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From Pope Urban VIII to Bishop Étienne Tempier: the Strange History of the “Doctrine of Double Truth”

1. “TWO CONTRADICTING TRUTHS, EXISTING SIDE BY SIDE – ONE RELIGIOUS, THE OTHER SCIENTIFIC”

In 1947, when Bertold Brecht was finishing the so-called ‘American’ version of his *Life of Galileo*, the distinguished American playwright Barrie Stavis also produced in New York a play on Galileo, titled *Lamp at Midnight*. Destined to an extraordinary success, translated in about thirty languages, produced in different countries and even adapted for the small screen in the 1960s, this work is not a masterpiece. It presents – like Brecht’s play – a one-sided and rather anachronistic picture of Galileo’s conflict with his contemporaries. Galileo is described as the champion of freedom of thought and the advocate of scientific knowledge, opposed by a legion of enemies (Aristotelian philosophers, Scholastically-trained theologians and Church authorities), who are all shown as dogmatic defenders of the traditional worldview. This is not to say that Stavis did not rely on a systematic, though hasty, reading of seventeenth-century sources: he even used some minor works such as the *Dianoia astronomica, optica, physica* published in 1611 by Francesco Sizzi, which is probably the silliest work ever written against Galileo’s astronomic discoveries. Nonetheless, the character of Cardinal Maffeo Barberini (the Florentine nobleman who later became pope Urban VIII) is largely fictitious. Stavis’s pope is ready to do anything to defend the Church and its intellectual and political interests from what he perceives as the threat of the *Dialogue concerning the two chief world systems*: a book that he considers dangerous because – as Stavis makes him say in Act II, scene 4 – it “will encourage people to think [...], will teach people *how* to think!”¹ In the previous Act I, scene 4, Maffeo, while still a cardinal and Galileo’s friend, had instead tried to offer him an easy way out to avoid the clash between the new Copernican cos-

¹ STAVIS, Barrie: *Lamp at Midnight. A Play about Galileo*, I, 4. New York: A.S. Barnes 1966, 62, Stavis’ emphasis. See also 21–22 for implicit references to Sizzi’s work. A first draft of this paper was read in English at the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow, June 11, 2014) and in Italian at the workshop organized by Marco Lamanna at Villa Vigoni (Bellagio, September 2, 2015). I am grateful to all participants for their helpful comments. The oral style of both presentations has been preserved. All italics in quotations are mine unless otherwise stated.

mology and the traditional reading of a few scriptural passages affirming the stability of the earth and the mobility of the sun. This remarkable passage reads:

BARBERINI: And yet – even as I admire Jupiter and her moons, this host of extravagant heavenly beauty, I cannot help but wonder how you will make this astronomy of yours fit in with Holy Scripture.

GALILEO: I do not anticipate any great difficulty.

BARBERINI: How so? Or do you intend to advance a doctrine of double truth?

GALILEO: A doctrine of double truth?

BARBERINI: Two contradicting truths, existing side by side – one religious, the other scientific. Each valid in its own category, but false in the other.

GALILEO: Such theological juggling bewilders me.

BARBERINI: It's really very simple once you get the knack of it (*They laugh*).²

It would be hard to imagine a more implausible exchange between the historical Maffeo Barberini and the historical Galileo. Galileo would have never described the “doctrine of double truth” as “theological juggling”, nor would he have thought of using it. We know indeed that in his so-called *Copernican Letters*, written between 1613 and 1615 and devoted to examining the relationship between scientific and scriptural truths, Galileo repeatedly claimed that “two truths cannot be contrary to one another”³ – a statement that he repeated in his masterpiece, the *Dialogue*, published in 1632.⁴ As to Maffeo Barberini, he would have hardly suggested how to

² *Ibidem*: 34, Stavies' emphasis.

³ “[...] ed essendo di più manifesto che due verità non posson mai *contrariarsi* [...]”, *Lettera a D. Benedetto Castelli*, in: FAVARO, Antonio (ed.): *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*. Firenze: Barbèra 1890–1909 (hereafter OG), vol. 5, 283; “ed essendo, come si è detto, che due verità non possono *contrariarsi* [...]”; “[...] poi che due veri non possono mai *contrariarsi*”, *Lettera a Madama Cristina di Lorena*, *ibidem*, 320, 330. See also the letter to Pietro Dini (May, 1615), in: OG, vol. 12, 184: “[...] onde non potendo 2 veritati *contrariarsi* [...]”; the *Considerazioni circa l'opinione copernicana*, in: OG, vol. 5, 364: “[...] non potendo un vero *contrariare* a un altro vero”. Clearly echoing the passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 8, discussed below, a few pages before (OG, vol. 5, 356) Galileo wrote: “chi è quello che non sappia, concordantissima essere l'armonia di tutti i veri in natura, ed asprissimamente dissonare le false posizioni dagli effetti veri”.

⁴ “[...] perchè chiara cosa è che *due veri non si posson contrariare*”, *Dialogo*, in: OG, vol. 7, 80. It has been argued that in both the Copernican Letters and the *Dialogue* Galileo relies on Benedict Perera, who in his *Commentaria in Genesim* wrote that the truth of the Bible cannot clash with true conclusions established through human reasons and experience, “cum verum omne semper cum vero *congruat*”: see e.g. CAPPIELLO, Annalisa/LAMANNA, Marco: *Il principio dell'unicità del vero dalla bolla 'Apostolici regiminis' alla Rivoluzione scientifica*, in: *Quaestio* 14 (2014), 230–256, at 253–254. However it might be, it is worth noting that while presenting the principle of the unity of truth Galileo always makes use of the verbs “*contrariare*” and “*contrariarsi*”, following – at least in terminology – an earlier tradition of this principle, which goes back to Albert the Great: see below nt. 11.

defend the truths of reason against the truths of faith. We know indeed that already as a cardinal he had a penchant for banning all philosophical doctrines supposedly contrary to religious beliefs. He even asked his theological advisor to examine Aristotle's *De anima* in order to establish if it denied the immortality of the soul and, in case it did, he contemplated the possibility of forbidding its teaching at the university of Bologna.⁵ We also know that in 1633, a few months after he had condemned Galileo, Maffeo – now pope Urban VIII – received from the Jesuit theologian Melchior Inchofer, who had played a pivotal role in Galileo's trial, a treatise entitled *Tractatus syllepticus*. In this treatise, expressly conceived as a justification of the sentence against Galileo, Inchofer rebukes Copernicans for using an “artful distinction”, claiming that the earth moves and the sun is immobile “according to philosophy – as they say – however it might be according to theology”. He adds that “nothing is true according to philosophy, if it is not true also according to theology, truth indeed does not contradict truth [*Verum enim non contradicit Vero*] as it is said in the Decree of the Lateran Council, eighth Session”.⁶

⁵ See BIANCHI, Luca: *Agostino Oreggi, qualificatore del Dialogo, e i limiti della conoscenza scientifica*, in: MONTESINOS, José/SOLÍS SANTOS, Carlos (eds.): *'Largo campo di filosofare'. Eurosymposium Galileo 2001*. La Orotava: Fundación Canaria Horotava de Historia de la Ciencia 2001, 575–584, at 578–580.

