

The Unalterable Mean: **Some Observations on the Presentation and Interpretation of** ***Zhongyong* of François Noël, SJ**

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Introduction

In common with *Daxue* 大學, *Zhongyong* 中庸 proves to be the most important Confucian classic that attracted the attention of seventeenth-century Jesuits in their translation projects.¹ The first Latin rendering was provided by Prospero Intorcetta (1626–1696) with the title *Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis* (*Chinese Political and Moral Science*), the first part being printed in Guangzhou in 1667 and the latter in Goa in 1669. This translation was later incorporated into the second volume of the influential *Relations de divers voyages curieux* (*Accounts of Various Curious Trips*) of the French diplomat Melchisédech Thévenot (1620–1692), and was further expanded in *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (*Chinese Philosopher Confucius*) chiefly edited by Philippe Couplet (1622–1693).² The latter work represents the spectacular success

¹ I principally base my English translation of *Zhongyong zhangju* 中庸章句 on the version provided by Johnston and Wang throughout this paper, with occasional slight modifications according to the context and my personal judgement. See Ian Johnston and Wang Ping, trans. & annot., *Daxue and Zhongyong* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2012).

² For a brief discussion of translations of *Zhongyong* in *Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis* and *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, see Luo Ying 羅瑩, “Yin Duoze Xiyi Zhongyong xiaoyi” 殷鐸澤西譯《中庸》小議, in *Guoji Hanxue* 國際漢學, ed. Zhang Xiping 張西平, vol. 20 (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe, 2012), pp. 149–55; idem, “‘Dao’ ke dao, fei chang dao: Zaoqi ruxue gainian Xiyi chutan” 「道」可道，非常道——早期儒學概念西譯初探, *Dongwu xueshu*, 2010, no. 2, pp. 135–39. For the relation of *Zhongyong* and Western spirituality among the Jesuits, see Mei Qianli 梅謙立 (Thierry Meynard), “Cong Xifang lingxiuxue de jiaodu

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of the missionary works of the Jesuits in the Oriental World, which in turn initiated a great fervour of Orientalism across the European continent and contributed to the birth of the abundance of ideas during the Age of Enlightenment.³ The translation of *Zhongyong* by the Belgian Jesuit François Noël (1651–1729) included in his *Sinensis Imperii Libri Classici Sex* (*The Six Classical Books of Imperial China*, henceforth *Libri Sex*) in 1711 presents a differing attempt to interpret this classic, and provides an alternate approach that could have rivalled *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, notwithstanding the fact that historical factors have robbed the work of considerable worth.

Who is “Another Commentator”?

For *Libri Sex*, it is widely known that the vast majority of notes are based on Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) and Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–1582). David E. Mungello pointed out in his groundbreaking and oft-cited article published in the early 1980s as follows:

Another reason for Noël’s more elaborate renderings is due to his use of multiple Chinese commentaries. Although Rémusat was aware of Noël using these “*gloses ou les définitions des commentateurs*,” he was not aware of the identity of each of these commentators. This is perhaps because while Noël referred to

(Note 2—Continued)

yuedu Rujia jingdian: Yesuhui fanyi de *Zhongyong*” 從西方靈修學的角度閱讀儒家經典：耶穌會翻譯的《中庸》，in *Quanshixue yu Zhong-Xi hushi* (*Bijiao jingxue dierji*) 詮釋學與中西互釋 (比較經學第2輯)，ed. You Bin 游斌 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2013), pp. 61–90.

³ For a descriptive account of the early publications of the translations of *Zhongyong*, see Luo Ying, “Shiqi, shiba shiji Ouzhou zhuyao de *Zhongyong* yiben: Jianlun zaoqi lai Hua Yesuhuishi dui ruxue dianji de Xiyi ji qi keyin chuban huodong” 17、18世紀歐洲主要的《中庸》譯本——兼論早期來華耶穌會士對儒學典籍的西譯及其刻印出版活動，in *Xixue dongjian yu Dongya jindai zhishi de xingcheng he jiaoliu* 西學東漸與東亞近代知識的形成和交流，ed. Beijing waiguoyu daxue Zhongguo haiwai Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin 北京外國語大學中國海外漢學研究中心 and Zhongguo jin xiandai xinwen chuban bowuguan 中國近現代新聞出版博物館 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2012), pp. 417–31. Andrew Plaks in the final year of the preceding century gave a very illuminating analysis of the European translations of *Zhongyong* from the sixteenth down to the nineteenth century. See Plaks, “The Mean, Nature, and Self-realization: European Translations of the *Zhongyong*,” in *De l’un au multiple: Traductions du chinois vers les langues européennes*, sous la direction de Viviane Alleton et Michael Lackner (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme, 1999), pp. 311–31.

Chu Hsi and other members of the *li-hsüeh* by name, he did not refer to the name of another commentator he was using—Chang Chü-cheng.⁴

With his discussion chiefly focused on the translation of *Daxue* in *Libri Sex*, complicated by the great difficulty in exhaustively scrutinizing the panorama of the massive volume, Mungello unavoidably missed the point that the translator in fact honestly informs us of the name of the commentator Zhang Juzheng in the translation of the note for the opening passage.⁵ But what is more important in Mungello's words is that *Libri Sex* may involve a number of unknown commentators. In my analysis, the authors of multifarious annotated or explanatory works of the *Four Books* quoted in *Philosophia Sinica* are all potential candidates for “these commentators,” but the problem remains that they are not readily identifiable in *Libri Sex*.

