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

### 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’.