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Quoting the Confucian *Analects* in Defense of Indian Buddhism: An Exegetical Study of Confucius' Utterances in the *Mouzi li huo lun*

Béatrice L'Haridon

- 1 I first encountered the *Mouzi* 牟子 while working on a Confucian text attributed to Lu Jia 陸賈 (d. c. 170 BCE), the *New Discourses* (*Xinyu* 新語), and more particularly on the problems raised by its authenticity. Lu Jia, as an ambassador for two emperors of the Han dynasty, Gaozu 高祖 (r. 202-195 BCE) and Wendi 文帝 (r. 179-157 BCE), led two expeditions to the remote area of Jiaozhi 交趾,¹ then an independent kingdom (Nan Yue 南越) at the extreme south of the Chinese space. The *New Discourses*, despite the importance of their author who was to be considered, at least some decades later, as a crucial counsellor at the very beginning of the dynasty, fell into oblivion in the following centuries. A troubling coincidence is that the first text which quotes the *New Discourses* is a Buddhist text, probably composed at the end of the Eastern Han dynasty, almost four centuries later, by a master living in the Jiaozhi region. I eventually found no reliable interpretation for this coincidence, but I discovered a text which, among other peculiarities, is an interesting textual hybrid between defense of the Buddhist way, Confucian persuasion and admiration for the *Laozi*.
- 2 Despite of complex questions about its authenticity,² which were first raised by the Qing dynasty philologists, the *Mouzi* has long been considered as the first Chinese text to defend and explain Buddhism in front of narrow-minded and hostile Chinese literati. *Mouzi* is the name of a mysterious master whose life is partly recounted in an introduction preceding a debate in thirty-seven arguments. He apparently never left the Jiaozhi region, which was relatively spared from the turmoil of the wars at that time disintegrating an empire whose existence had by then become only nominal. *Mouzi* received a complete training in Chinese Classics. Later, he was once forced to leave Cangwu 蒼梧, the administrative centre of the region, for Jiaozhi (that is the

region of Hanoi in present-day Vietnam), and may have discovered Buddhism there, since this commandery was a major place for trade with the South Seas.³ As his interlocutor was quick to highlight, he never went to India, but he became a devotee of Buddhism after realizing that commitment to the Han world was not possible anymore. In such a period of disorder, it would only mean losing one's own life. Yet, he got involved in controversies with his peers.

- 3 At the end of the autobiographical introduction, the text is presented as a necessary debate with hostile contemporaries, but paradoxically enough written down in order to avoid direct controversies which would be “contrary to the Way”:

世俗之徒，多非之者，以為背五經而向異道。欲爭則非道，欲默則不能。遂以筆墨之間，略引聖賢之言證解之，名曰牟子理惑云。

Those who were only following the conventional teachings of their time went in numbers to criticize him, considering that he had betrayed the doctrine of the Five Classics and had turned to a heterodox way. Should Mouzi debate with them, it would be contrary to the Way, and should he remain silent, it would be impossible for him, so Mouzi turned to brush and ink, and relying on the words of the sages explained the validity [of Buddhism].

- 4 Here, Mouzi recognizes that these debates never really happened, and were from the very beginning intended to be a written text and he therefore abandons the traditional presentation of written debates as transcriptions of oral controversies.
- 5 The last argument which comes as a conclusion adds that this literary debate is very carefully structured, in accordance with the number thirty-seven, which is symbolic in the Buddhist as well as in the Taoist tradition, thus becoming symbolic of the hybridization accomplished by Mouzi. Another kind of textual hybridization which will be the main object of this article is the pervasive use of quotations from the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語, abbreviated *LY*) in order to demonstrate the validity of Buddhism, thus transforming what may have been eristic dialogues into a rich intertextual play.
- 6 The introduction deeply roots the *Mouzi* in a specific historical moment, the fall of the Han dynasty, and in a specific geographic context, the extreme south of the Han empire, which according to the *Mouzi* was receiving refugees from the north, fleeing the disorder of the time. Notwithstanding the unsolved problem of the dating of the text, the significance of the *Mouzi* nevertheless extended well beyond its time and location to become a literary model and a source of arguments for debates between the “three doctrines,” mainly until the Tang dynasty, but also under the Yuan dynasty, when the controversies found a new life, mainly opposing Buddhists and Taoists claiming again that the Buddha was only one of the multiple transformations of Laozi (see for example the *Bianwei lu* 辯偽錄 by the monk Xiangmai 祥邁 (Accounts of Disputation of [Daoist] Falsehood, composed in 1291; T. 2116)); or a few decades later, another apologetic text, the *Zhe yi lun* 折疑論 written by a hermit and monk named Zicheng 子成 in 1351, which is modelled after the *Mouzi li huo lun* (even copying long passages of the *Mouzi* into its own text). The main reason for this deep and lasting influence was the insertion of the *Mouzi* in the *Hongming ji* 弘明集 (*Collection of texts for propagating and elucidating [Buddhist teaching]*) by Sengyou 僧佑 (445-518). Here, relying on a careful examination of the *Analects* quotations in the *Mouzi*, I would like to show that this foundational debate apparently opposing Buddhism on the one hand and