This paper argues that *Sishu mengyin* 四書蒙引 is definitely among the source texts of the translation of *Zhongyong*, and Noël unambiguously refers to Cai Qing 蔡清 (1453–1508) when he wrote of “another commentator” (*alius Interpres*) in the concluding remarks of the note mentioned above.⁶ It reads as follows:

Then another commentator adds: therefore the nature (*xing*), the correct Way of doing (*Dao*) or the correct discipline of life (*jiao*) is the unalterable mean, which is what this author proposes to explain to himself.⁷

This passage is no more than a literal translation of *Sishu mengyin* in which the author seeks to equate *xing*, *Dao*, *jiao* with *zhongyong*.⁸ What warrants our attention in particular in this paragraph is that the commentator gives prominence to the three notions that are conspicuously picked out from the opening passage. But this is not a novelty of the Ming scholar. The same approach can be seen as early as in *Zhongyong jilüe* 中庸輯略 and *Sishu huowen* 四書或問,⁹ though the texts of the two works are not what Noël was translating.

⁴ Mungello, “The First Complete Translation of the Confucian Four Books in the West,” in *International Symposium on Chinese-Western Cultural Interchange in Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the Arrival of Matteo Ricci, S.J. in China* (Xinzhuan: Furen daxue chubanshe, 1983), p. 529.

⁵ “Nota: sic hujus textum fusiùs explicat *Cham Kiu Chim*.” See *Libri Sex*, p. 41.

⁶ *Libri Sex*, p. 42, n. 1.

⁷ “Deinde alius Interpres addit: Itaque natura, recta agendi via, recta vitæ disciplina est illud immutabile Medium, quod hic Author sibi proponit explanandum.” See *Libri Sex*, p. 42, n. 1.

⁸ 「性、道、教三者，一中庸也。」 See *Sishu mengyin*, in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983), vol. 206, p. 82.

⁹ 「或問：『天命之謂性，率性之謂道，修道之謂教』，何也？曰：先此明性、道、教之所
以名，以見其本皆出乎天，而實不外於我也。」 See *Sishu huowen* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji

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Lühman provided a footnote to remind the reader that in the introductory remark Noël linked the important concepts of the opening passage together.¹⁰ What Lühman referred to is the note which immediately precedes the main body of the translation. Again, it is recognizably a literal rendering of the passage in *Sishu mengyin*:

Note: At that time Doctor *Zisi* [author's note: 子思] was grieving that the varied Sects with their perverse dogmas deprived all correct ways of virtue and the unalterable mean of honesty; and in order to rectify [lit. stabilize] their errors of falsely explaining the names by which he expresses *nature, correct Way of living of human beings, honest discipline of life*, that is *Xing, Dao, Jiao* in Chinese. Therefore from the explication of these three names and according to the mind and spirit of the past sages *Yao, Shun, Yu, Chengtang, Wenwang, Wuwang* and Confucius, he begins his book as follows:¹¹

When we observe Noël's manuscript of *Zhongyong*,¹² it is found that the entire passage concerning the analysis of *spiritus* (*guishen* 鬼神) for article 16 is crossed out outright.¹³ The manuscript candidly refers to *Sishu mengyin* by name (Su xu mum in),

(Note 9—Continued)

chubanshe, 2001), p. 46; 「呂曰：此章先明性、道、教三者之所以名，性與天道一也。」 See *Zhongyong jilüe*, a reproduction of the Song edition preserved in the National Library of China (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2003), p. 12. It seems that Zhu Xi was copying the words of Lü here.

¹⁰ Werner Lühmann, *Konfuzius: aufgeklärter Philosoph oder reaktionärer Moralapostel?: der Bruch in der Konfuzius-Rezeption der deutschen Philosophie des ausgehenden 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003), S. 54, n. 155.

¹¹ “Nota: cùm id temporis Doctor *Tsu Su* doleret varias Sectas suis perversis dogmatibus totam depravare rectam virtutis viam, & immutabile honestatis Medium; atque ad stabiliendos suos errores perperàm explicare illa nomina, quibus *natura, recta hominum vivendi via, honesta vitæ disciplina* exprimitur, Sinicè *Sim, Tao, Kiao*; idcirco ab horum trium nominum explicatione, juxta sensum ac mentum præteritorum Sapientum *Yao, Xun, Yu, Chim Tam, Ven Vam, Vu Vam, Confucii*, suum librum sic orditur:” See *Libri Sex*, p. 41. Cf. 「蓋當時異端之說亂真，將性、道、教等名字大槩皆錯解了，故子思於此推本其義而正言之，曰如此而謂之性，如此而謂之道，如此而謂之教。此乃堯、舜、禹、湯、文、武至孔子所謂性、道、教者然也。外此則皆異端之說矣。」 See *Sishu mengyin*, p. 80.

