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The *Epistula praefatoria* of the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*: A Rhetorical Analysis in Search of Cicero and Seneca

1 Purposes and Aims of This Paper

The symbolic meaning that Western modern thought still attributes to Cicero and Seneca is unquestionable. Likewise, while not the only ones, these two authors are points of reference for reflecting theoretically upon Roman antiquity regarding politics and ethics. Hammer (2008) 3–4, for one, says that many scholars believe that “the Romans have ceased to be central to political thought” and adds that “what has become most noteworthy about the Romans is their striking unoriginality”.¹ Nevertheless, it is a fact that several political concepts – for instance the idea of *res publica*, the image of the ruler, the role of law, the idea of *concordia ordinum*, the virtue of *clementia* – would not exist as such were it not for the Roman tradition. One could easily provide a list of references that underline the importance of the Classical tradition to the subsequent political debate, for example, back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.² In tune

Note: I wish to thank warmly Simone Mollea for the help in linguistic revision.

1 Nonetheless, the same scholar lists as pivotal authors for modern political thought Cicero, Livy, Seneca and Tacitus, and compares them with Arendt, Machiavelli, Foucault and Montaigne.

2 It is necessary to recall that the reception of Cicero in the 18th century needs further study and that the following study is inevitably based on the excellent yet dated work by Zielinski (1912) (who did not pay great attention – dedicating only six pages – to the Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation, but thought “that each century reveals itself not least of all in its relation to Cicero” [daß sich die Eigenart der Jahrhunderte nicht zum wenigsten an ihrem Verhältnis zu C. lernen läßt]). I am also indebted to the more recent Altman (2015) 1, who writes: “Underlying this *Companion to the Reception of Cicero* is an awareness of the fundamental and irremediable impossibility of the task undertaken here: to paraphrase John 21:25 [Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written], not all of the books in the world could contain the full story of Cicero’s influence.” It is well-known that Cicero influenced the development of social philosophy: consider Jean Bodin (1529/30–1596), Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), James Harrington (1611–1677), the author of *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, John Toland (1670–1722), with his *Cicero illustratus* of 1712, where Cicero is defined as an “incomparable Orator, the

with the aims of this conference, my main goal is to identify some rhetorical pillars of the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* and, where possible, some passages that suggest the author's possible reading of Classical sources, including Plato and Aristotle and, in particular, two of the main Roman thinkers mentioned above, Cicero and Seneca.

In 1687, the *Confucius*, because it was written in Latin, made available to the *litterati* of Europe a large part of Chinese philosophy while becoming at the same time a masterpiece of Jesuit thought. The work embodies an interaction between Eastern and Western cultures and provides a perfect case-study for understanding how Western culture – Classical, Medieval and Christian – used the education received by the Jesuit fathers to encounter a new tradition. I will return to this book later, because my aim is to use it as a bridge for cross-interpreting not only Eastern and Western cultures, but also Antiquity and Modernity, an endeavor which the title of this conference implies.

In this paper, I will deal in particular with the content of the *Epistula praefatoria*, written by Philippe Couplet – its description can be found below, in section 3. In short, I aim to show that Couplet was deeply indebted not only to the tradition of Medieval Latin, in particular to the theological texts, and to the teaching of the humanists and their recovering of classical texts – many scholars, like N. Golvers, have already demonstrated this – but also to Classical authors.³ I will therefore identify some examples that can be best explained through direct reference to the Classical tradition, mainly, but by no means exclusively, to Cicero. Indeed, reading the ancient Latin texts of Republican and Imperial Rome not only provided the basic elements of Medieval Latin culture and language under the guidance of the *Ratio Studiorum*, but it also impressed a sort of *forma mentis* onto the many Jesuit fathers who translated Chinese texts into Latin. My study here adds some new hypotheses to some passages of possible Ciceronian influence in the *Proemialis declaratio* (henceforward *PD*) that I proposed in a recent paper.⁴

best of Citizens, the wisest of Magistrates, and an excellent Philosopher (tr. East)” and Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679).

³ See Golvers (2012–2015) 3, 21, who highlights that they read “authors from religious congregations – related to the ‘missionary’ aspect of the Jesuit enterprise in China – and those with an academic background, connected to the particular method used for the mission”. It is obvious that the influence of this literature was at least equal to that of Classical authors of school syllabi.

⁴ Balbo (2020).

2 Beyond Antiquity: Cicero and Seneca as Witnesses of Ancient Political Ideas in Jesuit Thought

Before delving into a deeper analysis, we need to investigate the traces of the reception of Cicero and Seneca among the Jesuit fathers generally. Needless to say, it is impossible to deal here with the entirety of the enormous Jesuit literary production.⁵ Let me just take as example Antonio Possevino's (1533–1611) *Bibliotheca*, which, at the end of the 16th century, represents the 'selected library' of Catholics, i.e. the readings allowed in Catholic seminaries and libraries after the Council of Trent.⁶ This work stands at the base of the *Ratio Studiorum*,⁷ in which Cicero takes pride of place.⁸

5 See for instance the *Jesuit Bibliography Online*: <https://jesuitonlinebibliography.bc.edu/terms/subjects>.

6 On the *Bibliotheca Selecta* see Balsamo (1998) and Colombo (2015).

7 The *Ratio studiorum* is one of the most important didactic legacies of Jesuit thought and has been thoroughly studied. I take the examples from the 1599 edition, recalling that the course included a cycle of general culture of eight years, five with a humanistic, three with a philosophical orientation. In the first part, which included the study of grammar, literature and rhetoric, the study of Latin was central; in addition, Jesuits studied history, geography and elements of ancient Greek. The second part dealt with the study of philosophy, enriched by scientific knowledge, concerning mathematics, astronomy, physics and chemistry. This eight-year course was followed by another four-year course of theological specialization (the study of religion), aimed at future priests and those who chose to enter the Jesuit order.

8 Among the "Common rules for the lower classes" the rule 30 says: "The theme for composition should not be dictated *ex tempore*, but should be thought out and generally written out beforehand. It should be modeled on Cicero as much as possible and take the form of narration, persuasion, congratulation, admonition, or the like."

Rules of the teacher of rhetoric: "Cicero is to be the one model of style, though the best historians and poets are to be sampled. All of Cicero's works are appropriate models of style, but only his orations are to be material for prelection, so that the principles of his art may be observed as exemplified in his speeches."

Rules for the teacher of humanities: "1. The scope of this class is to lay the foundations for the course in eloquence after the pupils have finished their studies of grammar. Three things are required: knowledge of the language, a certain amount of erudition, and acquaintance with the basic principles of rhetoric. Knowledge of the language involves correctness of expression and ample vocabulary, and these are to be developed by daily readings in the works of Cicero, especially those that contain reflections on the standards of right living. For history, Caesar, Sallust, Livy, Curtius, and others like them are to be taken. Virgil, with the exceptions of some eclogues and the fourth book of the *Aeneid*, is the matter for poetry, along with Horace's selected odes. To

The final part of the *Bibliotheca Selecta* includes a section on Cicero, where he is compared with other authors (Christian and not Christian),⁹ as well as a judgment on Seneca and on other classical authors. Possevino's statements confirm the importance of Cicero, who is described as the greatest orator of Rome at *Bibliotheca Selecta* vol. 2, ch. 18¹⁰ and who also receives greater attention than all other ancient authors.

If Possevino and the *Ratio Studiorum* confirm the Jesuits' interest in Cicero, we could ask ourselves exactly what works of his they read. It would be easy to

these may be added elegies, epigrams, and other poems of recognized poets, provided they are purged of all immoral expressions.”