Chinese classical tradition on the other presents in fact a far more complex rhetoric. One of its most interesting aspects is the underlying reinterpretation of the *Analects*.

1. Mouzi's way of reading classical texts as exposed in the first polemical arguments

- 7 Mouzi's interpretation of the *Analects* is based on a general vision of the Chinese Classics as an open corpus. Confucius himself is considered to have expanded the classical corpus he edited, a way for Mouzi to make reconcilable the extensive corpus of the *Sūtra* and the limited and numbered corpus of the Classics,⁴ which was nevertheless considered by the Han dynasty literati as a complete one, embracing all the aspects of the cosmos. As is often the case in the *Mouzi*, the very argumentation does not rely on a simple opposition between Indian Buddhism and Chinese Classicism, but discerns and discusses tensions which are internal to the Chinese tradition in order to solve the possible tensions between the Buddhist way and Han Classicism. In one case, he is able to use the same arguments raised by the Classicists when criticized for their too complicated and extensive corpus by the followers of Laozi, who admire the brevity of the "five thousand characters" (*wuqian wen* 五千文) of the text ascribed to him. But at the same time, he goes subtly further by suggesting that the extensive Indian corpus reflects the infinity of the cosmos. The fundamental novelty lies in this conception of infinity we do not find well developed in Chinese ancient texts, except in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 and even more in the *Liezi* 列子.⁵

孔子不以五經之備，復作春秋孝經者，欲博道術恣人意耳。佛經雖多，其歸為一也。猶七典雖異，其貴道德仁義亦一也。孝所以說多者，隨人行而與之。若子張子游，俱問一孝，而仲尼答之各異，攻其短也。

Confucius did not consider the comprehensiveness of the Five Classics as an obstacle to the writing of two other Classics, *The Spring and Autumn Annals* and *The Classic of Filial Piety*. He wanted to fully explain the practices of the Way in accord with human intentions. Although the *Sūtra* of the Buddha are numerous, they revolve around one central point, just as the Seven Classics, although different, are at one in valuing the Way and its virtue, benevolence and righteousness. [Confucius] had many different ways to speak about filial piety because he was providing his teaching in accord with the man [in front of him]. It was indeed the case with the disciples Zizhang and Ziyou, who both asked the same question about filial piety, and received different answers from Confucius because he was correcting their respective shortcomings.⁶ (6th argument)

- 8 Thus, the specific form of the *Analects*, consisting in dialogues between a master and very different disciples, leads Mouzi to read this text as a collection of teachings adapted to specific situations, and not as the expression of immutable rules. In the next passage, Mouzi quotes an important sentence from the *Analects*, in which the disciple Zigong 子貢 describes his own master as having no exclusive master.⁷ Since the Master who composed the Classics had such a broad view, not restricting himself to one and only school, he would have followed the Buddha's teaching, had he only had the chance to come across it:

君子博取眾善，以輔其身。子貢云：夫子何常師之有乎？堯事尹壽，舜事務成，且學呂望，丘學老聃，亦俱不見於七經也。四師雖聖，比之於佛，猶白鹿之與麒麟，燕鳥之與鳳凰也。堯舜周孔且猶學之，況佛身相好變化神力無方！焉能捨而不學乎！

In order to elevate himself, the gentleman broadly draws inspiration from multiple good deeds. Zigong said, "Why should our master have a constant master?" (The great sages) Yao, Shun, the Duke of Zhou and Confucius

respectively studied with Yin Shou, Wu Cheng, Lü Wang and Laozi, and none of these teachers appear in the Seven Classics. Moreover, although they were Saints, to compare them with the Buddha is like comparing a white deer with a *qilin* unicorn, or a swallow with a phoenix. Despite this, Yao, Shun, the Duke of Zhou and Confucius studied with them, so much more would they have studied with the Buddha (had they known him), with his limitless spiritual and transformative power and his major and minor marks! How could they have turned against him? (7th argument)