¹² This manuscript is now preserved at the Royal Library of Belgium at Brussels. See Ad Dudink, *Chinese Books and Documents (pre-1900) in the Royal Library of Belgium at Brussels* (Brussels: Archives et Bibliothèques de Belgique, Archief- en Bibliotheekwezen in België, 2006), pp. 43–44: “MS KBR 19.930: *Immutabile Medium ex sinico in latinum idioma tractatum a P. Francisco Noël Societatis Jesu, Missionario Sinensi, Nancham in China, 1700.*”

¹³ See manuscript, n. 56.

and the quotation is to the effect that the first terminus of all things, *Taiji* in Chinese (*primus rerum terminus* [sinice Tai Kie]), produces *yang* by movement and *yin* by rest. Through such alternating movement and rest it produces *yinyang*; it is something flowing, or airy spirit.¹⁴ In this case, it is surprising to learn that Noël once harboured the idea of putting the title *Sishu mengyin* into his translation, notwithstanding the fact that in the end he relinquished his original design. In the same way, after translating “When joy and anger, sorrow and happiness have not yet arisen, we call it *zhong*. When they have arisen, and are all in perfect balance, we call it *he*” 喜怒哀樂之未發，謂之中；發而皆中節，謂之和 in article 1, the manuscript immediately says “the former is essence while the latter is use,” and this remark has been deleted.¹⁵ It is Zhu Xi who endeavoured to employ the conceptual tools of *ti* 體 and *yong* 用 in annotating *Zhongyong* in *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注, but it is Cai Qing who applied the dualistic notions to the explanation of *zhong* and *he* respectively in this context.¹⁶

Considering that Noël overtly used the names of Zhu Xi and Zhang Juzheng, it is truly inexplicable that he was reluctant to make known the title of *Sishu mengyin* and the author Cai Qing in *Immutabile Medium*. One plausible reason I offer here is that the translator might not have wanted to include notes that concern religious or metaphysical issues in the translation. As discussed in the latter part of this paper, Noël dedicated his efforts to delivering his full argumentation with regard to the compatibility of Christianity and Neo-Confucianism in *Philosophia Sinica*, and precisely as expected, the note provided by *Sishu mengyin* above can be found in the first treatise of the work despite some variances in the wording.¹⁷

The Translation of the Title

Noël was the first translator to render the title *Zhongyong* as “Unalterable Mean” (*Immutabile Medium*), which had a strong impact on the world of sinology until the nineteenth century. *L’Invariable Milieu* (or *Medium Immutabile* in Latin) of the

¹⁴ “Nota 2.º quod attinet ad spiritus sic ait liber Su xu mum in: primus rerum terminus [sinice Tai Kie] motu suo producit Yam; motu absoluto quiescit; quâ quiete producit Yn; quiete absolutâ, rursus mouetur; motu absoluto, rursus quiescit; sicque eundo et reundo, alternis motu et quiete producit Yn-Yam; id est nescio quem fluidum aut spiritum aëreum. . . .” See manuscript, n. 56. See *Sishu mengyin*, pp. 99–104.

¹⁵ “~~illud, substantia; hæc usus~~” See manuscript, n. 56.

¹⁶ 「愚意喜怒哀樂之未發，心之體也，存養此心之體者，心法也；喜怒哀樂之既發，心之用也，省察此心之用者，心法也。」 See *Sishu mengyin*, p. 79.

¹⁷ *Philosophia Sinica*, p. 97.

eminent French sinologist Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat's (1788–1832) is an undisguised following of Noël's *Immutabile Medium*,¹⁸ though Rémusat's ruthless attack on the translation of the Jesuits of the preceding centuries and specifically Noël radiated immense influence within academic circles for prolonged periods of time.¹⁹

The use of the word “unalterable” in the title was unequivocally influenced by the interpretation of Chengzi 程子 (Cheng Yi 程頤, 1033–1107) or Zhang Juzheng's elaboration of what Cheng says.²⁰ He did not directly adopt the explanation “common” (庸, 平常也) given by Zhu Xi on which his translation was chiefly grounded,²¹ and as an alternative he put the word *semper* (always) in the opening sentences in “Lectori” (To the Reader) of *Zhongyong*.²² *Buyi* 不易 and *chang* 常 is not synonymous in the strictest sense, yet what is “unalterable” is normally “common” or “usual.” This point has indeed been clearly spelled out in *Sishu huowen*, *Zhongyong jilüe*, and *Sishu zhijie* 四書直解.²³ However, by putting *immutabile* in the translated title Noël virtually expresses his conviction that “unalterable” should be the primary meaning of *yong*. He noted that “that which cannot and is not allowed to alter is called *unalterable*, or *yong* in Chinese” (*id quod nec potest nec licet immutare, dicitur immutabile, sinicè Yum*).²⁴ It is worthy of note that Noël did not offer a general rephrase that followed the examples of his senior colleagues like Intorcetta and Couplet. He opted to give a full literal translation of all the titles of the books

¹⁸ The use of the word “follow” here is by no means disapproving and does not repudiate the critical judgement of Rémusat himself. But Rémusat at least agreed with Noël and thus produced the same title.

¹⁹ See the biography of Noël written by Rémusat in *Biographie universelle* (Paris: Chez L. G. Michaud, 1822), tome 31, pp. 335–38, esp. pp. 336–37; Rémusat, *Nouveaux mélanges asiatiques* (Paris: Schubart et Heideloff, 1829), tome 2, pp. 254–55.

²⁰ Cheng: “Not changing is called *yong*” 不易之謂庸. See Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 17; Zhang Juzheng, *Sishu jizhu chanwei zhijie* 四書集註闡微直解, in *Siku weishou shu jikan* 四庫未收書輯刊 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2000), ser. 2, vol. 12, p. 203.