9 The *index* of the second part of the *Bibliotheca Selecta* includes the *Christianae methodi* to acquire many competences in Law, Medicine, Poetry and ends with a specific chapter entitled *Ad Ciceronem collatum cum Ethnicis, et sacris Auctoribus: cuius occasione agitur de Ratione conscribendi Epistolas, et de Arte dicendi etiam Ecclesiastica*.

10 This chapter was published separately from the other 17 in Padua and in Köln in the same 1593 volume with the title *Cicero collatus cum Ethnicis et sacris scriptoribus*. On p. 18 of the section Possevino writes: *Scio laudem oratoriam Ciceroni ab omnibus sic delatam, vt disertissimus Romuli nepotum fuerit vocatus, quot sunt, quot fuerunt. Post aliis erunt in annis: Scio item a Quintiliano dictum, cuique Græcorum fortiter posse opponi; quod cum sese totum ad Graecorum imitationem contulisset, effinxerit vim Demosthenis, copiam Platonis, iucunditatem Isocratis; in eoq. Lysiae subtilitatem, acumen Hyperidis, Aeschynis sonum, Lælij lenitatem, grauitatem Aphricani, plerique agnouerint. Illustrissimam quoque orationem habuisse pro Quintio, quae fuit prima in eius iuuentute pronunciata, Gellius scripsit. Notum et illud, quod Plinius, libro Epistolarum primo, cum inquit. Ac mihi ex Græcis orationes Lysiae ostentat, ex nostris Gracchorum, Catonisque, quorum sane plurimæ sunt circumcisae et breues. Ego Lysiae, Demosthenem, Aeschynem, Hyperidem; multosq. præterea Gracchis, et Catoni Pollionem, Cæsarem, Coelium, in primis, M. Tullium oppono, cuius oratio optima fertur esse, quae maxima* ('I know that everybody has heaped praise on Cicero's oratorical skills, so much so that he was called "the most skilled in speech of the descendants of Romulus, as many as there are and as many as there were, or as many as there will be in later years". I am also aware that Quintilian said that Cicero might be fearlessly compared with any one Greek orator: indeed, since he did his best to imitate them, he gained Demosthenes' rigour of expression, Plato's copiousness, Isocrates' charm. And many people will have also recognized in him Lysias' precision of argument, Hyperides' incisiveness, Aeschines' lofty style, Laelius' melodiousness, Scipio Africanus' gravity. Gellius wrote that Cicero also delivered a very distinguished oration in defence of Quinctius, and this was the first speech he gave. Furthermore, it is famous what Pliny the Younger said in the first book of his epistles: "He [*scil.* a friend of Pliny's] produces Lysias amongst the Greeks, and Cato and the two Gracchi among our own countrymen, whose speeches certainly afford many instances of the concise style. In return, I name Demosthenes, Aeschines, Hyperides, and many others in opposition to Lysias, while I confront Cato and the Gracchi with Caesar, Pollio, Coelius, and above all Cicero, whose longest oration is generally considered the best" (transl. S. Mollea. Pliny's letter reproduces the translation by B. Radice in the *Loeb Classical Library*).

guess ‘everything’, because in Possevino’s list we come across references to epistles, speeches, philosophical and rhetorical texts, and in the *Ratio Studiorum* we find explicit quotations of some works that were suitable for grammar school.¹¹ We can now turn our attention to the Eastern world, looking, for instance, at the lists of books contained in Jesuit libraries in the Far East. The excellent work of Golvers (2012) 437–439 provides us with much information, recalling that “among the Latin authors, M. Tullius Cicero – together with Augustinus – obviously has the palm of primacy, in general but also in particular, as an authority in rhetorics, both with theoretical treatises¹² and model speeches.¹³ [...] As for epistolography, Cicero was a model as well, together with C. Plinius Secundus, *Epistolae* [...] Philosophical treatises were Ciceronian”¹⁴. The works found by Golvers seem strictly useful both to religious speculation (as the *De natura deorum*) and to ethical (*Tusculanae disputationes*) or political reflections (*De re publica* and *De legibus*). Moreover, the rhetorical works constitute a real handbook of education for the orator and offer specific examples of great oratorical work, like the *Pro Milone*, which could be effective benchmarks for the student of eloquence, who had to strengthen his skills through the best available examples.¹⁵

If Cicero is clearly a model for the Jesuits, the situation appears different where Seneca is concerned. In his *Bibliotheca Selecta* (vol. 2, *index s.v.*) Possevino thinks that Seneca “did not pay attention to the announcement of the Truth”

11 Rules for the highest grammar class: “1. The aim of this class is to achieve complete and perfect knowledge of grammar. The teacher shall therefore review syntax from the beginning, adding all the exceptions. Then he shall explain figures of speech and rules of prosody. In Greek, however, he shall cover the eight parts of speech or whatever is embraced under the name of rudiments, except dialects and the more unusual variations. The reading matter in prose in the first semester shall be taken from the more important of Cicero’s letters *Ad Familiares*, *Ad Atticum*, *Ad Quintum Fratrem*; in the second semester, his *De Amicitia*, *De Senectute*, *Paradoxa*, and the like. From the poets, in the first semester, some selected and expurgated elegies and epistles of Ovid should be taken, and in the second semester expurgated selections from Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, the eclogues of Virgil, or also some of the easier books of Virgil, like *Georgics* [...] and *Aeneid* 7. Greek recommended readings are mainly St. John Chrysostom, Aesop and Agapetus.

12 *De inventione* and *De oratore* are listed in the Chinese libraries.

13 *De domo sua*, *Pro Archia poeta*, *Philippica* 12, *Pro Milone*.

14 *De divinatione*, *De legibus*, *Tusculanae*, *De republica*, *De natura deorum* and a reference to *Timaueus*.

15 It is worth recalling a note by Golvers (2012) 439: “The part of Cicero also in this respect is clearly formulated by Foucquet when he lists his desiderata of books to take from China to Europe in 1720 (CPF Ind. Or. Cina del 1720 SRC 15f. 396v.: *Apparatus in Ciceronem, Epistulae Ciceronis ad Att(icum)*, *Opera Cicer(onis) Philos(ophica) I vol. in 80 vieux*: [in margin [*comme j’ecris en Latin, ce livres m’aident*”.

(*veritatis notitiam neglexit*) and describes him as a “philosopher in words, without any form of morality” (*verbis philosophus, moribus perditus*), thereby portraying him as an incoherent man.

These words in the *Index* refer to pp. 114–116 of the first volume of the *Bibliotheca Selecta*, where Possevino’s judgment on Seneca is brutal:

De Seneca, Tacito, Plutarcho et aliis quibusdam primo loquar. [...] cumque Senecae libri inter philosophos ad nostram religionem proxime accedere dicantur, sicuti stoicorum fere apud Graecos alii et praesertim Musonii atque Epicteti, cuius Enchiridion extat, et liber de memorabilibus eius dictis ab Arriano conscriptus, hosce dicimus circumspectissime esse legendos [...]

