³ Moreover, “as the maritime power of Portugal declined, the interests of the Society and those of the *Padroado* would sometimes turn out to be contradictory.”⁴ However, Portugal was not the only state to patronize the transmission of Western science to China.⁵ Alessandro Valignano’s politically motivated visit to Macao in 1594 is considered to be the first attempt to weaken the *Padroado*, a process that would culminate with the French king, Louis XIV (r.1643–1715), agreeing to Ferdinand Verbiest’s 1678 appeal for mathematicians to be sent to China.

As Jesuits engaged in their mission using activities that differed from place to place, it is important to pay attention to the geographical expansion of

¹ Steven J. Harris, “Mapping Jesuit Science: The Role of Travel in the Geography of Knowledge,” in *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts 1540–1773*, ed. John W. O’Malley et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 212–39, here 233.

² Ugo Baldini, “The Portuguese Assistancy of the Society of Jesus and Scientific Activities in Its Asian Missions until 1640,” in *História das ciências matemáticas, Portugal e o Oriente/History of Mathematical Sciences, Portugal and East Asia* (Camarate: Fundação Oriente, 2000), 49–104, here 50; see also Francisco Rodrigues, *História da Companhia de Jesus na assistência de Portugal*, tome 1, (Porto: Apostolado da Imprensa, 1931), 2:517–41.

³ Carlota Santos, “As cidades portuguesas na idade moderna: População,” in *1º Congresso Histórico Internacional: As cidades na história; População* (Guimarães: Câmara Municipal de Guimarães, 2013), 203–19, here 206.

⁴ Catherine Jami, “Tomé Pereira (1645–1708), Clockmaster, Musician, and Interpreter at the Kangxi Court: Portuguese Interests and the Transmission of Science,” in *The Jesuits, the Padroado, and East Asian Science (1552–1773)*, ed. Luís Saraiva and Catherine Jami (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2008), 195–201.

⁵ Catherine Jami, “Image and Patronage: The Role of Portugal in the Transmission of Scientific Knowledge from Europe to China,” in *História das ciências*, 341–61, here 360–61, 356.

the *Cursus Conimbricensis*. Thus, after presenting an account of the course's structure, the article explores how it was disseminated throughout Europe and East Asia. The final section deals briefly with one particular contribution to our knowledge of Western and Coimbra philosophy that came from the East.

From a Portuguese Enterprise (“apud Lusitanos editi sint” [Edited by the Portuguese])⁶

Four of the first Jesuits to reach Coimbra on June 13, 1542 had a university degree and immediately began to offer three courses (humanities, philosophy, and theology).⁷ On October 1, 1543, there were already four grammar undergraduates, eight dialecticians, and four theologians. Diego Mirão reported to Ignatius of Loyola that two of the “grammarians” were also studying dialectics at the College of Arts (*lógica de fuera*), rather than their own college, while also studying the courses in the College of Jesus.⁸ In 1546, eighty of the ninety-five members of the College of Jesus were students, and in 1548 the Jesuits doubled their courses (grammar, rhetoric, Greek, Hebrew, philosophy, and theology).⁹

Different as they were due to their geographically diverse origins, all the Jesuits in Coimbra supported the Society's common goal and recognized that it could not be attained without political support.¹⁰ Thus, of the nine stones erected on April 14, 1547, the day on which the construction works for the new uptown College of Jesus started, the first stone was erected in the name of Jesus; the second and third stones in the name of the church and the Society; but the fourth to the sixth were all erected in the name of the royal family.¹¹ Simply put, it would have been foolish not to express gratitude to the monarchy given King John III's (r.1521–57) earlier (1537) decision to permanently set the campus of the Portuguese university in the town of Coimbra, the same city where the Society of Jesus was founding its own college. Quite understandably, seventeenth-century historian of the Society Baltasar Teles depicted King John and Simão Rodrigues, who was the head of

⁶ Horace Cardon, “Lectori studioso,” in *Commentarii Collegii Conimbricensis Societatis Iesu, in tres libros De anima Aristoteles Stagiritae*, 2nd ed. (Lyon]: H. Cardon, 1600), unpaginated.

⁷ Balthazar Tellez, *Chronica da Companhia de Jesu, na província de Portugal*, part 1, chapter 19 (Lisbon: Paulo Craesbeek, 1645), 94–99.

⁸ *Epistolae mixtae ex variis Europae locis ab anno 1537 ad 1556 scriptae*, tome 1 (1537–48) (Madrid: Augustinus Avrial, 1898), 142–43, reproducing Mirão's letter to Ignatius of Loyola.

⁹ Rodrigues, *História*, tome 1, 1:574.

¹⁰ Tellez, *Chronica*, part 1, chapter 19, 98; see also Antonio Franco, *Imagem da virtude em o noviciado da Companhia de Jesus no Real Collegio de Jesus de Coimbra em Portugal*, tome 1 (Évora: Oficina da Universidade, 1719), 3.

¹¹ Tellez, *Chronica*, part 2, chapter 21, 320–23.

the first mission to arrive in Coimbra, as the two heroes responsible for the global centrality the city was to acquire in the future.¹²