²¹ Zhu, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p. 17.

²² “Hic Liber *Immutabile Medium*, à *Tsu Su* Nepote Confucii conscriptus, docet ad ineundam virtutis viam semper esse sequendum Medium.” See *Libri Sex*, “Lectori,” p. 31.

²³ Zhu, *Sishu huowen*, p. 45; *Zhongyong jilüe*, p. 1; Zhang, *Sishu jizhu chanwei zhijie*, p. 203. Albert Chan 陳綸緒 (1915–2005) informs us that the edition of *Sishu huowen* preserved in the Jesuit Archives in Rome (ARSI, Japonica-Sinica, I, 17.1) includes the book *Zhongyong jilüe*. See Chan, *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome: A Descriptive Catalogue: Japonica-Sinica I–IV* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), pp. 16–17. Nicolas Standaert pointed out that “Japonica-Sinica, I, 17” was used by Noël.

²⁴ *Libri Sex*, p. 40.

included in his *Libri Sex*. The title *Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis* represented an overall understanding of the content of the book and presumably was deemed more tempting to Western readers. For *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, the official title of *Zhongyong* is *The Second Book of Chinese Learning (Scientiæ Sinicæ Liber Secundus)*.²⁵ Thierry Meynard rightly pointed out that the use of *scientia*, a concept inherited from the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, meant to accentuate the existence of a comprehensive system of knowledge based on an empirical view of reality and on deductive reason in China, and to display to the European audience the rationality of the *Four Books*.²⁶ Werner Lühmann has also articulated a similar viewpoint, but his emphasis regarding European rationality dwells on the philosophy of René Descartes (1596–1650).²⁷

According to the preface of *Libri Sex*, Noël in general views the purport of the books contained in *Libri Sex* as being on ethics or morality.²⁸ *Zhongyong* is certainly no exception seeing that he translates the title as *Unalterable (namely of virtue) Mean (Medium [nempe virtutis] immutabile)* in *Historica Notitia Rituum ac Ceremoniarum Sinicarum (Historical Notice of Chinese Rites and Ceremonies)*.²⁹ We can also infer from his “To the Reader” (*Lectori*), specifically written for the part

²⁵ In fact a literal rendering has already been done in the introduction. The author says “and it discusses chiefly on *the eternal medium*, or on the golden mean” (Agit autem potissimum de medio sempiterno, sive de aureâ mediocritate illâ). *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, Liber secundus, p. 40.

²⁶ Thierry Meynard, ed., *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus (1687): The First Translation of the Confucian Classics* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2011), pp. 42–43.

²⁷ “. . . erlagen die Übersetzer des 17. Jahrhunderts prompt der Versuchung, die abendländischen Begriffe so zu verwenden, daß sich für einen des Chinesischen unkundigen Leser gewissermaßen der schlüssige Beweis dafür ergab, daß der Denkansatz der chinesischen Klassiker den vertrauten *cartesianischen* Begriffen weitgehend ähnelte.” See Lühmann, *Konfuzius: aufgeklärter Philosoph oder reaktionärer Moralapostel?: der Bruch in der Konfuzius-Rezeption der deutschen Philosophie des ausgehenden 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhunderts*, S. 51.

²⁸ “Then, it builds to you not a hidden but rather a wonderful doctrine by its loftiness; only ordinary Ethics, composition of rules, discipline of a family and almost always of a good government. . . .” (Deinde nec reconditam, aut sublimitate miram tibi finge doctrinam; solam Ethicen vulgarem, morum compositionem, Familiæ disciplinam, & ferè semper boni regiminis. . . .) See *Libri Sex*, “Præfatio ad Lectorem,” unpaginated, or the page following p. a 2.

²⁹ “Secundus Chum Yum, id est Medium (*nempe virtutis*) immutabile, à Tsu Su nepote Confucii conscriptus.” See Noël, *Historica Notitia Rituum ac Ceremoniarum Sinicarum* (Pragæ: Typis Univers. Carolo-Ferdinand. in Collegio Soc. Jesu ad S. Clementem, per Joachimum Joannem Kamenicky Factorem, 1711), “Præfatio,” p. 4.

of *Zhongyong*, that the paragraphs concerning the accomplishments of the ancient political celebrities, such as Shun 舜, Wenwang 文王, and Wuwang 武王, are in fact important constituents of the work being incorporated into the coherent framework of this moral discourse.³⁰ This marks a significant difference from *Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis* of which the title suggests political and moral discussions by and large run in parallel.

The French Jesuits in Beijing later provided another alternative of translation on top of *Immutabile Medium*: “the Right Mean” (*Le Juste Milieu*).³¹ This French term, which originated from Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), was prevalent within French academic circles during the early eighteenth century, as evidenced by its inclusion in the entries of *Dictionnaire universel François & Latin* published in 1704.³² *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* already cited Cicero (106–43 B.C.) on the first page of *Zhongyong* that the golden mean is something between excessiveness and insufficiency, and has to be

³⁰ “. . . from which it begins by the nature of man itself and the dispositions of nature; then it proceeds through various examples of virtues like piety, prudence, fortitude, filial observance as the norm of the Mean being maintained. Moreover, it brings forth this Mean, and the use of the Mean to be the real Way of the sage men, which should be followed especially by high officials and rulers. Finally it concludes that the perfect Mean is situated in the highest virtue that requires to be pursued.” (. . . unde incipit ab ipsa hominis natura & naturæ affectionibus; deinde pergit per varia virtutum, pietatis, prudentiæ, fortitudinis, filialis observantiæ exempla, tanquam Medii obtenti normam. Hoc autem Medium, Mediique usum, veram esse viri sapientis viam, eamque præsertim Magistratibus ac Principibus sequendam afferit. Denique perfectum Medium in summa virtute sectanda situm esse concludit.) See *Libri Sex*, “Lectori,” p. 31. The political aspect constitutes one of the four parts being discussed in *Zhongyong* with the Mean being the central theme. See also a note in *Libri Sex* which has been translated in the next section. *Libri Sex*, p. 41.

