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EPICTETUS IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY:
ACCOMMODATION AND RESILIENCE
IN MATTEO RICCI'S «TWENTY-FIVE PARAGRAPHS»

In memoriam of Alfonso Traina

It has been unanimously recognized that Christian missionaries approaching Chinese culture in the early Middle Ages – as well as almost ten centuries later in modern times – displayed a sensitive attitude and an extremely open minded approach in adapting themselves to the local culture and environment, which allowed them to achieve a certain success, at least in the immediate aftermath¹. It is no wonder, therefore, that these approaches are nowadays in high esteem among contemporary theolo-

1. For additional bibliographic references see C. O. Tommasi, 'Nestorians' on the Silk Road: some notes on the Stele of Xi'an, in *La teologia dal V all' VIII secolo fra sviluppo e crisi*. XLI Incontro di Studiosi dell'Antichità Cristiana (Roma, 9-11 maggio 2013), Roma 2014, pp. 645-69. The concept of Jesuit accommodation has been extensively studied by almost all the scholars who have treated this subject (see e.g., the ones quoted *infra*, n. 30 and 45); a general perspective on the complexities inherent in the convergence of these two cultures is provided by J. Gernet, *Chine et Christianisme. La première confrontation*, Paris 1990², who argues for their fundamental incompatibility. For a recent original reassessment of the question, see A. Yeh, *The Hermeneutics of Silk: China and the Fabric of Christendom according to Martino Martini and the Early Modern Jesuit "Accommodationists"*, in «Comparative Studies in Society and History», 61 (2019), pp. 419-46. The author is grateful to Antonella Alimento, Andrea Balbo, Domitilla Campanile, Mei Guoli, Maria Luisa Paternicò, Jordi Pia, Francesco Stella, Wan Duyi, Zhou Zhihuan, and to the anonymous reviewers for insightful hints and suggestions; special thanks are addressed to the staff at

gians as foretelling a new paradigm for ecumenical dialogue and mutually beneficial relationships². An interesting example of this attitude is provided by the text I wish to discuss in this contribution, namely the *Èrshúwǔ yán*, 二十五言, or *Twenty-five Paragraphs* (or *Sayings*). The work is a short treatise on moral virtue composed by Matteo Ricci during his time in Nanjing and published in 1605. As a caveat, I must say that this is still a work in progress and, as such, I wish to proceed in examining a text that, to my knowledge, lacks a modern edition or translation, save for the one provided in a dissertation by Christopher Spalatin, the Jesuit priest and scholar who first salvaged this booklet from oblivion³. This paper will accordingly offer a presentation of the text situated within the cultural context of its age (namely, a cultural milieu that is simultaneously European and Chinese) and will suggest some paths for further investigation. I approach the subject from the perspective of a classicist who has recently developed a growing interest in Chinese matters; I am able, therefore, to provide a different perspective by taking into account other contexts than those immediately relevant for Sinologists. In the course of my work, I found it especially useful to employ the idea of *chresis*, or *iustus usus*, in

the Bodleian Library in Oxford, where I was able to access bibliographic material, and to Angela Kinney for linguistic revision. My research on this topic has been also inspired by the general theme of the Excellence Cluster Project awarded to the Department of Civiltà e Forme del Sapere of the University of Pisa by the Italian Ministry of Education and Research (2018–2022): *I tempi delle strutture. Resilienze, accelerazioni e percezioni del cambiamento (nello spazio euro-mediterraneo)*.

2. M. Nicolini Zani, *Lo sviluppo della teologia in Cina negli ultimi decenni: una panoramica in prospettiva ecumenica*, in «Archivio Teologico Torinese», 18 (2012), pp. 257–78. Interesting considerations concerning the concept of hybridization are put forward by the same author in *Il cristianesimo nella Cina dei Tang di fronte alla diversità religiosa*, in *La Storia delle Religioni e la Sfida dei Pluralismi*, eds. S. Botta – M. Ferrara – A. Saggiaro, Brescia 2017, pp. 239–48: 246 ff. See also J. D. Meehan, SJ, *A Theology of Friendship: The Contributions of Matteo Ricci and Celso Costantini to a Contemporary Understanding of Mission and Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Ph.D. Thesis, Toronto 2011.

3. C. A. Spalatin, SJ, *Matteo Ricci's Use of Epictetus*, Excerpta ex dissertatione ad doctoratum in facultate theologiae Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianaе, Waegwan 1975, whose conclusions take into account the theological perspective of ecumenism and dialogue. An abridged version was published with the same title in «Gregorianum», 46 (1975), pp. 551–57. The original title given by Spalatin, *Book of the Twenty-five Paragraphs*, has been criticized as «stilted» by H. L. Goodman – A. Grafton, *Ricci, the Chinese, and the Toolkits of Textualists*, in «Asia Major», 3 (1990), pp. 95–148: 100, who prefer translating

the same way as it was used by the early Church Fathers in their treatment of pagan literature⁴.

Spalatin had the immense merit of acknowledging that the *Èrshíwǔ yán*, is basically a translation of the *Encheiridion*, a short ‘manual’ of Stoic ethics compiled in the second century by Epictetus’ disciple Arrian, who also collected and edited his teacher’s major work, the *Dissertations*⁵. The

the term *yán*, 言, as «sentence», although this appears to be a nominalist distinction. I also found very useful the reading provided by Yu Liu, *The Complexities of a Stoic Breakthrough: Matteo Ricci’s ‘Ershiwu Yan’ (Twenty-five Paragraphs)*, in «Journal of World History», 24 (2013), pp. 823–47. A recent reassessment (in Chinese) of this work is provided by 徐頌贊, 明清之際的跨文化對話以《二十五言》及其序、跋、四庫提要為例, 文化中國 95 (2017), pp. 27–41 (Song-zan Xu, *Cross-Cultural Dialogues During Ming-Qing Period: A Case Study of Book of Twenty-Five Paragraphs and Its Preface, Afterword and Siku Tiyaoyao*, in «Cultural China»). Conversely, I was not able to read O Ji-Seok, ‘Encheiridion’ of Matteo Ricci and Epictetus: An Encounter between the Western Ethics and the Eastern, in «Korean Christian Social Ethics Society», 35 (2016), pp. 251–72 (in Korean).

4. This reference is to the pioneering work of C. Gnilka, *Chrēsis. Die Methode der Kirchenväter im Umgang mit der antiken Kultur*, Basel 1984, vol. I. *Der Begriff des rechten Gebrauchs*, which was followed by a series with the same title published by Schwabe in Basel. In the wake of Gnilka’s methodology, conferences on the subject were also held in Rome and Bologna (September 2017 and May 2019 respectively). Goodman–Grafton, Ricci, the Chinese cit., p. 115 seem to hint at the same methodology without mentioning, however, the idea of *chresis*. Seminal discussion and comparisons to early Christian apologists are provided by P. Rule, *Jesuit and Confucian? Chinese religion in the Journals of Matteo Ricci SJ 1583–1610*, in «The Journal of Religious History», 5 (1968), pp. 105–24: 107 (with previous secondary literature).

5. The text has benefited from a recent critical edition by G. J. Boter, Berlin-New York 2007; translations into modern languages are also available: P. Hadot, *Manuel d’Épictète*, Paris 2000; E. V. Maltese, *Epitteto, Manuale, con la versione latina di Angelo Poliziano e il volgarizzamento di Giacomo Leopardi*, Milan 1990; in English, in addition to Oldfather’s version published in the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass. 1925–1928), see now C. Gill – R. Hard, *Epictetus. Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, Oxford 2014. See also the rich commentary by U. Brandt, *Kommentar zu Epiktets Encheiridion*, Heidelberg 2015, the introduction written by A. A. Long, *Epictetus: a Stoic and Socratic guide to life*, New York 2002, and the presentation by G. J. Boter, *From Discourses to Handbook: the Encheiridion of Epictetus as a Practical Guide to Life*, in *Knowledge, Text and Practice in Ancient Technical Writing*, eds. M. Formisano – P. van der Eijk, Cambridge 2017, pp. 163–85. In addition to the classic discussion by M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa. Geschichte einer geistigen Bewegung*, Göttingen 1949, vol. I, pp. 327–41 and II, pp. 161–9, J. Pia Comella, *Une piété de la raison: philosophie et religion dans le stoïcisme impérial des Lettres à Lucilius de Sénèque aux Pensées de Marc-Aurèle*, Turnhout 2014 provides a general overview of Stoicism and its links with religious thoughts. The differences between Epictetus and Arrian are outlined by P. A. Brunt, *From Epictetus to Arrian*, in «Athenaeum», 55 (1977), pp. 19–48. F. Millar, *Epictetus and the Imperial Court*, in «Journal of Roman Studies», 55 (1965), pp. 141–8 provides a reconstruction

notion of ‘translation’, however, must be understood in a broader sense, that is: an adaptation, including modifications, changes, abridgements or additions to the original text. The most relevant examples of these alterations may be found in the suppression of some figures, events or practices peculiar to Greco-Roman culture that would have sounded unfamiliar, strange or even offensive to a foreign audience. For example, athletic games, mythological characters, theatrical performances, gladiatorial spectacles and sexual allusions were superseded by examples derived from Chinese culture; similarly, some notions that did not conform to Christian teachings were tacitly omitted⁶. In a letter written to Girolamo Costa in August 1599, Ricci explains that his brief treatise *On Friendship* (*Jiāoyǒu lùn*, 交友論), written in Chinese, would not sound as good in translation because he painstakingly adapted his thoughts for that language, and, when necessary, he altered the original Western («our culture») expressions and sentences⁷:

Ma non potrà avere la gratia che tiene la lingua cina, perché io in tutto mi accommodai a loro, e, dove era bisogno, mutai alcuna cosa i detti e sententie de philosophi nostri [e] alcune cose presi di nostra casa.

The *Jiāoyǒu lùn* is, in fact, a text influenced by classical and Renaissance authors; the title is reminiscent of Cicero, and its contents essentially present a cento of the miscellaneous volume *Sententiae et Exempla* by the Portuguese humanist André de Resende⁸. Some scholars have com-

of the environment and audience for Epictetus’s teaching (in Rome and during the exile), with some insightful hints that help in understanding the testimony Epictetus provides for the political life of his time. In particular, he notes the relevance of using examples taken from real life (regardless of their authenticity) to create a consistent picture of society.

6. Spalatin, *Matteo Ricci’s* cit., p. 20.

7. Here and in the following notes passages from the letters are quoted according to the new edition by P. Corradini and F. D’Arelli, Macerata 2001 (the present passage is taken from p. 363).