Sometimes—and this is what surely happened on April 14, 1547—symbols speak louder than words. While Ignatius’s letter of 1553 to the Portuguese king mentioning the institution of schools is well known,¹³ less attention has been paid to Loyola’s longer letter of May 27, 1547 in which he mentions the harmonious relationship between studying and the practice of virtues.¹⁴ In the letter, Ignatius claims that schooling, virtue, and the missionary goal should go hand in hand, and that the university campus would be pivotal for the Society’s missionary purpose. After a short period of mistrust from the university dons (*lentes*) toward the recent Jesuits’ arrival,¹⁵ the order was finally able to aim at attracting the best university students. Thus former students of Paris, now enrolled in the University of Coimbra, joined the Society of Jesus thanks to John’s appealing educational policies. Two arrivals from Paris were to play a particularly important role in Coimbra: Luis Gonçalves da Câmara, a student of theology, and his cousin, canon law student Leão Henriques, whose arrival signals the ensuing preponderance of the two major subject matters (theology and law) the first Jesuit missionaries in Coimbra were then targeting. A second wave of students moving between the university and the College of Jesus would also take place. However, if, as early as 1543, Melchior Nunes Barreto, Gonçalo da Silveira, Rodrigo de Meneses, Luís da Grã, António Correia, and Nuno Ribeiro had joined the Society from the university, in a year’s time the transfer would take another direction: Melchior Carneiro and Jorge Serrão would attend classes at the university after studying at the College of Jesus. Thanks to the growing number of youth attracted by the education the Jesuits were offering, things would change again, and a third wave would take place. If, in 1544, the year when Pierre Favre set foot in Coimbra, there were already sixty students at the College of Jesus, in December 1551 that number had risen to 130.¹⁶ It is also known that, after his graduation, Leão Henriques would become the first to teach (1553) moral theology in the College of Jesus (*aos nossos religiosos das portas dentro*),¹⁷ and it would be under his rectorship that speculative theology would be taught at the college for the first time by Jorge Serrão, probably as a complement to the classes the Jesuits were studying at the university.¹⁸ After 1555, that is, the year when the king delivered the College of Arts to the Society of Jesus, any graduate student wishing to become a Jesuit would have

¹² Tellez, *Chronica*, part 3, chapter 25, 540; Rodrigues, *Historia*, tome 2, 2:449ff.

¹³ László Lukács, ed., *Monumenta paedagogica Societatis Iesu*, vol. 1, 1540–1556 (Rome: IHSI, 1965), 432; Rodrigues, *História*, tome 1, 1:573.

¹⁴ Tellez, *Chronica*, part 2, chapters 30–31, 363–71, reproducing Loyola’s letter.

¹⁵ Tellez, *Chronica*, part 1, chapter 21, 107.

¹⁶ Rodrigues, *História*, tome 1, 1:443.

¹⁷ Tellez, *Chronica*, part 5, chapter 1, 254.

¹⁸ Tellez, *Chronica*, part 5, chapter 1, 257.

to circulate between the College of Arts and the College of Jesus. That was surely also the case with Sebastião de Morais's most famous student, Luis de Molina.

If one compares the opening lesson of the College of Arts (pronounced by Arnauld Fabrice, on February 21, 1548, the eve of its foundation)¹⁹ with the "Speech on the Jesuit Colleges and Their Method of Studying" (*de Societatibus Iesu gymnasiis et de eius docendi ratione*) pronounced seven years later (October 1, 1555, this time by a famous Valencian rhetorician and former student of the Coimbra College of Jesus, Pedro Juan Perpiñá), few things seemed to have changed in the way the courses were delivered.²⁰ But perhaps this is a hasty conclusion. For three years (1552/55), the Jesuits exclusively studied the arts within the College of Jesus, a period that culminated with the granting of a master's degree to Pedro Gómez, Morais, Pedro da Fonseca, Inácio Martins, Marcos Jorge, Manuel Rodrigues, and Nicolau Gracida (all the Jesuits who taught in the College of Arts' first schooling years) on September 9, 1556.²¹ A few years later, on February 9, 1560, the provincial Miguel Torres refers for the first time to the existence of "some dictations" related to philosophy (*ditados de las artes*) that were ready for the printing-press (*para poderse imprimir*).²² Torres did not make any reference to a formal "course," but one year later (1561), during a visit to Portugal, Jerónimo Nadal instructed Fonseca to lead a team to deliver a written course to the press (*se procure que hum curso de scriptos se imprima, y en esto se ocupe el P. Afonseca principalmente*).²³ In 1567, Superior General Francisco de Borja (in office 1565–72) assumed that Fonseca had managed to finish writing the course,²⁴ but, as is well known, he had been unable to do so. Fourteen years later (1575), in a petition to Superior General Everard Mercurian (in office 1573–80), Manuel Rodrigues asked permission to publish the existing glosses. However, Mercurian rejected the petition, which may have been a sign that the work was not progressing as expected. In 1579, the provincial congregation agreed to publish the "written course," but the decision was only confirmed by Mercurian's successor, Claudio Acquaviva (in office 1581–1615), who was elected in 1581. Fonseca's stay in

¹⁹ Arnaldo Fabricio et al., *Orações de sapiência 1548–1555*, ed. and trans. Maria J. Pacheco et al. (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2011), 30–61.

²⁰ Cf. *Petri Ioannis Perpiniani [...] orationes duodeviginti* (Rome: Zannettum et Ruffinelum, 1587), 165–209; see also Belmiro F. Pereira, *Retórica e eloquência em Portugal na época do Renascimento* (Lisbon: INCM, 2012), 774–95, and Rodrigues, *História*, tome 1, 1:429.

²¹ Mário Brandão, "Os professores dos Cursos das Artes nas Escolas do Convento de Santa-Cruz, na Universidade e no Colégio das Artes de 1535 a 1555," *Biblos* 5 (1929), offprint; see also Brandão, *O Colégio II: 1555–1580 (Livro I)* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1933), 392–93.

²² László Lukács, ed., *Monumenta paedagogica Societatis Iesu*, vol. 3, 1557–1572 (Rome: IHSI, 1974), 317.

²³ Lukács, *Monumenta*, 3:60.

²⁴ *Sanctus Franciscus Borgia quartus Gandiae dux et Societatis Iesu praepositus generalis tertius: Vol IV; 1565–1568* (Madrid: G. Lopez del Horno, 1910), 536.

Rome (1573–82) and his nomination as general-assistant should also be considered when taking the delay between the decision and its actual confirmation into account.

