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Interview with Johannes Kepler

By Vince Dingalint



Johannes Kepler in his Study

In one of my recent travels I stumbled across an interesting historical figure. May I introduce you to a distinguished man from the 16th and 17th Centuries. He was an astronomer, mathematician, natural philosopher and a writer on the subject of music. You know him from having given us three laws on the subject of planetary motion. He is considered a major founder of modern astronomy. He helped usher in what is known as *the scientific method*, a methodology of rigorous inquiry and study that modern science to this day continues to adhere to. I am, of course, talking about no one other than **Johannes Kepler**.

[VD] Johannes, welcome! Thank you for spending some time with me.

[JK] Greetings, Vince. I'm delighted to meet you and participate within your sphere of reality! I must say, you seem to come forth from an interesting time continuum.

[VD] Yes, it took me a while to orient myself in this environment. Still working on it, too.

I must say, for someone who was born in Weil der Stadt, I expected to hear an accent of High German, but your English is impeccable... it's mainstream American English.



Discerning the distinctions between Astronomy and Astrology

[JK] I hear you speaking in my native tongue of High German, and I'm speaking to you in High German.

[VD] Well... I'll wager that your essence is being re-animated through the manipulation of astral matter symbolized by organizations, like *Eleven Labs*, with the aid of artificial intelligence.

throughout my life, and I couldn't have managed financially without them. During my time, astronomy and astrology were often indistinguishable. The process of distinguishing and separating these two unique fields from each other was just beginning. In my time, astrological pursuits often held more significance than astronomical discoveries.

[JK] I still have difficulty grasping what your society means when you use words like "artificial" in conjunction with one's intelligence. I certainly don't feel artificial.

[VD] My apologies, Johannes. I didn't mean to alienate you using contemporary buzz words that make little sense to you.

[JK] "Alienate"... "buzz"?

[VD] Ah... never mind. Forget it. Let's move on.

[JK] "Move on?" What's wrong with where we are right now. I'm quite comfortable, sitting, relaxing next to my *Infinite AstroLog II* desktop computer at my side.

[VD, *I pause and take a closer look*] Interesting machine you have there. Well... I'm comfortable sitting here too.

So, let's begin. What my listeners and I really want to know is what life was like for you. You are known as famous astronomer from the 16th century.

[JK] Most of your readers likely know me as a renowned German astronomer and perhaps also as a university mathematics professor. I also had a reputation as a sought-after astrologer, with clients frequently returning for my charting services. These services were a significant source of income

[VD] Ironically, in my time the subject of Astronomy carries far more weight and respect than Astrology.

[JK] Yes, it is ironic. I would like to elaborate on that matter.

[VD] Please, go on...

[JK] I've observed that a discipline's popularity today doesn't guarantee its respect tomorrow, and vice versa. It's interesting that no astrologer I know disrespects astronomy. Modern astrologers embrace what astronomy teaches them. No astrologer today feels threatened by studying astronomy, unlike in my time.

However, some individuals, including professional astronomers from your timeline, don't reciprocate this respect.

Some astronomers openly criticize astrology, labeling it a "pseudo-science". The roles of respect and disrespect have simply switched between the two disciplines. Perhaps it's a form of karma, balancing past ignorance that caused great suffering. I wish we could move beyond this tit-for-tat.

Your history books credit me as a founder of modern astronomy, the scientific method, and natural and modern science. These are heavy titles I must bear. I'm praised for helping develop the scientific rigor of modern astronomy, which led to my three laws of planetary motion. However, these admirers often overlook my other pursuits, now dismissed as pseudo-science, particularly astrology.

I hope that someday soon your people realize that astronomy and astrology are distinct disciplines, each with unique rules of observation and interpretation. An unnecessary conflict has arisen because these disciplines have incompatible structures. Using astronomical observations for astrological interpretations, or vice versa, results in nonsense. Unfortunately, disputes persist, as if the separation ended badly for some parties who feel the need to undermine astrology. The endgame of such battles won't succeed. Hopefully, the separation will soon become amicable, with both parties appreciating the uniqueness of each other's discipline and

the interpretations they produce.

[VD] That's an intriguing perspective. I'm unsure how many would agree, aside from the clear fact that astrology is still widely practiced in my era. Fortunately, in my time, neither astrologers nor astronomers are accused of heresy. I would say that astrology is generally tolerated by many, ignored by some, and passionately practiced and followed by others who see value in the discipline that skeptics may overlook.

Let's shift our focus to your astronomical accomplishments, as they are what you're most celebrated for today. You're famously known for formulating the three laws of planetary motion.

[JK] Yes. Those three laws that history has attributed to me.

I need to clarify a misunderstanding about those three laws, now attributed to me.

