

# Kepler on Aristotle's Sabotage of Astronomy

*Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) refuted Aristotle's geocentric cosmology, and charged that Aristotle held science back for nearly two millennia, until the advent of Copernicus, by rejecting the Pythagorean idea that the Earth moves in an orbit around the Sun ("the fire"). Kepler's full document was published in 21st Century Science & Technology, Winter 2001-02, in a translation by George Gregory. Here are excerpts.*

[The Pythagoreans] spoke in a veiled way; by fire they understood the Sun, and I agree with them, that the Sun is in the center of the world, and never moves away from this place, and that, on the other hand, the Earth moves once in one year around the Sun, that is, it revolves around the center position of the world, as otherwise also five other wandering stars [that is, the planets]....

[Aristarchus of Samos (310-ca. 230 B.C.) was accused of blasphemy and threatened with death for endorsing a heliocentric system.] On account of this fear, and on ac-



*Johannes Kepler, the founder of universal modern physical science.*

count of the reputation of Aristotle, who rejected this teaching (although he did not yet fully understand it), this teaching was suppressed, and particularly because it was difficult to understand, it was nearly forgotten for 1,800 years....

I am as little satisfied with Aristotle, when he thinks it is sufficient to have asked why the Earth remains at the center of the world, and to answer, that nature assigned this

position to it. For it is entirely uncertain, and not conceded by me, that the Earth is in the middle of the world; and were it so, it would be so indeed on account of nature, but in the same way that all things are on account of nature. But one is not satisfied to know that things are according to nature, but one asks why they are that way and not some other way, and what means nature used to bring this about....