Since Fonseca was engaged with the composition and publication of his own *Metaphysics* and busy with the duties and politics of his administrative post and could not cope with the editorial program he had designed for the course, other candidates came forward to complete it. Eventually, Manuel de Góis's contribution was chosen to the detriment of other possible candidates, among which the most likely to have been chosen were those by Gómez, Jorge, and Molina. Politics played a role in the decision to choose Góis, suffice it to remember that the Portuguese kingdom was under the Spanish crown.²⁵ Gómez and Molina were Spaniards, and the latter, after twenty-nine years in Portugal, in his August 29, 1582 letter to Rome, acknowledged the handicap of being a foreigner (*parece que por estrangeiro*).²⁶ Since it is clear that Fonseca had initially subordinated Jorge to marginal philosophical matters in the course's composition and played a powerful role in the publication of Góis's volume, Jorge's work was already out of the question.²⁷ And Fonseca dismissed the other name he mentioned, Gómez, due to his other commitments. After a teaching career in Coimbra (1558–62), Gómez sailed from the Azores archipelago toward Japan in 1579.²⁸ While awaiting a closer inspection of his lessons in Portugal, we can instead use his Japanese work to conjecture that he would have represented in Coimbra a "party" closer to Francisco de Toledo than to Fonseca. It is well known that, for the Roman College, Toledo and Fonseca were equally authoritative, at least as far as logic is concerned.²⁹ But Gómez's *De sphaera*

²⁵ Nuno da Silva Gonçalves, "Jesuits in Portugal," in *The Mercurian Project: Forming Jesuit Culture 1573–1580*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog, S.J. (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2004), 705–744, here 720, 736–38; see also Domingos Maurício Gomes dos Santos, "O Curso Conimbricense: Expressão do patriotismo Português," *Revista Portuguesa de filosofia* 11 (1955): 458–67.

²⁶ See Friedrich Stegmüller, *Geschichte des Molinismus I: Neue Molinaschriften* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 1935), 558, reproducing Molina's letter to Acquaviva.

²⁷ Paula Oliveira e Silva and João Rebalde, "Doctrinal Divergences on the Nature of Human Composite in Two Commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima* (Anonymous, Cod. 2399 BGUC and Francisco Suárez): New Material on the Jesuit School of Coimbra and the *Cursus Conimbricensis*," in *Francisco Suárez (1548–1617): Jesuits and the Complexities of Modernity*, ed. Robert Aleksander Maryks and Juan Antonio Senent de Frutos (Boston: Brill, 2019), 378–410, here 401, 406.

²⁸ Gonçalves, "Jesuits," 725; Rodrigues, *História*, tome 1, 2:588; Jesús López-Gay, S.J., "Manuscritos y obras de teólogos españoles en Oriente (siglo XVI)," in *Tempus implendi promissa: Homenaje al Prof. Dr. Domingo Ramos-Lissón*, ed. Elizabeth Reinhardt (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2000), 717–27; Elisabetta Corsi, "Le categorie filosofiche nella missione gesuitica," in *Scienza, ragione, fede: Il genio di P. Matteo Ricci*, ed. Claudio Giuliadori and Roberto Sani (Macerata: Eum, 2012), 113–36, here 131–32.

²⁹ Charles Lohr, "Les jésuites et l'aristotélisme du XVII^e siècle," in *Les jésuites à la Renaissance: Système éducatif et production du savoir*, ed. Luce Giard (Paris: PUF, 1995), 79–91, here 81.

(On the sphere),³⁰ based on Christopher Clavius's *In sphaeram* (Disputation on planetary systems), as well as his commentaries on *De caelo* (On the heavens), *Meteororum* (On meteorology), and *De generatione* (On generation and corruption), clashed with Fonseca's distribution of the subject matters of the course among his companions—notably because Fonseca had consigned subject matters belonging mostly to the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) to Cipriano Soares. This is another sign that, apart from politics, philosophical conceptions often had a personal signature. Ignatius's secretary, Juan Alfonso de Polanco, was in favor of Toledo's recently edited course because it spared the students the fatigue of writing.³¹ The same rationale for the publication of the course would reappear in Polanco's successor, Antonio Possevino.³² The Society's choice of Góis's manual excluded any other glosses, whether by Jorge or by anyone else who was closer to Toledo. If we take Gómez as a reference, all seems to indicate that, in contrast to Fonseca's outlook, this "party" favored a greater theological presence in the philosophical courses. Despite this inner fight, or perhaps because of it, the decision to print the contribution by the Portuguese would turn out to be a powerful expression of an identity. Already in Portugal, on October 23, 1591, acting on behalf of the Society of Jesus and under the authorization of Acquaviva, Fonseca signed the "nihil obstat" for the actual publication of the course. In doing so, he was acting on behalf of Rome, and though it was impossible to link the course to any Jesuit in particular, it was clear that the Roman superiors were recognizing the merit of Góis's work.

Thus the various pre-existent Roman courses were definitively left aside, as well as the variety of options provided by the Coimbra manuscripts. As the course was published with the omission of the names of its contributors, it was no longer a Portuguese production but the expression of a uniform Jesuit philosophy. This had already been acknowledged by Borja in his 1567 letter to Leão Henriques.³³ Thus Acquaviva and Fonseca put aside Toledo's prestige, while also dismissing Fonseca's and Benet Perera's work as unsuitable for the Aristotelian identity they were seeking to create. One of the reasons Francisco de Gouveia presented to Rome in December 1594 in

³⁰ See Ryuji Hiraoka, "Jesuit Cosmological Textbook in 'the Christian Century' Japan: *De sphaera* of Pedro Gomez (Part I)," *Sciamvs* 6 (2005): 99–175; Hiraoka, "The Transmission of Western Cosmology to 16th-Century Japan," in Saraiva and Jami, *Jesuits, the Padroado, and East Asian Science*, 81–98.