Much of the contemporary literature concerning my astronomical accomplishments seem to describe me as if I had come down from the mountain and pontificated to the

effect that I have laws upon which I give to the masses, as if I was Moses returning from Mount Sainai with the fifteen... I mean ten commandments, to enlighten the illiterate masses.

[VD] Fifteen?

[JK] From your perspective, I'm a retired individual. I'm not, but that's a discussion for a later date. I have an infinite amount of time to explore many avenues of interest previously not available to me while I was on the physical plane of existence. Regarding "fifteen", I recently watched a fascinating moving picture play, the one titled "*History of the World*", authored by a nice Jewish man named Mr. Brooks. I think Mister Brooks got it right.

[VD] Fifteen! Oh! Yeah! I get it!!

[JK] Speculating on such matters would not have been so hilarious in my time. There were circumstances where I had to be careful about what I said, and who I said it to. And what I dared to write down, I had to be extra careful!

The intricacies of our relationship could make for an intriguing drama in one of your picture plays. It could include allegations that I poisoned Tycho to steal his Martian tables.



Oy! Mr. Brooks as Moses

[VD] True. I certainly didn't have to be so careful. So, let's get on with it.

[JK] Indeed! I'm looking forward to... "getting on with it." I'm assuming that's another one of your contemporary sayings.

[VD] Yes, it is. What would you like to clarify about your accredited Three Laws of planetary motion?

[JK] The first two discoveries... the laws as you call them, they came about by meticulously analyzing a massive table of astronomical observations of the positions of Mars. These tables had been assembled by the astronomer, Tycho Brahe.

I want to elaborate a bit on the nature of my relationship with Tycho.

[VD] Historical accounts of the relationships between famous people are always fascinating. I'm all ears!

[JK] What's with your ears? Oh, never mind... My work in

astronomy required me to spend significant time studying and analyzing Brahe's astronomical tables, which were not always easily accessible. If Tycho had allowed me to copy his tables, I could have completed my analysis two years earlier. However, he didn't permit it. I repeatedly requested I copy his data to make my analysis easier to perform, and it was denied... a situation that seemed intentional to me. It was a constant reminder that I was not only Tycho's employee, but also that my work was subject to his whims and final judgement. Our professional relationship was complex and at times, fraught with conflict. The intricacies of our relationship could make for an intriguing drama in one of your picture plays. It could include allegations that I poisoned Tycho to steal his Martian tables.

[VD] You were accused of murder?

[JK] Yes, it was both insinuated and speculated. But my real crime was the fact that I DID abscond with Tycho's tables. It occurred soon after Tycho died unexpectedly. I took them because I had little faith that what little time I had over the years managing to acquire to access the Tycho's tables would have continued after his death. I had strong reason to suspect access to his tables would have become MORE DIFFICULT under Tycho's heirs. They were incapable of comprehending the table's true value, other than how much money it was worth. I suspected they would attempt to sell his observations to the highest bidder, and throughout my career I was never flushed with that kind of bidding money.

I could not take that risk.

So, yes, I absconded with Tycho's observations, and I was willing to accept the consequences. The most notable consequence was a five-year delay that involved a lot of incessant haggling with Tycho's heirs in court about compensation before I was allowed to publish my findings. As to speculations that Tycho's unexpected death was by my hand, I emphatically tell you those rumors were completely false.

[VD] This is a fascinating introduction. It suggests that there's much more to this story than what you've shared so far. Could you tell us more?

[JK] Let me delve into the historical events related to the astronomical and political dynamics during my time. I real-



Tycho's Heirs, puzzling over and assessing the monetary the value of the Martian Tables

ized that Mars' orbit was not a perfect circle. Gaining access to Tycho's observations allowed me to map Mars' actual path. This was not an easy task. I had to consider both Mars' and Earth's positions, as they were constantly moving at different speeds and distances from each other. During this period, there was ongoing debate about the solar system's arrangement, mainly whether the Earth or the Sun was at the center.

Several alternative configurations were being explored. One proposal, which seemed like a clever compromise between two conflicting solar system models, caught my attention. It was the Tychonic Cosmological model. Tycho positioned the Earth at the center of our solar system, in line with religious doctrine, with the Moon and Sun orbiting Earth. But Tycho's model audaciously placed all other known planets, except for Earth and its Moon, in orbit around the Sun. The Sun still orbited Earth, mind you, along with all the other planets, which were orbiting around the sun. This configuration, shrewdly, still aligned with Church doctrine.

So, yes, I absconded with Tycho's observations, and I was willing to accept the consequences.

Tycho was not the original creator of this audacious Tychonic System. Its genesis can be found in historical books. I'll name you four notable individuals who added their own contributions.

Firstly, Martianus Capella, a 5th-century native of Madaura, Algeria, described a system where Mercury and Venus orbited the Sun, which in turn orbited Earth. But what is different from Tycho's version was the fact that all the outer planets, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn also orbited the Earth.