⁶ INCHOFER, Melchior: *Tractatus Syllepticus*. Romae: L. Grignanus 1633, 91–92. See BERETTA, Francesco: *'Omnibus Christianae, Catholicaeque Philosophiae amantibus. D.D.'*. *Le Tractatus syllepticus de Melchior Inchofer, censeur de Galilée*, in: *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 48 (2001), 301–328, in particular 317–322; BIANCHI, Luca: *Pour une histoire de la “double vérité”* (= Conférences Pierre Abélard). Vrin: Paris 2008, 152–154. Inchofer's accusations were not unprecedented. In 1631 Cesare Marsili reported to Galileo (OG, vol. 14, 282–283) that Giovanni Cuttunio, who then taught philosophy at Bologna university, “si è molto addolorato, per quanto mi è parso, in vedere che, contro il decreto, come egli dicie [*sic*], della Congregazione dell'Indice, V.S. habbi spuntato il poterne, ancorché come per favola, e senza determinazione veruna, filosoficamente porgere occasione di credere quello che è contro alla verità cattolica, alla quale né la filosofia o astronomia può veridicamente contraddire, essendo impossibile [*sic*] che la verità di una cosa non sia una sola, non pensando che la mobilità del sole scansi il decreto, come io gli ho detto et è stato confermato da cannonisti [*sic*] e teologici”. See BERETTA: *'Omnibus Christianae, Catholicaeque Philosophiae amantibus'*, 309, nt. 37. It has not been hitherto noticed that this witness is in keeping with Cuttunio's claim in his commentary on Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, published precisely in 1631 (*Lectiones Ioannis Cottunii [...] in primum Aristotelis de meteoris [...]*. Bononiae: Tebaldinus 1631, 96–97): “Pro hac ipsa veritate asserunt Doctores nostri complura sacrarum litterarum elogia. Hoc uno contenti simus quod in capite primo Ecclesiaste legitur: Terra in aeternum stat: oritur Sol, et occidit, et al locum suum revertitur, ibique renascens, gyrat per Meridiem, et flectitur ad Aquilonem. Quod verum non esset, si Sole quiescente, terra circumdaretur. Quocirca summa cum ratione Romana Congregatione Indicis, opinionem illam, aequo iussu oppressit: quamquam nonnulla adhuc mussent, quod me movit, ut hanc disputationem paulo uberius pertractarem, et firmissimis rationum momentis terrae firmitatem constabilirem, quod me consecutum esse plane confido, *ut hi intelligant, verum non adversari vero*”.

Reference here is to the well-known bull *Apostolici regiminis*, published in 1513 by pope Leo X, which censured philosophical doctrines challenging the Christian faith. The main targets of this bull, which officially affirmed that the immortality of the individual soul is an article of faith, were ‘Averroists’ (namely, the defenders of the doctrine of the unity of the intellect) and ‘Alexandrists’ (namely, the defenders of the mortality of the soul). The bull denounced that there were some masters who asserted that such interpretations of Aristotle’s philosophy were “true at least according to philosophy”. Arguing that “truth does not contradict truth [*Cumque verum vero minime contradicat*]”, the bull declared that every utterance contrary to the Christian faith was “totally false”; moreover, it enjoined professors of philosophy to strenuously support the articles of faith, to teach them in the most convincing way and – most importantly – “to apply themselves to the full extent of their energies *to refuting* and disposing of the philosophers’ opposing arguments, since all the solutions [were] available”.⁷

Francesco Beretta has convincingly shown that it is precisely this last regulation which provided the juridical ground for Galileo’s condemnation. On June 22, 1633, the Italian scientist was indeed obliged to recant as “vehemently suspected of heresy” because he had published a book, i.e. the *Dialogue*, where he defended the Copernican theory. According to the text of the abjuration, in so doing he had violated not only the *Decree of the Congregation of the Index*, which in 1624 had banned Copernicanism as contrary to the literal sense of Scripture, but also the injunction not “to hold, defend or teach” Copernicanism “in any way whatsoever”: the commission entrusted by the pope with the assessment of the *Dialogue* (with Inchofer among its members) had indeed ascertained that Galileo adduced “very effective reasons in its favour, *without refuting them in any way*”.⁸

It is therefore clear that Barrie Stavies’ notion that Galileo might have avoided problems with the Church authorities by invoking “a doctrine of double truth” is based on a complete misunderstanding of the position of both Maffeo Barberini and Galileo. There is no need to say that dramatists are allowed to simplify, deform and rewrite the past, transforming real men in symbols (or even in caricatures). It remains that historians have the task of understanding the past, and in so doing they often discover that its script is much more complicated, ambiguous, unexpected and

⁷ MANSI, Johannes Dominicus (ed.): *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*. Parisiis: Expensis Huberti Welter, Bibliopolae 1902, vol. 32, c. 842. On this bull and its impact see at least BIANCHI: *Pour une histoire*, 117–156 (with bibliography).

⁸ “Ma poiché da questo S. Off.o, per aver io [...] scritto e dato alle stampe un libro nel quale tratto l’istessa dottrina già dannata e *apporto ragioni con molta efficacia a favor di essa, senza apportare alcuna solutione*, sono stato vehementemente sospettato d’heresia [...]”, OG, vol. 19, 406. On this point see BIANCHI: *Pour une histoire*, 144–149.

therefore fascinating than writers can imagine.⁹ As a matter of fact we have seen that Church authorities condemned Galileo – who advertised a new cosmology against the Aristotelians – by applying to his case regulations originally conceived to control the teaching of ‘Averroists’ and ‘Alexandrists’, i.e. masters of philosophy who supported different interpretations of Aristotle’s psychology; we have seen that a few months after its dramatic end one of the keynote figures in the trial, i.e. the Jesuit Melchior Inchofer, insinuated that in his battle for Copernicanism Galileo had made use of the “artful distinction” between what can be said “according to philosophy” and what can be said “according to theology”; and we have also seen that Galileo accepted instead the principle of the unity of truth, formally established in 1513 by the Fifth Lateran Council, whose guidelines for the teaching of philosophy were used, one hundred and twenty years later, against him.