Et quidem Seneca inquit, Deum etiam ingratum multa tribuere: omnia nosse, etiam future; Dei omnia esse: Deum maximum ac potentissimum omnia vehere; fabricandi mundum bonitatem ipsum causam fuisse; eundem Deum, providentia, quam pronoeam Stoici vocant, opus suum disponere, ac sedentem spectare: fato nec preces nec vota nec expiationes nec libertatem arbitrii ullo modo repugnare; Deum probare homines et quos amat recognoscere et exercere: nullam sine eo mentem sanam esse: mortem denique expectandam sine taedio vitae. Quae omnia multo antea vel a Prophetis vel a Christo Domino sapientius pronuntiata fuerant: qui veritatem istarum rerum nec vitae labe neque contrariis sententis quod Seneca fecit infirmarunt. [...] Sed quid tum postea Seneca? De divina natura more Ethnicorum loquitur, quasi plures sint Dii: fatorum necessitate nimium saepe tribuit: de mundo, ex tempore ne, an ex aeternitate conditus, numve anima, an corpus sit, ambigit: humanum animum, modo ignem tenuiorem, corporeum tamen; modo Deum in humano corpore hospitantem; modo animal vocat; eiusque immortalitatem in dubium revocat: eiusdem affectus et motiones corpora esse et Animalia confingit ut itidem virtutes ac vitia; atque haec postrema omnia paria, sicuti et beneficia: praeterea virtutem neque amitti nec divinitus dari posse; honestum ac beatum nullam accessionem recipere; sapientes omnes esse pares; eos, qui sibi manus consciverunt esse laude dignos; supplicia vero inferorum non agnoscit; ut mittam quae de caerimoniis antiquae Legis aliquibus adversus Iudaeos tangit: quique cum Petrum et Paulum atque per eos Christianae semina religionis erumpentia cernere potuerit, indignum se tamen reddiderit cui splendor veritatis illuxerit.¹⁶

16 I am going to talk about Seneca, Tacitus, Plutarch and some others first. [...] Although philosophers claim that Seneca’s books are very close to our religion, as is the case with other Greek Stoics like Musonius and Epictetus, whose *Enchiridion* and *Memorabilia* (a book in which Arrian has collected Epictetus’ sayings) have come down to us, I say that these books must be read very cautiously. [...] So, according to Seneca, God also gives a lot to ingrates: he knows everything, including the future; everything belongs to God; God, the mightiest, carries everything; His benevolence caused the creation of the World; the same God, thanks to that providence called *pronoia* by the Greeks, organizes his creation and looks at it while seated: neither prayers nor vows, neither atonements nor free will in any way struggle against His decrees; God commends men, and examines and tests those whom he loves: no mind can be sane without Him: lastly, death should be awaited without boredom of life. All these principles had been enunciated more intelligently long before by prophets or Christ the Lord – and, unlike Seneca, they did not invalidate the truthfulness of these precepts with stains on their lives or inconsistent thoughts. [...] So

In short, it is possible to read Seneca only with great attention, because his *virtus* is *de facto* simulated. Possevino describes Seneca's thought in a very tendentious way, underlining his differences from the Christian fathers and showing that he was close to error and far from truth. Moreover, he includes Seneca in his list only thanks to the epistolary exchange between him and Saint Paul (which Possevino quotes in another part of the text), remarking that the philosopher did not provide any strong instruction to the people who read him. Nonetheless, Possevino demonstrates clear knowledge of Senecan texts, such as *De providentia*, the *Consolationes*, and the epistles to Lucilius, even if he clearly misunderstands some of his doctrine.

That said, it is highly probable that Seneca's work, if not explicitly recommended in Jesuit schools, was known to the most cultivated members of the Company. Yet the 'black legend' which made of Seneca a bad or useless counselor, since all his positive doctrine were already present in the Christian announcement, possibly explains his absence from the *Ratio studiorum* of 1599, which instead includes references to many historians and other Greek and Latin authors.¹⁷

why Seneca then? He talks about God's nature in pagan terms, as if there were many Gods; he leaves too much room to the constraint of fate; he is ambiguous as to the origins of the World – was it founded or does it belong to eternity? – and to its nature – is it soul or body? Now he defines it as human soul, now as thinner flame, yet corporeal; sometimes as a God housed in a human body, sometimes as a living creature whose immortality he calls into question; its changes of position and movements are regarded as concrete objects and it shapes living creatures as well as virtues and flaws, which are all equal in importance, as is also the case with benefits. Moreover, virtue can neither be lost nor acquired by divine agency; who is honourable and blissful cannot be attacked; wise men are all equal; those who commit suicide are praiseworthy; he does not recognize the tortures of the underworld, not to mention what concerns some ceremonies against the Hebrews prescribed by an ancient law. In short: he who might have been able to see Peter and Paul and, through them, the sprouting seeds of the Christian religion, nonetheless would have made himself indecorous before him on whom the brightness of truth shone' (transl. S. Mollea).

17 Traces of Seneca in Jesuit culture seem to be connected particularly to the theater and to a didactic purpose: see the *Ratio Studiorum* (*Rules of the Rector* 13): 'Tragedies and comedies, which are to be produced only rarely and in Latin, must have a spiritual and edifying theme. Whatever is introduced as an interlude must be in Latin and observe propriety. No female make-up or costume is to be permitted'. Pociña Perez (2000) studied the importance of Senecan pieces in Jesuit theater and gives as examples of 16th century Jesuit tragedies the *Lucifer furens* by P. de Acevedo and the *Mauritius* (anonymous), based upon Senecan tragedies like the *Hercules furens*; the second tragedy is a patchwork based on Senecan and non-Senecan writings.

Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that the *De clementia* received the attention of Jean Cauvin (John Calvin) in 1532,¹⁸ and this fact could hardly leave the Jesuit fathers¹⁹ indifferent. Be it as it may, Seneca was not included in the *Index librorum prohibitorum*, as highlighted by Höpfl (2004) and Braun (2016). Furthermore, Juan de Mariana, in his famous *De rege et regis institutione* (1599), used Senecan texts like *Ad Marciam* and *Ad Lucilium* 90. And Pedro de Ribadeneyra too seems to reveal traces of Senecan influence, perhaps from *De clementia* and *De ira*.²⁰ Finally, the possibility of reading and using Seneca in Jesuit treatises concerning China was guaranteed by Matteo Ricci himself. As Fontana (2011) 105 remarks, “The Four Books of Confucianism aroused the same interest in Ricci as the Greek and Latin works studied at the Roman College, and he found remarkable similarities between Confucian morality and the principles of Western ethics, as well as a particular affinity between the Chinese philosophy and Stoicism.” He described them in a letter to Superior General Acquaviva as “sound moral documents” [Letter to Claudio Acquaviva, December 10, 1593; OS II, p. 117] and Confucius as “another Seneca, [[Confucius] è nel morale un altro Seneca o altro autore dei più nostri famosi tra gentili” FR, I, ch. V, p. 39]” esteeming him as he had been one of the great Classical thinkers of the West: “In his sound way of living in harmony with nature, he is not inferior to our ancient philosophers”. Ricci does not limit himself to Cicero and Seneca, but in his letters compares elements of Chinese political organization to Plato’s *Republic*, and calls some of the Mandarins ‘Epicurean’. He also deliberately uses Latin and Roman models to ‘translate’ ideas into Chinese culture, probably because he felt such models would have greater impact than images drawn from the Bible. Especially in his treatises *On Friendship* and *Western Memory Techniques*, Cicero, Seneca, Ovid, Plutarch and Quintilian bear far more of the burden than Augustine, Ambrose and Chrysostom.²¹ Nonetheless, this fact should not be overestimated, because, as D’Elia (1952 and 1956) demonstrated and the most recent studies confirm,²² Ricci’s main sources were the *Sententiae et Exempla* by the Portuguese scholar André de Resende (1498 ca.–1573), better known as a translator of Horace and an archaeologist, and not the texts of ancient writers themselves, which would have been brought with difficulty on his journey to Peking.

¹⁸ See Battles-Hugo (1969).

