

## PREFACE



**T**HIS BOOK considers some crucial issues of contemporary Copernican studies, especially these contemplated by American experts who in principle have dominated in the research field over the last thirty years. This domination is not accidental. In general, it stems from the fact that the two disciplines of history and philosophy of science were accorded, in comparison to other countries, supreme importance in the circle of English speaking countries. Since American and British researchers, following George Sarton, Alexandre Koyré, Thomas S. Kuhn, Henry Guerlack, Herbert Butterfield, John D. Bernal, and Alistair C. Crombie, did *commonly* assume as an axiomatic truth (which I share entirely), that knowledge of the history of science (and its relationships with philosophy, society and culture) leads to a better understanding of the essence of the science itself and the history of culture conceived as an entity. This, in particular, results from the fact that over the last fifty years American and British academics have deeply studied (thanks to financial provision unheard-of in other countries) the beginnings of modern science, including issues about the so-called *Scientific Revolution* and the so-called *Copernican Revolution*. Their intention was to verify, develop and extend knowledge on such matters on the basis of work of earlier specialists who had assumed that these beginnings played a crucial part in the History of Western Culture.

The book is the result of my research into Copernicus's and Copernican thought, which I have pursued already for twelve years. It refers to and develops ideas originating from many of my earlier works in this field: papers delivered at international congresses, papers and articles delivered in Poland during several conferences and organized meetings, some dissertations and monographs (cf. *References*).

A particular characteristic of my approach is its interdisciplinary nature, unifying opinions expressed in the allegedly separate traditions of the exact sciences (especially their methodology) and philosophy, the history of science and theology. In this I am influenced to some extent by George Sarton's (1884–1956) *New Humanism*, with his comprehension of the history of science as constituting a bridge between science and the humanities, by Arthur Onken Lovejoy's (1873–1962) *History of Ideas*, by historians of philosophy's stance of

contextual and interdisciplinary reading of historical sources, assumed, among others, by Stefan Swieżawski, and also by Michał Heller's concept of *Philosophy in Science* (i.e. the study of the issue of philosophical views shared by scientists).

Today we live in times of global integration. I believe that one of its determinants should be the breaching of linguistic barriers and a free exchange of knowledge between all interested parties, wherever they live. Underlying this (maybe naive) statement lays a firm conviction. Discussions between different groups of people and multicultural meetings give a real chance to think about many problems in a deeper way, providing that we accept the need for dialogue and openness and we search for latent truths (that are too often overlooked). Thus, since Polish, my native language, is not widely understood globally, I have tried to express my thoughts in English, since it would seem to be a *lingua franca* of our times.

In this broad context, I invite you to become acquainted with my book in which I examine and defend the idea, unpopular among contemporary specialists, of the originality of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), the thinker who with no exaggeration may be regarded as a leading figure in European or World integration (albeit a great patriot of his own country). I also ask that you become involved in a critical discussion of the hypotheses propounded in this work.

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