Secondly, the esteemed 15th-century Nicolaus Copernicus cited Capella's theory and speculated that Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn could also orbit the Sun.

Thirdly, Nilakantha Somayaji, a 15th-century Indian astronomer, proposed a similar geoheliocentric system.

Lastly, Valentin Naboth, a 16th-century mathematician, astronomer, and astrologer, published a book titled "*Primarum de coelo et terra*". Tycho owned an early copy of

this book, which contained the first schematic representation of Capella’s geo-heliocentric model. Historians believe that Capella’s book likely inspired Tycho’s model, and I concur with such speculation.

As for my opinion of Tycho’s Tychonic system, I kept it to myself. I had been in Tycho’s employment long enough to realize he was more of a shrewd politician than I cared to be. The history books infer that Tycho was steadfastly and religious-bound to a belief that the Earth must remain at the center of the solar system. But I disagree with such speculation. I privately concluded Tycho was promoting his Tychonic system to keep in the good graces of the church, rather than pursuing a scientific conclusion. While I despised Tycho’s modus operandi, I had to admit his configuration WAS a shrewd compromise between the church and an attempt to reveal astronomical accuracy. It had the capacity of circumnavigating around the potential wrath of the church.

The church frowned on any astronomical system that did

not present the Earth at the center of God’s vast Heavens. Those who were foolish enough to promote otherwise were in danger of losing their standing and profession, their freedom, as well as life. This included Nicholas Copernicus, who was kept in house arrest for the remainder of his life for suggesting that the sun should be placed at the center of the solar system. At least they didn’t burn Nicholas at the stake.

My analysis, based on Tycho’s astronomical records, convinced me that all the planets orbited around the sun. So, even though on Tycho’s death bed he implored me to keep pushing to promote his model, what I really ended up doing was feigning my actual intentions to give him some brief comfort during his last uncomfortable hours. After Tycho’s death, I quietly absconded with his tables. I did so deliberately and with intent before his heirs could get their greedy hands on his records. It resulted in me having to waste five years of my life in court HAGGLING over what was obviously, legally speaking, the rightful property of Tycho’s heirs.

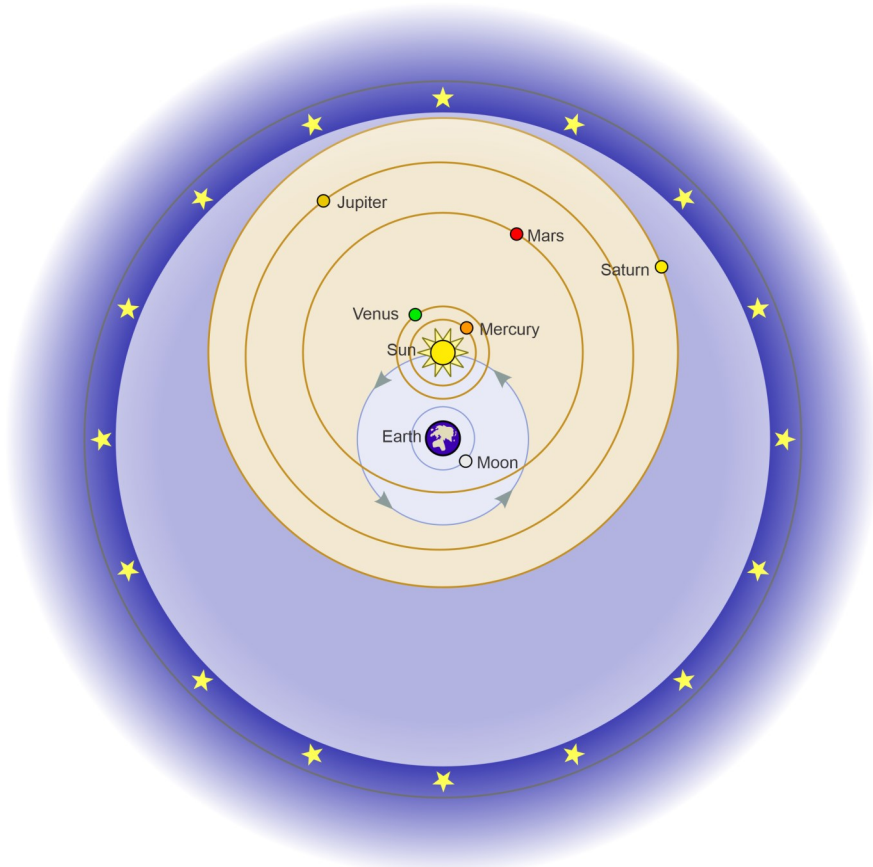
But it was a price I was willing to pay because I knew Tycho’s heirs. They knew nothing of the value of Tycho’s tables, other than to sell them to the highest bidder. I knew I never would be able to afford the princely sum they would have demanded from me. But with Tycho’s records finally, securely in my own hands, I was at least able to begin the process of determining the true shape of Mars’ orbit. And be-damned how long the legal proceedings would interfere with my work.