¹⁹ Even if Calvin had not yet left Catholicism in 1532, I do not think that in 1687 this will have made a great difference to Jesuits.

²⁰ Höpfl (2004) 152 n. 54

²¹ See Spence (1988) 15 and D’Elia (1952) for the first complete study on Ricci’s *De amicitia*.

²² See again Tommasi (2020) 76–77.

As a matter of fact, Seneca, even if not recommended, was not prohibited and was used. Further confirmation of this from Meynard (2011) 27 is particularly apt for closing this introductory section: “The Jesuit reading has to be understood along the line of the Western tradition of texts and practices, with its own normative references like the Bible, Plato, Aristotle, Seneca and Aquinas. [...] The *Sinarum Philosophus* manifests an encounter between two living interpretive traditions at one point in history. While Jesuits claimed to present the original meaning of the Confucian classics, an analysis of their translations, in fact, reveals a deep engagement with the interpretations then current in China. They had to come to terms with Neo-Confucianism. Therefore, the *Sinarum philosophus* should not be understood only as a translation and commentary of the ‘original’ classics, but also a discussion between Neo-Confucian and Western philosophy”.²³

3 Rhetoric in the *Epistula Praefatoria*

As is well known, the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* is the first broad presentation of some texts of Chinese ancient thought to a Western audience.²⁴ The book, printed in Paris in 1687 and edited by Jesuit father Philippe Couplet on behalf of a very important team of other interpreters of the Confucian philosophy,²⁵ opens with a letter (*epistola*) to king Louis XIV (henceforward *EP*); it then follows the *Proemialis declaratio*²⁶, a long (114 pages) and very rich introduction to some important treatises of the Confucian tradition. After the *PD*, we can find a life of

²³ No trace of Seneca appears in Golvers’ lists.

²⁴ This is the complete title: *Confucius Sinarum philosophus sive scientia Sinensis Latine exposita, studio et opera Prosperi Intorcetta, Christiani Herdrich, Francisici Rougemont, Philippi Couplet, Patrum Societatis, jussu Ludovici Magni eximio missionum Orientalium et litterae Reipublicae bono e bibilotheca regia in lucem prodita; adjecta est tabula chronologica Sinicae monarchiae ab huius exordio ad haec usque tempora*, Parisiis, apud D. Horthemels, 1687. The text is available at <https://archive.org/details/confuciussinarum00conf>; http://www.fondazioneintorcetta.info/pdf/Confucius_sinarum_philosophus_sive_scienc.pdf.

²⁵ Meynard (2011) 434–438 provides a very useful correspondence table between the manuscript translations, the *Sinarum Philosophus* and his edition, and we can summarize here some starting elements: a. the *EP* is a work of Couplet; b. the first part of *PD* (pp. ix–lix of the edition of 1687) was written by Prospero Intorcetta and revised by Couplet; c. the second part (pp. lx–cxiv) was by Couplet. Golvers 1998 describes very precisely the role of every contributor and of the different phases of translation from father Da Costa in 1665, and down to Intorcetta, de Rougemont, Couplet and others. See also Liščák (2015).

²⁶ *Operis origo et scopus nec non Sinensium librorum, interpretum, sectarum et et philosophiae, quam natutalem [sic] vocant, proemialis declaratio.*

Confucius, the *Scientia Sinica*, divided into *Ta Hio* (1st book, now better known as *Daxue*), *Chum Yum* (or *Zhongyong*, 2nd book) and *Lun Yu* (3rd book), and a *Tabula chronologica monarchiae Sinicae* (2952 BCE–1683 CE) with a long *praefatio*.²⁷ The *PD* consists of two parts: the first is dedicated to the books on Chinese philosophy and its interpreters, with particular attention to their schools; the second is instead devoted to the main principles of Chinese philosophy and to the difficulties and success of Matteo Ricci's and Jesuit missionary efforts in the Eastern Empire.²⁸

The *Epistola Praefatoria* to king Louis XIV aims to be a great *captatio benevolentiae* by Couplet to the political power, reassuring the sovereign that the new thought is a real political (and religious) opportunity and not a risk. It does not appear in the manuscript of Confucius translations, and thus is a specific and new creation of the editor of the book.²⁹ In analyzing the language and the ideas of the *EP*, I do not intend to say that Cicero and Seneca are the direct sources of the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, but only that they provide a large part of the vocabulary and ideological horizons of the Jesuit fathers and that their other sources (Christian and Medieval texts) draw much on these ancient

27 The bibliography on these works is vast: I refer to the entries included in Meynard (2011). Meynard's book translates the *PD* and the *Daxue* and I quote his English translation, while I use the Latin text of the editions mentioned above. Another useful book is Meynard (2015).

28 Meynard (2011) 82 divides the declaration into the following chapters. "First part: 1. The Classics and their first Authorship; 2. About the Interpreters of the Classical Books; 3. Short Introduction to the philosopher Li Laojun and his followers, called in China Daoshi; 4. A brief notice about the Sect called Fojiao and his followers; 5. School of the Literati or Philosophers; Basis and Principle established by Ancient and Modern Interpreters; 6. From What Source the Modern Interpreters have drawn a new genre of Philosophy; 7. Specimen of the Chart of the 64 Hexagrams; 8. Explanation of the Fifteenth Figure. Second part: 1. Explanation of the Principles of Things, both Material and Efficient, established by the Ancients and Moderns; 2. Disorder of many dogmas, sects, books and interpreters, making Ricci and the First Heralds of the Holy Law perplexed and troubled; 3. Ricci's deliberation on How to preach the Gospel in China; and his examination of Ancient Documents and Annals; 4. The proof from authentic Chinese Books that There Was No Exchange with Other Nations; 5. Proof of the Flood in Ancient China and of the Early Knowledge and Worship of God; 6. Conservation of the Knowledge of the True God by the Chinese for many Centuries; 7. More Proof that the Chinese knew the True God; 8. Name by Which the Ancient Chinese called the True God. Enquiry about its Etymology and Specificity; 9. The Reason Why the Innovators Cannot Subdue the True Meaning of Shangdi with Their Corrupt Interpretation; 10. Proof from the Examples of St. Paul and Church Fathers that Ancient Chinese Could Name the True God; 11. Evidence drawn, not from the Modern Interpreters, but as Much as Possible from the Original Texts; 12. A Successful Book of Theology by Fr. Matteo Ricci".

29 On Couplet (1623–1693), Flemish Jesuit missionary in China and India, see Mungello (1989) 253–257 and mainly Heyndrickx (1990); also some good reflections are in Meynard (2011) 10–12.

Roman writers. Accordingly, the passages I discuss include hypothetical exegesis.³⁰

I insert here the text of the *EP*; I have preserved the *EP* usage of capital letters and forms as caetera; the division of the *EP* into three rhetorical sections is mine.³¹

Exordium

Postquam ab altero non ita pridem Orbe, Maiestatem tuam, Rex Magne, adierunt cum insigni apparatu potentissimi Siamensium Regis Legati, exciti videlicet virtutis ac sapientiae tuae fama, quae remotissimas in oras iamdudum penetraverat; adest nunc ab extremo procul Oriente Princeps e Regio Sinensium Imperatorum sanguine, Confucium appellant, uno Sinensium consensu habitus omnium, qui unquam apud eos floruerunt, Sapientissimus et Moralis Philosophiae pariter ac Politicae Magister et Oraculum.

