Galileo Galilei

Galileo was born in Florence, Italy in 1564 to a poor but noble family.

His parents recognised their child’s innate intelligence and talents and so made sacrifices to have him educated. At his father’s insistence, Galileo studied the profitable career of medicine. But, at the University of Pisa, Galileo became fascinated in a wide range of subjects. He was also critical of many of Aristotle’s teaching which had dominated education for the past 2,000 years.

Galileo was appointed to be a mathematics professor at the university of Pisa, but, his strident criticisms of Aristotle, left him isolated amongst his contemporaries.

After three years of persecution, he resigned and went to the university of Padua. Here he taught maths. His entertaining lectures attracted a large following and he was able to spend the next 18 years pursuing his interests in astronomy and mechanics.

During this time, Galileo made important discoveries about gravity, inertia and also developed the forerunner of the thermometer. It was in astronomy that Galileo that became famous and for his views, he also courted the opposition of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

Galileo came to the same conclusions of Copernicus – that the sun was the centre of the universe and not the earth. By inventing the world’s first telescope, Galileo was able to make many explorations of the universe. He found that:

* Saturn had a beautiful ring of clouds.
* The moon was not flat but had mountains and craters.
* Jupiter had many moons which revolved around Jupiter rather than directly the sun.

Thus, Galileo not only had the mathematical proofs of Copernicus, but, also new proof from the science of astronomy. However, Galileo knew that publishing these studies would bring the disapproval of the church authorities.

The Church had already started to forbid the teachings of his teachings, especially anything that supported Copernicus. However, in 1623, a new pope, Pope Urban VIII seemed to be more liberally minded and he allowed Galileo to publish his great works on astronomy and supporting the works of Copernicus.

However, after publication, elements within the Church sought to attack Galileo’s position. Thus, Galileo was arrested and imprisoned for several months. He was convicted of heresy and was forced to recant his beliefs. He spent the remaining years of his life under house arrest at Arceti.

Galileo had three children. He was especially close to one of his daughters, Polissena; she took the name of Sister Maria Celeste and entered a convent near Arceti.

Despite being censured by the church, Galileo continued to make discoveries until death overtook him in 1642.

Citation : [Pettinger, Tejvan](http://www.biographyonline.net/contact.html). “Biography of Galileo Galilei“, Oxford, [www.biographyonline.net](http://www.biographyonline.net/)23rd July, 2011