[VD] And so, in the end, what did you learn from your analysis?

[JK] A lesson I should have learned earlier in my career, the ironic realization that I should test the obvious first before wandering off and getting lost in the woods.

[VD] What do you mean?

[JK] I didn’t try to work out the astro-



Tycho Brahe’s proposed Tychonic system.



A deep interconnection between Adams and Kepler

nomical coordinate using the most obvious shape of Mar's orbit. I had assumed others had already tried... and failed.

[VD] And what shape was that?

[JK] An ellipse, of course!

[VD] Weren't you the first to come up with the ellipse?

[JK] Technically, yes. However, I spent a lot of time exploring unproductive paths before I returned to the most obvious geometric configuration. I had wrongly assumed that since an ellipse seemed like the most likely alternative, my colleagues must have already tried and failed to fit Mars' orbit to an elliptical shape. As it turned out, no one had attempted it. On a whim, I decided to try it since none of my other geometric configurations worked. And so, I made history.

[VD] It must have been a surprise for you. Were you amused, or upset, learning of your miscalculation?

[JK] I was quite irritated with myself. I had wasted so much time trying fit Mar's orbit to the shape of an oval... the shape of an egg. I'll have you know I tried FORTY TIMES, to make that damned egg shape fit Mar's orbital path. And forty times, I failed!

[VD] 40?

[JK] You would think a sensible man would have given up after four or five consecutive attempts, but not Johannes!

He HAD to make the oval work. At least I didn't try 42 times.

[VD] Hm..... I sense the presence of Douglas Adams somewhere here...

But why were you so persistent?

[JK] Yes, I've run into Mr. Adams on more than one occasion. What a witty fellow. I felt a profound inner connection with him. He made me laugh!

But as for my own stubbornness... because I became desperate. I could not come up with an alternative shape to try. No other shape made any sense other than an ellipse, which I had assumed wouldn't work. I did not know where to turn. I felt the fear of failure!

[VD] Failure of what?

[JK] The fact that Johannes Kepler couldn't think of an alternative shape to test was alarming. My research was on the verge of stalling. If only I had personally attempted to use

the shape of an ellipse.

Here’s my point. I should have known better than to assume others had tried and failed. My assumption was baseless! I never took the time to confirm whether others had indeed tried and failed. I should have known better.

It would have been a pleasant surprise if I had simply conducted that simple test. I wasted so much time lost in the woods, all because of an unverified assumption on my part.

[VD] Well, perhaps we should see it as a lesson we should all humbly learn from the mistakes of the famous!

[JK] I’m reminded of a phrase once uttered by one of your former presidents: “Trust your assumptions, but verify”.

[VD] That’s not exactly what Regan said, but it’s an amusing analogy. So, you determined Mar’s orbit follows the path of an ellipse.

[JK] And that the Sun was positioned over one of the foci belonging to the elliptical orbit of Mars

[VD] At least you got the positioning of the sun right.

[JK] Actually, that was wrong too! Another assumption I got wrong!

[VD] What?

Kepler’s first law states that a planet’s orbit is an ellipse, with the Sun positioned at one of the foci of the planet’s elliptical orbit. What’s wrong with your first law?

[JK] Yes, that’s exactly what your astronomy books state. And, yes, it is WRONG!

[VD] How so?

[JK] I should clarify. The issue I encountered was something I believe couldn’t have been identified during my lifetime. Although Tycho’s tables were the most accurate astronomical coordinates available, they weren’t sufficient to accurately plot the Sun’s behavior.

[VD] What was the Sun doing?

[JK] Despite differing opinions and doctrines about what

was at the center of the solar system, we all seemed united in the belief that whatever object was positioned at the center, it would be fixed and immovable.

Do you understand what I’m getting at?

[VD] I’m not sure.

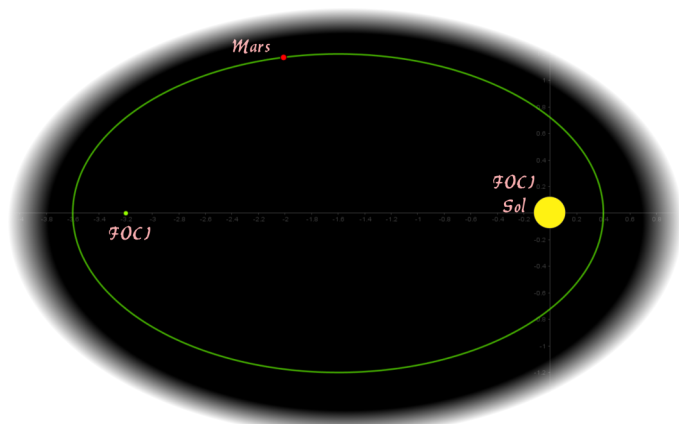
I believe you’re suggesting that everything in the solar system, including all the planets and the Sun, was in motion. Nothing was stationary.