³¹ Cf. Juan Alfonso Polanco, *Complementa [...] Epistolae et commentaria J. J. Alf. Polanco* (Madrid: MHSJ, 1917), 2:124: "Ha comenzado a imprimir el curso del P. Toledo para aliviar a los estudiantes de las fatigas de escribir"; López-Gay, "Manuscritos," 718.

³² Antonio Possevino, *Coltura degli'ingegni*, ed. Cristiano Casalini and Luana Salvarani (Rome: Anicia, 2008), chapter 26, 167–70, here 170.

³³ *Sanctus Franciscus Borgia*, 536: "Deseamos mucho tener aquí el curso de las artes que ha scripto el P. Pedro da Fonseca, porque queremos que, examinado aquello y lo que aquí han hecho los PP. Toledo y Benedicto, salga un curso que se haya de seguir de aquí adelante, y que no ande cada maestro haziendo inuenciones de su caueça."

support of Góis's work-in-progress to the detriment of Fonseca's were Góis's "sound common opinions" (*el P. Fonseca tiene muchas opiniones contra la comum, y el P Goes va con las recibidas*).³⁴ If, philosophically speaking, Aristotle was mandatory to the Society of Jesus, from now on it was up to the *Cursus Conimbricensis* to establish how Aristotle should be studied.

To the European Connection ("Opus iam olim promissum et diu ab Europa Academiis expectatum" [An already promised *oeuvre* and long awaited by European academies])³⁵

Coimbra left its mark abroad even before the publication of the *Cursus Conimbricensis*. Several companions from Coimbra were assigned to the Colleges of Gandía, Alcalá, and Valladolid by Favre; Diogo de Mirão left Coimbra to found the College of Valencia (1544); Francis Gallo left Coimbra to found the Jesuit province of Spain; and Francisco Rodrigues departed toward Salamanca (1547).³⁶

It remains impossible to fully understand the geographical dissemination of the *Cursus Conimbricensis*—literally from Lisbon to Kiev and Moscow—or to arrive at an accurate picture of its numerous editions. However, it would appear that, between 1592 and 1730, with the latter year being the one in which the Coimbra volume on *Dialectica* was published together with Fonseca's parallel title, *Institutionum dialecticarum* (Dialectical instructions),³⁷ almost all the titles knew from nineteen (*Physica, Meteororum*) to twenty-two editions (*Ethica, De caelo, Parva naturalia*); *De generatione* ran to twenty editions and the *De anima* twenty-one. An average of more than one title per year was being published, and some of the major Central European publishing houses were highly enthusiastic about the project, including Horace Cardon and John Pillheotte in Lyon; Lazare Zetzner and his heirs in Cologne; and Andrew Baba in Venice, who, together with John Albin, produced unconventional editions in Mainz. These unconventional editions include the compilation of the *Problemata* by Albin (in 1601)³⁸ and

³⁴ See Joaquim Ferreira Gomes, "Introdução," in *Pedro da Fonseca: Instituições dialécticas; Institutionum dialecticarum libri octo* (Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 1964), xix–lxviii, here xlix, reproducing Gouveia's letter.

³⁵ Bernard Gualter, "Epistola dedicatória," in *Commentarii Collegii Conimbricensis Societatis Iesu in Universam dialecticam, Aristoteles Stagiritae* (Cologne: B. Gualterium, 1611), unpaginated.

³⁶ Tellez, *Chronica*, part 1, chapter 37, 186; Rodrigues, *História*, tome 1, 1:399–401.

³⁷ Cristiano Casalini, *Aristotele a Coimbra: Il Cursus Conimbricensis e l'educazione nel Collegium Artium* (Rome: Anicia, 2012), 132.

³⁸ *Problemata quae in Collegii Conimbricensis Societatis Iesu Physicis commentariis enodantur, ad publicam scholarum philosophicarum utilitatem in Germania recusa* (Mainz: Ioannes Albin, 1601); http://www.uc.pt/fluc/uidief/textos_publicacoes/de_anima (accessed December 12, 2020).

Baba's composite (*De caelo, Meteororum, Parva naturalia*) in 1616, an editorial solution also adopted by Pilheotte in the same year, although with a more unusual combination, for he added the *Ethica* to the titles belonging to natural philosophy. Contrasting with the interest Central Europe had in the *Cursus Conimbricensis*, publisher John Bellamy only launched a digest of the *Dialectica* in the British Isles in 1627. Written by a member of the Reformed Church, the former Portuguese Jesuit Jerónimo de Paiva, it nevertheless announced its geographical brand on the front page, *Brevissimum totius conimbricensis logicae compendium* (A very brief summary of the whole of the Coimbra logic).³⁹ Significantly, using the same market strategy to announce its geographical origin in the title, the heirs of the prestigious publisher Johann Froeben launched a counterfeit edition, the *Collegii conimbricensis Societatis Iesu Commentarii doctissimi in universam Logicam Aristotelis* (A very wise commentary on the whole of Aristotle's *Logic* by the Coimbra College of the Society of Jesus [1604]). It is known that, eight years before the appearance of Sebastião do Couto's *Dialectica* (1606), Cardon was already eager to receive it.⁴⁰ The eagerness of the European book market was explicitly stated by the Latin phrase reproduced at the head of this paragraph. In less than one year's time, the Lyon publisher Jean Baptiste Buisson, a former student of the Jesuits, edited the *Physica* of Coimbra with the Aristotelian Greek text duly divided "ob studiosorum commoditatem" (for the convenience of students).⁴¹ The Greek addendum is a sign of editorial wealth, an option the Coimbra university publisher, António de Mariz, who funded the course's publication, could not afford.