- 9 Here, Mouzi does not directly compare the respective wisdom of Confucius and the Buddha (which would be the case in later polemic literature as we shall see below), but mentions diverse masters who became a source of inspiration for Confucian sages, without featuring in the Classics. As a consequence, a new master like the Buddha is not to be rejected because of his absence from the Classics. However, Mouzi's arguments mostly rely not on the Classics considered to have been edited by Confucius (the Five Classics) nor on the two additional Classics supposedly composed by Confucius himself (the *Chunqiu* 春秋 and the *Xiaojing* 孝經), but on the *Analects* whose position in this corpus is ambiguous.

2. References to the *Analects* in the *Mouzi*

- 10 The distribution of the *Analects* quotations in the *Mouzi* is quite significant in itself. Here is a list of the thirty-seven arguments, divided into groups presenting a certain thematic unity. Each argument is characterized by its main point, and the possible use of one or even two or three quotations from the *Analects*.

[Non-polemical arguments]

1. [Buddha's biography]

2. [Buddha's name]

3. [Why Buddha's Way is called « the way » (*dao*)]

4. Evanescence of the Buddhist Way

5. & 6. Complexity of the Buddhist scriptures. Need to simplify them

7. Absence of the Buddha in the Sages' scriptures – LY XIX.22

8. Buddha's strange appearance

9. Buddhist disrespect for body integrity – LY IX.29

10. Buddhist abandonment of family – LY XIV.11 & VII.15

11. Buddhist disrespect for ritual rules

2. Criticism of the Buddhist notion of rebirth

13. Excessive attention for death and life, and for spirits – LY XI.12

14. The Buddhist Way is a barbarian way – LY III.5 & IX.14

15. Criticism of Sudāna's distribution of his possessions

16. Criticism of the Buddhist monks' corrupt way of life

17. Criticism of the Buddhist distribution of wealth – LY VII.36

18. The Buddhist Classics rely too heavily on beautiful but meaningless comparisons – LY I.1 & II.1 & XIX.12

19. Excessive asceticism, contrary to human natural desires – LY IV.5

20. If Buddhist Classics are so profound and marvelous, why not present them to the Emperor or study them with friends?

21. [When and how did the Han Empire encounter the Buddhist Way?]

22. Why do Buddhist monks love to speak about the Way, instead of practicing it?

23. Mouzi's excessive attention for discourse – LY XV.7 & V. 21 & XV.8

24. Literati's lack of interest for the Buddhist Way

25. Mouzi's rhetoric is nevertheless impressive

26. Why always quote Chinese Classics and not Buddhist texts?

27. Literati in the capital never speak about Buddhism

28. Mouzi's eulogy of Buddha's deeds and virtues is excessive

29. Buddhism and the search for immortality

30. Daoist and Buddhist diets contradict each other

31. Superiority of the diet based on abstention from cereals

32. The Way of immortals prevent from illness, whereas Buddha's disciples must continue to use medicine.

33. Why distinguish the Way of immortals and the Buddhist way? – LY V.17 & V.23

34. There is no foundation to Mouzi's faith in Buddha since he has never been to India – LY II.10

35. Even monks from Khotan had no argument to oppose to Mouzi's interlocutor, how is it that Mouzi is so difficult to persuade?

36. The immortals' asceticism is more rigorous than the Buddhist one – **reference to Confucius' words, not found in the *Analects***⁸

37. Taoists and Buddhists contradict each other about death – LY XIV.37 & VI. 10 & XI. 7 & XI.22

Coda: The interlocutor is convinced when he discovers the careful crafting of Mouzi's arguments.

11 Thus we find twenty-two references to the *Analects* in this rather short text. The next most-quoted text is the *Laozi* with sixteen references and the *Xiaojing* with five references. They are completely absent from the four non-polemical passages but they play a crucial role in almost all the themes debated in the text. These quotations are introduced by different expressions: “*Kongzi yue*” 孔子曰 (7), “*Kongzi yun*” 孔子云 (2), “*Kongzi cheng*” 孔子稱 (2), “*Sheng Kong cheng*” 聖孔稱 (1), “*Lunyu yue*” 論語曰 (1) and Zhongni 仲尼 for quotations presented in an indirect mode. There is one wrong quotation⁹ and a quotation we do not find in other sources. They sometimes appear in the interlocutor's question, in order to strengthen his criticism of the Buddhist way, and are then the object of a re-interpretation by Mouzi, and more often they directly appear in Mouzi's answer.