Ab huius ore, sicuti quondam pendebant tria Discipulorum millia, ita modo ex eius effatis amplissimum gubernatur imperium, statuuntur leges, Gentis mores et civilia componuntur officia, denique in eius doctrina perdiscenda summorum Reipublicae honorum ac Magistratum obtinendorum spes una et ratio continetur. Huius memoriam, libros, nomen ipsum Sina omnes, mirifice colunt, ipsique adeo imperatores qui ad eas, ubi docebat olim, ades (qua tanquam sapientiae sacraria servantur) eiusque gymnasia venerabundi ventitare non dedignantur: nec sane immerito; quippe qui ab tanto Magistro didicerint Summum coeli, ut vocabat ipse, Imperatorem Regnorum omnium ac Imperiorum moderatorem et arbitrum adorare ac timere, subditos sibi populos aequitate magna et charitate regere, fovere artes, orbem denique Sinensem domi tot iam annos ac militiae florentem, sanctissimis institutis legibusque moderari.

Hic igitur ille Confucius tibi se sistit, Rex Magne, curis tuis et Regia liberalitate in Gallias veluti deportatus, et ad Majestatis Tuae pedes provolutus accedit, palam admiraturus sapientiam tuam, et suam illam, etsi apud populares suos incredibili fama et existimatione iactatam, Tua tamen nihilo secius, quam. Soli Stellas, decedere confessurus.

Narratio

Haerebit ille, opinor, ad primum aditum atque inspectum, et admiratione simul gaudioque defixus repertum sibi tandem Principem illum dicet, ad quem videndum nequidquam hactenus tanto studio exarserat. Cum enim egregius ille vir eximium, et qualem informabat animo, Imperatorem suis in libris adumbrasset, ac neminem sane votis suis parem ex avitis Imperii Principibus reperire potuisset, in quem unum omnes regiae illae dotes conspirarent, quique illam numeris omnibus absolutam formam ideamque perfectissimi Principis referret, tunc in eas erupit voces Tái Kí Gîn Expectandus hic Vir hic est, qui veniet aliquando, e divina quadam admirabili sapientia praeditus talem se exhibebit, in quo nihil nostra, nihil publica desiderare vota possint.

³⁰ See again Golvers (2012–2015).

³¹ Meynard (2011) transcribes in a different way the Chinese words quoted by Couplet and makes some observations about his deliberate misunderstandings in the translation, which underline the concept of attacking heresies while the Chinese actually means ‘pay attention to aberrant teachings’.

Nonne ille, si modo revivisceret, ac Te, Rex Magne, contemplaretur, illum ipsum esse Te agnosceret, quem prospexisset animo, incredibili gaudio perfusus, voti se compositum esse factum exclamaret? Nonne tuam in administrando Regno amplissimo sapientiam regibus omnibus proponeret, exempla tuis e moribus, leges ex effatis peteret? Tuam denique pietatem, clementiam, aequitatem, illam aequabilem in tanta rerum maximarum et negotiorum mole mentis ac vultus serenitatem atque praesentiam cum tanta Maiestate. coniunctam, Principibus universis pro norma et regula esse vellet?

Quoniam vero Philosophus ille sapientissimus, solo naturae ac rationis lumine cognoverat, nihil religione antiquius homini esse oportere, ad eumque scopum unum suam ipse doctrinam disciplinamque referebat, ut mortales vitam omnem e supremi Numinis legibus praeceptisque componeret, idcirco nihil ipsi prius aut potius fuit, quam ut sectae et peregrina dogmata, quae in populorum exitium, ac Monarchiarum perniciem nata esse dictitabat, penitus profligaret. Hinc eiusdem ea vox, hodieque inter Sinas celebratissima: Cum hu y tuon, Oppugna haeretica dogmata. Quantam igitur afferret homini pietatis amantissimo laetitiam, siquidem ad haec felicissima legis gratiae tempora pertingere potuisset, tua illa Rex tutandae et amplificandae Religionis, extirpandae haeseos, pietatis propaganda cura? Quibus Te Laudibus efferreret, cum haeresim, hostem illam avitae fidei ac regni florentissimi terribilissimam, proculcatam et attritam, edicta, quibus vitam ducere videbatur, abrogata; disiecta templa, nomen ipsum sepultum, tot animarum millia pristinis ab erroribus ad veritatem, ab exitio ad salutem, tam suaviter, tam fortiter, tam feliciter traducta, Galliam denique universam sub Rege Maximo et vere Christianissimo Christianissimam aspiceret?

Non ille tantum profecto miraretur ac praedicaret caetera Galliae tuae miracula, non tot arces omnibus et artis et naturae praesidiis permunitas partim a Te deiectas et captas, partim extractas et erectas; non potentissimas et numerosissimas classes quibus Asiae et Africae terrorem attulistis; non tot victorias de hostibus reportatas, quibus coronidem gloriosissimam imposuisti publicae trophaeum pacis: non visenda illa, in quibus Regium splendorem et magnificentiam tuam explicas, Palatia; non flumina ultra montes transvecta; aperta et juncta maria; non tot atrium et scientiarum gymnasia et seminaria, haec inquam, omnia tantam admirationem Sapientissimo Philosopho non iniicerent quanta haec una Religionis, duce te atque auspice, de Haeresi triumphantis Victoria quam nec tentare quisquam antea sic ausus erat, nec sperare; credere vero vix olim poterit sera posteritas admirari quidem certe ac praedicare nunquam satis poterit.

Epilogus

Ego vero huius unius rei et victoriae tam incredibili fama percipue percussus huc ab ultimis Sinarum oris adveni, magnum me longissimi Oceani feliciter emensa opera pretium fecisse ratus, quod bis oculis ea videre mihi contigerit, quae fama ubique sparserat, quam tamen ipsa re minore esse deprehendi. Quam dulce mihi iam accidit, favente Deo, renavigare tot maria, revisere optatissimam Sinam et illic ista miracula, quorum testis oculatus extiti, predicare! vel eorum certe recordatio tot laborum ac periculorum absterget sensum, memoriam delebit, viam redeunti efficiet faciliorem, et quasi complanabit. Iam mihi videor in medio Neophytorum ad me convolantium laetissimo consessu, atque ipsorum etiam Ethnicorum, renarrare, quae hic viderim, illos arrectis auribus animisque adstare suspensos, obstupescere ad rerum magnitudinem ac novitatem, simulque Tibi, Rex Magne, Religioni, et Galliae congratulari.

Quibus porro incedent Laetitias, cum accipient suum illum Confucium tanto a Te in pretio et honore habitum fuisse, ut ei ceteros inter Bibliotheca Regia libros locum esse volueris? eun-

dem latio sermone donatum, eius effigiem ac libros necnon etiam de alta principum suorum, non ligneis tantum illis, quibus Sina utitur, tabulis, sed aereis et elegantissimis excussos; eum denique, qui Sinico tantum in Imperio bactenus erat cognitus, iam per Galliam atque ex Gallia per omnem late Europam brevi spargendum, ac tanti ab omnibus, quanti par est, ubique faciendum. Quas illi tum Maiestati Tuae gratias agent, quibus Nomen tuum laudibus universi, quam fausta comprecatione prosequentur! quae vota Neophyti certatim pro tua incolumitate; pro felici rerum omnium, quascumque fueris aggressus, exitu; pro florentissimi Regni ac Religionis Catholica fecundissimo illo cursu nuncupabunt? Et audiet illorum vota fortunabitque Deus Optimus Maximus, talemque Te Gallis et Orbi Christiano diu servabit, qualem Catholica res Ecclesia tota, qualem probi omnes tam tui, quam exteri vovent ac precantur, atque imprimis, qui praeter ceteros esse amat gloriaturque Maiestati Tuae.³²