Prestigious European publishers were clearly responding to the demands of the market not only in France, Germany, and Italy but even in East Asia, as we shall see below. The imprimatur of the Lyon provincial Bernardin Castorius, dated August 17, 1593, which was reproduced at the beginning of Góis's *Physica*, is likely to certify that the course was no longer considered a national enterprise but, as Borja once wished, a manual presenting the Aristotelian philosophy of the Society of Jesus. Possevino's *Bibliotheca selecta* (Selected library) mentions the German edition of the Coimbra commentary on *Ethica* as the culmination of a long bibliographical history related to the study of ethics (*disciplina moralis*) inside the Society of Jesus.⁴²

³⁹ E. Jennifer Ashworth, "Jesuit Logic," in *Jesuit Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity*, ed. Cristiano Casalini (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 95–114, here 97. As regards the presence of the Coimbra volume on logic in Scotland in the nineteenth century, see William Hamilton, *Lectures on Logic*, ed. Henry L. Mansel and John Veitch (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1868).

⁴⁰ Cardon, "Lectori studioso," 1: "Alios in Logica eiusdem sholae commentarios spero propediem me recepturum."

⁴¹ Coline Silvestre, "Les éditions d'Aristote à Lyon dans la seconde moitié du XVIe siècle: Chroniques d'un déclin annoncé?" (Master's thesis, Université de Lyon, 2014), 86ff.

⁴² Antonio Mantovano Possevino, *Bibliotheca selecta de ratione studiorum, recognita novissime ab eodem et aucta et in duos tomos distributa*, 2nd ed. (Venice: A. Salicatum, 1603); David A. Lines, *Aristotle's Ethics in the Italian Renaissance (ca. 1300–1650): The*

At this stage, a philosophical identity would have been incompatible with the emergence of any “national” manuals, despite several national editions. Zetzner’s edition of the *Physica* in Cologne 1596 appeared as a “first German edition” *ob studiosorum Philosophiae usum in Germania sunt editi* (published for the use of philosophy students in Germany). Such a geographical claim, apparently diminishing the interpretation advanced here, is even more patent in its Italian counterpart. The Venice edition of 1602, dated October 23, 1601, by Piero da Ponte and Hieronimo da Diedo, contains the first vernacular translation of any Coimbra title, “La filosofia di Aristotele con li commentarii del Collegio Conimbricense della Compagnia di Giesú” (Aristotle’s philosophy with the commentary by the Coimbra College of the Society of Jesus). Indeed, Ponte’s and Diedo’s title says it all—the books were about Aristotle’s philosophy, even if interpreted by the Coimbra College of Jesus; or, in Cardon’s words: “A celeberrimo et tum litteris, et pietate florentissimo Collegio emissos” (Published by the most well-known and flourishing college, either by its studies or piety).⁴³ From an exclusively Portuguese point of view, eighteenth-century historian of the Society António Franco was still attributing the editorial success of the course to Góis’s knowledge of philosophy and Latin,⁴⁴ but this was likely no more than a patriotic and outdated claim. Only the identity issue can explain the multifarious uses of the course during the seventeenth century. The way the course was used in the Roman College is still to be studied, but it is likely that the impact the course had in distant and unexpected geographies⁴⁵ means that it was almost certainly used in Rome. Wider research on the *Wirkungsgeographie* of the course, its presence in school institutions, academies, libraries, and universities, is still waiting to be initiated.

Nevertheless, there is one hypothesis worth advancing. To briefly present it, I will rely on Kantian terms. Much more than the Magdeburgenses, the Lovanienses, or the Complutenses, the *Conimbricenses* (i.e., the various volumes of the course) provided an identity in a period that was characterized by a conflict of identities. In such a difficult situation, there was clearly an

Universities and the Problem of Moral Education (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 546, see also 382, 363.

⁴³ Horace Cardon, “Clarissimo Viro D. Nicolao Regnauld,” in *Commentarii Collegii Conimbricensis Societatis Iesu, in tres libros De anima*, 1–2, here 2.

⁴⁴ António Franco, *Imagem da virtude em o noviciado da Companhia de Jesus no Real Collegio do Espírito Santo de Évora* (Lisbon: Deslandesiana, 1714), 874.

⁴⁵ Serhii Wakúlenko, “Algumas reflexões acerca do lugar dos autores religiosos portugueses na vida intelectual ucraniana dos séculos XVII e XVIII,” in *Para a história das ordens e congregações religiosas em Portugal, na Europa e no Mundo*, ed. José Eduardo Franco and Luís Machado de Abreu (Prior Velho: Paulinas, 2014), 1:219–39, here 222, 234; Wakúlenko, “Projecção da filosofia Escolástica Portuguesa na polónia seiscentista,” *Revista filosófica de Coimbra* 15 (2006): 355–60. See also Cristiano Casalini, “Introduction,” in *Jesuit Logic and Late Ming China: Lectures on the Cursus Conimbricensis*, ed. Cristiano Casalini (Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2019), 1–5.

urgent need for “incorporated scholars” (i.e., intellectuals recognized as such by the university). Europe was less in need of “scholars at large,” working either in “a state of nature so far as learning is concerned” or in “independent organizations” (academies or scientific societies).⁴⁶ The course thus provided a “*filum doctrinae*” (a system; an expression repeated numerous times in the *Cursus Conimbricensis*) that could not be ignored by Lutheran, Calvinist, Catholic, or even Jesuit schools and universities, though for different reasons. Geographically, a relatively autonomous organization, such as the Society of Jesus, was very much in need of incorporated scholars, and manuals would have played a vital role in establishing a “Jesuit International,” so to speak. This ran in parallel with a particular way of doing philosophy *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* (for the greater glory of God), namely under the notion of “authorized truth” (*vérité autorisée*).⁴⁷ In other words, a procedure to link the “unity of doctrine” and the “eternal and immutable truth,” an ideal the course had tried to be faithful to since its very creation.⁴⁸

The Japanese Connection (“Para bem d’ambas estas Crismandades sinica e japonica” [For the benefit of Chinese and Japanese Christianity])⁴⁹

In December 1594, Valignano established a new college in Macao that would become the training center for missionaries from Japan to China, Tonkin, and the surrounding regions.⁵⁰ Even if it would have been impossible to read the course in Macao by the time the college began to award degrees (1597), Portuguese philosophy nevertheless exerted an influence in China. Giulio Aleni’s *Zhifang waiji* (Record of foreign lands [1623]) would announce the strongest point of Portuguese Jesuit education, its Scholastic Aristotelian body

⁴⁶ Immanuel Kant, *O conflito das faculdades*, Portuguese translation (Lisbon: Edições 70), 20.

