1. Overview

William R. Shea is a professor of history of science in the University of Padua located in Italy, and Mariano Artigas is both a physicist and a Roman Catholic Priest.\(^1\) Shea and Artigas decided to connect their extensive knowledge in order to collaborate together and publish a book counteracting the overall dominant response of the Galileo affair. The Galileo affair is often seen as a black/white dilemma in which the Roman Catholic Church was at complete fault for persecuting Galileo based on his revolutionary discoveries, while Galileo, on the other hand, is often, and almost naturally, seen as being completely innocent of a genuine wrongdoing. Traveling back in time and analyzing each of the six trips Galileo took to Rome, Shea and Artigas attempt to find flaw in the black/white logic by pointing out life changing mistakes Galileo made during the course of his lifetime and ultimately put together an argument stating that, although the Roman Catholic Church was at fault, Galileo played an equal part in digging his own grave. Although Shea and Artigas discuss the six trips made to Rome, this review will cover the most controversial chapters; trips five and six are covered in their respective chapter (five and six) and highlight the argument attempted by the authors.

2. Background

\(^1\) Pg. xi
Galileo’s fifth trip to Rome was when he was just over 60-years-old and took place on May 3rd, 1630, lasting a little over a month until June 26th. During this time, Galileo published *The Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems*; a play in four acts about three friends (Filippo Salvati, Giovanfrancesco Sagredo, and Simplicio). The play was published to dismantle Aristotelian philosophy stating that the physics found on Earth differs from the physics found in the heavens. It was believed that “heavenly bodies naturally move in perfect and unending circles while bodies on Earth naturally go straight up or straight down,” and thus the belief that the heavens and Earth are not equal spawned. Galileo took it upon himself to let everyone know the current Aristotelian thought could not be by pointing out what he witnessed through his telescope – mountains on the Moon. The discovery of mountains on the Moon was striking to Galileo because it meant the heavens could not be totally different due to the like geography of the Moon and the Earth. Through the character of Salvati, Galileo argues precisely the aforementioned viewpoint:

Terrestrial physics can and should be extended to the celestial regions argues Salviati, who is careful not to overstate his argument. Sagredo, the voice of sweet reasonableness, points out that plants, animals, and humans could not live on the moon because there is no water there. Nonetheless Salviati does not rule out that the moon could contain creatures very different from us who would praise the Lord in their own way.⁴

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² Pg. 123
³ Pg. 124
⁴ Pg. 124
The Pontiff received Galileo on May 18th, the same date an article was issued in a gossip column known as Avvisi that stated the following:

Galileo, the famous mathematician and astronomer, is here to try to publish a book in which he attacks several opinions held by the Jesuits. He has been understood to say that D. Anna. [Anna Colonna, the wife of Taddeo Barberini, the Pope’s nephew] will give birth to a son, that we shall have peace in Italy at the end of June, and that shortly thereafter Taddeo and the Pope will die. This last point is confirmed by the Neapolitan Caracioli, by Father Campanella, and by several articles that discuss the election of a new Pontiff as if the Holy See were already vacant.\(^5\)

Galileo’s sixth and final trip to Rome occurred on February 13\(^{th}\) 1633 until July 6\(^{th}\) of that same year. During this trip, the plague had been going around and Galileo endured a rather uncomfortable voyage with rough lodgings and with only bread, wine, and eggs as form of nourishment.\(^6\) Upon arrival, Galileo was allowed to stay in the Palazzo Firenze, as permitted by Cardinal Francesco Barberini as long as he did not receive any visitors nor pay anyone a visit himself. The confinement Galileo had to endure was rather painful for him since he was accustomed to frequent exercise in the form of working on his orchids and exercising period. However, Pope Urban VIII declared Galileo’s house arrest was not contestable due to his meddling in these subjects and the trial would need to go on for Galileo’s continuous declarations of new science defeating the Catholic Church’s teachings.\(^7\)

\(^5\) Pg. 132
\(^6\) Pg. 181
\(^7\) Pg. 184
3. The Authors’ Argument

Both Shea and Artigas attempt to come to the conclusion that Galileo was at fault for the outcome of his trial, house arrest for the remainder of his life, because he should have obeyed with the orders of the Catholic Church and should have ceased to discuss such innovative ideas the public was not ready for. By continuing to go against the Catholic Church to teach his new discoveries and try to spread the wealth of new knowledge to limited minds, the authors argue Galileo ultimately dug his own grave. Sixteenth century Italy was heavily influenced by the church in a political manner, Galileo should have constrained his new ideas and discoveries due to the hierarchy of power at the time, especially after being forewarned to stop discussing such world altering ideas by officials themselves as well as friends who were worried about his safety as he continued to try to prove his theories. Which leads to the next downfall the authors subsequently point to: Galileo could never really prove the theory of the Copernican system. Instead, Galileo strongly supported it while insisting it must be true. This was something the Catholic Church was not ready to hear since the belief of the Earth being in the center of the world was well rooted and believed in for all of time. If the Earth wasn’t in the center of the universe, it meant mankind wasn’t in the center of the universe and it displaced the heavens as well. It was strongly believed that God created Earth and was constantly looking after His people, it made sense to believe the Earth was at the very core and all the other planets revolved around Earth because mankind was God’s special project. To suddenly denounce this belief and accept the fact that the Earth was never the center of the universe, and that Church teachings had been wrong this entire time, left people
feeling insecure and with shaken feelings about how the Church could possibly be wrong with regards to the Earth being at the center of the universe.

The authors argue Galileo should have known all this and should have obeyed authority by submitting to their requests for him to silence himself. Instead, Galileo chose to spread his thoughts, ideas, and discoveries, and for that, received the ultimate punishment of being confined indoors for the remaining of his life – finally accepting to keep quiet on his astronomical discoveries and thoughts. Once Galileo obeyed to what was being asked of him from the beginning, it had been too late.

In 1633 the Roman Inquisition condemned Galileo for teaching that the earth moves. The trial was the outcome of a series of events that are described in this book and are usually referred to as the Galileo Affair. It extended over a period of several years, during which different popes, cardinals, and civil personalities entered the scene and made their exit. We can even speak of two Galileo trials, one in 1616 and the other in 1633, although only the second was a trial in the legal sense. The new science, which today pervades our entire life, was just emerging, and very few were able to realize what was happening at the time. Most people were not ready to abandon cherished traditional ideas for daring hypotheses that had yet to be proved.8

4. Conclusion

Although the authors are inexplicitly biased towards the position of the Catholic Church, they raise interesting key points emphasizing what could have gone differently if Galileo hadn’t been such a “troublesome genius.” However, the overall argument made

8 Pg. x
is weak in the sense that the basic argument is that Galileo should have sat still and not made revolutionary changes to science at the time because the people were not ready for it and it wasn’t appropriate for the time. This is all stated in an inexplicit manner, yet the main argument stands through what they claim as factual evidence backing up their viewpoints. I don’t agree with there being any new factual evidence presented that would shine light on the Catholic Church and put Galileo in the shadows. All the evidence brought forth in the text is what readers already know, and there isn’t any new evidence that would make readers think otherwise of the Catholic Church in regards to the Galileo affair.