3. A contextual interpretation of the *Analects*: Confucius as a Master of his time

12 So as to understand why the *Analects* are ubiquitous in a text defending Buddhism, we have to analyze the very nature of these references. Are they ironical references aiming at denigrating Confucius' figure? Or far-fetched interpretations aiming at demonstrating the superiority of Buddhism? We must therefore investigate further into the precise *modus operandi* of these references. By comparing, for example, the quotation rhetorics in the *Mouzi* and in other texts inserted in the *Hongming ji* compilation, one discovers that despite their common use of quotation from authoritative texts in order to dispel criticism,¹⁰ the *Mouzi* is quite distinctive in its way of selecting the texts it quotes: indeed, it relies mainly on the *Analects*, the *Laozi*, and the Classics, and makes no use of Chinese apocrypha,¹¹ whose intention was often to demonstrate that Buddhism had roots in the "sacred" ancient history of China. By contrast, *Mouzi* does not rely on this kind of argumentation, nor on early (supposedly Indian) Buddhist texts, but relies on an exegesis of "mainstream" texts in order to put forward the openness of classical tradition, and its compatibility with Indian Buddhism. For example, the *Zhengwu lun* 正誣論¹² (composed at the beginning of the 4th century), which immediately follows the *Mouzi* in the first chapter of the *Hongming ji*, makes use of a very different argumentation, based on apocryphas such as the *Hua hu jing* 化胡經 and the *Xisheng jing* 西昇經, which originally advocated the idea of the Buddha as a reincarnation of Laozi, but which are paradoxically used here to demonstrate that Laozi went to India, not in order to change himself into Buddha, but in order to become Buddha's disciple. Other apologetic debates adopt an iconoclastic rhetoric, strongly questioning Confucius' personality.¹³ As Jülch has it: "Because Confucius plays this crucial role among the Confucian sages, by depreciating Confucius Buddhist apologists could depreciate Confucianism itself. In order to accomplish this depreciation, they attacked Confucius for his failure to convince the dukes of the Warring States to employ more humane policies."¹⁴ But, according to Jülch, the *Mouzi* is a simple precursor of this technique to demonstrate "Confucius' inferiority," he continues: "Already in *Mouzi lihuo lun*, chapter 14, we read: 'Zhongni was not employed in Lu or Wei, and Mencius was not utilized in Qi or Liang. [Not being used even in China], how then could they have gained official employment among the barbarians?'... In the context of the Buddhist worldview, this passage rests on the understanding that the so-called barbarians are in fact superior to the Chinese civilization, so that Confucius and Mencius, if they did not even succeed in China, would have had even less success where the Buddha comes from." This refers to the passage which reads as following:

孔子所言矯世法矣 (...). 昔孔子欲居九夷日：君子居之何陋之有？及仲尼不容於魯衛，孟軻不用於齊梁，豈復仕於夷狄乎？

Those things that Confucius said [which you quoted in your criticism: "Barbarians even with rulers are inferior to the Xia people even deprived of a ruler."¹⁵] were meant to reform his age. (...) Yet formerly, Confucius wanted to live among the nine barbarian [tribes] of the east. He did say: "Once a gentleman settles among them, what uncouthness will there be?"¹⁶ But Confucius was not employed in Lu or Wei, and Mencius was not utilized in Qi or Liang, how could they have gained official employment among the Barbarians?¹⁷

13 Here, Jülch precisely missed the *Analects* quotation to which the question "how then could they have gained official employment among the barbarians?" refers. In this rhetorical disposition, the idea is not to demonstrate the superiority of non-Chinese civilization. It would be the case if *Mouzi* had the same literal way of reading the

Analects as his interlocutor. Mouzi's aim is neither to suggest that Confucius was so much of an incompetent person that even the non-Chinese countries would not employ him. By quoting this very passage of the *Analects*, he demonstrates that Confucius' words must be understood in their very specific and pragmatic context, otherwise, by referring to another passage, one may also conclude that Confucius considered the barbarian tribes as a better place to live and realize his way! Because it would have been impossible for him to be employed in alien countries, so his words are not to be taken at face value, or to be read literally without taking into account the context of utterance: Confucius was not really willing to go to a non-Chinese country but through his provocative words, he was willing to criticize the failures of the Chinese world of his time. In the same way, the quotation used by his interlocutor does not mean at all that Confucius denounced the inferiority of non-Chinese civilizations, but was uttered in a context where the Master was urging his world to become civilized again.