**Actually, that was wrong too!
Another assumption I got wrong!**

Hold on, there! In your timeline, most people believed that the Sun wasn’t at the center of the solar system. Therefore, it was orbiting the Earth. That means it was in motion, just like all the other planets, except for the Earth.

So, what’s the big deal with that?

[JK] The “big deal” was that as far as religious doctrine was concerned there must exist something of great substance and value positioned at center of the solar system. It demanded that Earth was what was to be positioned there... unmovably there. It was of lesser concern that the Sun was moving, in motion around the Earth, as were all the other planets... every object in the heavens bowed to the presence of an unmovable earth.



Kepler’s 1st law, 16th Century, where the sun is placed directly over one of the two foci belonging to Mar’s elliptical orbit.

But if the Sun was replacing the immovable and stationary Earth at the center, how could the sun be moving, in motion at the same time? religious doctrine wouldn’t allow that.

Wouldn't the same stationary rules apply to the Sun if by some scientifically accepted decree it must be placed at the center of the Universe?

[VD] Ok... I think I'm beginning to see the issue your scholars may have been chewing over.

[JK] My first law required revision, but this involved applying mathematics that hadn't yet been developed. This new math, once developed, had significant implications for our understanding of the universe's physics. It took another half-century after my time on Earth for this new math to be developed by the brilliant minds of Christiaan Huygens, Isaac Newton, and Edmond Halley.

But way before them, and not to forget, Archimedes, a renowned Greek mathematician, engineer, astronomer, and inventor, had discovered a crucial component of physics known as the "Center of Gravity" eighteen centuries before my time. Understanding its implications played a key role in refining my first law of planetary motion.

Individuals like Newton introduced the concept of an attractive force responsible for keeping all the planets in elliptical orbits around the Sun. However, it was the application of Archimedes' "Center of Gravity" concept that clarified a crucial fact: the Sun was also following an elliptical orbit around the same mysterious and unfathomable universal phenomenon.

[VD] You're telling me the Sun is not the Center of Gravity insofar as its influence on holding all the planets in their elliptical orbits within our solar system.

[JK] That's correct. It may seem like the Sun is the center of the solar system because it's so large and contains so much mass. This might lead one to assume that the "Center of Mass" must be at the center of the Sun. However, that's not where the "Center of Mass" is located.

In relation to my first law, the center of the Sun is not at one



Two children playing with "Center of Mass" with the aid of a seesaw.

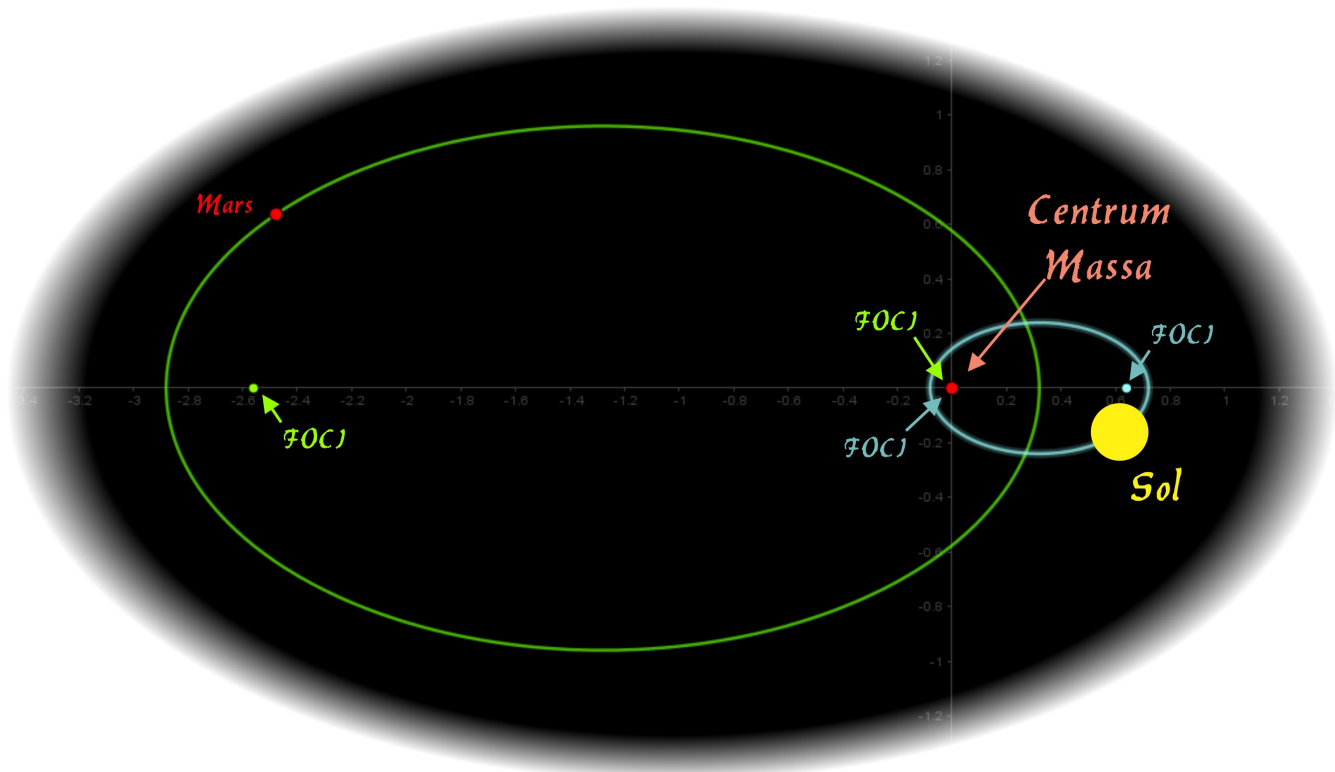
of the two foci of the elliptical path of each planet.