³¹ The title given is “Tchong-Yong ou Juste Milieu.” See Jean Joseph Marie Amiot (1718–1793), Pierre-Martial Cibot (1727–1780) et al., *Mémoires concernant l’histoire, les sciences, les arts, les mœurs, les usages, &c. des Chinois* (Paris: Chez Nyon, 1776), tome 1, p. 459. François-André-Adrien Pluquet (1716–1790), the French translator of *Libri Sex*, also presents this title and even places it before that provided by Noël: “Le *Juste Milieu*, ou le Milieu immuable, e été donné par Tsée-sée, petit-fils de Confucius. L’objet de cet ouvrage est de prouver que l’homme a une loi qu’il doit suivre inviolablement.” See Pluquet, *Les livres classiques de l’Empire de la Chine* (Paris: Chez De Bure, Barrois aîné & Barrois jeune, 1784), tome 2, p. xxxvij.

³² *Dictionnaire universel François & Latin* included several quotations under this term, like “Le grand art de plaire consiste à trouver le juste milieu entre trop, & trop peu,” “Le juste milieu entre deux extremitez se mesure par rapport aux personnes: ce qui seroit excessif pour l’un ne l’est pas pour l’autre,” among others. See *Dictionnaire universel François & Latin*, tome 2 (Trevoux: Chez Estienne Ganeau, 1704), “MILIEU,” unpaginated.

held constantly in all things.³³ It is thus a reasonable inference that the French Jesuits employed *Le Juste Milieu* as an additional title with the aim of harmonizing Chinese and Western philosophy. In this respect, Rémusat explicitly cited Aristotle and Horace (65–8 B.C.) in the footnotes of his *L'Invariable Milieu*.³⁴

One should notice that in the translation of Chengzi's commentary at the beginning of *Zhongyong zhangju*, however, a sentence appears on the fifth and sixth lines which is absent in the original text, and is evidently a deliberate interpolation of Noël: "Medium is norm; unalterability is use" (*Medium, norma; Immutabilitas, usus*).³⁵ To construe *yong* as "use" is reminiscent of *Zhuangzi* 莊子,³⁶ but for this definition specifically given here by the translator I wish to re-emphasize the possible influence of *Sishu mengyin*. Zhu Xi mentioned the meaning of "use" several times in his annotations, and the introduction of *tiyong* 體用 is particularly important.³⁷ It is *Sishu mengyin* that developed this concept and further associated it with the title.³⁸ *Philosophia Sinica* candidly makes references to *Zihui* 字彙 (*Tsu guey*) and *Zhengzi tong* 正字通 (*Chim tsu tum*),³⁹ two comprehensive dictionaries which were compiled by Ming scholars Mei Yingzuo 梅膺祚 (fl. 1570–1615) and Zhang Zilie 張自烈 (1597–1673) respectively and were very popular among intellectuals in the late Ming

³³ “. . . de aureâ mediocritate illâ, quæ est, ut ait Cicero, inter nimium & parum, constanter & omnibus in rebus tenendâ.” See *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, Liber secundus, p. 40.

³⁴ Rémusat, *L'Invariable Milieu, Ouvrage moral de Tsèu-Ssé*, en Chinois et en Mandchou, avec une version littérale latine, une traduction française, et des notes (Paris: L'Imprimerie Royale, 1817), p. 33.

³⁵ Noël, *Libri Sex*, p. 40.

³⁶ To use the word “reminiscent” is because the main text of “Qiwulun” 齊物論 of *Zhuangzi* directly delivers the definition of *yong*: 「庸也者，用也；用也者，通也；通也者，得也。」 See “Qiwulun,” in Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, 2nd ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), p. 70. The rendering of A. C. Graham of this sentence is: “The ‘usual’ is the usable, the ‘usable’ is the interchangeable, to see as ‘interchangeable’ is to grasp.” See A. C. Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-Tzū* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001), p. 54.

³⁷ *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, pp. 17–19, esp. p. 18.

³⁸ 「是書獨取中庸二字以為名，則舉道體之全而言該動靜體用而無遺者也。」 See *Sishu mengyin*, p. 79.