8. J. Dehergne, SJ, *Les sources du Kiao Yeou Luen ou Traité de l’amitié de Ricci*, in «Recherches de Science Religieuse», 72 (1984), pp. 51–8; Yu Liu, *The Preparation for Proselytizing: Matteo Ricci’s Treatise Jiao-You-Lun (On Friendship)*, in «Mosaic», 43 (2010), pp. 167–83. See also the recent editions by T. Billings, Matteo Ricci, *On Friendship, One Hundred Maxims for a Chinese Prince*, Yale 2009 and F. Mignini, Matteo Ricci, *Dell’Amicizia*, Macerata 2005.

pared this practice to the editions *ad usum Delphini* or to the habit of censoring or expurgating texts, so widespread in the sixteenth century especially among the Jesuits. Such censorship was carried out to remove unseemly language and contents and to comply with a pedagogy «based on the direct study of classical Latin texts, but designed to produce active, faithful Catholics»; this often resulted in the ‘crystallization’ of classic images or characters as exemplary figures⁹. However, those acquainted with the theory of translation promulgated in classical antiquity may find in it a closer parallel, given that this theory of translation involved much more than mere verbatim rendering, but implied precisely the same kind of complex reworking and unexpressed notion of rivalling and emulating the original¹⁰; on the other hand, superimposing (or adapting) new terms on pre-existing concepts was a common practice in China as well, as the translations of Buddhist, Christian and Manichaean texts into Chinese witness to¹¹.

9. Goodman-Grafton, *Ricci, the Chinese cit.*, p. 105. See also Yu, *The Complexities cit.*, p. 832, who quotes a passage from the *Ratio studiorum, Regulae praepositi provincialis* 34, (p. 25 in the bilingual edition by Claude Pavur, SJ, Saint Louis 2005): *omni vigilantia caveat ... ut omnino in scholis nostris abstinenceatur a libris poetarum, aut quibuscumque, qui honestati bonisque moribus nocere queant, nisi prius a rebus et verbis inhonestis purgati sint*; the image of the «spoils of the Egyptians» invoked by Loyola in reference to classical culture (quoted by Yu, p. 834) is a clear echo of the same image used by Irenaeus, Tertullian, and later authors to describe the attitude Christian culture should have towards the Gentiles; this would become a standard motif in Jesuit education: see P. Caliendo, *Latin and Loyola: Means, Ends and Options in Mind*, in *Jesuit Education and the Classics*, eds. E. Cueva - S. N. Byrne - F. J. Brenk, Newcastle 2009, pp. 22-40, with reference to the famous slogan *cum intentione charitatis spolia Aegypti sacra reddantur*.

10. For a still invaluable presentation of the issues at stake, see A. Traina, *Vortit barbare*, Rome 1970. The question has been reconsidered with particular reference to late antique and early medieval texts by P. Chiesa, *Ad verbum o ad sensum? Modelli e coscienza metodologica della traduzione tra tarda antichità e alto medioevo*, in «Medioevo e Rinascimento», 1 (1987), pp. 1-51; Id., *Le traduzioni in latino di testi greci*, in *Lo spazio letterario del Medioevo*, ed. G. Cavallo, Rome 2004, vol. III, 1, pp. 491-518; W. Berschin, *Traduzioni dal greco in latino (secoli IV-XIV)*, in *I Greci. Storia, cultura, arte, società*, ed. S. Settis, vol. III, Turin 2001, pp. 1023-33; for a general perspective also see M. Bettini, *Vertere. Un'antropologia della traduzione nella cultura antica*, Turin 2012; *Übersetzung, translation, traduction - ein internationales Handbuch zur Übersetzungsforschung, an International Encyclopedia of Translation Studies, Encyclopédie internationale de la recherche sur la traduction*, eds. H. Kittel - J. House - B. Schulze et al., voll. I-III, Berlin-New York 2004-2011.

11. See e.g. E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China. The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*, Leiden 1959; P. Bryder, *On the Sunny Side of the Moon*,

Before discussing the *Èrshíwǔ yán* and its contents, it is necessary to remember that learning Chinese was de facto imperative for foreign missionaries:

contrary to the interaction in Japan, where Japanese learned Portuguese or Latin, or to modern interactions, where many Chinese have to learn a foreign language in order to participate in cultural transfer, in the seventeen and eighteen centuries, except for a very small number of Chinese educated for the priesthood, no Chinese involved in the interaction learned a foreign language¹².

In addition, book learning and books themselves as material objects could secure recognition and esteem from Chinese literates and in general, have a high impact on Chinese society¹³.

in *Apocryphon Severini presented to S. Giversen*, Aarhus 1993, pp. 42-9, who outlines some patterns in the method the Manicheans adopted to translate their text into Chinese in order to obtain an adaptation to Chinese culture as well. As for Christianity in the Tang period is concerned, see the bibliography provided in Tommasi, 'Nestorians' cit.; and M. Deeg, *Die Strahlende Lehre. Die Stele von Xi'an*, Wien 2018, pp. 42 ff.: «Der „Verfasser“ des Stelentextes, Jingjing 景淨 / Adam, und das Problem der Sinsierung». In this regard, another episode ought to be taken into consideration, namely the famous 'translation incident' of 786-7, which involved the same monk Adam/Jingjing, and a Buddhist monk called Prajña, who came from Northern India. According to the report in the *Zhēn yuán shìjiào*, 真元釋教, the *Buddhist Record of the Zhenyuan Period*, the two cooperated to the translation of an esoteric text, the *Dàchéng lǐ qū lù bōluómì duō jīng*, 大乘理趣六波羅蜜多經, *Sūtra of the Six Mahāyāna Pāramitās*, for Prajña did not know Chinese language and, conversely, Jingjing, although speaking Chinese, did not understand Sanskrit, nor was aware of the Buddhist doctrines. The attempt at a joint translation, probably through the intermediation of an Iranian language (perhaps Sogdian), however, was unsuccessful, for the two «could not obtain half its [*i.e.* of the sutra] pearls» (*wèi huò bàn zhū*, 未獲半珠). A detailed reconstruction of the translation episode is provided by R. Todd Godwin, 'Eunuchs for the Kingdom of God': *Rethinking the Christian-Buddhist Imperial Translation Incident of 787*, in *Winds of Jingjiao. Studies on Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, eds. D. Winkler - Li Tang, Wien 2016, pp. 267-82; and by A. Forte, *The Chong fu-Si 崇福寺 in Chang'an. A neglected Buddhist Monastery and Nestorianism*, in P. Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne de Si-ngan-fou*, edited with supplements by A. Forte, Kyoto-Paris 1996, pp. 429-72: 442 ff. 鄭海娟, 跨文化交流與翻譯文本的建構——論利瑪竇譯《二十五言》, in 《編譯論叢》, 5 (2012), pp. 205-24 (Zheng Haijuan, *Cross cultural Communication and Construction of Translated Texts, 1: Matteo Ricci's Twenty-five Paragraphs*, in «Translation Theory»), provides a discussion of some renderings in Ricci's text.

12. N. Staedert, *Christianity in Late Ming and Early Qing China as a Case of Cultural Transmission*, in *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future*, eds. S. Uhalley - Xi-aoxin Wu, London 2001, pp. 81-116: 84.

13. On this interesting topic, see in general N. Golvers, *Circulation of Knowledge between*

Ricci, well aware of the importance of written culture, undoubtedly felt an affinity with this intellectual and elitist position, and recognized that the most effective way to proselytize was to make use of books¹⁴. Although it was a daunting task, he understood the necessity of learning Chinese, as he was sure that this effort would be eventually rewarded with admiration and esteem¹⁵. As stated in his journals, with regard to his attempts to publish works in Chinese, Ricci explicitly mentions the fact that almost all doctrines and news were promulgated by the written word¹⁶. The project of translating European and ancient classics into

Europe and China in the 17th-18th centuries: the Role of Material Objects, from Gadgets to Instruments, in «Almagest. International Journal for the History of Scientific Ideas», 8 (2017), pp. 76-117, who provides an extensive list of the European objects in the possession of the Jesuit missionaries which were intended for personal use as well as gifts for the emperor or dignitaries; along the same lines, see also M. Laven, «From His Holiness to the King of China»: Gifts, Diplomacy and Jesuit Evangelization, in *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia*, eds. Z. Biedermann - A. Gerritsen - G. Riello, Cambridge 2018, pp. 217-34.

14. Yu, *The Complexities* cit., p. 826 f. It seems worth quoting a passage from a letter addressed from Nanchang to his superior Claudio Acquaviva (4 November 1595): after having described the impression made on the audience by Western mechanical tools (sundials, clocks, oil paintings, maps, astrolabes, armillary spheres), Ricci adds: «i nostri libri ligati in tavole e dorate ci dà grande credito, che siamo di regno di letterati, che è la più difficile propositione che odono in nostra casa; perché pare a loro che implica contradditione esser letterato e non per mezzo de' loro libri, e non sanno se non domandare chi fece questi libri. Nondimeno, vedendoli sì belli, vengono a confessare che alcuna bona cosa vi sarà scritto in essi» (p. 316).

15. That Jesuit missionaries should become familiar with the native language of the region in which they preached had been considered a necessity by Loyola himself: see Li Sher-Shiueh, *Toward a Missionary Poetics in Late Ming China: the Jesuit Appropriation of the "Greco-Roman" Lore through the Medieval Tradition of European Exempla*, PhD Diss., Chicago 1999, p. 9 ff., who also offers interesting thoughts concerning different Chinese dialects, Mandarin and classical written languages. In particular, as far as Alessandro Valignano (the general Visitor of Indian Missions) is concerned, and his method of integration in China (and Japan) is concerned, see P. M. D'Elia, SJ, *Fonti Ricciane: documenti originali concernenti Matteo Ricci e la storia delle prime relazioni tra l'Europa e la Cina (1579-1615)*, Rome 1942, vol. I, p. XCIII.

16. See book five, chapter 2, p. 451 in the recent Italian edition of Ricci's *Della Entrata della Compagnia di Giesù et Christianità nella Cina*, Macerata 2010 (new edition by P. Corradini, F. Mignini and M. Del Gatto, based on the manuscript kept in the *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu*): «fiorando tanto le lettere in questo regno, quanto sopra si disse, puochi sono tra di loro che non sappino qualche cosa di libri, e tutte le loro sette furno seminate e dilatate più tosto con i libri fatti, che con prediche o ragionamenti fatti al popolo, il che anco recò molto agiuto ai nostri nell'insegnare le orationi necessarie ai

Chinese (including astronomical, geographical, mathematical and philosophical texts) was undertaken by many of the Jesuits who arrived in China¹⁷. Recent research has focused on how Greco-Roman authors were employed by early missionaries in the Heavenly Empire either in their correspondence or in works destined to circulate in China¹⁸.

