

How did Copernicus become a Copernican

Thursday 28 September 2023 12:15 (30 minutes)

A close reading of Copernicus's two key texts, *Commentariolus* and *De revolutionibus*, reveals his commitment to the Platonic program of True astronomy, which is to discover the well-proportioned, harmonious universe hidden beyond visible phenomena but accessible through mathematical reasoning. There are several types of evidence of varying weight that support this claim, both textual and contextual.

I will first briefly present some of the textual evidence that support Copernicus's astronomical Platonism, and second show that his sociocultural context during his student years is consistent with this interpretation. I will focus on humanist circles and Platonist currents in Cracow and Padua during his study period (1491-1495 and 1501-1503, respectively). Among other things, I will discuss the existence of a Plato's reading room at the University of Cracow, which indicates a strong interest in Plato shared by the two main Cracow teachers, Albert of Brudzewo and John of Glogów, as well as the influence of Filippo Buonaccorsi (Callimachus) on intellectual life in general and on Copernicus's friend Laurentius Corvinus in particular. Although Padua was considered a stronghold of Averroism, it could not escape the influences of humanism and Platonism. Nicolaus Leonicus Tomaeus very likely read Plato in Greek and translated a part of the *Timaeus* 35a-36e, which Marcantonio Della Torre referred to Girolamo Fracastoro as relevant to the revival of homocentric astronomy. There were also other personalities, such as Federicus Chrysogonus, who followed "the teaching of the divine Plato and the Pythagoreans".

Presenter: VESEL, Matjaz (Institute of Philosophy, The Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts - Ljubljana)

Session Classification: The Education between Cracow and Italy: Becoming Copernicus