2. OMNIA VERA VERO CONSONANT

But what are the origins and the meaning of what, borrowing an expression introduced by Richard C. Taylor,¹⁰ I called the principle of the unity of truth? We have seen that in Galileo’s works it is formulated thus: “two truths cannot be contrary to one another”. We have also seen that Inchofer, following the bull *Apostolici regiminis*, presents it as follows: “truth does not contradict truth”. But other versions of our principle also circulated: “truth is not [or: cannot be] contrary to truth”,¹¹ “truth is not opposite to truth”,¹² “truth is consonant with truth”,¹³ “all truths are consonant with

⁹ The thesis that for the historian the past is no less unpredictable than the future is convincingly argued by ROSSI, Paolo: *Un altro presente. Saggi sulla storia della filosofia*. Bologna: Il Mulino 1999, 27–30.

¹⁰ See TAYLOR, Richard: “*Truth Does Not Contradict Truth*”: *Averroes and the Unity of Truth*, in: *Topoi* 19 (2000), 3–16.

¹¹ Formulas of this kind are often used by Albert the Great. See e.g. *In Aristotelis librum Peri hermeneias*, II, l. 2, c. 7, in: *Opera Omnia*. Ed. Auguste Borgnet. Parisiis: Apud Ludovicum Vivès, Bibliopolam editorem 1890, vol. 1, 454b and 456b: “Et supponamus quod *verum vero non contrariatur* [...] quia sive sint ambae una opinio, sive plures, constat quod ambae verae sunt: *verum autem vero non contrariatur*”; “vera autem opinio verae non contrariatur: quia *verum vero non potest esse contrarium*”; *In IV Sententiarum*, d. 10, a. 9, in: *Opera Omnia*. Ed. Auguste Borgnet. Parisiis: Apud Ludovicum Vivès, Bibliopolam editorem 1894, vol. 29, 261b: “*Nullum verum vero est contrarium*: ergo omne verum cum quolibet vero salvatur”.

¹² See e.g. BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO: *In Secundum librum Sententiarum*, d. 15, dub. 3, in: *Opera Omnia*. Quaracchi: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae 1885, vol. 2, 389b: “*verum vero non opponitur*”. In the prologue (*ibidem*, 2b) Bonaventure wrote instead: “[...] quia verum non *contrariatur* vero”.

¹³ See e.g. NICOLAS OF CUSA: *De venatione sapientiae*, c. 2, in: *Opera Omnia*. Ed. Raymond Klibanski/Iohannes G. Senger. Hamburgi: In Aedibus Felicis Meiner 1932, vol. 12, 9: “*Verum enim vero consonat*”; MARTIN LUTHER: *Disputatio theologica an haec propositio sit vera in Philosophia: Verbum caro factum est*, in: *Luthers Werke* (= Weimarer Ausgabe 39.2).

truth”.¹⁴ Variations in phrasing do not imply different ways of conceiving the principle, nor do they reflect different sources of inspiration. As a matter of fact, it is obvious that its roots are to be found in the Aristotelian tradition,¹⁵ and this was undoubtedly the source of both Galileo and the members of the commission that redacted the 1513 bull. Though influenced by different currents of thought (Thomism, Scotism and Platonism) the theologians working in the eighth Session of the Fifth Lateran Council were all trained in Scholastic philosophy and they all mastered Aristotle’s thought.¹⁶ As to Galileo – often too hastily labelled as an ‘anti-Aristotelian’ – he was not only well acquainted with the Stagirite’s writings, but also knew and used extensively the sayings and maxims that had been extracted from his works, and circulated in compilations of *florilegia*.¹⁷ It is precisely in the most widely diffused of these *florilegia*, the so-called *Auctoritates Aristotelis* redacted around the end of the thirteenth century by the Franciscan friar Johannes de Fonte, that one can find the standard version of our principle: “all truths are consonant with truth [*omnia vera vero consonant*]”.¹⁸

It is worth noting that this version of the principle of the unity of truth is *not* traceable, in this precise wording, in the Aristotelian corpus, but was freely extracted from the *Nicomachean Ethics* (I, 8, 1098b 10-11), where the Stagirite actually makes a rather different claim, which in medieval Latin translations was rendered thus: “Vero quidem enim omnia consonant existencia, falso autem cito dissonat vero”.¹⁹ This can be judged as a faithful translation, the Greek expression *panta [...] ta uparchonta* being rendered

Wiemar: Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger 1932, 3: “Etsi tenendum est, quod dicitur: *Omne verum vero consonat [...]*”.

¹⁴ See the saying of the *Auctoritates Aristotelis* examined below.

¹⁵ This is not to say, of course, that one cannot find elsewhere anything similar. See e.g. SCOTUS ERIUGENA: *De divina praedestinatione*, 3 (= CCCM 50). Ed. Goulven Madec. Turnhout: Brepols 1982, 19: “Verae quidem non sunt, quoniam omne quod veritati contradicit a veritate non est. Omne quod a veritate est verum esse necesse est”; JOHN OF SALISBURY: *Policraticus*, I, 2, c. 29 (= CCCM 118). Ed. K.S.B. Keats-Rohan. Turnhout: Brepols 1993, 170: “[...] quia uerum uero nequit esse contrarium nec bonum bono”.

¹⁶ On this point see PRICE, Daniel: *The Origins of Lateran’s V’s Apostolici Regiminis*, in: *Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum* 17 (1985), 464-472.

¹⁷ See BIANCHI, Luca: *Conclusions*, in: HAMESSE, Jacqueline/MEIRINHOS, José Francisco (eds): *Les ‘Auctoritates Aristotelis’, leur utilisation et leur influence chez les auteurs médiévaux. État de la question 40 ans après la publication*. Barcelona: FIDEM 2015, 317-331, at 326-331.

¹⁸ HAMESSE, Jacqueline: *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis. Un florilège médiéval. Étude historique et édition critique* (= *Philosophes Médiévaux* 17). Louvain: Publications Universitaires 1974, 233 §15.