14 I think the misunderstanding on this particular way of quoting and reading the *Analects* leads one to miss an important point of the *Mouzi*, which precisely does not need to depreciate Confucius in order to praise the Buddhist way. Confucius did what he had to do in his own time; there is a strong commitment to the *shi* 時, the need to choose the right moment, inspired by the eremitic tradition in China –to serve or to retire according to the right moment. This commitment to the right moment, which was practiced by Confucius, is also practiced by Mouzi, as he underscores the need to choose the right moment in order to explain why he continues to refer to the Classics and does not present and explain the *Sūtra*: the right moment has not come yet.

15 Another example of this *Analects* exegesis taking into account the specific context of utterance may be found in the 17th argument. Here, Mouzi does not use a “defensive quotation” from *Analects contra Analects*, but rather proposes a distinction between two kinds of extravagance, and thinks that in Confucius' time, what he attacked was this kind of “extravagance devoid of any ritual spirit” (the display of wealth for one's own sake and not for the sake of others).

16 The interlocutor makes a distorted use of a quotation from the *Analects* in order to criticize the Buddhist extravagant distribution of wealth:

孔子稱：奢則不遜，儉則固，與其不遜也寧固。 (...) 今佛家以空財布施為名，盡貨與人為貴，豈有福哉！

Confucius had this judgement: “Extravagance leads to arrogance, frugality leads to stinginess, but stinginess is still better than arrogance.”¹⁸ (...) Yet the Buddhists gain notoriety from emptying all their possessions in giving. They exhaust their goods in giving to others in order to gain fame. How can this bring them good fortune?

17 The interpretation of the quotation given by Mouzi here again highlights the importance of the context of Confucius' utterances:

彼一時也，此一時也。仲尼之言，疾奢而無禮。 (...) 非禁布施也。

That was one time, this is another. Confucius' words raged against extravagance devoid of any ritual spirit [in his time]. (...) Never did he prohibit giving.¹⁹

18 As Mouzi also reminded his fictional interlocutor in the 9th argument, Confucius was himself attentive to providing his teaching in accordance with the right moment; therefore the contextual interpretation of his words is justified by the Master himself.

4. Confucius as a connoisseur of men

- 19 Another way to accommodate a space for Indian Buddhism in the *Analects* is the reference to Confucius as a connoisseur of men, sometimes going against the consensus. In the 9th argument, which illustrates the playful use of quotation in our text, the interlocutor intertwines quotations from the *Classic of Filial Piety* and the *Analects*, in order to assert the ultimate value of non-harming the body given by our parents. His quotation from the *Classic of Filial Piety* refers to this passage of the “Kaizong mingyi” 開宗明義 chapter :

仲尼居，曾子侍。子曰：「先王有至德要道，以順天下，民用和睦，上下無怨。汝知之乎？」曾子避席曰：「參不敏，何足以知之？」子曰：「夫孝，德之本也，教之所由生也。復坐，吾語汝。身體髮膚，受之父母，不敢毀傷，孝之始也。」

Once, when Confucius was at home, and his disciple Zengzi in attendance on him, the Master said, “The ancient kings had a supreme moral power and an all-embracing Way, through which they were in accord with all in the world. By the practice of it the people were brought to live in peace and harmony, and there was no ill-will between superiors and inferiors. Do you understand this?” Zengzi rose from his mat and said, “I am so devoid of intelligence, how could I understand this?”

The Master said, “Filial piety is the root of moral power, and the origin of civilizing influence. Sit down, and I will explain this to you. Since body, limbs, hair, and skin are received from one’s parents, do not dare to harm them. [Such an imperative] is the beginning of filial piety.”