The choice made by Ricci to make use of the *Encheiridion* does not seem fortuitous. First of all, Epictetus' concise style, characterized by short aphoristic sentences, was particularly close to that of Confucius' *Analects*; this was perhaps the reason behind the book's near-immediate success¹⁹. The same efficacious and clear stylization is likewise responsible

Christiani». In the same work, an early chapter (I 4, pp. 21-2) is dedicated to the explanation of how books are printed and differences from the Western printing system. On this work, whose renown may be attributed rather to the Latin version arranged by Ricci's Flemish confrere Nicolas Trigault rather than to the original Italian, see L. Fezzi, *Osservazioni sul "De Christiana Expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Iesu" di Nicolas Trigault*, in «Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa», 34 (1999), pp. 541-66; J. Gernet, «Della Entrata della Compagnia di Gesù e Christianità nella Cina» di Matteo Ricci (1609) et les remaniements de sa traduction latine (1615), in «Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres», 147/1 (2003), pp. 61-84 (p. 75 on the aforementioned passage).

17. N. Standaert, *The Classification of Sciences and the Jesuit Mission in Late Ming China, in Linked Faiths. Essays on Chinese religions and traditional culture in honour of Kristofer Schipper*, eds. J. de Meyer - P. M. Engelfriet, Leiden 2000, pp. 287-317; Id., *The Transmission of Renaissance Culture in Seventeenth-century China*, in «Renaissance Studies», 17 (2003), pp. 367-91.

18. N. Golvers, *Reading Classical Latin Authors in the Jesuit Mission in China: Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, in *Receptions of Greek and Roman Antiquity in East Asia*, eds. A.-B. Renger - Xin Fan, Leiden 2018, pp. 50-72, discusses quotations and allusions to classical literature in Jesuit writings; see also A. Müller Lee, *The Jesuit Mission to China and the Reception of Ancient Greek and Roman Culture in China and Korea*, ivi, pp. 19-49; a particularly interesting analysis (as far as Homer is concerned) may be found in Li Sher-Shiueh, «Translating» Homer and his Epics in Late Imperial China: Christian Missionaries' Perspectives, in «Asia Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies», 1 (2014), pp. 83-106.

19. This is what Spalatin p. 19 (relying on E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* cit., Leiden 1959, p. 329, n. 62), labels as *Lunyu style*. What's more significant, I think, is that Zürcher discusses the peculiarities of this style (namely, short independent paragraphs, usually introduced by «The Master said» or «The Buddha said») in his treatment of the *Sutra in Forty-two Sections* and its close parallels with the *Xiaojing*, the *Daodejing* and the *Lunyu*. As will be discussed later on, this *Sutra* can be considered the implied reference text (whether polemic or not) behind Ricci's work. Collections of sentences are attested to in Chinese late Ming literature: 鄭海娟, 跨文化, p. 211 f.

for the great renown and attraction the *Manual* exerted in Europe from Late Antiquity onwards, especially after the influential commentary written in the sixth century by the Neoplatonist Simplicius²⁰; it is enough here to mention the fifteenth-century Latin versions of the two Italian humanists Niccolò Perotti (1450) and Angelo Poliziano (1479), which were followed three hundred and fifty years later by the Italian one of Giacomo Leopardi²¹. It was, however, during the Late Renaissance and Early Baroque period that the book enjoyed its greatest popularity and became a favorite philosophical text; the work reached an even wider audience thanks to its publication in most modern European languages²².

Furthermore, as is well known, Stoicism and Stoic ethics enjoyed a brilliant revival during the Counter-Reformation. This was largely thanks to the Flemish humanist Justus Lipsius. Lipsius was not only a prominent philologist who produced an edition of Seneca in 1605, but also an influential standard-bearer of Neostoicism in Europe. He trivialized Stoic tenets in his dialogue *De Constantia* and in the *Manuductio ad*

20. See especially Simplicius, *Commentaire sur le Manuel d'Épictète. Introduction & édition critique du texte grec par Ilsetraut Hadot*, Leiden 1996; P. Hadot - I. Hadot, *Apprendre à philosopher dans l'Antiquité: l'enseignement du Manuel d'Épictète et son commentaire néoplatonicien*, Paris 2004; C. Vogel, *Stoische Ethik und platonische Bildung: Simplicios' Kommentar zu Epiktets Handbüchlein der Moral*, Heidelberg 2013.

21. Older studies such as those by W. A. Oldfather, *Leopardi and Epictetus*, in «*Italica*», 2 (1937), pp. 44-53; O. R. Pendleton, *Niccolo Perotti's version of the Enchiridion of Epictetus*, Urbana 1954; R. P. Oliver, *Politian's translation of the Enchiridion*, in «*Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*», 89 (1958), pp. 185-210, are now superseded by E. V. Maltese, *Epitteto, Poliziano, Leopardi*, in «*Atti della Accademia Pontaniana dei Pericolanti*», 67 (1991), pp. 35-53; G. Leopardi, *Il Ma-nuale di Epitteto*, ed. C. Moreschini, Roma 1990. G. J. Boter, *The Greek Sources of the Translations by Perotti and Politian of Epictetus' Encheiridion*, in «*Revue d'Histoire des Textes*», 23 (1993), pp. 159-88; and P. D'Alessandro, *L'archetipo dell'Enchiridium Epicteti di Niccolò Perotti*, in «*Rinascimento*», 35 (1995) 287-317, discuss the Greek *Vorlage* employed by the two humanists.

22. See the extensive entry by G. J. Boter, in *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries*, eds. V. Brown - J. Hankins - R. A. Kaster, Washington, DC 2011, vol. IX, pp. 1-54; L. Zanta, *La traduction française du Manuel d'Épictète d'André de Rivaudeau au XVI^e siècle*, Paris 1914; W. A. Oldfather, *Contributions toward a Bibliography of Epictetus. Appendix: J. Schenk's Translation of the Encheiridion, Basel 1534, Facsimile Reproduction from the Copy in the British Museum*, Urbana 1927; P. Hadot, *La survie du commentaire de Simplicius sur le Manuel d'Épictète du XV^e au XVII^e siècle: Perotti, Politien, Steuchus, John Smith, Cudworth*, in *Simplicius, sa vie, son oeuvre, sa survie. Actes du Colloque International de Paris (28 sept. - 1er oct. 1985)*, ed. I. Hadot, Berlin 1987, pp. 326-67.

Stoicam Philosophiam, employing these concepts in support of his political philosophy and seeking to reconcile them with Christian faith²³. Themes such as the sage facing the tyrant and the reflection on universal providence and governance of the universe were surely attractive to a sixteenth-century intellectual. One cannot forget the friendly encounters between Stoicism and Christianity in Late Antiquity, such as Tertullian's brilliant witticism *Seneca saepe noster* and Jerome's portrayal of the Seneca's suicide as a prototype of Christian martyrdom, not to mention the apocryphal correspondence between Seneca and Saint Paul produced at the end of the fourth century²⁴.

For his part, Epictetus also enjoyed considerable renown among Christian writers, who were surely aware of the sometimes irreconcilable differences between the two doctrines; however, certain teachings could be more easily accommodated within Christian ethics than others. Echoes of Epictetus or direct mentions of his name appear in authors from Clement onwards, and extensive quotations may be found in Byzantine florilegia. In addition, the *Encheiridion* was the object of at least three anonymous Christian paraphrases, whose degree of adaptation ranges from slight alterations to an almost complete reworking. Their success is demonstrated by the fact that extant manuscripts of the Christian paraphrases antedate those of the genuine *Manual*, which has been considered an indication that «the Byzantine world paid more attention

23. C. Brooke, *Philosophic Pride. Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau*, Princeton 2012; *(Un)masking the Realities of Power Justus Lipsius and the Dynamics of Political Writing in Early Modern Europe*, eds. E. De Bom - M. Janssens - T. Van Houdt - J. Papy, Leiden 2011, in particular the essays by B. Lindberg, *Stoicism in Political Humanism and Natural Law*, pp. 73-93, and by J. Papy, *Fate and Rule, Destiny and Dynasty: Lipsius's Final Views on Superstition, Fate and Divination in the Monita et exempla politica (1605)*, pp. 195-206. It is interesting to note (with Brooke, p. 76) that Lipsius does not seem much influenced by Epictetus, whom he cites only once, compared to Epictetus' influence within contemporary French milieus and the Platonic circle of Cambridge.

24. See especially the papers collected by *Seneca e i Cristiani*. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, ed. A. Martina, Milan 2001; a recent survey is offered by C. Torre, *Seneca and the Christian Tradition*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Seneca*, eds. S. Bartsch - A. Schiesaro, Cambridge 2015, pp. 266-76. Among previous works see W. Trillitzsch, *Seneca im literarischen Urteil der Antike: Darstellung und Sammlung der Zeugnisse*, Amsterdam 1971; some interesting remarks may be found in G. Brugnoli, *La 'Lectura Senecae' dal tardo-antico al XIII secolo*, in «Giornale Italiano di Filologia», 52 (2000), pp. 225-47.

to the Christianized versions of the *Encheiridion* than to the original text»²⁵. In modern times, some scholars have even speculated on Epictetus' probable knowledge of some passages from the New Testament – a coincidence that, however, is more likely dependent on the common lexical ground of the Greek *koine*²⁶ or on the connections between Pauline thought and Stoic tradition, which have been increasingly highlighted by recent scholarship²⁷.

Although it is impossible that Ricci was aware of these late antique paraphrases, as their *editio princeps* dates to the second half of the seventeenth century, it is nevertheless true that both Seneca and Epictetus were part of the standard Jesuit curriculum²⁸. The founder of the order, Ig-

25. This quotation is from the fundamental work by G. Boter, *The Encheiridion of Epictetus and Its Three Christian Adaptations: Transmission and Critical editions*, Leiden 1999, p. xv. See also F. De Nicola, *Osservazioni critico-esegetiche alla Parafraasi cristiana del Manuale di Epitteto*, in «Bollettino dei Classici», 19 (1998), pp. 35-67; A. Carlini, *Rifacimenti cristiani di opere pagane: il Manuale di Epitteto e le Sentenze di Sesto*, in *Aspetti di letteratura gnomica nel mondo antico*, ed. M. S. Funghi, Firenze 2004, pp. 97-110; M. Spanneut, *Épictète chez les moines*, in «Mélanges de Science Religieuse», 29 (1972), pp. 49-57; Spanneut also provided a French edition and translation of one of these paraphrases (*Commentaire sur la Paraphrase chrétienne du Manuel d'Épictète. Introduction, texte (partiellement) inédit, apparat critique, traduction, notes et index*, Paris 2007).