¹⁹ *Ethica Nicomachea, translatio Roberti Grosseteste [...]* (= AL, vol. 26.1-3, f. IV). Ed. René-Antoine Gauthier. Leiden: Brill 1973, 385. The same translation (without the adverb “cito”) had been provided by the so called *Ethica nova*: see *Ethica Nicomachea, translatio antiquissima [...]* (= AL 26.1-3, f. II). Ed. René-Antoine Gauthier. Leiden: Brill 1972, 80.

as *omnia [...] existencia*. If a few contemporary translators reproduce almost verbatim this rendering,²⁰ most of them go a little further and allow Aristotle to say that “all *facts*”, “all *data*” are in accord with what is true.²¹ It would be interesting to examine how this passage – whose meaning is less obvious than one might presume – was translated and interpreted by medieval, Renaissance and modern scholars. Two points, however, seem clear. First, although a great variety of (sometimes unexpected) readings of this passage were suggested, none of them exercised, from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, a greater influence than the scholastic formula extracted from it and spread by the *Auctoritates Aristotelis*. Second, this formula produced a significant shift in meaning, because in the saying *omnia vera vero consonant* the accent is on the harmony of “all truths”, which conveyed the idea that Aristotle’s intention was to emphasize not the agreement *between facts and truths*, or in other words *between data and true statements*, but rather the agreement *between true statements*.

This happened first of all because the principle of the unity of truth was perceived as a corollary of the principle of non-contradiction, clearly and repeatedly presented in the fourth book of the *Metaphysics* and in the first of the *Posterior Analytics* as the fundamental principle of scientific inquiry, reasoning and communication. Moreover, in *Prior Analytics* I, 32 (47a 8-9) Aristotle claimed that “everything that is true must in every respect agree with itself”. Having in mind both this passage and that of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the greatest Islamic interpreter of Aristotle, i.e. Averroes, proposed his own version of the principle of the unity of truth. If in his middle commentary on the *De interpretatione* he simply emphasized that “it is impossible that truth is contrary to truth”,²² in his long commentary on Aris-

²⁰ “With what is true *all things which really are* are in harmony, but with that which is false the true very soon jars” (D.P. Chase); “Infatti le *cose reali* concordano in tutto con la verità, mentre il falso tosto avverte la sua discordanza” (A. Plebe).

²¹ See e.g. the following renderings: “For with a *true view all the data* harmonize, but with a false one the facts soon clash” (D. Ross); “For *all the data* harmonize with the truth, but soon clash with falsity” (R. Crisp); “If a *proposition be true, all the facts* harmonize with it, but if it is false, it is quickly seen to be discordant with them” (H. Rackman); “Car avec un *principe vrai toutes les données de fait* s’harmonisent, tandis qu’avec un principe faux la réalité est vite en désaccord” (J. Tricot); “Car, avec le vrai, *tous les données* s’harmonisent, avec le faux, ells sont vite en désaccord” (R-A. Gauthier and J.-Y. Jolif); “Infatti *i dati* si accordano *tutti* con ciò che è vero, mentre rapidamente il vero discorda da ciò che è falso” (L. Caiani); “*Tutti i fatti* sono in armonia con la verità, e la verità mostra presto la sua discordanza col falso” (C. Mazzarelli).

²² “Et est manifestum quod credulitates de quibus dicitur hic quod sunt contrarie, quod non est possibile ut sint credulitates uere, *cum sit non possibile ut sit uerum contrarium uero*, sicut non est credulitas uera credulitati uere, neque dictio contradictoria dictioni, cum sint utreque significantes intentionem que est in anima uera”, *Commentum medium super libro Peri hermeneias, translatio Wilhelmo de Luna attributa*. Ed. Roland Hissette. Lovanii: Peeters 1996, 103. This text is not examined by TAYLOR: “*Truth Does Not Contradict Truth*”.

totle's *De anima*²³ – and in a slightly different form in his middle commentary on the *Prior Analytics*²⁴ and the *Nicomachean Ethics*²⁵ – he claimed that “truth, as Aristotle says, is consistent and bears witness to itself in every way”. Moreover, in his *Decisive treatise*, devoted to the problem of the relationship between scriptural and scientific truths, he stated that “truth does not oppose truth; rather it agrees with and bears witness to it”.²⁶

It is well known that until the Renaissance this treatise was not available to Latin readers, who therefore for two centuries ignored that Averroes' discussion of the relationship between philosophy and religion rests on the assumption of the principle of the unity of truth. But if their ideas about Averroes' evaluation of revealed religions were based on a limited and distorted knowledge of his writings, the fact that he accepted this principle, or better that he gave it some of its clearest formulations, should have been obvious, since his Aristotelian commentaries were widely known.²⁷ Yet, apart from a few scanty references to him as an *auctoritas* proving that “truth bears witness to itself in every way”,²⁸ Averroes' name was for a long time associated with the so called ‘double-truth theory’.

²³ *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, III, c. 5. Ed. F. Stuart Crawford. Cambridge (Mass.): The mediaeval academy of America 1953, 399: “*Veritas enim, ut dicit Aristoteles, convenit et testatur sibi omni modo*”.

²⁴ “*Quoniam veritas, ut inquit Aristoteles, attestatur sibi ipsi et consentit ex omni latere [...]*”, ed. Venetiis: Apud Junctas 1562 (facsimile reproduction Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva 1962), vol. 1, 92vH.

²⁵ “[...] etenim quilibet *concordat vero et attestatur ei, a falso autem velociter diversificatur verum, et elongatur ab eo*”, ed. Venetiis: Apud Junctas 1562 (facsimile reproduction Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva 1962), vol. 3, 10vM. This should be the unidentified source of the gloss introduced in some Renaissance editions of the middle commentary on *Prior Analytics* and mentioned by TAYLOR: “*Truth Does Not Contradict Truth*”, 13, nt. 18.

²⁶ I follow the translation provided by Charles E. Butterworth (Provo: Berigham Young U.P. 2001, 9); see also the French translation by Marc Geoffroy (Paris: Vrin 1996, 119).

²⁷ Significantly enough, Marcantonio Zimara presented Averroes' passage quoted above, nt. 23, as an explanation of Aristotle's thought, notably of *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 8, 1098b 10-11. See *Tabula dilucidationum in dictis Aristotelis et Averrois*. Ed. Venetiis: Apud Junctas 1562 (facsimile reproduction Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva 1962), Suppl. 3, 390v: “*Veritas sicut dicit Aristoteles convenit, et testatur sibi omni modo* 3. De anima, com. 5, iuxta dimidium, et est autoritas Aristotelis primo ethicorum, cap. 10, *verum vero consonat omni parte, falso autem statim dissonat vero*”. Also in a commentary on Boethius' *De consolatione*, falsely ascribed to Thomas Aquinas but probably written in the fifteenth century, Aristotle's thesis of the “consonance” of truths is presented in terms which recall not only the saying of the *Auctoritates Aristotelis* but also Averroes' passages quoted above, nt. 23-25. See S. *Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia*. Parmae: Typis P. Fiaccadori 1869, vol. 24.3, 39b: “*Nam vero omnia consonant, et veritas sibi ipsi attestatur secundum Aristotelem*”.