- 20 This point is further illustrated by a quotation from the *Analects* which shows Zengzi, Confucius’ disciple who was famous for his obsession with filial piety, expressing his pride to have preserved until death his bodily integrity.
- 21 This double quotation establishes filial piety, and even more, the prohibition of any kind of harm to the body, as the foundation for the “Supreme moral power,” thus asserting the absolute incompatibility between Buddhist practices and the roots of Chinese virtue.
- 22 Quite ironically, Mouzi’s answer uses the same way of intertwining the *Classic of Filial Piety*, precisely another passage of the same chapter, and the *Analects*. Such a procedure shows a crafted literary play with quotations. Here, the *Analects* quotation is meant to give another illustration of what the *Classic of Filial Piety* meant by “supreme moral power.” Instead of looking for the origin of Supreme moral power in filial piety, embodied by the never-changing Zengzi, he looks for a human example of supreme virtue itself, and finds it in the *Analects*. Indeed, in the *Analects*, Zengzi does not illustrate any particular virtue to Confucius’ eyes, except that of being dull (*lu* 魯).²⁰ The one endowed with “supreme virtue” is Wu Taibo 吳太伯, an ancient king who happened to reign on barbarians and as such is a highly significant figure for Mouzi:

太伯，其可謂至德也已矣，三以天下讓，民無得而稱焉。

[The Master said:] Of Taibo, one may truly say that his moral power was supreme. Three times, he renounced dominion over the entire world, without giving the people a chance to praise him.²¹

- 23 Taibo is well-known for having turned over the royal power he should have had in the Chinese dynasty of Zhou, and for having left his ancestral territory to become a king in the so-called barbarian land of Wu, going so far as wearing his hair loose and tattoos on

his skin. Confucius' strong praise of Taibo allows Mouzi to construct his own argumentation:

孔子曰：可與適道，未可與權。所謂時宜施者也。且孝經曰：先王有至德要道，而泰伯祝髮文身，自從吳越之俗。違於身體髮膚之義，然孔子稱之，其可謂至德矣。仲尼不以其祝髮毀之也。由是而觀，苟有大德，不拘於小。

Confucius said: "There are people with whom you may share the Way, but not share a commitment." That is what we call acting in a timely fashion. Furthermore, the *Classic of Filial Piety* states: "The ancient kings had a supreme moral power and an all-embracing Way", and Taibo, who cut his hair and marked his body, followed the customs of Wu and Yue (non-Chinese people), who went contrary to the principle of [not harming] body, limbs, hair, or skin was nevertheless praised by Confucius, saying that "He can be said to have a supreme moral power". Confucius did not revile him for having cut his hair! From this it can be seen that if one has a great moral power, one does not cling to petty [rules].

24 Through Wu Taibo's figure, Mouzi reject his interlocutor's contention that there is one and only way to illustrate filial piety.

25 Indeed, Confucius as a connoisseur of men appears many times in Mouzi's argumentation:

夷齊餓首陽，聖孔稱其賢曰：求仁得仁者也。不聞譏其無後無貨也。

Boyi and Shuqi starved on Mount Shouyang. When Confucius eulogized their worthiness, he said, "They sought benevolence and attained it." Never did he blame them for not having posterity or possessions!²² (10th argument)

26 Confucius' eulogies included men who sometimes were condemned by their contemporaries, or were about to fall into oblivion because of their marginality. This is the case of the two brothers Boyi and Shuqi, who condemned themselves to starve in the mountains, in order to protest against the founders of the Zhou dynasty. Although Confucius expressed his admiration for the Zhou dynasty (at least at its beginning), he nevertheless praises the radical opposition of the brothers. It is indeed the occasion for Mouzi to demonstrate the absence in the *Analects* of any basis to condemn the Buddhist way of life, although some aspects may appear as extreme or opposite to the prevailing consensus.

蘧瑗國有道則直，國無道則卷而懷之。寧武子國有道則智，國無道則愚。孔子曰：可與言而不與言失人，不可與言而與言失言。故智愚自有時，談論各有意。

When the state possessed the way, Qu Yuan (Qu Boyu) served it with uprightness; when the state lacked the Way, he was able to roll up his talents and hide them away.²³ When the Way was being practiced in his state, Ning Wuzi was wise, but when the Way was not being practiced, he [pretended to be] stupid.²⁴ Confucius said, "If someone is open to what you have to say, but you do not speak to them, this is letting the person go to waste; if, however, someone is not open to what you have to say, but you speak to them anyway, this is letting your words go to waste." Therefore, there is a specific moment to be stupid or to be wise, there is a specific intention behind debate, either oral or written.²⁵ (23rd argument)

27 Here again, Mouzi quotes Confucius' judgements on paradoxical figures, who were able to have seemingly opposite practices, adapted to the times they encountered.

