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Representing the Truth: The Case of a Jesuit Astronomer and a Jesuit Polymath

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« It is a grave error to believe that our mental representations of the truth are unique as if several different images could not be exhibited of a single statue » (F. Lana Terzi, 1684). This eclectic epistemology was shared by several Jesuit confrères in the second half of the 17th century. I will discuss the case of Riccioli and that of Kircher. With the exception of his beloved proof of the immobility of the Earth, the *argumentum physicum-mathematicum*, in his *Almagestum novum* the former often seemed to draw inspiration from a similar criterion, without however evoking it openly. As in the case of the locations and trajectories of comets, or of new stars' locations, or for the semi-dark light observed at the new moon etc. The latter described his cosmology and his astronomical and philosophical theses in his *Itinerarium extaticum*, albeit through an imaginary journey characterized by an ecstatic dimension with echoes of Cusan or Brunian cosmology. In the background stood out the Revisori Generali and the *Ordinatio pro studiis superioribus* (1651), which attempted to impose guidelines that had to be strictly followed by Jesuit scholars. The difficult balance between one's *curiositas* towards the natural world on the one hand, and the theological tradition and the pervasive influence of the higher authorities of the Order on the other, often resulted in contradictory outcomes for various reasons.

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