²⁸ As far as I know, John Wyclif is one of the rare thinkers who repeatedly refer to Averroes as an *auctoritas* in favour of the unity of truth: see *Trialogus*, II, c. 12. Ed. Gotthardus Lechler. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1869, 116: “*Et cum Auerrois dicat, quod veritas testatur sibi ipsi omnibus modis concordat experientia, quam habemus de malis spiritibus*”; *Dialogus sive speculum Ecclesie militantis, epilogus*. Ed. Alfred W. Pollard (= Wyclif's Latin Works 3). London: Wyclif Society 1886, 92: “[...] *ut Averrois asserit, veritas testatur multipliciter sibi ipsi*

3. “PHILOSOPHY DOES NOT REST ON REVELATIONS AND MIRACLES”

It would be difficult to fully explain why this happened, but although the causes were various one surely played a decisive role: Averroes’ position on this point was read in the light of the position ascribed to his true or presumed Latin followers. We must therefore take a further step forward in our history, which will confirm to what extent this history – which I am trying to reconstruct backwards – is intricate and strange. I recalled that the Fifth Lateran Council stated that “truth cannot contradict truth” as the premise of dispositions prohibiting to claim that doctrines contrary to the articles of the Christian faith were true “at least in philosophy”. This was, as we will see, a formula largely diffused among Aristotelian philosophers from mid-thirteenth century onwards; and for a long time this formula has been presented by historians as the hallmark of the so-called ‘Averroism’, which was supposed to accept precisely a ‘double-truth theory’ claiming that a doctrine could be true for philosophy while being false for theology, or vice versa.

In the space at my disposal I cannot discuss the highly controversial notion of ‘Averroism’: avowing that I belong to the group of historians whom Guido Giglioni wittily labelled as “Averro-sceptics”,²⁹ I will simply say that this notion – introduced by the French philosopher Ernest Renan in 1852 – seems to me not only too ambiguous, but too value-laden to be helpfully used in writing the history of European philosophy.³⁰ It is well known that after the introduction in the Latin world, between the twelfth and the thirteenth century, of the works of Aristotle and of his Greek and Arabic interpreters, it became more and more obvious that they conveyed some metaphysical, cosmological and moral doctrines incompatible with fundamental Christian beliefs and the established traditions of Western theology. It is equally well known that the Arts masters working at Paris university in the 1270s – and first of all the two most distinguished masters, Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia – highlighted the differences of method and object between philosophy and theology and introduced some important distinctions in their commentaries on Aristotle’s works: the distinction between expounding (*recitare*) and asserting a doctrine; the distinction

[...]”. I am grateful to Luigi Campi for drawing my attention to this second text. The source of both – which is clearly the passage quoted above, nt. 23 – is not identified by the editors. Wyclif repeats elsewhere the saying “veritas testatur sibi ipsi omnibus modis”, but without mentioning Averroes: see *Sermo* 56, in: *Sermones. Vol. III*. Ed. Iohann Losert (= Wyclif’s Latin Works 7). London: Wyclif Society 1889, 490; *Opus evangelicum*, III, c. 66. Ed. Iohann Losert (= Wyclif’s Latin Works 10). London: Wyclif Society 1896, 247.

²⁹ GIGLIONI, Guido: *Introduction*, in: ID. (ed.): *Renaissance Averroism and its Aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*. Dordrecht: Springer 2013, 1–34, at 11.

³⁰ See at least BIANCHI, Luca: *L’averroismo di Dante: qualche osservazione critica*, in: *Le tre corone* 2 (2015), 71–109, at 71–78.

between the point of view of the *naturalis* – the natural philosopher who discusses problems rationally – and that of the *fidelis* – who takes into account revealed truths; and finally the distinction between what is true “speaking naturally” or “according to the philosophers” and what is true “according to faith”. Far from being simple disclaimers, meant to avoid troubles with censors and Church authorities, these formulas reflect a precise conception of what sciences – in the Aristotelian sense of the term – are, or must be. They are grounded on the epistemological rule, inspired by Aristotle and diffused by Albert the Great, that every specialist of a science – or, to use medieval terminology, every *artifex* – must keep within the boundaries set by the principles of his science. This led, on the one hand, to a campaign for the autonomy of rational disciplines, challenging the old accepted scheme of their ‘ancillarity’ to theology; on the other hand, it prompted the recognition of the limits of these disciplines. Knowing that whatever logically derives from certain principles is valid in relation to these principles, and that the principles on which philosophical disciplines are founded are established by generalizing empirical data, thirteenth-century Parisian Arts masters were ready to grant that their conclusions had only a limited degree of certainty, because a supernatural cause might intervene so as to suspend or violate these same principles.³¹

Although this approach was a development of a strategy for avoiding the conflict between Aristotle’s philosophy and Christian faith adopted by the Dominican friar Albert the Great, it was perceived by several thirteenth-century theologians as potentially dangerous because it contested the traditional hierarchy of sciences and allowed scientific disciplines to affirm conclusions which were at odds with the tenets of the Christian faith. In the prologue to his 1277 condemnation the bishop of Paris Étienne Tempier voiced these sentiments and rebuked no better identified *studentes in artibus* who, in his opinion, were spreading dangerous doctrines and, trying to justify themselves, stated “that these things are true according to philosophy but not according to the Catholic faith, as if there were [*quasi sint*] two contrary truths, and as if there were [*quasi ... sit*] a truth in the sayings of the damned pagans that is opposed to the truth of the Sacred scripture”.³²

Generally considered as the first appearance of the ‘double-truth theory’, this text is more ambiguous than it appears at first glance and would deserve a careful analysis. I content myself with remarking that Tempier twice employs the term *quasi*, which seems to suggest that his reproach is based on an inference from what the *studentes in artibus* affirm rather

³¹ See BIANCHI, Luca: *Loquens ut naturalis*, in: BIANCHI, Luca/RANDI, Eugenio: *Le verità dissonanti. Aristotele alla fine del medioevo*. Roma: Laterza 1990, 33–56.