³⁹ Noël cited *Zhengzi tong* and *Zihui* in *Philosophia Sinica*. See *Philosophia Sinica Tribus Tractatibus* (Pragæ: Typis Universit: Carolo-Ferdinandæ, in Collegio Soc. Jesu ad S. Clementem, per Joachimum Joannem Kamenicky Factorem, 1711), “Tractatus Primi: De cognitione primi Entis, seu DEI apud Sinas,” pp. 81–82. *Zhengzi tong* (Jap-Sin II, 115–120) and *Zihui* (Jap-Sin II, 121–122) can be found in the Jesuit archives in Rome, see Albert Chan, *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome*, pp. 421–24, 425–27.

period; it is also conceivable for Noël to refer to these voluminous works for further support.⁴⁰ Some contemporary researchers attempt to explicate the origin of the title *Zhongyong* founded on the evidence from the main text itself in which *yong* 庸 and *yong* 用 are interchangeable in meaning (i.e. from “yongzhong” 用中 to “zhongyong” 中用);⁴¹ yet it was of course impossible for the Jesuits at that time to take on such a circumlocutory route to their comprehension of the book.

Review of the Opening Passage

For the striking opening passage of *Zhongyong*, one can hardly deny that the translation in *Libri Sex* is unsatisfactory. Noël did not follow Zhu and Zhang’s commentaries and failed to grasp the structures of the key terms of the source language. He took *tianming* 天命, *shuaixing* 率性, and *xiudao* 修道 all as substantives, and advanced “law of Heaven” (*Cæli lex*), “command of nature” (*naturæ ductus*), and “direction of the Way” (*viæ directio*) respectively.⁴² The main reason is that the rhetorical presentation of this passage seems to imply a rigid linguistic parallelism of the three sentences. And apart from this, the term *tianming* is a vivid reminder of the famous saying of Confucius in *Lunyu*: “The gentleman stands in awe of three things. He is in awe of the Decree of Heaven. He is in awe of great men. He is in awe of the words of the sages” 君子有三畏：畏天命，畏大人，畏聖人之言，⁴³ and Noël’s translation for *tianming* here was exactly *Cæli lex*.⁴⁴ It is therefore probable that the translator, under the strong influence of this dictum, also conceived of *tianming*

⁴⁰ *Zhengzi tong* defines *yong* 庸 as *yong* 用 (use), and offers a wealth of textual evidence in ancient Chinese works, with *Shangshu* 尚書 and *Zhuangzi* being placed at the beginning. See Zhang, *Zhengzi tong*, in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), vol. 234, p. 358. The first definition offered by *Zihui* is also “use” (用也). See Mei, *Zihui*, in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu*, vol. 232, pp. 543–44.

⁴¹ Liu Baonan 劉寶楠, *Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), *juan* 23, pp. 756–57; Gao Ming 高明, *Lixue xintan* 禮學新探 (Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhongwen daxue Lianhe shuyuan zhongwenxi, 1963), p. 142; Wang Congming 王聰明, *Zhongyong xingshang sixiang yanjiu* 《中庸》形上思想研究 (Taipei: Huamulan wenhua chubanshe, 2010), p. 8.

⁴² “Cæli lex est ipsa natura; hujus naturæ ductus est recta agendi viæ; hujus viæ directio est recta vitæ disciplina; seu recta vivendi præcepta.” See *Libri Sex*, p. 41, no. 1.

⁴³ Zhu, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, Book 16, p. 172; D. C. Lau, trans., *The Analects*, 2nd ed. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1992), pp. 164–65.

⁴⁴ “Tria sunt, quæ Sapiens veretur: veretur Cæli legem, veretur illustres viros, veretur Sapientum dicta.” See *Libri Sex*, p. 177. “Legem” is the accusative singular of “lex” because the deponent verb “veretur” governs the accusative. See also the quotation in *Philosophia Sinica* of the same saying: “Libri sentent. art. 16 dicentem: tria sunt, quæ sapiens veretur, scilicet Cæli lex, viri illustres, sapientum effata.” *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 56.

which appears at the beginning of *Zhongyong* as being a modifier-head construction (*pianzheng* 偏正) rather than a verb-object (*dongbin* 動賓) construction. As far as I can observe, the quotation of Chengzi's words for article 1 in *Zhongyong jilüe* may also have played a part.⁴⁵ The parallelism of *tiandao* 天道 and *tianming* in his couplet could have given a false impression to Noël that the two constructions should be identical.

Whatever the reasons, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* in this regard excels in realizing that *ming* is actually a verb, and renders the first sentence as “that which is given to man from Heaven is called rational nature” (*Id quod à cælo est homini inditum dicitur natura rationis*).⁴⁶ Jean-Baptiste Du Halde used a total of eleven lines on his pages to explain solely the first article. He still followed Noël in using “the law of Heaven” (*la loi du ciel*) and particularly inserted a verb “engrave” (*graver*) so that the whole rendering became “the law of Heaven is engraved into the nature of human beings itself” (*la loi du ciel est gravée dans la nature même de l'homme*).⁴⁷ This approach was later inherited by the French Jesuits in Beijing in the eighteenth century, but what makes a difference is that the missionaries at the imperial court were more audacious and deviated from the original.⁴⁸ The French translation of *Libri Sex* made by François-André-Adrien Pluquet (1716–1790) is more an explanation than a translation. It is worth noticing that he still followed Noël in using “the law of Heaven” but dissented from him in using “rule” (*regle*; Couplet's *regula*).⁴⁹

⁴⁵ 「程子曰：言天之自然者，謂之天道；言天之付與萬物者，謂之天命。」 See *Zhongyong jilüe*, p. 6.

⁴⁶ *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, Liber Secundus, p. 40.