- 28 To conclude, although the Chinese Classics were often read by Han literati as a reservoir of immutable values and as an exhaustive source of knowledge, the disposition of Mouzi's text allows him to assert a place for transformation and universality inside the Chinese Classics. To this end, he interprets Confucius' words in the *Analects* not as one-size-fits-all prescriptions, but as performative expressions of a connoisseur aware of the singularities of situations and men. But although the *Analects* may give a flavour of universality, what gives a real flesh to universality is Buddhism:

問曰：見博其有術乎？

牟子曰：由佛經也。（...）五經則五味，佛道則五穀矣。

A critic asked: Do you have a peculiar art for attaining such a broad vision?

Mouzi answered: I take the path of the Buddhist Classics. (...) The Five (Chinese) Classics are like the five flavours, the Buddhist way is like the five grains. (25th argument)

- 29 Later, Sengyou, the author of the compilation of texts defending Buddhism, could go so far as to assert that the Chinese literati opposing and denigrating Buddhism were in fact opposing the very spirit of their "own" Classics:

俗教封滯，執一國以限心。心限一國，則耳目之外皆疑（...）俗士執禮，而背叛五經，非直誣佛，亦侮聖也。

The proponents of the vulgar doctrine are blocked, and create boundaries for their own spirits by clinging to only one country. Their spirits being limited to only one country, they mistrust anything they did not hear or see before. (...) The vulgar literati cling to the ritual rules, and thus turn away from the Five Classics. They not only denigrate the Buddha, but also betray the Sage (Confucius). (Postface to the *Hongming ji* 弘明論後序)

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NOTES

1. This toponym has aroused many interesting debates. For a quick survey of these debates and of the history of this region under the Han dynasty, see my introduction to the French translation of the *Mouzi*, p. xxx-xxxvii.
2. Liang Qichao 梁啟超, Lü Cheng 呂澂 and Erik Zürcher all consider the text as a late forgery which would have been composed under the Eastern Jin dynasty 東晉 (317-420) or even the Liu-Song dynasty 劉宋 (420-479). Hu Shi 胡適, Zhou Shujia 周叔迦 and Tang Yongtong 湯用彤 refuted the arguments against authenticity, or demonstrated that they were not sufficient to prove the forgery. Most of the arguments of this debate can be found in the *Mouzi congcan xinbian* 牟子叢殘新編 compiled by Zhou Shujia and Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良.
3. See Rafe de Crespigny, *A Biographical Dictionary of Later Han to the Three Kingdoms (23-220 AD)*, p. 739: "Shi Xie dominated the far south. His capital at Longbian 龍編 (Jiaozhi), near present-day Hanoi, was an important trading centre, the prosperity, scholarship and splendour of his court were celebrated, and his territory became a refuge for emigrants from the troubles of the north. There was prosperous tribute/trade in goods from the South Seas, and also contact into Yi province, which apparently sent horses overland from western China."
4. Although the number of the Classics was never completely fixed, it is quite meaningful that in a short text like the *Mouzi*, the very number of the Classics is frequently shifting. No less than four different terms (and three different numbers) relate to the Classics: "five Classics" *wujing* 五經 (introduction, arg. 4, 6, 7, 15, 25), "six Arts" *liu yi* 六藝 (arg. 16 and 37), "seven Classics" *qi jing* 七經 (arg. 5, 7, 16) and "seven scriptures" *qi dian* 七典.
5. Timothy H. Barrett, "Reading the *Liezi*: The first thousand years."