³² I quote from PICHÉ, David: *La condamnation parisienne de 1277. Texte latin, traduction, introduction et commentaire*. Paris: Vrin 74.

than on what they actually say. In other words, he is making explicit what the attitude of these scholars supposedly implies. In order to find something closer to ‘double-truth’ in the proper sense of the term, one must turn to the list of 219 articles whose teaching was prohibited, where one can read at least three suspect articles. Articles 113 and 184 have the form ‘P is impossible according to philosophy, but non-P must be held by faith’.³³ Article 90 explicitly hints at the possibility of making two contradictory statements, namely: “That the natural philosopher must deny without qualification [*simpliciter*] that the world began to be, since he bases himself upon natural causes and natural arguments. The believer can instead deny the eternity of the world because he bases himself upon supernatural causes”.³⁴ One might wonder, however, if these articles reflect what Arts masters and bachelors actually taught, or if they indicate what was ascribed to them by the committee of theologians, appointed by bishop Tempier, who selected which ‘errors’ were to be banned.

The answer is clear when one examines the most significant case, that of article 90. It is obvious that this article is taken from the key-passage of the treatise *On the eternity of the world* authored by Boethius of Dacia, whose name is mentioned in two fourteenth-century manuscripts as one of the main supporters of the condemned articles. For this reason, when in 1954 the Hungarian scholar Geza Sajó discovered this treatise, he presented it as the source of both article 90 and the “doctrine of double truth”.³⁵ Yet, great medievalists soon gave a different interpretation, whose accuracy was later recognized by Sajó himself and is now almost universally accepted. According to this interpretation, the Danish master – whose declared purpose was to “bring into harmony [*reducere ad concordiam*] the view of Christian faith concerning the eternity of the world and the view of Aristotle and of certain other philosophers” – *does not* say that the natural philosopher must deny the beginning of the world *simpliciter*, i.e. without qualification, absolutely speaking. He says precisely the contrary, i.e. that the position of the natural philosopher is *false* “when it is taken in the absolute sense [*accepta absolute*]”. Bishop Tempier and his committee therefore gave – one cannot know whether intentionally or not – a radicalized and distorted version of Boethius’ position.³⁶

³³ *Ibidem*, 112, § 113: “Quod anima separata non est alterabilis secundum philosophiam, licet secundum fidem alteretur” ; 134, § 184 : “Quod creatio non est possibilis, quamvis contrarium tenendum sit secundum fidem”.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, 106, § 90: “Quod naturalis philosophus debet negare simpliciter mund nouitatem, quia innititur causis naturalibus et rationibus naturalibus. Fidelis autem potest negare mundi aeternitatem, quia innititur causis supernaturalibus”.

³⁵ SAJÓ, Geza: *Un traité récemment découvert de Boèce de Dacie De aeternitate mundi. Texte inédit avec une introduction critique*. Budapest: Akademiai Kiadó 1954, 37.

³⁶ I quote from the critical edition published in *Boethii Daci Opera. Topica – Opuscula*. VI.2. Ed. Niels Jørgen Green-Pedersen (= *Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi*).

A few points may be added to better qualify this reading.³⁷ In order to show that there is no real contradiction between the conclusions of the natural philosopher and the teachings of faith Boethius distinguishes what is stated in the absolute sense, without qualification (*simpliciter, absolute*), and what is stated with qualification, in a certain respect (*secundum quid*). This distinction is taken from Aristotle, who in his *Sophistical Refutations* (5, 166b38-167a14) warns that several fallacies depend on the fact that expressions used in a certain respect are interpreted as valid in the absolute sense, or vice versa. Medieval logicians largely examined this kind of fallacies, called *fallaciae secundum quid et simpliciter*, and in so doing they systematically used the example of dark skinned people introduced by Aristotle himself. After noting that the conclusion wherein the natural philosopher asserts that the world did not begin to be follows from his principles but “is false when it is taken in the absolute sense”, Boethius obviously hints at this example when he adds: “For we know that both he who says that Socrates is white, and he who denies that Socrates is white in certain respect [*secundum quaedam*], tell the truth”. It is therefore evident that in order to *defend* the unity of truth, which is a corollary of Aristotle’s principle of non-contradiction, Boethius makes recourse to another Aristotelian logical tool: the distinction between what is stated absolutely and what is stated in a certain respect. But whereas Aristotle introduced it in order to warn that one is not allowed to take in the absolute sense what is said in a particular sense, and vice versa, because this would make one’s arguments fallacious, Boethius employs this distinction in order to emphasize that there is *no contradiction* between what is said to be true in the absolute sense and what is said to be true in a certain respect.

It is also significant that Boethius felt free to employ the term ‘truth’ in relation to the statements of the natural philosopher who – he writes – “tells the truth” when he holds that the beginning of the world is impossible “from natural causes and principles”. Most of the great medievalists who, from the 1950s onwards, promoted the deep historiographical revision which led to acknowledge that one cannot find the so-called ‘double truth’ in any thirteenth-century text so far preserved, generally maintained

Hauniae: Gad 1976, 333–366, here 335, 352–353. See GILSON, Étienne: *Boèce de Dacie et la double vérité*, in: *AHDLMA* 30 (1955), 81–99; MAURER, Armand: *Boethius of Dacia and the Double Truth*, in: *Mediaeval Studies* 17 (1955), 233–239; MICHAUD-QUANTIN, Pierre: *La double vérité des Averroïstes*, in: *Theoria* 22 (1956), 167–184; VAN STEENBERGHEN, Fernand: *Nouvelles recherches sur Siger de Brabant et son école*, in: *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 54 (1956), 137–147; GAUTHIER, René-Antoine: review of Sajó’s book in: *Bulletin Thomiste* 9 (1954–1956), 926–932. Sajó acknowledged that his critics were right in SAJÓ, Geza: *Boetius de Dacia und seine philosophische Bedeutung*, in: WILPERT, Paul (ed.): *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter. Ihr Ursprung und ihre Bedeutung* (= *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 2). Berlin: De Gruyter 1963, 455–463, at 458–460.

³⁷ What follows is a synthesis of the commentary provided in my Italian translation of BOEZIO DI DACIA: *Sull’eternità del mondo*. Milano: Edizioni Unicopli 2003, 38–55.

that medieval Aristotelians always used the term “truth” associated with faith, and qualify the teachings of philosophy as *probable*, not as true. Boethius provides evidence to the contrary and shows that these issues are more complex – and therefore more interesting. Boethius indeed assumes that revealed truth is the absolute truth, but this does not prevent him from qualifying as *true* also the limited conclusions of natural science, which are true “in certain respects [*secundum quid*]”. Since these conclusions inevitably follow from the principles of natural philosophy, they are relatively true – true within the boundaries of natural philosophy, which takes into account only natural principles and causes. However, they are not true absolutely: as we have seen, Boethius explicitly declares that if one takes them without qualification they are *false*, because God is a supernatural, omnipotent cause, and is therefore able to act outside and even against natural principles. So Boethius speaks of *two truths*, one of the *naturalis* and one of the *fidelis*, and nonetheless he *does not* at all defend a ‘double-truth theory’.