⁴⁷ Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise*, Tome 2 (A la Haye: Chez Henri Scheurleer, 1736), pp. 391–92.

⁴⁸ “TIEN has engraved his law into our hearts, and Nature reveals it to us. The rules of morals are founded on his teachings, and wisdom consists in knowing them, and virtue in following them.” (Le TIEN a gravé sa Loi dans nos cœurs, la Nature nous la révele, les regles des mœurs sont fondées sur ses enseignements, la sagesse consiste à les connoître, la vertu à les suivre.) See Jean Joseph Marie Amiot (1718–1793), Pierre-Martial Cibot (1727–1780) et al., *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les mœurs, les usages, &c. des Chinois* (Paris: Chez Nyon, 1776), p. 459.

⁴⁹ “The law of Heaven is nature itself; and the direction or the tendency of nature is the sure law of conduct: this rule is the principle of the order in life, because it contains all the precepts for morals.” (La loi du ciel est la nature même; & la direction ou le penchant de la nature est la regle sûre de la conduite: cette regle est le principe de l'ordre dans la vie, parcequ'elle renferme tous les préceptes pour les mœurs.) See François-André-Adrien Pluquet (1716–1790), *Les livres classiques de l'Empire de la Chine* (Paris: Chez De Bure, Barrois aîné & Barrois jeune, 1784), tome 2, p. 99.

Rémusat, a well-trained sinologist, had without doubt no problem in identifying *ming* as a verb, and said “what Heaven commands is called nature” (*Cælum jubet quod dicitur natura*), but what strikes me as interesting is that his French rendering on the same page is inconsistent with his Latin: “the order established by Heaven is called nature” (*L'ordre établi par le Ciel s'appelle nature*).⁵⁰ Likewise, Rémusat followed Couplet in using “rule” (*regulam*) in his Latin section but used “law” (*loi*) in his French, and the word *Dao* was translated as *regula* (Couplet) and *via* (Noël) indiscriminately.⁵¹ For subsequent Catholic Latin translators like Angelo Zottoli (1826–1920) and Séraphin Couvreur (1835–1919), *Cæli lex* is still regarded as a preferential choice.⁵²

Mungello pointed out that the over-projection of rationality into the *Zhongyong* in *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* is confirmed by the interpretation of this passage, and the Jesuit use of *regula* as a translation of *Dao* had connotations that were more geometrical than natural.⁵³ Paul Rule also claimed that “his interpretation is European and scholastic, in a mode that has many precedents in the China Mission,” and a good example is the opening line of *Zhongyong*. Rule thought that his interpretation was far less tendentious than that of Giulio Aleni (1582–1649), but still included a distinctly scholastic flavour.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, what we see is that Noël’s renderings of the words *xing* 性 and *Dao* in this context are *natura* (nature) and *recta agendi via* (the correct Way of doing) respectively, in contrast to the “rationality” of Couplet’s *natura rationalis* (rational nature) and *regula seu consentaneum rationi* (rule or consistency to reason). Werner Lümann discerned the rendition of *xing* as simply *natura* in this passage as well, and added that Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) intentionally attached an adjective *vernünftig* (reasonable; rational) to establish a connection between the ideas of the rationalists and classical antiquity of China.⁵⁵ One of my principal findings in

⁵⁰ Rémusat, *L'Invariable Milieu, Ouvrage moral de Tsèu-Ssê*, p. 33.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 45.

⁵² Angelo Zottoli, *Cursus Litteraturæ Sinicæ Neo-Missionariis Accommodatus* (Chang-hai: Ex typographia Missionis Catholicæ, 1879), vol. 2, “Studium Classicorum,” p. 171; Séraphin Couvreur, *Les Quatre Livres, avec un commentaire abrégé en chinois une double traduction en français et en latin* (Sien Hsien: Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique, 1930), p. 28.

⁵³ Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1985), p. 284.

⁵⁴ Paul Rule, “François Noël, SJ, and the Chinese Rites Controversy,” in W. F. Vande Walle, ed., Noël Golvers, co-ed., *The History of the Relations between the Low Countries and China in the Qing Era (1644–1911)* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2003), pp. 158–59.

⁵⁵ Lümann, *Konfuzius: aufgeklärter Philosoph oder reaktionärer Moralapostel?: der Bruch in der Konfuzius-Rezeption der deutschen Philosophie des ausgehenden 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhunderts*, SS. 53–54.

the comparison of the manuscript and the printed version of Noël's *Zhongyong* is that he indeed made a discernible effort to eliminate nearly all words “*rationalis*” (rational; of reason) which modify “nature” (*natura*) in the first passage and the accompanying notes. In an aggregate of around six times the term *natura rationalis*, intended to render *xing* on one page in the manuscript, became simply *natura* in the printed version.⁵⁶ In particular, the first sentence in the manuscript was originally written as “The supreme law of Heaven is a common reason, natural and directive; or more specifically, the rational nature itself,” but the words *ratio* (reason) and *rationalis* were finally removed in the printed version (see the table below). The translator appears to know that not all natures are by themselves rational. One will remember that in the early part of this paper, it was argued that Noël considered *Zhongyong* a work which primarily discusses morality, and so he put the title as “*Unalterable Mean (namely of Virtue)*” in the preface of *Historica Notitia Rituum ac Ceremoniarum*. His endeavour to differentiate the unalterable mean pertaining to “reason” from that of “virtue” essentially presented an approach to interpreting Chinese metaphysical thoughts that was divergent from that of his senior colleagues.

