

RADIO NOTES

Philosopher's call-in show simply unreal

By CARMEN JURI

You are not reading this.

In fact, there is no "this" and there is no "you."

At least that's what poet and philosopher Copernicus believes.

"There is no Copernicus, really. I'm denying the fact that we're here," Copernicus said in a telephone interview that he denies really took place.

The Brooklyn resident, known for his thought that nothing exists, will host and moderate two call-in radio programs at midnight, one on Monday, the other on July 25, on WBAI-FM (99.5).

He wants those who've always wanted to discuss reality to come out of the closet, so to speak.

"I believe that nothing exists; that this is an illusion," Copernicus said. "What we see with our senses is not real."

Copernicus doesn't trust his senses.

"It's chaos. You're perceiving reality with your senses but your senses are so poor, your tongue can't taste an atom, your eyes can't see an atom. From day one, man has said, seeing is believing," he said. "It's very damaging to think the only real thing is what your senses perceive."

The first program will feature a

discussion on the process of searching for truth and whether or not one should even care about discovering it. The Rev. Finley Schaef, pastor of the Park Slope Methodist Church, will be a guest.

The second show will focus on the idea that "nothing exists." A representative of the Jewish faith will be featured.

"Every individual in America has his own concept. There's no real forum for people to discuss what they think is real," said Copernicus, a.k.a. Joseph Smalkowski, from his Brooklyn home.

"All these talk programs center on homosexuality, adultery, women's and children's rights. But the concept of reality is a taboo subject. You're not supposed to talk about it," he added.

On both programs, listeners will hear music from Copernicus' five albums since 1985 that center around his philosophy. "Nothing Exists," "Victim of the Sky," and his latest, "No Borderline" (Nevermore, Inc.), are among them.

"Let Me Rest," a song from "Nothing Exists," tells of a man who searches so vigorously for answers, he exhausts himself in the process.

Copernicus first began questioning the existence of reality during his days at Queens College. A notebook he

kept from that time vividly details his inner struggle with the credence of his Roman Catholic upbringing.

He describes it as a "horrible time in my life to be a fervent follower of a religion and to lose that and not believe in it anymore."

In his travels to try to make sense of life, Copernicus visited India, where he learned about Buddhism and found he agreed with many of its ideas.

Copernicus also insists his theory bears no resemblance to that of the existentialists because the latter believe man's will is stronger than reason. He disputes the belief that there is such a thing as "man" at all.

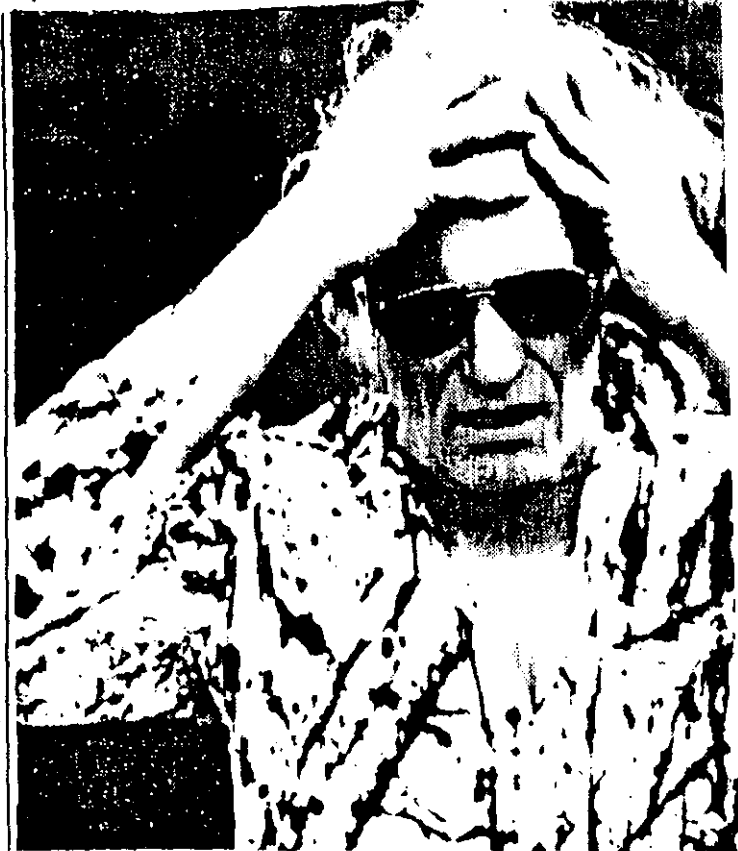
All his convictions are original, he said, views he has come to believe on his own.

Atoms, which are in constant motion, play an essential role in Copernicus' beliefs. If man is not the same from one moment to the next, explained Copernicus, then in reality, he is never here.

When asked what his family thinks of his philosophy, Copernicus said whenever he tries to confront them with his thoughts, his brother scolds him and his sister, who is a nun, skillfully backs away from any discussion.

"They accept the truth they see and don't want to be challenged. A lot of people are like that," he said.

"Some guys lift weights, I think about reality," he said.



Poet and philosopher Copernicus moderates a discussion on reality
WBAI