6. Keenan's translation, p. 77, slightly modified.
7. LY XIX.22: 夫子焉不學？而亦何常師之有？ "There is no one from whom our Master could not have learned something; and there is no one who could have been our Master's exclusive teacher." See Simon Leys (transl.), p. 59.
8. 孔子曰：天地之性，人為貴。
9. In the 23rd argument, Confucius' judgement on Qu Yuan (Qu Boyu) is attributed to Qu Boyu himself. According to certain editions, the same kind of wrong attribution is repeated with Ning Wuzi.
10. On this apologetic literature, see esp. Thomas Jülch, "In defense of the samgha: the early Tang Monk Falin," in Thomas Jülch (ed.), *The Middle Kingdom and the Dharma Wheel*; and Livia Kohn, *Laughing at the Tao*. Another difference between the *Mouzi* and the apologetic literature described by Jülch is the presence or not of secular power in the text. *Mouzi* does not address the sovereign of his time, and does instead justify a radical withdrawal from public affairs.
11. If the dating of the *Mouzi* given in its own introduction is correct, the absence of Chinese Buddhist apocrypha is simply due to the fact that they were not yet written, and not the result of a selection.
12. On this text, see Arthur Link, "Cheng-wu lun: The Rectification of Unjustified Criticism."
13. This is also the case of Falin's 法林 *Poxie lun* 破邪論, composed at the beginning of the Tang dynasty (618-907): it deprecates Confucius through reference to chapter 18 of the *Analects* (where some ironical hermits appear) and to the *Zhuangzi* 莊子. Nevertheless one of the main arguments still relies on Buddhist apocryphas which present Confucius, Yan Hui and Laozi as reincarnations of Bodhisattvas.
14. Thomas Jülch (ed.), *The Middle Kingdom and the Dharma Wheel*, "The Inferiority of Confucius," p. 56.
15. To further complicate the interpretation, this passage from the *Analects* (LY III.5) can be read in two opposite ways. For example, Simon Leys translates: "Barbarians who have rulers are inferior to the various nations of China who are without." (*The Analects*, p. 7; see also his French translation: Pierre Ryckmans, *Les Entretiens de Confucius*, p. 190) and Anne Cheng translates: "Même les Barbares de l'Est et du Nord, qui ont encore des chefs, sont préférables aux États chinois, qui ne reconnaissent plus de souverain!" (*Entretiens de Confucius*, p. 39). Whereas the interlocutor clearly interprets the passage in the first way, it is possible that *Mouzi* refers to the second interpretation, according to which Confucius, exasperated by the disintegration of the Zhou dynasty, recognizes that the Barbarians are superior to the Chinese states.
16. LY IX. 14.
17. Keenan (transl.), p. 103, except for the last sentence. If we compare with the *Poxie lun* 破邪論 by Falin 法林, the tone is completely different: 案孔子周靈王時生。敬王時卒。計其在世七十餘年。既是聖人。必能匡弼時主。何以十四年中行七十國。至宋伐樹。相衛削跡。陳蔡絕糧。避桓魋之殺。慚喪狗之呼。雖應聘諸侯莫之能用。當春秋之世。文武道墜。君暗臣姦。禮崩樂壞。爾時無佛。何為逆亂滋甚。篡弑由生。孔子乃婉婉順時。逡巡避患。難保妻子。終壽百年亦無取矣。或發瓠瓜之言。或興逝川之歎。 "If we refer to the fact that Confucius was born under the reign of King Ling of Zhou and that he died under the reign of King Jing, we may calculate that he lived seventy years or so. If he had been a great Sage, he would necessarily have been able to rectify the rulers of his time. So why did he have to travel through seventy countries during fourteen years, to see his tree (under which he was teaching) cut down in the state of Song, to erase his traces in the state of Wèi, to starve between the states of Chen and Cai, to flee from the murderous Huan Tui and to lament about his being a homeless dog? Despite his responding to the invitation of the feudal lords, none of them could employ him in the end. During the Spring and Autumn period, the Way of Kings Wen and Wu was abandoned, lords benighted, ministers traitorous, rituals and music destroyed, and in such times there was no Buddha. How was one to face the aggravation of disorders and rebellions and the appearance of

usurpation and regicide? Confucius was complacent with his times and only tried to protect his wife and children and to avoid danger. And he remained useless until his old age, complaining to be a bitter gourd or sighing about the flowing river.” (T. 2109, p. 485, c18-20). Falin also wrote another apologetic treatise, the *Bianzheng lun* 辯正論 (T. 2110): see Timothy H. Barrett, “*Bianzheng lun* – Essays of Disputation and Correction,” in Fabrizio Pregadio (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, vol. 1, p. 232-233.

18. LY VII.36

19. Keenan transl., p. 113, slightly modified.

20. LY XI.18.

21. LY VIII.1. See Simon Leys (transl.), p. 21.

22. Keenan (transl.), p. 87, slightly modified.

23. LY XV.7 (Simon Leys transl., p. 177). Some editions of the text add a *yue* 日, which would mean that these were Qu Yuan’s own words, but in the *Analects*, it is Confucius’ words about Qu Yuan. The same ambiguity happens with the following quotations. Only the last quotation of this sequence of three is introduced by “Kongzi yue” 孔子曰.

24. LY V.21 (Simon Leys transl., p. 48).

25. Here I had to disagree with my own earlier translation: *Meou-tseu. Dialogues...*, p. 46. I originally thought that the opposition was between speech and practice, but this idea does not corroborate the parallelism between 智 and 愚 on the one hand and 談 and 論 on the other.

INDEX

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