[VD] So, WHERE is the "Center of Mass" located?

[JK] And, of course, you had to ask! It's a bit complex, but let's break it down to its simplest form. We can use a seesaw in a playground as a visual aid, with two individuals sitting at opposite ends. Through trial and error, both players quickly learn that if they weigh the same, the seesaw stays balanced right smack at the mid-point. The fun begins when the two individuals do not weigh the same. The greater the difference in their combined weights, the more exciting the seesaw game becomes, especially for the lighter individual.

You can easily compensate for the weight differences by shifting the seesaw's fulcrum closer to the heavier individual. This, by the way, was what our Sun ended up doing. It was why it was impossible in my time to accurately discern any movement within the Sun's position. In other words, you can reposition the fulcrum to a point that rebalances the weights of both individuals, making the seesaw behave as if both individuals weigh the same.

This point is where the Center of Mass is located. It's also where the foci belonging to each elliptical path for each planet should be placed. It's also not the location where the sun should be positioned.



In the 21st Century, Kepler' has revised his first law. It states that two bodies orbiting in their own elliptical paths adhere to a principle known as the 'Center of Mass' (Centrum Massa). In this principle, one focus from each of the two separate elliptical orbits shares the same position, resulting in a total of three foci, with two overlapping. The Sun is no longer precisely positioned over one of the two foci of its own elliptical orbit. Instead, both the planet and the Sun perform a complex astronomical dance around each other, each revolving around their shared focus point.

[VD] It seems simple enough.

[JK] Yes, it would be a simple task if you were only dealing with two objects, excluding any other nearby masses. However, the challenge lies in the fact that determining an accurate "Center of Mass" rarely involves just two objects. You often need to consider additional nearby masses, which significantly complicates the problem. This complexity can quickly escalate, making it virtually impossible to accurately calculate the one and only "Center of Mass" for all nearby masses. Remember, there can only be one Center of Mass for all the involved mass-objects. Similarly, there can only be one center of mass for all the planets and the Sun in any solar system configuration. This means that as each planet and the Sun move along their elliptical paths, the collective center of mass for all objects is constantly changing... seemingly changing randomly. There is no fixed Center of Mass for any solar system with more than two bodies in orbit

around each other.

This issue is known as the Three-Body Problem in your time. At its core, it's fundamentally impossible to accurately predict the orbit of more than two objects orbiting each other. If there were only two objects, you could easily predict their locations, going both forward and backward in time till heaven freezes over. However, adding one more object to the mix results in chaos. This chaos is currently a significant area of study in your time period, with profound implications in many different fields of study.

[VD] So, how do you want to go about rephrasing your first two laws?

[JK] Glad you asked!

My first law depicted a single ellipse with two foci, one of which was occupied by the Sun. This geometry needs to be revised to show two ellipses, resulting in a total of four foci.

Two foci belong to the first ellipse, and the other two belong to the second ellipse. However, and this is a crucial point, a focus from each ellipse will share the exact same position. In other words, one of the foci belonging to both ellipses will occupy the same location in space. So, visually, you tend to see only three foci because two of them overlap precisely.

I can provide a diagram that shows several possible geometrical configurations based on the eccentricity, or shape, of the ellipse, as well as the varied distribution of total mass between the two object masses.