⁴⁷ Paul Richard Blum, “L’enseignement de la métaphysique dans les collèges jésuites d’Allemagne au XVIIe siècle,” in Giard, *Les jésuites à la Renaissance*, 103.

⁴⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, introduction, §2, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. [Hugh Barr] Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 26: “Philosophy forms a circle. It has an initial or immediate point—for it must begin somewhere—a point which is not demonstrated and is not a result. But the starting point of philosophy is immediately relative, for it must appear at another end-point as a result. Philosophy is a sequence which is not suspended in mid-air; it does not begin immediately, but is rounded off within itself.” See Mário S. de Carvalho, *O Curso Aristotélico Jesuíta Conimbricense* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2018), 44.

⁴⁹ Niccolò Longobardo, *Resposta breve sobre as controversias do Xámtý, Tien Xîn, Lîm hoên, e outros nomes e termos sinicos: Para se determinar quaes delles podem ou não podem usarse nesta Crismandade*, APF (Archives of Propaganda Fidei), MS SC Indie Orientali Cina, 1: *proemio*, no. 3, fol. 146^r.

⁵⁰ Domingos Maurício Gomes dos Santos, *Macao: The First Western University in the Far East* (Macao: Fundação Macao, 1994), 79; see also Ugo Baldini, “The Jesuit College in Macao as a Meeting Point of the European, Chinese, and Japanese Mathematical Traditions: Some Remarks on the Present State of Research, Mainly concerning Sources (16th–17th Centuries),” in Saraiva and Jami, *Jesuits, the Padroado, and East Asian Science*, 33–79.

of knowledge taught at Coimbra and Évora around 1600, the praise of its two Portuguese universities, and a tribute to Francisco Suárez's theological reputation in Coimbra.⁵¹

As already said, geopolitically the “appointment of Valignano appears to indicate a desire on the part of the general of the Society to strike a radically different balance.”⁵² Valignano's *Catechismus Japonensis* (Japanese catechism [1586])⁵³ was harsh toward “Japanese sects,” but Gómez's *Compendium catholicae veritatis* (1574),⁵⁴ a treatise on souls, could have offered a distinct basis for a condensed alternative course by Aleni.⁵⁵

As a matter of fact, the appearance in China of an adaptation⁵⁶ of the Coimbra course's volume *On the Soul* in 1623, Aleni's *Xingxue cushu* (Brief introduction to the study of human nature),⁵⁷ indicates that Jesuit missionaries in China were testing different approaches. Thanks to the Jesuit Nicolas Trigault's journey to Central Europe⁵⁸ with the Coimbra commentaries between 1613 and 1619, after which they were taken to East, Aleni was not the only one to benefit from the actual volumes of the course.⁵⁹ Francisco Furtado,⁶⁰ Alfonso Vagnone,⁶¹ Francisco Sambiasi,⁶² Xu Guangqi,⁶³ and Li

⁵¹ Jami, “Image and Patronage,” 345.

⁵² Andrew C. Ross, “Alessandro Valignano: The Jesuits and Culture in the East,” in O'Malley et al., *Jesuits*, 336–51.

⁵³ *Catecismo da fé Cristã no qual se mostra a verdade da nossa santa religião e se refutam as seitas japonesas*, trans. António G. Pinto (Lisbon: Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2017).

⁵⁴ López-Gay, “Manuscritos,” 717–27.

⁵⁵ Thierry Meynard, “Comparative Analysis of Two Jesuit Treatises on the Soul, in Japan and China: Gómez's *Breve compendium* (1593) and Aleni's *Xingxue cushu* (1646)” (forthcoming).

⁵⁶ Arianna Magnani, “The Imported Culture: Who Is the Dummy? Considering ‘Agency’ in the Circulation of Chinese Books in Europe during the Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries,” *Annali di Ca' Foscari: Serie orientale* 54 (2018): 575–94, here 581.

⁵⁷ Thierry Meynard, “The First Treatise on the Soul in China and Its Sources,” *Revista filosófica de Coimbra* 24 (2015): 203–42; Qiong Zhang, “Translation as Cultural Reform: Jesuit Scholastic Psychology in the Transformation of the Confucian Discourse on Human Nature,” in O'Malley et al., *Jesuits*, 364–79.

⁵⁸ Thierry Meynard, “Aristotelian Works in Seventeenth-Century China: An Updated Survey and New Analysis,” *Monumenta serica: Journal of Oriental Studies* 65, no. 1 (2017): 67–91, here 70; Noël Golvers, “Scientific Books and Individual ‘Curricula’ among Jesuit ‘Indipetae’ in Portugal and China (17th–18th Cent.),” *Euphrosyne* 45(2017): 205–27, here 207.

⁵⁹ Meynard, “Aristotelian Works,” 67–91; Noël Golvers, *Libraries of Western Learning for China: Volume 2: Formation of Jesuit Libraries* (Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Institute, 2013), 9, 14.

⁶⁰ Han Qi, “F. Furtado (1587–1653), S.J. and His Chinese Translation of Aristotle's *Cosmology*,” in *História das ciências*, 169–179, here 169–79; Corsi, “Le categorie,” 133n64; Thierry Meynard, “What the Failure of Aristotelian Logic in Seventeenth-Century China Teaches Us Today: A Case Study of the *Mingli Tan*,” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 14, no. 2 (2019): 248–63.

⁶¹ Thierry Meynard, “Aristotelian Ethics in the Land of Confucius: A Study on Vagnone's ‘Western Learning on Personal Cultivation,’” *Antiquorum philosophia: An International Journal* 7 (2013): 145–69.

