

# GALILEO

DECISIVE INNOVATOR

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1 Galileo: the frontispiece of Viviani's *De locis solidis* (Florence, 1701).

understand. He also had a very good conceit of his own amazing abilities and was to find it difficult to allow others a share in the glory that he thought was his alone. He is most widely remembered for his brilliant but unsuccessful campaign to use the novel telescopic discoveries to gain acceptance for the (more or less) Sun-centred system of the universe proposed decades earlier by Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543)



# THE STRANGEST PIECE OF NEWS

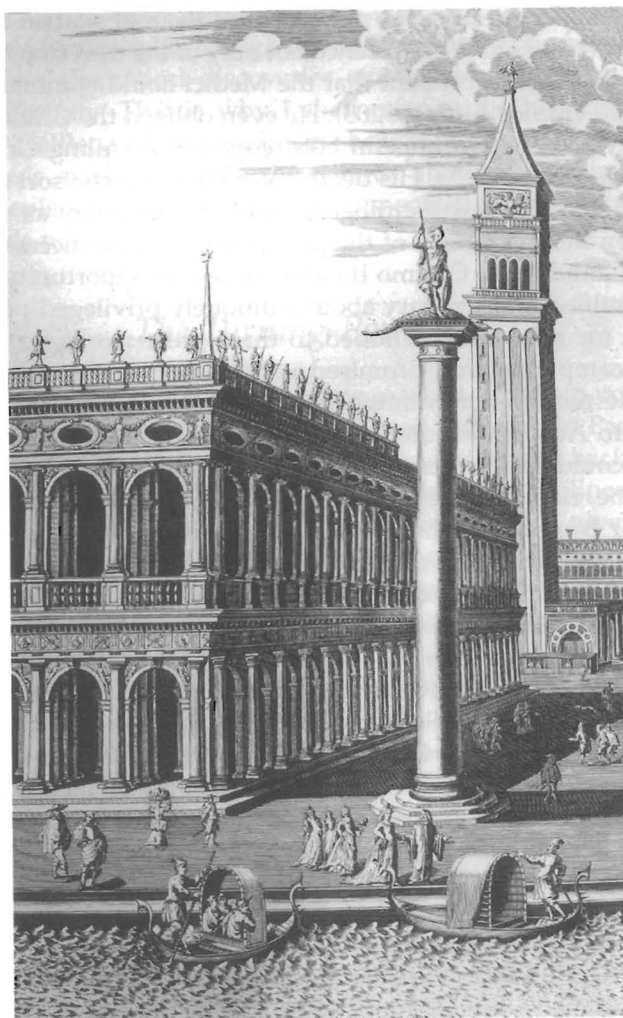


2 Galileo, from *Serie di ritratti d'uomini illustri toscani*, volume 2 (Florence, 1768).

tions of how science should be approached, questions which needed tackling if physics was ever to be emancipated from Aristotelian philosophy. His life would be simpler to write if the unhappy consequences of his commitment to Copernicanism could be given a brief mention and then disregarded, as he taught us to disregard air resistance in the free fall of heavy bodies. But that simpler life would not be

Galileo's. He responding to a vacuum: he many of his impersuasible after he had

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3 The tower from which Galileo showed off his telescope: a detail from a view of St Mark's Square, Venice, *Nouveau Théâtre d'Italie . . . sur les desseins de feu Monsieur Jean Bleau* [i.e. Blaeu], tome 1 (The Hague, 1724).

zecchini, on condition that it was not taken apart to discover its secret (10: 250, 255). Sarpi was appointed to examine its merits, but did not recommend purchase, doubtless because he already knew that Galileo could produce something better. Galileo did in fact come to Venice with an instrument that magnified eight or nine times and showed it off

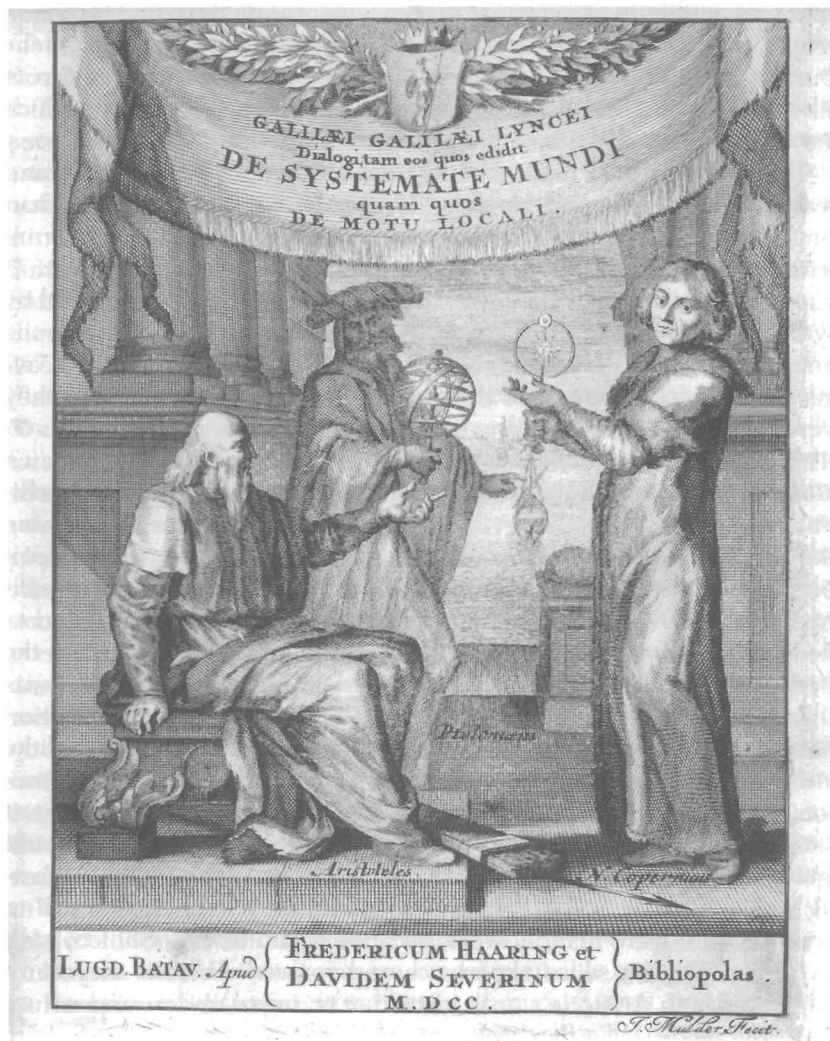
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# THE *DIALOGUE* AND GALILEO'S CONDEMNATION



23 The frontispiece of the Latin version of the *Dialogue and Discourses* (Leyden, 1700) showing Aristotle, Ptolemy and Copernicus

## First Day

The contrast between the unchangeable heavens and the elementary world was based on the distinction between the rectilinear motion