UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA
CENTRO DE MATEMÁTICA E APLICAÇÕES FUNDAMENTAIS
Av. Prof. Gama Pinto 2, 1649-003 LISBOA, PORTUGAL Tel. (351) 217 904 700 FAX (351) 217 954 288

CONFERÊNCIA

Dia 2 de Junho (quarta-feira), às 18h, no Anfiteatro do IIIUL

"Leibniz and Euler on the infinite"

Eberhard Knobloch

(Berlin)

Abstract:

Since ancient times mathematics was the science of quantities. Quantities were defined by Aristotle. In order to understand Leibniz's and Euler's different handling of the infinitely small and the infinite one has to know the ancient patterns represented by Aristotle, Archimedes, and Euclid. Certainty and rigour characterized the realm of mathematics still in the 17th century (Cavalieri, Guldin) when Leibniz looked for suitable definitions of indivisibles and infinitely small quantities. His perfectly rigorous definition that he eventually found enabled him to give a rigorous foundation of the 'method of indivisibles' (integration theory). Euler, however, retained a definition that Leibniz had justly abandoned thus elaborating his contradictory calculation with different types of zeros. His notions of divergence and convergence did not coincide with the corresponding modern notions.

Eberhard Knobloch, is professor of history of science and technology at the Technical University of Berlin since 1981. Member of several national and international academies of sciences, president of the International Academy of the History of Science (Paris), past president of the European Society for the History of Science. About 300 publications on the history of mathematical sciences and Renaissance technology, especially interested in Leibniz, Kepler, Euler, Alexander von Humboldt. Project manager of two series of the Academy edition of Leibniz's Complete writings and letters, and of the A. von Humboldt research group at the Berlin Academy of Science and Humanities