26. A. Bonhöffer, *Epiktet und das Neue Testament*, Giessen 1911.

27. P. Robertson, *Paul's letters and Contemporary Greco-Roman Literature: Theorizing a New Taxonomy*, Leiden 2016; R. C. Kavin, *One True Life: the Stoics and Early Christians as Rival Traditions*, New Haven, Conn. 2016 (whose approach is rather quite theological); V. Nguyen - H. T. Henry, *Christian Identity in Corinth: A Comparative Study of 2 Corinthians, Epictetus and Valerius Maximus*, Tübingen 2008. On specific topics, see M. Becker, *Der Vergleich des Lebens mit einem Gastmahl als Verhaltensanweisung: Lk 14, 7-11 und 22, 26-27 im Lichte von Texten Epiktets und Dions von Prusa*, in «Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft», 107 (2016), pp. 206-31; M. Toti, *Il lessico dell'ascesi: alcune osservazioni sulla "psicologia spirituale" nel Cristianesimo orientale ed in Epitteto*, in «Historia Religionum», 3 (2011), pp. 47-63; G. Jossa, *Epitteto e i cristiani*, in *Giudei, pagani e cristiani. Quattro saggi sulla spiritualità del mondo antico*, Naples 1977, pp. 81-108. R. M. Thorsteinson, *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism. A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality*, Oxford 2010; *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, eds. T. Rasimus - T. Engberg-Pedersen - I. Dunderberg, Grand Rapids, Mich. 2010.

28. They are not openly mentioned, however, in the *Ratio studiorum*, whose final version appeared in 1599, when Ricci was already in China. In addition to the pioneering work on the initial development of a study plan by L. Lukács, SJ, *De prima societatis ratione studiorum Sancto Francisco Borgia Praeposito generali constituta*, in «Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu», 27 (1958), pp. 209-32, see *La Ratio Studiorum. Modelli culturali e pratiche educative dei gesuiti in Italia tra Cinque e Seicento*, ed. G. P. Brizzi, Roma 1981; and M.

natus of Loyola, showed great appreciation for Epictetus, as had bishops and cardinals, such as Agostino Steuco and Carlo Borromeo. It is worth mentioning that Matthias Mittner, a Carthusian friar, prepared an *Encheiridion cartusianum* in the seventeenth century, thus reviving the aforementioned tradition of Christian paraphrases of the work²⁹.

In recent decades, many scholars are not content merely to highlight Ricci's contribution in establishing a bridge between Western and Chinese culture. Since the publication of Jonathan Spence's captivating biography, scholars have attempted to situate Ricci within the framework of late humanistic culture and education (especially grammatical, rhetorical and exegetical instruction), and have compared him with other contemporary Western scholars, both Catholics and Protestants³⁰.

«Ricci was above all humanist and a scholar. That is, he worked with texts: Confucian classics that he mastered as the price of entrance to conversations with the Chinese elite and Western classics that gave him the authority to offer an alternative to Confucianism. He interpreted both with flair and individuality, as Spalatin's monograph shows. But he also applied many established philological and hermeneutical methods that he did not devise but inherited from his Jesuit teachers»³¹.

Zanardi, *La "Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu": tappe e vicende della sua progressiva formazione (1541-1616)*, in «Annali di storia dell'educazione», 5 (1998), pp. 135-64. Interestingly, N. Guasti, *L'esilio italiano dei gesuiti spagnoli. Identità, controllo sociale e pratiche culturali (1767-1798)*, Rome 2006, p. 514, points out that Stoicism was ostracized by eighteenth-century Spanish Jesuits, insofar as it was considered a philosophy too close to atheism or materialism, not to mention some implied ties with Freemasonry. *Infra*, n. 40, I discuss how Confucianism was also sometimes perceived as an atheistic philosophy.

29. K. Döring, *Jakob Balde über Epiktet und sein Encheiridion*, in «Philologia Classica», 13 (2018), pp. 141-50; Id., *Zur Rezeption von Epiktets Encheiridion*, in *Kleine Schriften zur antiken Philosophie und ihrer Nachwirkung*, Stuttgart 2010, pp. 319-43, which also considers the *Èrshúwù yán*.

30. J. D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, London 1985; among the rich secondary literature on Ricci and his inculturation method, see D. E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology*, Honolulu 1989; C. Redaelli, *Il Mapamondo con la Cina al centro. Fonti antiche e mediazione culturale nell'opera di Matteo Ricci SJ*, Pisa 2007; M. Fontana, *Matteo Ricci. A Jesuit at the Ming Court*, Lanham 2011 (Milan 2005); R. Po-Chia Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City: Matteo Ricci 1552-1610*, Oxford 2010; M. Laven, *Mission to China: Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit Encounter with the East*, London 2011; interesting remarks are provided by T. Billings, *Jesuit Fish in Chinese Nets: Athanasius Kircher and the Translation of the Nestorian Tablet*, in «Representations», 87 (2004), pp. 1-42.

31. Goodman-Grafton, *Ricci, the Chinese cit.*, p. 102.

Therefore, the enterprise pursued by Ricci, and in general by Jesuit missionaries in the New World and the Far East, fit well within the norms that governed Renaissance scholars in their treatment of ancient sources. This humanistic background was an effective tool for interpreting Chinese culture, as is shown in some famous passages of correspondence.

As far as religion is concerned, at the very beginning of his arrival in China, Ricci mentions the three principal traditions (which he calls 'sects'). He describes Buddhists and Confucianists, comparing them to Pythagoreans and Epicureans respectively, since the former believe in metempsychosis and abstain from eating meat, whereas the latter are said (by Ricci) to deny the immortality of the soul³². Likewise, he probably hints at Daoists when he mentions the high esteem in which the alchemic arts are regarded and recalls the fact that he has been considered an alchemist as well³³. In any case, Ricci seems to appreciate the fact that Confucians do not fall prey to superstition and idolatry³⁴; in his discussions on Buddhists, he often uses the terms «worshippers of idols» and «idolatry», especially after his becoming closer to Confucianism. Later on, he confirmed his predilection for the *literati*, that is, the Confucians (according to an almost verbatim translation of *rújiā*, 儒家); he states that their Master is «another Seneca» and that the *Four Books* represent a good moral example³⁵.

If at first Ricci was drawn to equate Confucianism and Epicureanism, in subsequent years he produced a much more fitting comparison with Stoicism, essentially praising its non-religious (i.e., not prone to superstition) character, together with its social and ethical values, which he saw

32. M. Ricci, letter to Claudio Acquaviva, 20 October 1585: «Non voglio consumare in questo la carta in darli conto delle sette della Cina per essere cosa lunga. In breve le dico che i grandi sono tutti della setta epicurea, non già di nome, ma con leggi e opinioni; gli altri più bassi, che confessano l'immortalità dell'anima, sono pitagorici, perché tengono scrupolo di mangiare carne di animali e pesci, dicendo che ha transmigrazione di animali tra gli huomini et anco nelli animali» (p. 100).

33. Letter to Acquaviva, November 1595, p. 317.

34. Letter to Giambattista Román, 13 September 1584, p. 85; a general discussion is provided by M. Catto, *L'ateismo dei cinesi in Matteo Ricci e Niccolò Longobardo. La strategia missionaria della Compagnia di Gesù in Cina*, in «Giornale di Storia», 18 (2015), pp. 1-14.

35. In a letter to Acquaviva (December 1593), p. 185, he compares Confucius to Seneca: «è nel morale un altro Seneca o un altro autore dei più nostri famosi tra gentili».

as potentially prefiguring the conversion to the more perfect form of Christian monotheism. In doing this, he targeted as potential converts the Chinese Confucian scholar-officials, whom he admired for their high education and literacy, while he considered Buddhist monks as base and of lower rank. Classical philosophy offered an interpretative framework to describe traditions so different from the European ones. It was possible to follow the pattern already employed, for instance, by Flavius Josephus, who labelled the Hebrew contemporaries of his time in terms palatable to a Roman audience, namely by presenting the ascetic Essenes as Pythagoreans; the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, as Epicureans; and the learned aristocrat Pharisees as Stoics³⁶. A comparative examination of the chapter concerning religious traditions (significantly placed at the end of the first book of the History of the China mission)³⁷ has not yet been undertaken and would be a fruitful endeavor.

In general, it can be said that the Jesuit tradition quickly canonized the image of Confucius as a *priscus theologus*, as had been done with the pagan philosophers who *de Deo multa recte senserunt*. Confucius, via the Chinese branch of the Noahic tradition, was therefore considered a precursor of Christianity, joining the ranks of Hermes Trismegistos, Moses, Zoroaster, Socrates, and Pythagoras, as well as Plato, Epictetus, Varro, Cicero and Seneca³⁸. On the other hand, Ricci's double-sided interpretation of Confucianism was fated to take a different path, as some later European philosophers, such as Pierre Bayle and Nicholas Malebranche, used it to promote the idea of atheism: they probably relied on and developed in the mainlines of a Western interpretation the notion of *tiān rén hé yī*, 天

36. A. Catastini, *Stoici ed Epicurei in Flavio Giuseppe, Ant. X 266-281*, in «Studi Classici e Orientali», 46 (1998), pp. 495-514.

37. Ricci, *Della entrata* cit., pp. 90-106.

38. According to the end of chapter five in the *proemialis declaratio* in Philippe Couplet's *Confucius Sinarum philosophus*. On this passage, see G. Mori, *History Ad maiorem Dei gloriam Ancient Theology in the Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Environment*, Torino 2017, p. 37; Stefano Benedetti, "Sapientia Sinica" (1662): sulla prima traduzione a stampa dei "Dialoghi" confuciani di Prospero Intorcetta, in «Atti e memorie dell'Arcadia», 3 (2014), pp. 167-208: 174. A similar attitude, namely the inclusion of Confucius among the ancient sages and theologians, may be perceived in Athanasius Kircher's *China Illustrata* as well. For the theme of *prisca theologia* see also W. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy. Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*, Cambridge 2012, pp. 69 f.

人合一, humanity's unity with heaven. A concept of Daoist derivation, refined by the author of the *Zhōngyōng*, 中庸, and by Mencius, this idea represents the ultimate goal of self-cultivation within Chinese tradition, according to which there is a strong interdependence between heaven and man, who is therefore regarded as one with the universe, while human mind functions as co-creator of the world order³⁹.

