

THE FIXED IDEA OF ASTRONOMICAL THEORY

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The Fixed Idea of Astronomical Theory by August Tischner & Herbert Charles Elmer

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AUGUST TISCHNER & HERBERT CHARLES ELMER

**THE FIXED IDEA OF
ASTRONOMICAL
THEORY**

DEDICATED
TO ALL CANDID FRIENDS OF RATIONAL
ASTRONOMY.

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Dear Sir!

I don't doubt that you look in science for nothing but truth, and admit, that theory is but an attempt to explain inexorable, great Nature, and that theory can serve but for a resting-point, a point of departure for further explorations, and that science, if raised to dogma, is brought to a standstill, and any further success is rendered impossible.

The history of science proves, too, that at every time there have been stated theories which in the course of time must be variously altered and even replaced by others quite opposed to them.

It was as an explanation of the phenomena of heaven, that the theory of a fixed earth in the centre of the universe was stated; this theory was found to be untenable, when the movement of the earth was recognized, and now theory based itself on a fixed sun. But afterwards it was discovered, that even the sun is not fixed, but transposes himself in space. The conviction, too, was arrived at, that not only the sun moves in mundane space, but also, that the stars, too, are not fixed, but in motion. In short, in the universe there is no immovable

thing, neither a fixed earth, nor a fixed sun, nor fixed stars. Now, instead of stating or seeking some theory based upon the general movement of all the heavenly bodies, mankind has become so enamoured of the idea of a fixed sun, that no astronomer has the courage to come forward in order to demonstrate that the present conception of the universe is no longer tenable. They have even dared to affirm, that it is quite irrelevant to theory, whether the sun is considered as fixed or as in motion; for astronomers say, "we may consider the sun as being at rest."

Dear Sir, I don't doubt, that you are endeavouring to lead science to truth, and I hope, you will cause the question thus raised to be seriously discussed.

I am, Sir,

your obedient servant

Leipzig.

August Fischner.

To Mr. Scheberle
assistant of the Detroit Observatory.

To the Reader.

To remove misunderstanding, we must remark, that in our pamphlets we do not attack practical astronomy, which, with the excellent instruments at its command, has attained a high perfection. We do but reject the present astronomical view of the world along with the Copernican hypothesis. According to the hypothesis of Copernicus, the sun is fixed in the centre of the universe; observations prove, however, that he is not fixed, but moves. Now, if we know, that the sun moves, why are we always to treat him "as at rest?" On this account astronomers are bound to give a rational explanation.

The fixed idea of astronomical theory.

We may in thought pursue a train of hypotheses and suppositions, but they do not thereby acquire reality: still, in a normal condition of the human intellect, it is impossible to conceive that any thing can exist and not exist at the same time.

Copernicus established his system on the hypothesis of a fixed sun. Those who worked at the construction of astronomical theory, were fully convinced that his system was wholly right and derived from nature itself.

The system of Copernicus was not immediately adopted by the learned men of his time, its very possibility was contested by the most celebrated astronomers, and it is, even now, admitted by not a few only as the best hypothesis. But astronomers and mathematicians contend, with an obstinacy one might call fanatical, that we may consider the sun as "at rest." Astronomers, however, refer motion only to fixed points (centres), and are obliged to measure from these, but as such fixed points nowhere exist in the universe, we cannot wonder, that they could not attain to the comprehension of a universal motion.

It was by the heroic appearance of Galilei that the system of Copernicus attained to general propagation, and was, by the majority of modern astronomers and mathematicians, by means of analysis, declared to be the only possible and right system, and it is by them, too, asserted that only foolishness and ignorance cannot comprehend it.