32 I quote here the translation of Meynard (2011): “O great King, not long ago the plenipotentiary envoys of the King of Siam, no doubt spurred by the reputation of your virtue and wisdom which had already penetrated those distant lands, came to Your Majesty, as never before with all their elaborate trappings, from the other side of the world. Today, a Prince from the noble blood of Chinese emperors approaches from the furthestmost Orient, this Confucius, held, by common acclaim of all the Chinese, to be the Wisest Teacher and Oracle of both Moral and Political Philosophy who has ever flourished among them. There was a time when three thousand disciples hung on his every word, just as now, from his utterance, a huge empire is ruled, laws and customs of the people established and civil positions distributed. Furthermore there is to be found in his teaching both the promise of and rule for bestowal of the highest honors and offices in the State. All the Chinese hold his memory, his books and his very name in awe, up to the Emperors themselves, who are not above paying regular visits to the houses and academies where he once taught, and which are preserved as shrines of wisdom. This is not without reason, since they learnt from this great Teacher to adore and fear ‘the Highest in Heaven’, as he himself called it, the commander of every kingdom and the governor and judge of every empire. From Confucius they learnt to rule their subject peoples justly and charitably, to promote the arts, and finally to govern China, which has prospered for so many years now in times both of peace and of war, by just decrees and laws. Thus, O Great King, this Confucius now places himself here before you, as if transported to France through your care and Royal generosity. Prostrated, he approaches your Majesty’s feet. He wonders openly at your wisdom and recognizes that his own, though enjoying such an incredible reputation and esteem among his people, yet yields to yours, like Stars to the Sun.

This Confucius will, I imagine, find his first tentative impression confirmed, and, rapt with joyful admiration, he will declare that he has found at last that Prince whom he had burned to see with an ardor that had until now been in vain. Indeed, this exceptional man had conceived in his mind such an outstanding Emperor and he had sketched his outline in his books, but yet, amid the ancestral Princes of the Empire, he could find no one who truly conformed to his wishes, no one in whom all the royal talents could be combined. Then, leaving aside those examples, he returned to the absolute form and idea of the most perfect Prince,’ and he pronounced the words: ‘*dai qiren*’ [modern transcription of Chinese words] which means ‘This is the Man to be waited for’: “He is the one who will one day come, and, gifted with such divine and wondrous wisdom, will conduct himself so as to fulfill all our wishes, both private and collective. O Great King, if Confucius could live again and contemplate you, would he not himself acknowledge that you are the one he had foreseen in his mind? Overcome by an incredible joy, would he not ex-

claim that his wish had been fulfilled? Would he not propound your wisdom in governing a mighty Kingdom to all the kings? Would he not adopt examples drawn from your behavior and from your laws? Finally, would he not want that, amid such a burden of the highest responsibilities and affairs, your piety, clemency, justice, equity, serenity of mind, attitude and your majestic presence should become the norm and rule for all the Princes of the world? Since truly this very wise Philosopher has recognized, by the light of nature and reason alone, that men should revere religion above all things, he conducted his teaching and training towards the single goal that mortals should arrange all their lives according to the laws and precepts of the supreme divine will.' Therefore, there was nothing higher in his list of priorities than thoroughly overthrowing the foreign sects and doctrines by which, he was wont to say, nations were destroyed and dynasties brought down. Even today, his words are very famous among the Chinese: 'Gong hu yiduan' [modern transcription of Chinese words] which means, 'Attack heresies'. Indeed, O King, if Confucius could have reached these happiest times under the Law of Grace', what joy your own care in protecting and promoting Religion, in weeding out the scourge of heretics, and in furthering the spread of piety, would bring to this man who loved piety most of all. With what praises would he exalt you, since he could observe in the whole of France, the most Christian King of all the Christian countries of the world, and under the greatest King, that heresy, this enemy of the ancestral faith and of a flourishing kingdom, has been disgraced, trampled underfoot, destroyed. Confucius could see that the edicts of the past, by which heresy seemed to prolong its existence, were abrogated, the temples torn down, and its very name buried. In contrast, he could see that thousands of grateful souls have been brought back, happy and steadfast, from former errors to truth, from damnation to salvation! This Confucius would not so much marvel at and proclaim all the other miracles of your France: the many citadels, fortified by all kind of protections, both artificial and natural, some of which you cast down and captured, others which you raised and built up,' the powerful and numerous fleets, by which you instilled fear in Asia and Africa, those many victories brought back from your enemies, by which you have placed the most glorious crown upon the trophy of collective peace, those remarkable palaces, in which you unfold your royal splendor and magnificence, those rivers beyond the mountains which you have navigated, and those seas you have opened and explored, so many academies of arts and sciences and seminaries, none of these, I say, could instill admiration in the wise Philosopher as much as this one victory of triumphant Religion over Heresy, under your leadership and auspices.' No one had previously dared to attempt it, or even to hope for it. Though it may scarcely be believed by posterity until some years have passed, truly, this victory will never be enough admired and proclaimed. Being especially struck by the reputation of this affair and by such an incredible victory, I myself have come here from the furthest reaches of China, and reckon that I have won a great reward for my efforts in safely crossing the boundless ocean, because I had the chance to see these things with my own eyes. Their fame has spread everywhere, but even so I discovered it did not do justice to the reality. How sweet it will be for me, God willing, to navigate once again the many seas, to see again my longed for China and to proclaim there those miracles that I have witnessed and recorded! Indeed, this thought will banish the fear of so many hardships and dangers, will destroy their memory and make my return trip easier and almost smooth. I can see myself in the midst of a happy accession of new converts flocking towards me, even of the local peoples themselves, recounting over and over what I have seen here, and they would remain astounded, with keen ears and open hearts. They would be dumbstruck by the importance and novelty of those things and at the same time congratulate you, O Great King, Religion, and France?! What

The letter has 132 lines and occupies 6 pages of the volume, and comprises a speech in epistolary form. It opens up with an address to *Ludovico Magno regi Christianissimo*, which Meynard (2011) 83 n. 1 judges less formal than an official dedication, since he knew the king personally. However, *Christianissimus rex* is the normal form of address to the king of France before the Revolution and the dative is the normal form in Latin. The rhetorical structure is very clear:

a. The long *exordium* (lines 1–33). Here the writer refers to a recent embassy of Siamese ambassadors and announces that another prince from the Far East – Confucius – is approaching the court of the Sun King. Confucius is the *sapientissimus omnium Sinensium*, the founder and creator of Chinese thought: accordingly, his teachings stand in the heart and in mind of every person in China. He reaches Louis XIV’s court and submits himself to his authority. In addition to being informative, this *exordium* reveals the effort to render the reader benevolent and attentive, an important requirement for the beginning of a speech according to Classical treatises. In particular, the *prosopopoeia* of Confucius, imaged as coming to modern France to do homage the King, as well as the apostrophe concerning the King himself, both contribute to the *delectatio* of the reader and to maintaining their attention. Moreover, Couplet inserts here a real enthymeme: since the Siamese envoys were welcomed by the King and since Confucius is more important than they, it follows that Confucius is worthy of a significant welcome by the King. The reference to Confucius makes an effective *transitio* to the *narratio*;

happiness will they yet discover when they learn that their own Confucius has been held in such honored esteem by your Majesty that you wished him to have a place in the collections of the Royal Library! What joy when they learn that you wished the book to be put into the Latin language, with Confucius’s portrait, as well as the books and deeds of their princes! Moreover, all this is not printed on those wooden blocks used by the Chinese, but on elegant copper plates! What happiness when they find out that you wished his work, until now famous only in the Chinese Empire, to be disseminated in short order throughout France, from there far and wide across Europe, and, as much as possible, everywhere. How they will thank your Majesty; they will tell your Name everywhere, with such praise and such auspicious public supplication! How the new converts will ardently pray for your safety, and for a successful result in all the endeavors you have undertaken! Will they not wish a most favorable future for the most prosperous Kingdom and for Catholicism? The Most Benevolent and Highest God will hear and bless their wishes, and He will duly serve You for a long time in France and all over the Christian world, so that Catholicism and the entire Church, all the honest people in your country and outside, and especially the ones God loves and glories in more than others, will implore and pray on behalf of Your Majesty”.

