

Alberti, Copernicus and a Surprising “Thereafter”

Friday, 29 September 2023 09:45 (45 minutes)

My point of departure is Leon Battista Alberti's (1404-1472) insight into the nature of visual representation. As an Italian humanist and artist, he was aware of the critical power of visual evidence and a rational deliberation of the appearances vis-à-vis the traditional authority of the ancients. Simultaneously he also challenged a subservient approach to the appearances that might turn out to be “merely apparent”, namely without reflecting true reality. Nicholas Copernicus' (1473-1543) testimony (in his *Commentariolus* ca. 1510-1514) that he engages with “something beyond that very same appearance”—namely the earth immobility in the center of the universe—calls for a more thorough investigation of the changing meaning of “appearances” and the effect of the “apparent” (but not true) on the science of astronomy. Finally, the problematics of the relationship between observation and interpretation will be investigated through a reading of Galileo Galilei's (1564-1642) and the Jesuit Christopher Scheiner's (1573-1650) on the nature of sunspots (CA.1611-13).

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Session Classification: Copernicus among the Humanists