⁶² Elisabetta Corsi, “Our Little Daily Death: Francesco Sambiasi's Treatise on Sleep and Images in Chinese,” in *Réligion et littérature à la Renaissance, mélanges en l'honneur de Franco Giacone*, ed. François Raudaut (Paris: Garnier, 2012), 427–42.

Zhizao⁶⁴ also benefited from that purchase. Thanks to Noël Golvers, I have been able to read an unedited 1613 letter (JS 113, fol. 303^{r-v}) by the Sicilian Jesuit Nicolò Longobardo that foresees a project of filling a library with European books by European standards (*como qualquer das melhores da Europa*) in Beijing. But libraries were just a part of the problem, and in the mission field things proved far more difficult. In the same year Aleni was writing the *Xingxue cushu*, Longobardo was writing *A Short Answer concerning the Controversies about Shangdi (God), Tianshen (spirits), and Linghun (the rational soul)*.⁶⁵ Simplistic and replete with Scholastic jargon,⁶⁶ *Short Answer* was about the controversy over the question of Chinese terms. The author presenting those terms was depicted therein as “a staunch representative of the anti-Ricci camp who was not persuaded by the decision of the Jesuit conference at Macao in 1621 in favour of Matteo Ricci’s supporters.”⁶⁷ According to Longobardo, some Jesuits in Japan had different views about cross-culture relationships from those of their companions in China.⁶⁸ Of course, the Japanese experience differed from the Chinese one, not least because the persecutions in Japan had become more severe since 1613. Longobardo took sides with Sabatino de Ursis and João Roiz against Diogo Pantoja and Alfonso Vagnone, the former two representing Jesuits in Japan, with Vagnone being one of the six aforementioned “translators.” Apparently, whereas Pantoja and Vagnone were closer to Ricci’s theses, Ursis and Roiz were against a possible parallelism between the Confucian notion of Xangdi/Xámtý and the Christian God. Even if it was a matter of debate among Western Jesuits, their knowledge of Confucianism was more than perfunctory. Let us not forget that in 1617/18, after being expelled from China, Ursis is credited with teaching Confucian matters (*livros sinicos*) in Macao.⁶⁹ In his capacity as Ricci’s successor, Longobardo’s option would represent a blow to the Jesuits’ primitive mainstream in China.

Contrariwise, the recognition of the existence of natural philosophy (in the Chinese heritage as well) had the potential to boost the universalist ideal of human knowledge that lay behind one dimension of Ricci’s strategy. This is not the place to demonstrate how, throughout the Coimbra course, Western Scholastic thought serves the ideal of one universal ancient science and wisdom (*prisca theologia*). Nevertheless, one or two words will be added later

⁶³ Catherine Jami, Peter Mark Engelfriet, and Gregory Blue, eds., *Statecraft and Intellectual Renewal in Late Ming China: The Cross-cultural Synthesis of Xu Guangqi (1562–1633)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

⁶⁴ Qi, “F. Furtado,” 170–72.

⁶⁵ Longobardo, *Resposta*, fols. 145^r–168^r.

⁶⁶ Zhang, “Translation,” 366.

⁶⁷ Zhang, “Translation,” 366.

⁶⁸ Longobardo, *Resposta, proemio*, no. 2, fol. 145^v.

⁶⁹ Baldini, “Jesuit College,” 46–47n47.

in the essay. Meanwhile, let us put into context the presence of the Coimbra course in Longobardo's digest. Two things will interest us here. First, one quotation from the volume on *Physica*, and second, two references to Fonseca's glosses on the same Aristotelian title. It is clear that the precise quotation of Góis's *Physica* (1, c. 7, q. *unica*)⁷⁰ explicitly targeted Vagnone. According to Longobardo, one difficulty with Chinese wisdom was due to the "metaphorical" use of symbols, in a similar way to the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Greeks. Adopting the posture of a master of suspicion, Longobardo downgraded the issue of the metaphorical use of terms to a mere trick or stratagem (*stratagemma*) where the message was ambiguously conveyed, *Huõ tím tiě*, according to the Chinese expression he reports, meaning the ends justify the means.⁷¹

As well as Góis (*Physica, prooemium*), Couto's *Dialectica* also dwelled on the topic of the "prisca theologia." Ultimately, the Assyrian and Persian magi, the Egyptian priests, the Bactrian shamans, the Indian Brahmans and Gymnosophists, the Druids of the Gauls, the sages of the Greeks, and the doctors of the Latins all went back to one and primal font, God the Creator.⁷² Commenting on this passage, Robert Wardy states that "if the Chinese are intellectually unfortunate, this is due not to any innate logical inferiority, but rather to [a] geographical accident."⁷³ If Wardy regrets the omission of China in the list of the inventors of the arts and the possibility of that list being no more than an updated ancient *topos*, it may be said that East Asia is not entirely ignored in the *Cursus Conimbricensis*. Immediately after mentioning the hieroglyphic writings of the Chaldeans and Egyptians, Couto refers to the possibility that Japanese and Chinese characters (*utuntur hodie Sinarum et Iaponiarum populi*), despite being more figures than writing, signify things.⁷⁴ This is interesting because it anticipates the particular relation *signum/res* that would underlie a letter by Joachim Bouvet to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Writing in Beijing on November 4, 1701, Bouvet admits that "like the Chinese," Leibniz too proceeds "from the generation of the numbers to the production of things, keeping up the same analogy in the explanation of both

⁷⁰ Longobardo, *Resposta*, 3rd, *preludio*, fol. 150^r. There is also one allusion to the Coimbra *De anima* (2, c. 1, q. 7, a. 1, 179), see Longobardo, *Resposta*, 3^o, *preludio*, fol. 150^r.

