



# Giordano Bruno

## 1548 - 1600

Giordano Bruno was an Italian philosopher, astronomer and mathematician. He was born near Nola in the province of Napoli in 1548. His father baptized him Filippo. When he was seventeen, he entered the Dominican monastery in Napoli, where he received the name of Giordano. In the monastery he read for the first time Copernicus' book 'On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres' and grasped Copernicus' world-view, that ***the sun is the centre of our local system, not the earth***. As he did not accept all Catholic doctrines, he was soon threatened with prosecution. At the age of twenty-eight he left his monastery for Rome. But his stay in Rome was not very pleasant; as he realised that he was under suspicion by the Napoli Church, he fled. It was in May 1579 that he inscribed his name in the Rector's Book of the University of Geneva and in August of the same year he published a pamphlet on a distinguished professor of philosophy 'who made twenty errors in a single lecture!' Both Bruno and his printer were promptly arrested. After rehabilitation he was allowed to leave the city.

Bruno moved to France. At the University of Toulouse he acquired his doctorate and lectured on astronomy but his stay in Toulouse was not very successful. He moved to Paris, where he had an immediate success. His reputation for teaching and especially his power of memory reached even King Henry III, who appointed him as his temporary lecturer. In 1582 Bruno published a comedy '*Il Candelaio*', which exposed the moral and social corruption of the time.

In the spring of 1583 Bruno went to London. Soon after he was appointed to Oxford University where he started a series of lectures on ***the Copernican theory of the movement of the Earth***. He frequented the court of Queen Elizabeth I.



***Bruno attended  
Queen Elizabeth's  
Court***



***Bruno was burned  
at the stake for his  
views***

Between 1583 and 1585 Bruno published several books in London. He presented his cosmological views in the form of dialogues. He conceived that each of infinite number of worlds was moving in relation to other worlds, saying that ***'all estimates of a direction, position and weight within the whole must be relative.'***

He spent the following years travelling in France and Germany. While in Frankfurt, he received two letters from Giovanni Mocenigo, perhaps an agent of the Venice Inquisition, inviting him to become his teacher of arts. In 1591 the unsuspecting Bruno went to Venice, where his promising 'pupil' threatened him and delivered him to the Inquisition in May 1592. Although the Venetian verdict of the trial was not very severe to Bruno, the later Roman Inquisition required his extradition.

During the seven year Roman period of the trial Bruno tried to demonstrate that his views were not incompatible with the Christian conception of God, but his argument was rejected. Bruno was ordered to retract his theories of the Universe, but he declared that he had nothing to retract. Finally the Pope, Clement VIII, ordered Bruno be sentenced as an impenitent and pertinacious heretic and send him to jail where he ***'was given eight days to recant, but in vain'***. Soon after, he was brought to the Campo dei Fiori in Rome and burned alive. He has never been rehabilitated into Catholic Church.

S.E.