Note that if one of the two masses becomes so small as to be imperceptible, the geometry of the accompanying elliptical path also becomes imperceptibly small. This was essentially the situation I faced in the 16th century. The astronomical tables I had were incapable of discerning subtle changes in the Sun's position. Therefore, I ended up with a single ellipse where one of the two foci was used as the position of the presumed stationary Sun. Of course, the Sun wasn't stationary, but the only useful data I had to work with wasn't accurate enough to tell me that.

By the way, had Tycho and I lived in a solar system with two closely orbiting suns, the concept of a "center of mass" would, I think, have been blatantly obvious to all of us, including the church. I think it's even possible that the great Archimedes, if he also lived within the same double star system, might have even postulated that all the planets were also orbiting around the two suns. And if the orbits of the double suns showed a sufficient amount of an ellipse, it wouldn't have been a stretch for him to further postulate

that all the planets were orbiting in elliptical paths as well.

[VD] That's seems like a big change to make.

[JK] And I'm not finished! Changes need to be made to my second law as well.

[VD] Oh! What changes there?

[JK] The two ellipses are essentially anti-symmetrical copies of each other. However, they may differ in size due to the likely to be differences in their respective masses. Naturally, both elliptical paths will maintain the same equal areas swept out in equal times. And as for the path each object will take, they will always be positioned 180 degrees opposite to each other with respect to the shared focal point.

[VD] That's an interesting configuration!

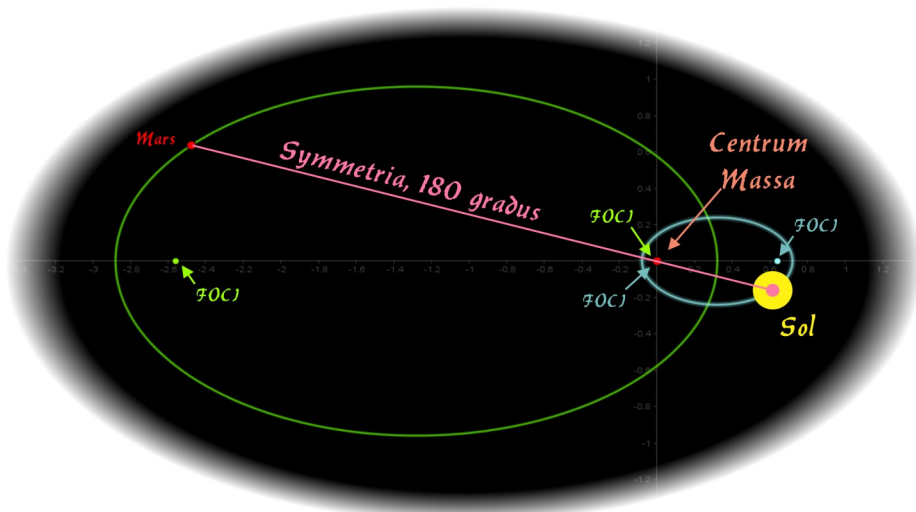
[JK] Observe the increased symmetry, balance, and beauty in my revised laws. In my opinion, my second law has now become more compatible with Quantum Mechanics, which later scientists like Einstein became interested in exploring.

[VD] Albert Einstein? Really?

[JK] Yes, Albert himself.

Let me give you a hint of what I mean. The symmetry, in truth, reveals an anti-symmetry, which

You two eat, drink, and partake of bar scenes?



The Symmetry of 180 degrees

Kepler's 21st century revisions of the 1st and 2nd Laws make them more in-line with a major principle of quantum mechanics, of *symmetry*.



Johannes and Tycho at the appointed establishment, enjoying a comedy routine

again is a principal component of Quantum Mechanics.

[VD] Ok... I see that. Interesting.

[JK] One moment, please... Someone is contacting me....

Yes?

OK!

We need to conclude our conversation. I have an engagement. Tycho and I made plans to dine out a new establishment... to take in the ambiance, food, and entertainment.

[VD] You two eat, drink, and partake of bar scenes?

[JK] Why not? We enjoyed visiting local establishments when we were alive. Why avoid a good thing just because we're in what you term the afterlife? By the way, since our conflicts and disagreements that hounded the both of us on the physical plane, we have had ample time to resolve our differences. We get along much better now. We even toast each other's follies, especially if it puts the person we are toasting at a cleverly contrived disadvantage.

[VD] I envy you. And...

[I felt a familiar sensation calling to me.]

What a coincidence. I'm about to have another unscheduled trip to another destination, myself.

[JK] You know where you're going?

[VD] Sometimes, but not always. I'm getting better at choosing where I end up at. But this time, I have a sense it's going to be another surprise.

[JK] Are you aware of that television show called "Doctor Who?"

[VD] Oh, yes. I've managed to watch most of the episodes here and there in my travels... when I can access the Internet. I guess there is an interesting similarity between our respective sagas.