b. *narratio* (lines 34–96): Confucius announces that the French King is the perfect example he predicted in his writings; religion takes pride of place when it comes to ruling a people and the fight against the heresies is pivotal in this context. France exemplifies perfect action against the enemies of faith and the adversaries of the power of the Sun King. Here references are evidently made also to Christian and Lateantique and Medieval elements, the section almost recalling the adoration of the Three Kings to the infant Jesus or proskynesis to the emperor. It is not strange that here Couplet underlines the importance of the Confucian principles of respect for power and submission to it, both of which fit perfectly with the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV;

c. *epilogus* (lines 97–132): Couplet declares his satisfaction because the King has welcomed the book and expresses the wish that it be used to help in the conversion of the Chinese to Catholicism. A good summary of the topics presented is combined with a strong emotional appeal, which starts from reference to the personal experience of the author, underlining his involvement in the evangelization enterprise and reaffirming his desire to return to China.

This structure is perfectly consistent with the main teachings of Classical handbooks concerning the *exordium*, *narratio* and *epilogus*³³ and demonstrates the careful construction of this speech in the form of a letter. It is perhaps possible to push the analysis little further, in order to underline other points which resonate with Classical sources, Cicero and Seneca in particular.

The initial address includes expressions that might recall Classical features, such as the couplet *virtus and sapientia*,³⁴ but it is completely impossible to dem-

³³ See, for instance, Calboli Montefusco (1988).

³⁴ The association of *virtus* and *sapientia* is very frequent in Cicero (*Verr.* 2.5.50). Particularly important are *Pis.* 35 (because it connects *virtus* and *sapientia* with the *optimus* and *iustissimus vir*, a syntagm perfectly suitable to the French king) and *Inv.* 1.68: *ea enim virtute et sapientia maiores nostri fuerunt, ut in legibus scribendis nihil sibi aliud nisi salutem atque utilitatem rei publicae proponerent.* ('For our ancestors were men of such virtue and such wisdom that when they were drawing up laws they proposed to themselves no other object than the safety and advantage of the Republic,' tr. C. D. Yonge). Even more important is *Rep.* 2.25: *Quo quidem tempore novus ille populus vidit tamen id, quod fugit Lacedaemonium Lycurgum, qui regem non deligendum duxit, si modo hoc in Lycurgi potestate potuit esse, sed habendum, qualiscumque is foret, qui modo esset Herculis stirpe generatus; nostri illi etiam tum agrestes viderunt virtutem et sapientiam regalem, non progeniem quaeri oportere.* ('For even at that period the new nation perceived a fact that had escaped the Spartan Lycurgus: for it was his thought that the king should be not one freely chosen (assuming that the power of Lycurgus could have extended as far as that), but one retained in power, whatever sort of man he might chance to be, if he were but the offspring of the stock of Hercules. Yet our ancestors, rustics though they even were, saw that kingly virtue and wisdom, not royal ancestry, were the qualities to be sought') (transl. C.W. Keyes). *Virtus* and *sapientia* are directly connected with the king. The political language

onstrate the source of such terminology because of the frequent juxtaposition of these two words since late antiquity.³⁵ More interesting is another element, the *sermocinatio* of the imagined Confucius, which, in a metaphorical sense, represents the arrival of his doctrines in Europe through the medium of *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, as Meynard (2011) 84 n. 8 already observed. The insertion of this rhetorical device follows the Ciceronian tradition, which – as is common knowledge – has a very strong academic basis and can evince certain similarities with the *prosopopoeia* of the fatherland at *Cat.* 1, or, although without compelling evidence, with the heroic Milo at *Mil.* 72–75. The introduction of Confucius, nonetheless, has a function which is opposite to that of the Ciceronian *sermocinationes*: at *Cat.* 1 the fatherland blames Catilina, while here Confucius praises Louis XIV, but the tones of Couplet's words recalls Cicero's representation. In particular, on page 2, Couplet imagines that Confucius, if he could live again, would take Louis XIV as a model, as we can see in the following lines:

Nonne ille, si modo revivisceret, ac Te, Rex Magne, contemplaretur, illum, ipsum esse Te agnosceret, quem prospexisset animo et incredibili gaudio perfusus, voti se compositum esse factum exclamaret? Nonne tuam in administrando Regno amplissimo sapientiam regibus omnibus proponeret, exempla tuis e moribus, leges ex effatis peteret? Tuam denique pietatem, clementiam, aequitatem, illam aequabilem in tanta rerum maximarum et negotiorum molem mentis ac vultus serenitatem atque praesentiam cum tanta Majestate conjuncta, Principibus universis pro norma et regula esse vellet?

Meynard (2011) 84 n. 12 quotes the *captatio benevolentiae* that is suitable to the *exordium*, but here we find the merging of different important elements, in my opinion of Classical origin. In particular, we find a significant mixture of Ciceronian language and Senecan themes.

First of all, let me focus on stylistic aspects: the structure of the passage is highly Ciceronian. The epideictic elements are not far from the initial sequence of the *Pro Marcello*,³⁶ which also preserves the association of *sapientia* with *clem-*

of the Jesuit fathers seems to echo Cicero in describing Louis XIV's majesty. Nonetheless, I have to admit that the formula is almost canonical, perhaps because of the ancient origin of its parts: we find it, for instance, in the *Opera oratoria postuma* of cardinal Roberto Bellarmino (see ed. Tromp, Rome 1945, vol. 9 p. 52), who was a Jesuit and was well known to the fathers.

35 35 occurrences of the association *virtus et sapientia* appears in late antique pagan literature alone: see digilibt.uniupo.it. Moreover, as Meynard (2011) 84 n. 9 suggests, we find here traces of ancient philosophy: I am not sure that the wording is only Platonic, as the editor suggests, but surely we have here some *loci communes* of ancient thought.

36 *Tantum enim mansuetudinem, tam inusitatam inauditamque clementiam, tantum in summa potestate rerum omnium modum, tam denique incredibilem sapientiam ac paene divinam tacitus praeterire nullo modo possum. [...] 5. Soleo saepe ante oculos ponere idque libenter crebris usur-*

entia; furthermore, repeated rhetorical questions are very common in Ciceronian speeches. The presence of two *nonne*, for example, can be referred to *Verr.* 2.2.24 or *Deiot.* 32, but also appear at *Cat.* 1.1. Phrases include *incredibile gaudium*, which recalls Cicero *Fam.* 10.12.2,³⁷ *in administrando regno*, which in ancient Latin only appears in *Iust.* 29, 1, 8, but is very close to *in administranda re publica* (*Arch.* 14) or *in administranda provincia* (*Fam.* 10.3.1), which became common in later Latin literature,³⁸ and *prospexisset animo* (*Verr.* 2.3.218, *Pis.* 21, *Cael.* 20), which only appears elsewhere in Livy and is also very rare in late antiquity.