One might object that this solution raises at least one serious difficulty, since it seems to be grounded on a relativistic conception of truth. Proposed by several historians,³⁸ this reading of Boethius neglects an important aspect of his approach to the relationship between rational and religious truths. Boethius surely emphasizes that natural philosophy, and more generally speaking every form of rational inquiry, is limited: every specialist of a given science can indeed demonstrate, concede or deny something only in terms of the principles of his science. Therefore his conclusions depend on the principles assumed by his science, and as we have seen these principles are not absolutely valid, because God’s power is greater than the power of natural causes. Nonetheless what the *naturalis*, i.e. the natural philosopher asserts *as a natural philosopher* is true not only in the sense that it correctly follows from physical principles, but also in the sense that it corresponds to *a fact*: the fact that the beginning of the world is not naturally, physically possible. What the Christian believer says also corresponds to *a fact*: the fact that the world began to be because of the supernatural intervention of an omnipotent God, who freely decided to create *ab initio temporis*. This, according to Boethius, whose religious sincerity is out of the question, is a fact, but since it depends exclusively on God’s inscrutable will it is known only through revelation and cannot be rationally demonstrated: “faith is not science” – Boethius claims – and it would be “foolish to seek rational argumentations for things which should be believed by reason of religious Law”.

³⁸ Such as Paul Wilpert, François-Xavier Putallaz, Ruedi Imbach and John Marenbon. The latter recently labelled Boethius of Dacia as a “limited relativist”, accepting my critical remarks. See MARENBNON, John: *Pagans and Philosophers. The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibniz*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2015, 146–147.

Our strange backwards history, therefore, ends more or less where we started, with a natural philosopher rebuked for having endorsed an absurd ‘double-truth theory’ that he openly refused; with a natural philosopher who – like Galileo 350 years later – tried instead to defend the autonomy of natural philosophy, regarded as a limited yet valuable form of knowledge, which should be practiced using only rational principles, without taking into account revealed truths, supernatural interventions (such as God’s creation) and miracles:

From all this it is evident that for the philosopher to say that something is possible or impossible is to say that it is possible or impossible for reasons which can be investigated by man. When someone puts aside rational arguments, he immediately ceases to be a philosopher: philosophy does not rest on revelations and miracles.³⁹

4. “THERE ARE TWO TRUTHS’, SAID THE CAID PLACIDLY”

In conclusion, the so called ‘theory of double truth’ has its roots in a distorted reading of the conception of the dialectic between the truths of reason and the truths of faith proposed in the 1270s by some late thirteenth-century Scholastic authors – notably Parisian Arts masters – and later developed until the Renaissance. However one evaluates this conception, it is clear that while its first appearance depends on a multiplicity of causes, they were all *internal* to Latin culture. In particular, behind Siger of Brabant’s and Boethius of Dacia’s approach to this problem there lie, on the one hand, institutional factors such as the emergence of certain methods of teaching and commenting ancient texts, the development of Paris university, the transformation of its Arts faculty into a Philosophy faculty, the conflict between professional philosophers and theologians; on the other hand, intellectual factors such as the growing influence of Aristotle’s conception of science and of Albert the Great’s peculiar form of Aristotelianism, which encouraged a clear-cut distinction between the spheres of rational reasoning and religious beliefs. Averroes had no significant effect on the way of understanding the relationship between these two spheres suggested by Siger, Boethius and their colleagues working in the last decades of the thirteenth century. It is well known that a few decades later another generation of French and Italian Arts masters overtly conceived of their work as a development of Averroes’ interpretation of Aristotle’s doctrines; and it is equally well known that the most representative figure of

³⁹ *De aeternitate mundi*, 364. On Galileo’s account of miracles and his complex attitude towards the use in natural philosophy of the theological notion of omnipotence see BIANCHI, Luca: *Interventi divini, miracoli e ipotesi soprannaturali nel Dialogo di Galileo*, in: CANZIANI, Guido/GRANADA, Miguel Angel/ZARKA, Yves Charles (eds): *Potentia Dei. L’onnipotenza divina nel pensiero dei secoli XVI e XVII* (= Filosofia e scienza nel Cinquecento e nel Seicento). Milano: Angeli 2000, 239–251.

this group, i.e. John of Jandun, felt free to expound his views, often without making any effort to accord them with the Christian ones but simply adding, at the end of his questions or treatises, short disclaimers and cautionary statements.⁴⁰ Yet, far from saying that rational and revealed wisdom lead to two contradictory truths, Jandun not only declared that philosophical theories are nothing more than generalizations from sense experience, not absolutely true. He went even further. Discussing a few controversial passages of the *Averroes latinus* where Aristotle's remarks on "custom" as a hindrance to scientific knowledge were interpreted as implying that religious training during childhood might impede the study of philosophy, Jandun argued that this actually happens with "false religions", which are "intermingled with errors"; the Commentator – Jandun added – spoke precisely "of his religion", and "if he spoke also of the Christian religion, proved by God's miracles, he would lie".⁴¹ Therefore, whatever one might think of their sincerity and efficacy, the different strategies adopted by late medieval Arts masters to manage the tension between rational inquiry and Christian revelation were not substantially inspired by Averroes, and were associated to his name because some of them were labelled as 'Averroists' since they were influenced by other doctrines of the Corduan thinker. It is however significant – but generally neglected – that in treatises on the "errors of the philosophers" many accusations were addressed against Averroes, but not that of spreading an unlikely 'double truth theory'. Relying on a distorted reading of a selection of passages, the Commentator was rather presented as a sort of freethinker, who would disparage all religions and argue that philosophers cannot believe their "fables".⁴²

Having started with Berry Stavies' 1947 play on Galileo, let me conclude with a novel about Thomas Aquinas, first published three years later by Louis de Wohl and entitled *The Quiet Light*. Born in Berlin to a Jewish family, de Wohl opposed the Nazi regime and was therefore obliged to move to England, where during World War II he worked – as an astrologer! – for the British Intelligence. A fervent Catholic, he became increasingly religious and wrote extensively on the history of the Church and the lives of saints, from Augustin to Benedict of Norcia, from Francis of Assisi to Catherine of Siena, from Johan of Arc to Ignatius of Loyola. If Thomas Aquinas could not be lacking in such a rich list, there is no need to say that his life – devoted to the teaching and writing of rebarbative works of theology and philosophy – could not hope to appeal to a large readership. Obligated

⁴⁰ See at least MACCLINTOCK, Stuart: *Perversity and Error: Studies in the 'Averroist' John of Jandun*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1956, 66–99.