During his years in China, Ricci deepened his knowledge of Confucianism by reading the Four Books (which he calls *Tesserabiblio*, adopting an interesting mixture of Greek loanwords). He was surely aware of the divergences between the original texts ascribed to Confucius and the Neo-Confucian tradition; texts of the latter were found in a great number of commentaries, as he wrote to his friend Lelio Passionei in September 1597⁴⁰:

Fiorirono nel tempo che fra noi fiorì Platone et Aristotile, come feci il conto de' tempi, anco tra loro alcuni letterati di buona vita che fecero alcuni libri di cose morali non per via di scientia, ma di sententie buone, dei principali de quali fecero poi quattro libri, che adesso sono gli più stimati e letti de giorno e de notte, che non passerà il volume della grandezza delle epistole familiari di Marco

39. Yu Liu, *Adapting Catholicism to Confucianism: Matteo Ricci's Tianzhu Shiyi*, in «The European Legacy», 19 (2014), pp. 43-59: 53 ff., states that this interpretation was due to a second-hand distortion of Ricci's journals. It might be maintained, however, that the interpretation offered by many philosophers was closer to the original meaning than the one provided by the Jesuits, who aimed at a conciliation between Christianity and Confucianism: see J. Israel, *La querelle sur Confucius dans les Lumières européennes (1670-1730)*, in «Rue Descartes», 81 (2014), pp. 64-83; M. Catto, *Atheism: A Word Travelling To and Fro Between Europe and China*, in *The Rites Controversies in the Early Modern World*, eds. I. Županov - P.-A. Fabre, Leiden 2018, pp. 68-88. On the evolution of the *tiān rén hé yī* idea see Li Shenzi, *Reflections on the Concept of Unity of Heaven and Man ('Tian Ren He Yi')*, in *Chinese Thought in a Global Context: A Dialogue Between Chinese and Western Philosophical Approach*, ed. K.-H. Pohl, Leiden 1999, pp. 115-28 (who argues for a sort of 'pantheism'); and, most of all, P. Y. M. Jiang, *Ethics in cosmology: Variations on the theme of 'Unity of Heaven and Man' in Neo-Confucianism*, in *Harmony and strife: Contemporary perspectives, East & West*, eds. S.-H. Liu - R. E. Allinson, Hong Kong 1988, pp. 271-90, on Wáng Yángmíng (*infra* p. 95)'s statement that intuitive knowledge represents heaven.

40. See p. 349. In the same letter Ricci mentions his Latin version of the Four Books, to which he had already hinted in the aforementioned letter to Acquaviva in December 1593. The idea of equating Plato and Aristotle to Confucius relies, I think, much more on their symbolic purport and importance than on actual chronology that Ricci (mistakenly) situated about a century later. (The traditional dates of Confucius' life are 551-479 BC).

Tullio, ma gli comentarij e glosse, e comentarij de' comentarij et altre espositioni e discorsi sopra essi sono già infiniti.

The need for restoring the original Confucian thought, which in the late Ming period had been increasingly permeated with Buddhist and Daoist ideas, seems mandatory for Ricci's strategy, whose ultimate goal could be summarized in the later formula *bǔ rú yì fó*, 補儒易佛, («supplementing Confucianism and repudiating Buddhism»)⁴¹. It partly reflected a tendency that Chinese philosophy developed (albeit not without opposition) in the following century under the Qing: that is, the clear-cut refusal of all the doctrinal concretions or practices perceived as favorable to Buddhism and Daoism (and considered partially responsible for the moral decadence that affected the last period of the Ming dynasty), and the exigence for a more philological or critical examination of the texts⁴². Ricci's inclination towards Confucianism developed gradually thanks to his friendship with Qú Tàisù, 瞿太素 (1549-1612), who introduced him to Confucian philosophy and was also responsible for his decision to cease shaving his head and dressing as a Buddhist (which he and Ruggeri began doing during their stay in Zhaoqing in 1583), adopting instead the Confucian garb. This event is recalled in one of the earliest accounts of Ricci's life, written by his friend Lǐ Zhīzǎo, 李之藻 (1571-1630), at the request of Nicolas Trigault⁴³. In addition, Ricci entertained cordial relationships with some members of the White Deer Grotto Academy, a scholarly institution which had become, under the influence of Wáng Yángmíng, 王陽明 (1472-1579), one of the most important centers of

41. See Rule, *Jesuit and Confucian?* cit., pp. 116 ff., to be supplemented with the thorough discussion in Yu Liu, *The Dubious Choice of an Enemy: The Unprovoked Animosity of Matteo Ricci against Buddhism*, in «The European Legacy», 20 (2015), pp. 224-38; Id., *The Complexities* cit., p. 829. On the 補儒易佛 concept see 李天綱, 補儒易佛, 徐光启的比较宗教观, in «上海社会科学院学术季刊» 3 (1990), pp. 128-33. (Li Tiangang, *Complement Ruism and Change Buddhism. The Comparative Theological Perspective of Xu Guangqi*, in «Quarterly Journal of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences»).

42. A. Cheng, *Histoire de la pensée chinoise*, Paris 1997, chapt. 21; Gernet, *Della Entrata* cit., p. 83 f.

43. For the circumstances of such a 'metamorphosis' see Yu, *The Dubious Choice*, who also examines how Ruggieri was not as hostile towards Buddhism as Ricci was in subsequent years and recalls some disputes Ricci had with prominent Buddhist scholars.

Confucian thought. In both cases these deliberate choices of embracing local habits and even costumes were part of the accommodation strategy and have been recently considered within the framework of the general Renaissance idea of *dissimulatio* (in a wider and neutral sense)⁴⁴.

One can probably read the *Èrshíwǔ yán*, through the same lens: in all probability, it was the aforementioned equation between Stoic and Confucian ethics that led Ricci to employ Epictetus as the backbone for his short treatise on moral virtue, a text that was met with unexpected success immediately after its publication in 1605, as Ricci himself declares in another letter to Father Ludovico Maselli (probably dating to May 1605)⁴⁵:

Nuovamente stampò un mio libretto un huomo tenuto per santo al quale fecero molti tempj et assai sontuosi, che per star diviso in venticinque paragrafi gli chiamano le *Venticinque sententie* o parole. In questo non faccio altra cosa se non parlare della virtù e viver bene con molta interezza come filosofo naturale, ma christiano, senza confutare nessuna setta: e così è letto et è gratissimo a tutti di qualsivoglia setta che sia; e di tutte le altre case mi scrivono il grande movimento che fa solo questo libretto in ogni parte; così puochi mi vengono a visitare che non mi prieghino con molta instantia che facci altri libri, perché con questo diamo credito alle cose della nostra religione. A questo libretto non ho fatto io nessun proemio, poiché in esso parlo del disprezzo del mondo e cose externe, *virtutis nudae rigidus satelles*, come dice quel poeta. Ma quello che lo stampò ne fece uno assai grave, et il nostro dottor Paulo anco gli fece il suo, nel quale si dichiara per nostro discipulo e per christiano, e dice molto elegantemente varie cose che autorizzano molto la nostra christianità.

The success obtained by the booklet appears even more remarkable, especially when considering that Ricci's most ambitious work, the catechetical *Tiānzhǔ shí yì* (天主實義, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heav-*

44. See in general J. R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 2009; *Dissimulation and Deceit in Early Modern Europe*, eds. M. Eliav-Feldon - T. Herzig, London 2015; S. Tutino, *Jesuit Accommodation, Dissimulation, Mental Reservation*, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits*, ed. I. G. Županov, Oxford 2019, pp. 216-40.

45. The Latin quotation is a slight modification of Hor., *Epist.* I 1, 17, *uirtutis uerae custos rigidusque satelles*, a line that has a clear Stoic inspiration. The Christian convert «Doctor Paul» is to be identified with Xú Guāngqǐ, who authored the afterword.

en), published two years earlier, had not been received with much admiration (if not open hostility), notwithstanding several references to Chinese classical philosophy; this was probably because of the open attack against Buddhism and because of the subtlety of his theological explanations, which rely on the metaphysical system of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas⁴⁶. It must be added that Ricci's attack against Buddhism should be considered a personal enterprise and not devoid of risk. He was motivated by a desire to form an alliance with the oldest and most important Chinese doctrine, that is, Confucianism; however, he did not take into account the fact that many leading philosophers and even his closest friends, in spite of their criticism of Buddhism, were nevertheless deeply influenced by that doctrine, to the point that the aforementioned Wáng Yángmíng has been regarded as the advocate of a syncretistic fusion of Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist elements⁴⁷. It is disputed whether the *Èrshíwǔ yán*, also should be understood as an anti-Buddhist treatise—in particular, as a response to the *Sìshíèr zhāng jīng*, 四十二章經, the *Sutra in Forty-two Chapters*. The *Sìshíèr zhāng jīng* is the oldest Buddhist Chinese text, allegedly dating to 67 AD; it contains a compendium of the Theravada doctrines⁴⁸. That the *Èrshíwǔ yán* is a response to this text is suggested by the original preface written by Féng Yīngjīng, 馮應京, although recent interpreters view this preface in a more nuanced way⁴⁹. It

46. On this work see the recent edition by T. Meynard - M. Ricci, *Le sens reel de Seigneur du Ciel*, Paris 2013; Yu, *The Complexities* cit., p. 824. A detailed analysis of this treatise highlighting the most notable differences with its forerunner (namely Ruggeri's *Tiānzhuǐ shílu*, 天主實錄) may be read in Yu Liu, *Adapting Catholicism*, who observes how Ricci's philo-Confucian attitude was met with a certain skepticism by some of his conferees as well, including Nicola Longobardo (p. 49).

47. See Gernet, *Della Entrata* cit., p. 65 f.; however, Yu, *The Dubious Choice* cit., p. 236, notes how Wáng Yángmíng, in his openness to Buddhism, indeed helped shape the tolerant attitude of his followers with regard to Christianity.

48. Spalatin, *Matteo Ricci's* cit., p. 13 and 17. Yu, *The Complexities* cit., p. 846 (softening the strong anti-Buddhist reading shared by previous interpreters, among them Joseph Shih, in his introduction to Matteo Ricci - Nicolas Trigault, *Histoire de l'expédition chrétienne au royaume de la Chine [1582-1610]*, Paris 1978).