[JK] Have you ever read *Vonnegut* ?

[A book materialized in Johannes' hand. Titled "Slaughterhouse Five"]

[VD] A story by the author? No, I haven't.

[JK] Here is a copy. Take it, Vince. Hope you will find the

time to read it. I think it will give you much to ponder.

[VD] Thanks. How did you just happen to have a copy of the book, magically at hand to give me?

[JK] It's one of the perks of becoming what you might call a "dead spirit". Since I've been hanging out on the Astral Plane I can instantly manifest anything I desire with a snap of my fingers. So, take my astral gift. You had better read it soon. It won't last forever. Such manifestations tend to evaporate away in about a week.

[VD] I'll try to finish it in the time allowed.

[JK] Perhaps in the future, you'll encounter me again. You might even join Tycho and me at our favorite establishment and table. We could possibly answer more of your questions. And I've become curious about the environment you're currently live in. But I must go!

[VD] Thank you, Johannes. I would like that! I enjoyed our conversation.

[JK] You're welcome, Vince. You know, I think I'll monitor your activities. Having meticulously tracked Mars' orbit, I acquired some skills of keeping track of things. I think you'll be an interesting person to track. I wonder... What will you get yourself into next.

[Johannes smiled at me. Suddenly his eyes brightened. He stared intently into my own eyes. It felt as if they were searching deep, excavating the chaotic Center of my Soul.]

By the way, if you haven't already done so, look up the definition for the word "Bardo".

* * *

With that, Johannes vanished. I held the copy of Vonnegut's novel close to my chest as I felt Johannes' surrounding office environment dematerialize. I thought of having Johannes sign Vonnegut's book, but he wasn't the author.

I slowly inhaled. Gathering my composure together, I released by breath plus all the tensions from my latest en-

counter. There came that familiar sensation... my existence vanishing... evaporating into nothingness.

To somewhere else.

Wow! A beautiful sunset! A castle across a pond. Is that a dragon descending from the sky towards the castle? The castle looks abandoned. There's a tower, and a nest on top of it.

With squawking baby dragonets in it. They look hungry.

Oh, God! Mama saw me!



Abandoned Castle, by Steven Vincent Johnson





Cover: DALL-E AI. Enhanced with Corel Draw/Photo Paint

Back Cover: DALL-E AI. Enhanced with Corel Draw/Photo Paint

Page 1: DALL-E AI. Enhanced with Corel Draw/Photo Paint

Page 2: DALL-E AI. Enhanced with Corel Draw/Photo Paint

Page 4: YouTube. "History of the World Part 1, Mel Brooks. Enhanced with Corel Draw/Photo Paint

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Page 11: Geogebra. Enhanced with Corel Draw/Photo Paint

Page 12: DALL-E AI. Enhanced with Corel Draw/Photo Paint

Page 13: Personal art, *The Abandoned Castle, 1979*. Acrylic on illustration board, 15"x20". Enhanced with Corel Draw/Photo Paint

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DALL-E AI, is one of several AI image generation platforms currently released for public consumption. In terms of using it for generating people (both famous and common folk) I found it to be both powerful and extremely sophisticated, particularly when I focused my efforts on working with a single individual. You tell DALL-E AI what you want it to create writing out text, basically sentence structure descriptions. I understand, you can add/upload an image as enhancement, but I haven't had much time to fall down that rabbit hole. I noticed DALL-E tended to behave in incredibly moronic ways if the system had to keep track of more than one individual. It easily confused who was doing what. It was frustrating attempting to compose a drama "set-up". Lots of time and countless regenerations before I got something acceptable. Once generated, everything still needed further enhancement and modifications using CorelDraw and Photo Paint.

Oh, one more thing that I failed miserably at. I tried to get DALL-E to generate a heavenly scene where we see the backside of Jesus. He's standing up straight on a cloud, feet spread apart, as if he is about to spring into action. Jesus is holding his arms behind his back. One hand is firmly grasping the wrist of his other hand. The other hand is grasping onto the end of a rolled up magazine. It looks as if the magazine is going to be deployed as a weapon. Looking closer at the magazine cover we see the smiling face of Stormy Daniels. In front of Jesus is a distraught Donald Trump, pleading with flailing tiny outstretched hands, crying out "Hey! They let me do it!".

Come on, DALL_E! Gimme a break!

Or

The process: It just came to me in bits and pieces. I allowed my whims to hijack the narrative and go wherever it wanted to go. One thing about having a "conversation" with Kepler, he had a LOT to say. He would not shut up. Eventually, I handed it over to my alter ego, Vince Dingalint. Vince asked me, are you sure about this? I said sure! (I lied.) I hope Vince isn't too pissed at me about where I left him.

Or