No doubt the rhetorical figures are Classical in format as well. This is the case of the rich *hyperbata* (*te ... contemplaretur, tuam ... sapientiam*) and of the isocolic sequences (*tuam ... sapientiam ... proponeret, exempla ... peteret*). Also Ciceronian is the search for rhythm, as is the case with the dichoreic/dispondaic *clausula in regula esse vellet* or *factum exclamaret*. Yet there are also expressions that cannot be connected with classical Latin here, like *pro norma et regula*, which appears in 18th century texts such as N. Orlandini (1554–1606), *Historia Societatis Jesu* 2.8.80 (Rome 1614) or D. Sennert (1572–1637), *Institutionum medicinae libri quinque* 3, 4, 3, 25 (Wittenberg 1611), and *ex effatu* or *effatis*, which seems to belong to a more juridical pattern of expression. Nevertheless, the latter two examples do not compromise the Classical appearance of the passage.

If we pay attention to contents, we observe that *clementia* is a key virtue for the king, together with *pietas*, *aequabilis serenitas* and *aequitas*. The sequence recalls not only the image of the Ciceronian *rector* and of the Senecan king of *De clementia*,³⁹ but also the lists of virtues of Augustus engraved on the *clupeus aureus* of *R. gest.* 34.20.⁴⁰ In the age of absolutism, a Sun King could not but be full of clemency, obviously interwoven with a Catholic view of the virtues.

The following passage on page 3 seems to be particularly built on a Ciceronian model:

pare sermonibus, omnis nostrorum imperatorum, omnis exterarum gentium potentissimorumque populorum, omnis regum clarissimorum res gestas cum tuis nec contentionum magnitudine nec numero proeliorum nec varietate regionum nec celeritate conficiendi nec dissimilitudine bellorum posse conferri, nec vero disiunctissimas terras citius passibus cuiusquam potuisse peragrari quam tuis non dicam cursibus, sed victoriis lustratae sunt.

37 *Incredibili gaudio perfusi sunt omnes* appears in J. Peperman, *Joannis Ciritae vita et epistolae* 4, but *perfundī* with the ablative modifier identifying joy or satisfaction (*iucunditas, laetitia*) is already Ciceronian: see *Fin.* 2.60 and 5.70.

38 *Exempli gratia* in *Paneg. Constantio Caesari* 14 or in Boeth., *diff. top.* 2.1183 D. The form in *administrando regno* is very rare in Christian texts as well.

39 *Clem.* 1.3.3 *Nullum tamen clementia ex omnibus magis quam regem aut principem decet.*

40 *Et clupeus aureus in curia Iulia positus, quem mihi senatum populumque Romanum dare virtutis clementiaeque iustitiae et pietatis caussa testatum est per eius clupeus inscriptionem.*

Non ille tantum profecto miraretur ac praedicaret caetera Galliae tuae miracula, non tot arces omnibus et artis et naturae praesidiis permunitas partim a Te deiectas et captas, partim extractas et erectas; non potentissimas et numerosissimas classes quibus Asiae et Africae terrorem attulistis; non tot victorias de hostibus reportatas, quibus coronidem gloriosissimam imposuisti publicae trophaeum pacis: non visenda illa, in quibus Regium splendorem et magnificentiam tuam explicas, Palatia; non flumina ultra montes transvecta; aperta et iuncta maria; non tot artium et scientiarum gymnasia et seminaria, haec inquam, omnia tantam admirationem Sapientissimo Philosopho non iniicerent quanta haec una Religionis, duce te atque auspice, de Haeresi triumphantis Victoria [...].

First of all, the anaphoric sequence of *non* can be usefully compared with two famous Latin passages by Cicero and Seneca:

- a. the succession of *nihil* in *Cat. 1*: *Nihilne te nocturnum praesidium Palati, nihil urbis vigiliae, nihil timor populi, nihil concursus bonorum omnium, nihil hic munitissimus habendi senatus locus, nihil horum ora voltusque moverunt?*
- b. the sequence of *non* at *Clem. 1.1.3*: *In hac tanta facultate rerum non ira me ad iniqua supplicia compulit, non iuvenilis inpetus, non temeritas hominum et contumacia, quae saepe tranquillissimis quoque pectoribus patientiam extorsit, non ipsa ostentandae per terrores potentiae dira, sed frequens magnis imperiis gloria.*⁴¹

Yet once again the Ciceronian model is reversed: the rhetorical questions originally raised against Catiline become an opportunity to exalt, in a sort of Priamel, the capacity of the king and to highlight that all his actions are inferior to his love for the true religion. The structure of this section of the *EP* seems very close in framework to the sequence of *non* in the above passage from *De clementia*, despite concepts and words being very different. It seems probable to me that these older passages have exercised a sort of indirect influence via cultural memory upon Couplet's language.

Some elements of the passage might have genuine Classical origins: *duce et auspice* echoes Horace (*Carm. 1.7.3*), but we can also find it in Humanistic authors such as, for instance, Andreas Rapicius (1533–1573, *Poematum* II, 1, 16, in a po-

⁴¹ 'Do not the nightly guards placed on the Palatine Hill—do not the watches posted throughout the city—does not the alarm of the people, and the union of all good men—does not the precaution taken of assembling the senate in this most defensible place—do not the looks and countenances of this venerable body here present, have any effect upon you?' (tr. C. Macdonald). 'In this position of enormous power I am not tempted to punish men unjustly by anger, by youthful impulse, by the recklessness and insolence of men, which often overcomes the patience even of the best regulated minds, not even that terrible vanity, so common among great sovereigns, of displaying my power by inspiring terror.' (tr. A. Stewart).

etical letter sent to Sigismondus Herberstanus); others, instead, might have post-classical models: *scientiarum gymnasia* appears in the commentary to the *Rule* of Saint Benedict,⁴² and the word *coronis* appears in some passages of the Erasmian *Adagia*. This is only another example of the richness of the Latin reading of a Jesuit father who, to address the Sun king, surely had to rely on the resources provided by consummate and shrewd knowledge stemming from model authors consecrated by very ancient tradition.

4 Some Final Remarks

My aims have been to show how Classical rhetoric is important for understanding this text and to mark out traces of Cicero and Seneca in a still little-studied context. These traces show how these two authors played a role in the building of this complex and diverse book and, consequently, on the spread of knowledge of Chinese culture across Europe. It is my contention that the presence of Classical authors here cannot be limited to Cicero or Seneca, but that similar enquiries should be made for Sallust, Livy, Tacitus and Augustine; yet this would be another and larger project. Nonetheless, the language and style of the most ‘theoretical’ parts of the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (here most of all the *EP*) seem to detect the presence of Cicero and Seneca, who are sometimes regarded by philosophers as models for Western thought and were protagonists of the mediations between China and the West, starting at least from Matteo Ricci’s *De amicitia*. In fact, if we scroll through the list of Classical references in the index of Mignini’s 2005 edition, we will find that Cicero is the most cited author and that Seneca’s *Letters to Lucilius*, together with Aristotle’s *Ethics to Nicomachus* and Augustine, occupy a place of honor in the sentences of the learned Jesuit from Macerata. Certainly, as we have seen, there was a level of mediation that occurred between these later texts and their ancient sources, based on the school works and (for Ricci) on De Resende, but this mediation too is worthy of interest: it confirms that and how these two figures continued to act as models in Jesuit formation and how their traces can be considered significant in Couplet’s work.

⁴² 66, 717B: *Ego vero etsi persuasum habeam instituta a S. Benedicto in suis monasteriis scientiarum gymnasia.*