49. See Yu, *The Complexities* cit., p. 846: «by praising *Ershiwu Yan* over *The Sutra in Forty-two Chapters*, he was showing his ideological partiality, but he was at the same validating the historical entry of Buddhism into China and drawing attention to the remarkable similarities between Buddha and Epictetus ... Just as the Buddhist classic [i.e. the *Sutra in Forty-Two Chapters*] is similar to *Encheiridion* in its brevity and aphorismic struc-

must be added that the same comparison between the two texts, originating in the preface itself, is repeated in Ricci's journal. After mentioning the success won by his moral works, he adds⁵⁰:

Ne' libri degli Idoli ve n'è uno dove dicono stare la sustantia della loro dottrina, distinto in quarantadoi paragrafi, che per questo si chiama i *Quarantadoi paragrafi*. E nel vero, conferito con queste vinticinque parole, non solo si vede la differentia delle cose della verità Christiana, quanto superiori siano alle falsità della idolatria, ma si scorge anco il modo de trattare queste materie sì scientifico e chiaro, assai differente dal modo di tutti i gentili. Per questa causa il Fummo-cam (that is, Féng Yǐngjǐng) in questo suo proemio chiede et essorta molto i suoi letterati che comparino queste *vinticinque parole* con i quarantadoi paragrafi de gli Idoli, e veggano bene qual di questi doi è più utile al ben vivere et ai buoni costumi della repubblica.

Indeed Ricci had been much more hostile towards Buddhism in the *Tiānzhǔ shū yì*, where, as is well known, he recalls the Chinese imperial envoys to the West and blames them for having brought back Buddhist sutras rather than the Gospels⁵¹. The comparison put forward by Féng between the *Èrshíwǔ yán*, and the *Sishier zhāng jīng*, on the one hand identifies some similarities (including stylistic ones), on the other hand, it is an implied statement of their differences. Féng employs sophisticated imagery to state that Ricci's work will supersede the *Sutra* and will provide help in difficult moments. He parallels it to an 'exotic food', delicious and rare, and evokes the image of the phoenix and the dragon:

凡人之情 厭飫常餐 則尋珍錯於山海 亦祇以異耳。先生載此道腴，梯航而來，以惠我中國，如龍鬻鳳鬚。[...] 於戲 立言難 聽言不易。中國聖人之訓夥矣，然鋪糟者見譏於輪人，揆藻者或方之優孟，則今對證而發藥，烏可以已？儻誦斯言者，穆然動深長之思，一切重內輕外，以上達於天德，則不必起游、夏於九原，而

ture, so it resembles its European counterpart in its teaching about the mastery of desire and in its emphasis on concrete practice rather than empty theorizing».

50. The passage is cited from pp. 452-3 of the aforementioned edition by Corradini et alii.

51. VIII 591, p. 251 Meynard.

尼父覺人之志以續。其視蘭臺四十二章，孰可專用，當必有能辨之者。

Fánrén zhī qíng, yàn yù cháng cān, zé xún zhēn cuò yú shānhǎi, yì zhī yǐ yì ěr.
Xiānshēng zài cǐ dào yú, tǐ háng ér lái, yǐ huì wǒ zhōngguó, rú lóng luán fēng zì.

Wū hū! Liyán nán, tǐng yán búyì. Zhōngguó shèng rén zhī xùn huǒ yǐ, rán bù zāo zhě jiàn jǐ yú lún rén, shàn zǎo zhě huò fāng zhī Yōu Mèng, zé jīn duì zhèng ér fā yào, wū kěyǐ yì? Tǎng sòng sī yán zhě, mù rán dòng shēncháng zhī sī, yìqiè zhòng nèi qīng wài, yìshàng dá yú tiān dé, zé bùbì qǐ yóu, xià yú jiǔ yuán, ér ní fù jué rén zhī zhì yì xù. Qí shì lán tái sìshí'èr zhāng, shú kě zūn yòng, dāng bì yǒu néng biàn zhī zhě.

In general when people become disgusted with eating ordinary food, they go to the sea and mountains to find especially delicious food, even if it is just for a change. Now this man who is carrying the food of this doctrine has scaled the mountains, crossed the seas, and has come to offer it to the Middle Kingdom. This food is like the special meat of the dragon and phoenix ... Alas! While it is difficult to teach others, it is also difficult to listen and accept another's teaching! Therefore the result is that there are many teachings of the Middle Kingdom. But just as those who eat coarse food are ridiculed by those who make wheels, so too those who simply gather together a bundle of quotations are probably reproved by Yu-meng. This work demonstrates the symptoms and also prescribes the correct remedy. If those who read this work will respectfully exercise their minds in long and profound reflection and if they will also appreciate the interior and depreciate the exterior as they try to reach the virtuous life of Heaven in everything they do, then our father Confucius' desire to teach all men will continue without allowing Yu and Hsia to come back from the underworld. It would indeed be all the better if you could read and judge for yourselves which of these two works is more useful and beneficial, this one of Ricci's or the *Sutra of 42 Paragraphs* by Dharmarisa. (transl. Spalatin)

Féng had already written the prefaces for the *Tiānzhǔ shí yì*, and for the *Jiāoyóu lùn*; in the following years the same role would be undertaken by another of Ricci's friends, Xú Guāngqǐ, 徐光啟 (1562-1633), who also helped him translate Euclid and other scientific texts⁵² and wrote the

52. In this regard, it is also particular worth mentioning the contribution made by Xú Guāngqǐ, one of the first Christian converts, to the discovery of the famous 'Nestorian' inscription in Xi'an more than ten years after Ricci's death. He discussed the inscription at greater length and produced a commentary, and also dictated an epigraph for a church

afterword of the *Èrshíwǔ yán*. The practice of having some Chinese official or scholars «authoring» a book written by Ricci was a necessity approved by his superior, Alessandro Valignano. This was done so that they could bypass the otherwise lengthy process of obtaining the imprimatur from censors who resided in India and did not know Chinese⁵³. In all likelihood, this practice was also necessary for the foreign missionaries, who otherwise wouldn't have been able to write impeccable works in classical Chinese style. In addition, writing prefaces, introductions or conclusions of books written by others was quite common among Chinese literates, as part of a scholarly etiquette guiding mutual learned exchanges, that obviously contributed to increase the prestige of the books. All these factors, however, make the question of identifying the actual author of the texts much complicated: recent scholarship has consequently put an emphasis on the role played by the Chinese 'collaborators' of the Jesuits in the creation of texts written in Chinese by European missionaries.

According to Ricci, this text attained much renown; this was probably because in both its contents and structure, the work attempted to accommodate Stoic, Christian and Confucian ethics in lucid prose without any obvious agenda (e.g., catechetical intent). This can be clearly inferred from a letter addressed in May 1605 to Fabio de Fabii, where Ricci states that the hostility against him was mitigated by means of a «small book», in which he did not confute the other sects, but limited himself to praise virtue «in a somewhat Stoic way, but accommodated to Christianity»; he adds that some suggested to him that in the catechism he should have

in Jiangzhou. This text closely resembles those of the Tang period, thus epitomizing Xú's efforts to establish continuity between the ancient 景教, *jǐng jiào* (the «brilliant teaching», as Tang Christianity was labelled) and modern Catholicism; such continuity allowed the authority of antiquity to be conferred upon the new religion introduced from the West: see M. Nicolini Zani, *Xu Guangqi, Disciple of the Luminous Teaching. A Study of the "Stone Inscription for the Church of the Luminous Teaching" (Jingjiaotang beiji) at Jangzhou, around 1632*, in *Rooted in Hope. China - Religion - Christianity. In der Hoffnung verwurzelt. China - Religion - Christentum. Festschrift in Honour of, Festschrift für Roman Malek, SVD, on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday, zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, eds. B. Koster - D. Kuhlmann - Z. Wesolowski, Sankt Augustin 2017, vol. I, pp. 155-73. On the modern reception of the figure of Xú Guāngqī see Wu Hsin-fang, *Commemorating Xu Guangqi in 19th- and 20th-Century Shanghai*, in «Monumenta Serica», 66 (2018), pp. 437-64.

53. Spalatin, *Matteo Ricci's cit.*, p. 12. See also Ricci's hint in a letter to Acquaviva, August 1606, p. 428.

done the same thing, that is, avoid disputation or refutation of the «idols»⁵⁴:

Mitigorno molto l'odio i nostri inimici con una opera assai piccola, che stampo, nostra di venticinque sententie, la quale, per non confutare le altre sette, ma solo con dir bene della virtude un puoco stoicamente, ma tutto accommodato alla christianità, fu grata a tutti e letta con molto applauso, dicendo che così avevamo da fare il catechismo, cioè non confutare né disputare contro di loro idoli.

As in the case of the treatise on Western mnemotechnics, which captured the interest of Chinese people who needed to prepare for the imperial exams, the success enjoyed by the *Èrshíwǔ yán*, was probably due to the fact that the work filled a gap in Chinese society, where moral issues were much debated among scholars of the Ming period. Indeed, the stability of this social framework was undermined by corruption and frivolity; according to a Chinese expression, *tiānxià wú dào*, 天下無道 (*Daodejing* 46: the Dao is disregarded in the world; the text compares the situation to horses left grazing far at the borders). For this reason, many Confucian magistrates found themselves forced either to abdicate their moral principles or to renounce their political careers after the example of their Master, who famously solved this dilemma at the age of fifty by abandoning his public ambitions in order to comply with heavenly decrees (as summarized in the formula *zhī tiānmìng*, 知天命)⁵⁵. Such had been the case not only for Féng Yíngjǐng, Ricci's coadjutor in the translation of the *Twenty-Five Paragraphs*, but also for the most important philosopher of his age, Wáng Yángmíng: notwithstanding his military ability and his efficaciousness as a civil administrator, he fell into disgrace,

54. P. 383. Likewise, in the previously mentioned letter to Costa (14 August 1599, p. 364), Ricci seems to imply the same reception of a similar work, the *Jiāoyǒu lùn*. He stated that the treatise on friendship was met with general applause, because, in contrast to material and mechanical objects, it credited him with abstract qualities, such as literacy, virtue and cleverness: «questa *Amicitia* mi ha dato più credito a me e alla nostra Europa di quanto abbiamo fatto; perché l'altre cose danno credito di cose mecaniche e artificiose di mano e di instrumenti; ma questa da insieme credito di lettere, di ingegno e di virtude; e così è letta e ricevuta da tutti con grande applauso, e già la stampano in due luoghi».

55. See *Analects* 2, 4.

and was exiled to Guizhou in 1506 for having attacked a dishonest eunuch. Additionally, Féng can be considered a prototype of the Confucian intellectuals who found themselves in the dilemma of obeying political power or following their own conscience, because he had been imprisoned for denouncing some corrupt officials⁵⁶.

