

**The Twilight of the Scientific Age**, by M. López Corredoira (BrownWalker Press, Boca Raton), 2013. Pp. 208, 21.5 × 14 cm. Price \$25.95 (about £17) (paperback; ISBN 978 1 61233 634 3).

This book (so the end cover assures us) "gives a challenging point of view about science and its history/philosophy/sociology. Science is in decline ... Our society is saturated with knowledge which does not offer people any sense in their lives." It is not the first time that López Corredoira has written in this vein. A previous review (129, 32, 2009) concluded that he had a large chip on his shoulder. It has not got any smaller. He starts with some valid points, but expresses them in such impolite language and with unrelenting bigotry that what we have is a one-sided diatribe against just about everything that we and our scientific colleagues stand for. He deplores the way nobody nowadays is "great" like Newton and Einstein; there is nothing left to discover, and all we do is spend increasingly large sums of money on diminishing returns. He uses 'science' synonymously with 'technology', and heaps the faults of the latter upon the former. Money means power, the prime bent of every modern scientist. The worst criminals are the Institutions, their swaggering administrators spending huge amounts for their own ends and doing nothing constructive. Since López Corredoira has tenure at the IAC it amazes me that the Spanish tax-payer supports someone who writes about the awful evil in such places.

If his writings are to be convincing, López Corredoira must present well-balanced, carefully-argued statements. Shrill writing is counter-productive, as any traces of reason become lost upon an irritated reader. The language is appalling; words like "ballyhoo" and "rubbish" describe scientific publications; those outside his own circle are fools, "common" people (i.e., not Newtons or Einsteins) who only have enough intelligence to "worry about food, sex and power". The peer-review system comes in for considerable bashing, while training students by giving them topics to work at is nothing but slavery for the glory of the fame-grubbing staff member. And so it goes on.

When those topics are exhausted, the book then turns to the philosophy of science, but leaves the reader no happier because — despite having a PhD in Philosophy — López Corredoira repeatedly confuses 'truth' with 'knowledge'.

He ends by visualizing a "new humanity" of hugely downsized "science": salaries slashed and facilities shrunk in order to encourage quasi-monastic devotion to research, the scientific *hoi polloi* seeking better careers in worldly occupations which certainly do not help humanity. Has the age of big discoveries really passed? Are the *Hubble* images not worth looking at, or the details of exoplanets not worth the trouble? Should we weaken scientific research, and turn out all those over 50 since they cannot possibly have another new idea by that age? Are discoveries really made only by gentlemen scientists in isolation? Money, he says, should be used to build hospitals, not to fund research. Mister, an isolated person isn't going to find a cure for cancer just by sitting and thinking about it.

I want to call it a terrible book and leave it at that, but the photograph of the Teide Observatory (Tenerife) on the front cover is worrying. It suggests that the author is speaking on behalf of astronomers, though apart from labelling large new telescopes "expensive toys", astronomy gets no mention. Yet I would urge people to look through it, in order to be forearmed should the patient general public get to see it and assume its opinions are widespread. I fear this book will do damage. I sincerely hope it will be avoided. — ELIZABETH GRIFFIN.