⁷¹ Longobardo, *Resposta*, 17th, *preludio*, §2n5, fol. 168^r: "Por onde nos deu muitas vezes pera conselho, que na declaração [das] cousas uzassemos de hum modo *Huõ tím tiě*, Id est, ambidextro ou anfibologico [...]"

⁷² *Commentarii Collegii Conimbricensis S.I. in Universam dialecticam Aristotelis Stagiritae, prooemium*, 2 (Coimbra: D. G. Loureiro, 1606).

⁷³ Robert Wardy, *Aristotle in China: Language, Categories, and Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 89: "If the Chinese are intellectually unfortunate, this is due not to any innate logical inferiority, but rather to [a] geographical accident [...]"

⁷⁴ John P. Doyle, *The Conimbricensis: Some Questions on Signs*, trans. John P. Doyle (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001), 119, corresponding to *De interpretatione* part 1, chapter 1, q. 3, a. 4 of the *Commentarii Collegii Conimbricensis S.I. in Universam dialecticam Aristotelis Stagiritae*.

matters.”⁷⁵ It seems that the *Cursus Conimbricensis* was already pierced by the idea and motif of one fundamental root and its semiotic dimension (*signum/res*), a root that will unite the “small lines of the Prince of the Chinese philosophers, that is, the Fo-hii,” and Leibniz’s philosophical and mathematical program.⁷⁶

The Boomerang Effect (*Seria facil restituir a scientia dos numeros Pythagoricos que se perderam la no grande Occidente [It would be easy to restore the Pythagorean science of the numbers, which was lost in the great West]*)⁷⁷

Let us now pay attention, albeit briefly, to the two Longobardo quotations from Fonseca’s *Glosses on Physics* that scholars have previously failed to notice.⁷⁸ They must date from his 1552/57 lessons either in the College of Jesus or in the College of Arts. Fonseca was already then dialoguing with Thomas Aquinas’s *Commentary on Physics* (a precise critique to Melissus of Samos in the latter’s *Physica* 1, *lectio* 5n3), but the long quotation by Longobardo reinforced the idea that the pagans had no knowledge of any kind of cause, besides the material one, and ignored the creation of the universe. Another passage called upon Fonseca’s authority to parallel the Chinese texts and the pagans, “all devils’ work.”⁷⁹ Since it is admissible that those earlier theses quoted in China knew their future development in Fonseca’s *Metaphysics* book 1, chapters 3–7, it may be said that Coimbra’s authority was

⁷⁵ Gottfried W. Leibniz, *Der Briefwechsel mit den Jesuiten in China (1689–1714)*, ed. Rita Widmaier, trans. Malte-Ludolf Babin (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2006), 334; compare with Longobardo, *Resposta*, fol. 149^v.

⁷⁶ Leibniz, *Der Briefwechsel*, 334. For the obvious and critical presence of Augustinian semiotics in Sebastião do Couto, see Doyle, *Conimbricenses*, 19, 39.

⁷⁷ Longobardo, *Resposta*, 3rd, *preludio*, fol. 149^v.

⁷⁸ Longobardo, *Resposta*, 7th, *preludio*, fol. 154^v–155^r: “O Padre Fonseca na grosa que fez sobre o primeiro dos Physicos, diz o seguinte: Philosophi antiqui rudi adhuc et balbutiente philosophia solam ferme causam materialem attingerunt, nec vero ut ipsa est, sed rudi quodam modo putaverunt totam essentiam rerum naturalium esse materiam ipsam. Unde hi qui dicebant principia rerum naturalium esse aquam, eo cogebantur fateri omnia secundum essentiam esse aquam, differre tamen accidentibus, ut densitate, raritate, calore, frigora, atque ita in caeteris: quemadmodum nos arte facta omnia quae ex ligno fiunt, dicimus esse ligna secundum substantiam, sed differre figuris inductis per artem. Secundum hoc igitur Philosophos dicit Aristoteles non differre hanc quaestionem, sint ne principia unum an plura, ab hac quaestione sint ne entia naturalia unum an plura, et in reliqua subdivisione, sint ne finita an infinita. Ratio est, quoniam principium et principiatum apud eos nulla ratione distinguebantur secundum essentiam. [...] [Quid quid factum est habet principium durationis, ergo quidquid non est factum, non habet tale principium, et per consequens nec finem durationis; sed ex se est infinitum duratione et essentia; et per consequens prorsus unum et immobile. Item quid quid est praeter ens quod ex se habet esse, est non [ens] et nihil. Et ita cum ens ex se habens esse unum tantum sit, efficitur ut ens tale, ens [unum omnino] sit dumtaxat.”

⁷⁹ Longobardo, *Resposta*, 1st, *preludio*, fol. 148^r.

being downsized and Fonseca's thought ill-interpreted.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, there is something new here. Not only Gómez but also Fonseca had reached East Asia, the former in person, the latter in text. Even if the idea of restoration that the Portuguese expression quoted in the title of this paragraph implies is certainly a huge and probably overenthusiastic admission, one may expect that Chinese archives may continue to increase our knowledge about Western and Coimbra philosophy.

Conclusion

What does a geopolitical perspective add to our knowledge about the Coimbra course? Immediately after its publication, what had initially been conceived as a Jesuit Portuguese philosophical achievement acquired an international dimension. However, due to its philosophical nature, the *Cursus Conimbricensis* did not receive a similar reception in East Asia to the one it had in Europe. Nevertheless, we witnessed how Coimbra's philosophical echo arrived in East Asia in different ways to serve distinct purposes, from a more dialogical project (Aleni, Vagnone, Sambiasi) to a less dialogical one (Longobardo). Finally, a Chinese manuscript written in Portuguese offers a detail, related to Fonseca's earliest teaching, which may be indicative that, thanks to the East, our knowledge of Western philosophy may still increase.

⁸⁰ Mário S. de Carvalho, "As palavras e as coisas: O tema da causalidade em Portugal (séculos XVI e XVIII)," *Revista filosófica de Coimbra* 19 (2009): 227–58.