«By tapping into the Chinese custom of friends volunteering to publish for each other, he dexterously skirted the censorship problem and forestalled any unwanted attention to the overseas connection of his proselytizing enterprise. However, by engaging in publication and relying on his targeted readers like Féng, Xú, and Wáng as his surrogate publishers and cheerleaders, he also willy-nilly let himself be carried by them more deeply into their way of doing things than he either intended or even realized»⁵⁷. This is for example the case of the partial edition of the *Èrshíwǔ yán*, which had been published in Nanjing in 1602, edited by Wáng Kěntáng, 王肯堂 (1552?-1638), in a miscellaneous collection that also included some sections of the treatise on friendship. To what extent the *Èrshíwǔ yán*, had been completed by Ricci is a matter of speculation, but Wang probably selected some portions from a larger text to be included in his anthology⁵⁸. In any case, a comparison between the two texts shows some slight, although meaningful, differences. Apparently Wáng did not limit himself to correcting Chinese sayings in order to make them more idiomatic; he also eliminated some overt references to Christianity, in particular references to *Tiānzhǔ*, 天主, the Lord⁵⁹. As mentioned previously, the final complete edition, from which we derive all the references, appeared three years later in Beijing.

It is not clear whether Ricci had brought with him to China the text of Epictetus. It seems more plausible that he had learned by heart some extensive portions (if not the whole work) and that he freely employed these as needed. Furthermore, the use of Epictetus has been detected in another near-contemporary work, the paradoxical *Jírén shí piān* (畸人十篇, *Ten Chapters by a Non-Conformer*, 1608), in which Ricci employed

56. Yu, *The Complexities* cit., p. 825.

57. Ivi, p. 826.

58. Ivi, p. 837 f.

59. Ivi, p. 828.

hidden quotations from classical authors such as Seneca, Horace, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus⁶⁰. The following synoptical table (derived from Spalatin) shows the correspondences between the *Ěrshúwř yán*, and the *Encheiridion*. In some cases the chapters are reproduced *ad verbum*, while others are excerpted, abridged or intertwined, according to the principles we have outlined in the introductory paragraphs; it might be worth further investigating whether there was a ratio for such a rearrangement:

Ricci	Epictetus	Ricci	Epictetus
1	1	14	43, 30
2	2	15	34
3	25	16	19, 33, 48
4	—	17	17
5	33	18	41
6	3	19	26, 14
7	12	20	37 (?)
8	22	21	49
9	6	22	33
10	11	23	47, 20 (?)
11	10	24	46
12	15	25	51
13	31		

A closer look at the text reveals that Ricci also modified some classical quotations by inserting allusions from the Gospels or other Christian works. In particular, paragraph five, which deals with the admission of one's own faults, is redolent of a passage on the life of St. Francis, which can be identified as an excerpt from Bonaventura's *Legenda Maior* 6, 6f.:

“Videor”, ait, “mihi maximus peccatorum”. Cui cum frater diceret ex adverso, quod hoc nec posset sana conscientia dicere nec sentire, sub-iunxit: “Si quantumcumque sceleratum hominem tanta fuisset Christus misericordia prosecutus, arbitror sane, quod multo quam ego Deo gratior esset”. Confirmatus fuit frater ex tam admirabilis humilitatis auditu de veritate visionis ostensae, Evangelio sacro testante cognoscens, quod ad excellentiam gloriae, de qua superbus eicitur, vere humilis exaltetur.

60. The text has been recently edited in Italian by Wang Suna and F. Mignini, *Dieci capitoli di un uomo strano*, Macerata 2010.

有傳於爾曰「某訾爾 指爾某過失。」爾曰：「我猶有別大罪惡，某人所未及知；使知之，何訾我止此歟！」認己之大罪惡，固不暇辯其指他過失者矣。芳齊，西邦聖人也，居恆謂己曰：「吾世人之至惡者也。」門人或疑而問之，曰：「夫子嘗言，僞語縱微小，而君子俱弗爲之。豈惟以謙己可僞乎！夫世有害殺人者，有偷盜者，有奸淫者，夫子固所未爲，胡乃稱己如此耶？」曰：「吾無謙也，乃實言也。彼害殺、偷盜、奸淫諸輩，苟得天主祐引之如我，苟得人誨助之如我，其德必盛於我也，則我惡豈非甚於彼哉！」聖人自居於是，余敢自誇無過失，而辯訾者乎？

Yǒu chuán yú ěr yuē: Mǒu zǐ ěr, zhǐ ěr mǒu guòshī. Ěr yuē: Wǒ yóu yǒu bié dà zuì'è, mǒu rén suǒ wèi jí zhī; shǐ zhīzhī, hé zǐ wǒ zhǐ cǐ yú! Rèn jǐ zhī dà zuì'è, gù bùxiá biàn qí zhǐ tā guòshī zhě yǐ. Fāng qí, xī bāng shèngrén yě, jū héng wèi jǐ yuē: Wú shīrén zhǐ zhī è zhě yě. Ménrén huò yí ěr wèn zhī, yuē: Fūzǐ cháng yán, wěi yú zōng wéixiǎo, ér jūnzǐ jù fú wèi zhī. Qī wéi yǐ qiān jǐ kě wěi hū! Fú shì yǒuhài shāréng zhě, yǒu tōudào zhě, yǒu jiānyín zhě, fūzǐ gù suǒ wèi wèi, hú nǎi chēng jǐ rúcǐ yé? Yuē: Wú wú qiānyě, nǎi shí yán yě. Bǐ hài shā, tōudào, jiānyín zhū bèi, gǒu dé tiānzhǔ yòu yǐn zhī rú wǒ, gǒu dé rén huì zhù zhī rú wǒ, qí dé bì shèng yú wǒ yě, zé wǒ è qǐfēi shén yú bǐ zāi! Shèngrén zìjū yúshì, yú gǎn zikuā wú guòshī, ěr biàn zǐ zhě hū?

If a man has reported to you; "A certain person speaks ill out of you and points out this fault of yours." You should respond: "I have other even greater faults which the man does not know yet. For how could he only point out this fault in me". If a man recognizes how great his faults are, he certainly will not have the leisure time to discuss them with his critics. Francis, a saint from the western world, always said of himself: "I am the worst sinner in all the world." But his disciples doubted this and said to him: "You always speak in such a false way. Even the superior man cannot be perfect in all things to the very last detail. Do you speak falsely like this just to humiliate yourself? There are murderer, thieves and lustful men in the world. Such a man you certainly are not. How then can you call yourself the worst sinner?" Francis answered: "I do not speak in this way for the sake of humility, but what I say is true. If those murderers, thieves, and lustful men had received the same grace from the Lord of Heaven as I have and if they had been trained and educated as I have been, then certainly their virtue would be greater than mine. Therefore will not my evil be greater than theirs?" If a saint puts himself in this position, then how can I dare to boast and say that I have no faults, and try to dissuade the one who criticized me? (transl. Spalatin)

Similarly, the passage concerning a man who boasted of his ability to understand the difficulties of Chrisyppus (*Encheir.* 49) is placed within a Chinese setting that takes into account the *Book of Changes* and its exegesis, in particular the invention of the eight trigrams attributed to the mythical King Fúxǐ, the sixty-four hexagrams credited to King Wén, and the sentences added by Duke Zhōu, *Èrshíwú yán*, 21)⁶¹:

有人通《易》善解輒以敖人 或自誇其能。爾聞之，默曰：「使伏羲氏明著性命之理，不以卦爻蘊蓄其旨，此人將無以自誇詡焉。」然有人欲學儒，則慕性命之理，心將明之，身將行之，且稽古中國先進孰善說性命？顧聞其人莫如文王、周公、仲尼，其說莫辨於《易》，即取《易》讀之，讀之未達，即詢能解之者而窮叩之。止於是，其所事無貴矣。既解達，而能力行，是乃貴焉。如徒誦其文而揚其微義，是圖爲儒而成優伶乎？惟用《易》代樂府耳。夫見人從我求《易》之講，當愈恥己之不能行其言也，況敖誇乎哉？

Yǒurén tōng “yì” shàn jiě, zhé yǐ áo rén, huò zìkuā qí néng. Èr wén zhī, mò yuē: Shǐ fúxǐ shì míngzhe xìngmìng zhī lǐ, bù yǐ guà yáo yùnxù qí zhǐ, cǐ rén jiāng wú yǐ zìkuā xǔ yān. Rán yǒurén yù xué rú, zé mù xìngmìng zhī lǐ, xīn jiāng míngzhī, shēn jiāng xíng zhī, qiě jǐgǔ zhōngguó xiānjìn shú shuō xìngmìng? Gù wén qí rén mòrú wénwáng, zhōugōng, zhòng ní, qí shuō mò biàn yú “yì”, jí qǔ “yì” dú zhī, dú zhī wèi dá, jí xún néng jiě zhī zhě ér qióng kòu zhī. Zhǐ yúshì, qí suǒ shì wú guì yǐ. Jì jiě dá, ér nénglì xíng, shì nǎi guì yān. Rú tú sòng qí wén ér yáng qí wēi yì, shì tú wèi rú ér chéng yōulíng hū? Wéi yòng “yì” dài yuèfǔ ěr. Fū jiàn rén cóng wǒ qiú “yì” zhǐ jiǎng, dāng yù chǐ jǐ zhǐ bùnéng xíng qí yán yě, kuàng áo kuā hū zāi?

When a man is proud because he can understand and explain the *Book of Changes*, you listen and say to yourself quietly: If Fu Hsi had not written obscurely about the principles of the philosophy of nature and had not enveloped them in trigrams or hexagrams, this man would have nothing to be proud of. Thus if one wishes to study Confucianism one must give oneself to the study of nature [destiny], and understanding them put them into practice. Above all one must consult the ancient authorities of China who have explained these principles best. Among these the most renowned are King Wen, Duke of Chou, and

61. A. Cheng, *Histoire cit.*, chapt. 11, 2.

Confucius. As for books, there is nothing better than the *Book of Changes*. One takes this book and reads it. Not understanding it, one looks for an interpreter. Then one queries him in depth. So far there is nothing to be proud of. But if you read the text and can only verbally explain the meaning, you have become an actor and not a philosopher of life. You simply substituted the Book of Changes for the text of a drama. Thus when someone asks me to explain the Book of Changes, I am embarrassed because I am not able to prove my words by my actions. Indeed how can I ever be proud of myself? (transl. Spalatin)

In paragraph 13, the classic stereotype of the fratricidal rivalry between Eteocles and Polynices (*Encheir.* 31) is adapted to the story of Zhé of Wèi and Kuǎi Kuì hinted at in Confucius' *Analects* 7, 15 and 13, 3. This story is discussed in the *Zuozhuan Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chūnqū zhuǎn chuán*, 春秋左傳, *Āi Gōng*, 哀公 2, 2 and 3, 1) and in Sīmǎ Qián, 司馬遷, *Shǐjì*, 史記 as a famous episode that had taken place in the years 496-493 BC: as a consequence of his attempt to kill his step-mother, Duke Líng's weak son, Kuǎi Kuì, had been exiled and excluded from the line of succession. The throne was instead handed to his son, Zhé of Wèi, later known as Duke Chū. This provoked Kuǎi Kuì's rage, and he attempted to regain the throne; he failed, as Zhé, with the help of the state of Qi, besieged his father's army⁶². Ricci's apparent sympathy for the dethroned father, together with other indications in Zhū Xǐ that blame Zhé for honouring his grandfather instead of his actual father, may perhaps cast some light on the current interpretation of the passages in the *Analects*, where the Master, who was probably a witness to this «family melodrama», initially rebukes his interlocutor.