⁴¹ On this point see BIANCHI, Luca: "Nulla lex est vera, licet possit esse utilis". *Averroes' "errors" and the emergence in the Latin West of subversive ideas about religion*, forthcoming.

⁴² See e.g. the lists of Averroes' "errors" provided by (pseudo?) Giles of Rome and by Nicolaus Eymericus.

to give a dramatic picture of the doctrinal conflicts in which Thomas was involved, de Wohl turned to one of his best known adversaries, Siger of Brabant. In the 1940s – i.e. *before* the discovery of Boethius of Dacia's *De aeternitate mundi*, which, as we have seen, was going to spark a great debate about 'double truth' – Siger was considered as the leader of the 'Latin Averroists', who were believed to use the device of 'double truth' to spread heresies inspired by Aristotle and Averroes. Unsurprisingly, de Wohl's Siger is the herald of a "Mohammedan philosophy", which "was not an original philosophy", but "a garbled and Orientalized Aristotelian philosophy".⁴³ Much might be said on de Wohl's variations on the theme of the danger coming from the East, on philosophy as a weapon used by Muslim culture against Christianity, as the "Trojan horse" which might accomplish "what the vast armies of the camel driver could not do". The pronounced islamophobia permeating this novel might grant it a considerable success even today, although it reflects typically post-war fears and sentiments: one need only think of the character of the emperor Fredrick II, portrayed as a charismatic leader who, though "aping oriental customs", embodies a conception of the will to power which is very 'Western' and has a strong Nietzschean, not to say Hitlerian flavour.⁴⁴

While Barrie Stovies' *Lamp at midnight* is a drama, which may have a sad ending, de Wohl's *The Quiet Light* is a historical and hagiographical novel, which is expected to have a happy ending. One of its last chapters shows the vicissitudes of Piers Rudde, a young knight who after serving the Aquino family and secretly loving Thomas' sister Theodora decides to participate in the crusade of Louis IX. Captured by the Arabs, Piers is involved in an unlikely philosophical debate with "their Caid, Omar ben Tawil". Omar "placidly" claims that "there are two truths", namely "the truth of religion and the truth of philosophy", and "if they come to different results, it only goes to show the great variety of Allah's world". Piers immediately qualifies this as "the error of Averroes", and adds that the greatest of his disciples in Paris, called Siger of Brabant, was challenged by "a Christian mullah who had studied both Aristotle and Ibn Roshd", namely Thomas Aquinas, "to fight it out with him at the school of philosophy in Paris before the highest imam of the city", namely bishop Tempier. According to Piers, Siger "tried to avoid the fight", but "in the end was forced to face his opponent" who defeated him "so thoroughly that the Grand Imam who presided at the fight declared his teaching to be null and void".⁴⁵

Needless to say, there is no evidence of thirteenth-century disputations, chaired by a bishop, between a professor of Theology like Thomas Aquinas

⁴³ DE WOHL, Louis: *The Quiet Light. A Novel about Saint Thomas Aquinas*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1966, 208.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, *passim* (quotations are from 208–209).

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 340–342.

and an Arts master like Siger of Brabant. We know instead that in his *De unitate intellectus* Thomas, without naming him, harshly criticizes Siger and invites him to reply “*in writing, if he dares*” – which Siger actually did. We also know that, in this treatise, Thomas *does not* openly charge Siger with defending ‘double truth’: Thomas rather tries to drive him into a corner, showing that he cannot say “I conclude necessarily that intellect is numerically one, but I firmly hold the opposite by faith”, because “since the only thing that can be necessarily concluded is a necessary truth whose opposite is false and impossible, it follows from this statement that faith is of the false and impossible”.⁴⁶ In doing so, Thomas applies to a heated case the general principle – which he had formulated in his commentary on Boethius’ *De Trinitate* – that what reason demonstrates to be true cannot contradict a tenet of Christian faith, because “it would be necessary that one or the other be false, and since both are for us from God, God would be responsible for making us believe something false – which is impossible”.⁴⁷ This is undoubtedly a brilliant polemical strategy, although one might wonder to what extent it was effective against Siger, who, at least in his extant works, never made the statement which Thomas presents as a quotation (from him?). However it might be, one point should be clear. Only in edifying novels do threats for Christianity always come from without, from different cultures, from ‘impious’ thinkers such as Averroes; in real history it was *within* Latin Christian thought that the different ways of conceiving the relationship between ‘reason’ and ‘faith’ generated the phantom of ‘double truth’.

⁴⁶ *De Unitate intellectus*, c. 5, in: *Opera Omnia*. Ed. Leonine. Roma: Editori di San Tommaso 1976, vol. 43, 314.

⁴⁷ *Super Boethium De Trinitate*, I, q. 2, a. 3, in: *Opera Omnia*. Ed. Leonine. Roma: Commissio Leonina 1992, vol. 50, 99.

Abstract

In 1633 pope Urban VIII received from the Jesuit theologian Melchior Inchofer the Tractatus syllepticus, expressly conceived as a justification of the sentence against Galileo. Inchofer referred to the bull Apostolici regiminis, published in 1513 by pope Leo X, in order to argue that “truth does not contradict truth”, and therefore Copernicans were not allowed to use the “artful distinction” between what can be said “according to philosophy” and what can be said “according to theology”. It is well known that the aforementioned distinction had been widely used by Aristotelian philosophers since the mid-thirteenth century; and for a long time historians presented it as the hallmark of the so-called ‘Averroism’, which supposedly accepted a ‘double-truth theory’ claiming that a doctrine could be true for philosophy while being false for theology (or vice versa). This paper shows that the roots of the principle of the unity of truth, sanctioned by Leo X in his attack against the masters of philosophy who supported ‘Alexandrist’ and ‘Averroist’ interpretations of Aristotle’s psychology, can be found not only in Aristotle’s but also in Averroes’ works; that Averroes gave it one of its clearest formulations; and that Averroes had no significant impact on the understanding of the relationship between philosophy and religious beliefs articulated by the thirteenth-century Parisian Arts masters generally labelled as ‘Latin Averroists’. Rebuked in 1277 by bishop Tempier for holding that there are “two contrary truths”, these masters did indeed try to avoid the conflict between Aristotle’s philosophy and the teachings of the Christian faith by using Aristotelian logical tools. However one evaluates their strategy, it seems clear that it was within Latin Christian thought that the different conceptions of the dialectic between ‘reason’ and ‘faith’ generated the phantom of ‘double truth’.