父子之恩，而至於相殘，無他，謂其親不遂其所欲得也。衛輒，子也。蒯聵，父也。子而拒父，正以君國爲福、爲吉焉耳。彼農夫之怨歲也，商賈之怨時也，死喪者怨天也，亦猶是也。是俱以外利，失其內仁也。

Fùzǐ zhī ēn, ér zhìyú xiāng cán, wú tā, wèi qí qīn bùsuí qí suǒ yù dé yě. Wèi zhé, zǐ yě. Kuǎi kuì, fù yě. Zǐ ér jù fù, zhèng yǐ jūn guó wèi fú, wèi jí yān ěr.

62. The exact references are credited to Loy Hui-Chieh, *Analects 13.3 and the Doctrine of Correcting Names*, in «*Monumenta Serica*», 51 (2003), pp. 19-36. The passage 13, 3 is sometimes read in connection with 12, 5.

Bǐ nóngfū zhǐ yuàn suì yě, shāngǔ zhǐ yuàn shí yě, sǐ sàng zhě yuàn tiān yě, yì yóu shì yě. Shì jù yìwài lì, shǐ qí nèi rényě.

Thus despite the affection that a father and son have between them, they will try to kill each other when their interests contradict their relationship. This actually happened to Wei Che, the son, and Kua K'uei, the father. The son resisted the father because he believed that his happiness consisted in being master in place of his father. The situation is similar for the cultivator of the earth who is bitter over the year's crops, the merchant who is resentful of the times, and the person in mourning who has rancour against Heaven. For the sake of gaining an external thing these people lose their intrinsic worth, that is their human benevolence. (transl. Spalatin)

On a more philosophical level, it seems worth remembering that the distinction (so typical of Stoic teaching)⁶³ between things that depend on us and things which are out of our control comes very close to the Neo-Confucian idea of *qiú zài wǒ zhě*, 求在我者也 (namely, according to a sentence that is in Mencius, «the things sought for are those which are in ourselves») with the same division between moral virtues and transitory goods, such as richness, honour, and even life and death: the first paragraph employs exactly these words. It was therefore possible that Chinese readers found some common elements between Western philosophy and the teachings of their classical authors. For instance, the metaphor about proper behavior at a banquet, namely, not yearning in desire for the food, but waiting patiently until it arrives within one's reach (*Encheir.* 15) may be intended to evoke the idea of complying with the decrees of heaven, while the emphasis on practical actions (*Encheir.* 46 and 51) may be read as a parallel to the identity of knowledge and action (*zhīxíng hé yī*, 知行合一) theorized by Wáng Yángmíng. Further investigation of this work, which represents a fruitful example of mutually beneficial cultural osmosis, could take into account intertextual patterns: namely, exploring the extent to which Ricci and his coadjutors employed classical Chinese texts and literary allusions, and determining the kind of philosophical lexicon used to translate some key tenets⁶⁴.

63. On this concept see J.-L. Labarrière, *De ce qui dépend de nous*, in «Les Etudes Philosophiques», 88 (2009), pp. 7–26.

64. For some hints, see Yang Huilin, *Matteo Ricci and Michel Foucault's Readings of*

Finally, it can be said that Ricci followed the usual practice of ‘monotheizing’ the different gods mentioned by Epictetus, employing the usual words of *Tiānzhu*, 天主, or *Shàngdì*, 上帝, that were fated to play a crucial role in the Rites Controversy; such monotheizing is attested as early as the Greek apologists of the second century AD, who dealt with tragic fragments. It has been surmised that Ricci was later critical of Epictetus himself, although this would be difficult to fit into his philosophical framework of Stoicism and Confucianism⁶⁵. Surely he replaced Epictetus’ philosophy of appearance with a more acceptable philosophy of reality, and it goes without saying that Stoic fatalism was unacceptable to Christians. This is perhaps the reason why Ricci omits some famous passages, including the famous apologue of the «port of call» in chapters 7 and 8⁶⁶, as well as the final chapters citing Cleanthes’ *Hymn to Zeus*; in doing so, he probably intended to target Buddhist resignation as well.

As previously mentioned, a common ground between Confucianism and Western (that is, Greco-Roman and Christian) culture could also be found in the idea of endurance in the face of *the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune*, which had to be tolerated with «Stoic» resignation. Such steadfast endurance resembles in part the Confucian tenet about abandoning oneself to the will of heaven and thereby obtaining a sort of consolation:

That connection seems to consist first and foremost in a remarkably similar mental and psychological disposition toward the daunting challenges of an ethical and active life in society. As committed as the Stoics were to public service and personal spiritual refinement, the Confucians also resembled the Stoics in accepting the reality of their being able to get or avoid only what was in their power to get or avoid⁶⁷.

Epictetus: A Quest of “Zhi” (知Knowing) and “Xing” (行Application), in «Christianity & Literature», 68 (2018), pp. 36-54.

65. Yu, *The Complexities* cit., p. 841: «if Ricci had really been as critical of Epictetus as Shih implies he was, it is difficult to see how he could have used the affinity with Stoicism as a justification for his friendly accommodation of Catholicism to Confucianism».

66. See P. Hadot - I. Hadot, *La parabole de l’escalier dans le “Manuel” d’Épictète et son commentaire par Simplicius*, in *Les Stoiciens*, eds. G. Romeyer-Dherbey - J.-B. Gourinat, Paris 2005, pp. 427-49, with many references to the late antique notion of fate (εἰμαρμῆν).

67. Yu, *The Complexities* cit., p. 842.

By drawing upon examples from daily life within the context of a non-technical treatise, Epictetus (and consequently Ricci) taught basic ethics that could be applied in different situations, no matter what religion or creed people professed: including advice on how to survive the loss of a dear person, warnings against becoming too proud or fishing for flatteries, exhortations to abandon transient desires and instead pursue eternal blessings, admonishment against caring about trifles, and encouragement to behave temperately. All these instructions were part of the «moral virtue» praised by Ricci's audience.

In all likelihood, these ethical issues and the implied rational orientation of Confucianism persuaded Ricci that employing Stoicism could prove fruitful in his evangelical efforts. Moreover, in choosing late imperial Stoicism, with its tendency toward theism and providentialism, rather than praising an impersonal force set over the universe (as in the Hellenistic period), Ricci suggested a kind of monotheization of Confucianism. That is, he understood it as a doctrine comparable to Stoicism: an ethical theism lacking only the revelation of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Christianization that had been applied to Epictetus could also reshape Confucian ethics in an even more spiritual way by allowing them to regain their authentic religious inspiration and thus draw closer to the original teachings of Confucius himself. In doing so, Ricci shares some affinities with later Jesuit translators, who attempted to transform Confucian doctrine into universalist ethics in order to bring its message closer to Christianity and make it more acceptable for European readers⁶⁸.

It is true, however, that Ricci never revealed his debt to the Greek philosopher, except for an allusion in the aforementioned letter, where he labels his work as «Stoic (yet adapted to Christianity)», and a passage in the *Tiānzhǔ shí yì*, where he attributes to an unnamed 'Master' the comparison between human life and the role played by an actor on the stage⁶⁹. There are probably several reasons for this choice: on the one

68. See T. Meynard, *The Jesuit Reading of Confucius. The First Complete Translation of the Lunyu (1687) published in the West*, Leiden 2015.

69. VI, 363, p. 161 Meynard, to be compared with *Encheir.* 17 (and 二十五言 17). It must be added, however, that the comparison between life and stage was a favoured one in the late Renaissance and has a long story, from Plato to John of Salisbury till to Shake-

hand, every educated European reader during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would have easily recognized the context of this treatise; on the other hand, Ricci may have preferred to obscure his source because he thought it unnecessary to explicitly mention a gentile author. The «right use» of a pagan classic was also part of the dissimulation, or accommodation, strategy that led him to be a Chinese among Chinese, or in other words (as the famous proverb sounds), *rùxiāngsuǐsú*, 入乡随俗 («when entering a village, adopt local customs»).

speare, only to cite the most notable examples. According to the commentators, the metaphor could have a certain appeal in China as well, because of the contemporary development of the *kun* opera. Quite interestingly, Li, “*Translating*” Homer cit., p. 84, mentions the *Lì xué gǔ yán*, 勵學古言 (*Exhortation to the study of the ancient sayings*), published in 1632 by Alfonso Vagnone (1566-1640), where the name appears transliterated as Èbǐ-dédū, 厄比德篤.

ABSTRACT

Epictetus in the Forbidden City: Accommodation and Resilience in Matteo Ricci’s «Twenty-Five Paragraphs»

In this paper I wish to provide an examination of Matteo Ricci’s 二十五言, or Twenty-five Sentences, a short treatise on moral virtue which contains a free translation and adaptation of the *Encheiridion*, attributed to the former slave and Stoic philosopher Epictetus of Hierapolis, but actually collected by his pupil Arrian in the second century AD.

The original *Encheiridion* enjoyed a considerable fortune during the centuries, being the object of three late antique and early Byzantine Christian paraphrases or being largely translated in most of the vernacular European languages, thanks to a concise and aphoristic style and to contents that could be easily accommodated to Christian ethics. Together with Seneca, Epictetus had been largely in favour among Neo-Stoic philosophers during the sixteenth century. Ricci’s interest for Epictetus (and, more in general for Greek and Latin authors, who are often hinted at in his Chinese works) witnesses to his being a true son of his age, that is deeply rooted in humanistic (and Jesuit) culture. At the same time, it seems particularly worth investigating the «Chinese» side of this work, such as the circumstances of the publication and the assimilation between Stoicism and Confucianism. Finally, I will discuss some passages in the text, showing in particular those passages that are modified, abridged or reworked compared to the original

text. The most relevant examples are to be found in the suppression of some Greco-Roman figures, events or consuetudes that would sound unfamiliar or strange to a foreign audience, which were superseded by examples derived from Chinese culture; similarly, some notions that did not conform to Christian teachings were tacitly expurgated. This a way of dealing comes very close to the early Christian idea of *chresis* or *iustus usus* theorized by authors like Jerome or Basil of Caesarea and can allow us to cast a glance on Ricci's great cultural project.

KEYWORDS: Epictetus; Matteo Ricci; Chinese culture; Christianity; Confucianism.

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