Below is a comparison of the first line of *Zhongyong* in the manuscript and the printed version:

Manuscript
<p>“Suprema cæli lex, est quædam communis ratio, naturæ directiva; siue specialius, est ipsa natura rationalis, uno uerbo <u>Sim</u>, hæc duo textus et interpretes significant huius naturæ rationis ductus, est recta agendi uia; hujus uiæ directio, est recta uitæ disciplina, a sapientibus tradita seu rectè uiuendi præcepta.”</p> <p>(Translation: The supreme law of Heaven is a common reason, natural and directive; or more specifically, the rational nature itself, with a word <i>xing</i> 性. Two texts and interpreters indicate this. The leading of this rational nature is the correct way of doing; the direction of this way is the correct study of life, or the teachings of living correctly delivered by the sages)⁵⁷</p>

⁵⁶ See manuscript, no. 1; *Libri Sex*, pp. 41–42, no. 1.

⁵⁷ See manuscript, no. 1.

Printed version

“Cæli lex est ipsa natura; hujus naturæ ductus est recta agendi via; hujus viæ directio est recta vitæ disciplina; seu recta vivendi præcepta.”

(Translation: The law of Heaven is nature itself; the leading of this nature is the correct way of doing; the direction of this way is the correct study of life, or the correct teachings of living)⁵⁸

Generally speaking, I consent to the fact that the Jesuits translators, including Couplet and Noël, did commonly have a propensity to rationalize Chinese concepts with their familiar conceptual tools of scholasticism.⁵⁹ But what I contend is that the degree of their rationalization or employment of these conceptual tools may vary. The fact that

⁵⁸ *Libri Sex*, pp. 41–42, no. 1.

⁵⁹ For Couplet, See Thierry Meynard, ed., *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus (1687)*. As for Noël, to render *junzi* as *vir sapiens* (wise man) obviously overemphasizes the intellectual faculties and underestimates the importance of the cultivation of virtue. The translation of *Daoxue* 道學 as “the doctrine of correct reason” (*Rectæ rationis doctrinam*) also suggests that the learning of *Dao* gravitates towards a rational approach (*Libri Sex*, p. 32). As evidenced in *Philosophia Sinica*, Noël from time to time used scholastic concepts to draw comparisons of Chinese and Western philosophy. He laid an increased emphasis on the distinction of spiritual and material causes in the interpretation of first origin, and unequivocally spelled out that the spiritual and uncreated primary origin is none other than God (“Unde sic distinguendum foret duplex primum principium; alterum spirituale & increatum, nempe Deus; alterum materiale & creatum nempe iste primitivus aër, seu æther; quod quia non satis clarè distinguunt Sinæ, ideò interdum videntur & Spiritum cum materia, & Rationem cum corpore pene confundere.” See *Philosophia Sinica*, p. 76). In addition, he attempted to associate the notions of *yin* and *yang* in Chinese with the European concepts of *conjunctio* and *disjunctio*. He said that when one transits from non-action to action, then it is called *conjunctio*, because certainly as one unites material with form, or nature with substance, or subject with accidents; when one transits from action to non-action, then it is called *disjunctio*, since truly the latter is put asunder (“Nota: iste modus loquendi *conjunctio quietis yn & motûs yam*, & *disjunctio quietis yn & motûs yam*, ut reducatur ad nostrum modum loquendi Europæum, quamvis aliquando posset utcumque intelligi de conjunctione, & disjunctione materiæ ac formæ . . . dum transitur à non actione ad actionem, ità ut ex non esse rei, fiat esse rei; tunc dicitur conjunctio; quia nimirum vel unitur materia cum forma, vel natura cum subsistentia, vel subjectum cum accidentibus; dum transitur à non actione ad actionem, ità ut ex esse rei fiat non esse rei; tunc dicitur disjunctio.” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 98.)

Noël did not attempt to distinguish *animus* and *cor* in his reproduction of *Mencius* further reinforces this argument.⁶⁰ As a Jesuit well-versed in the Chinese language and Chinese classics without a clear political agenda, Noël was in an advantageous position to present his translation and his viewpoints on a more scholarly level which is comparatively free from preconceived ideas. Michael Albrecht noted that unlike the work of Couplet, his work (Noël) is not an expression of *China-Politik* of the Jesuit Mission.⁶¹

Ad Dudink remarked that “starting with the second line [on a new page] of sentence 81 [= *Zhongyong* 20.9] the Western handwriting changes and corrections are absent,” and for the final sentence of this passage, “a sapientibus tradita” is later corrected.⁶² Some observations can be made here. As shown above, I notice that the rectified words in the manuscript in the end are “seu rectè uiuendi præcepta” instead of “seu recta uiuendi præcepta,” which means that the printed version replaced the adverb “rectè” (correctly) by the adjective “recta” (correct). Secondly, the handwriting of “seu rectè uiuendi præcepta” is identical with the changed style of calligraphy after the second line of sentence 81 as rightly indicated by Dudink above. Thirdly, there is not much difficulty in recognizing that the former portion (i.e. before the second line of sentence 81) of *Zhongyong* and the whole manuscript of *Mencius* should have been written by the same person. Finally, some amendments can still be found in the latter part of the handwriting of *Zhongyong*.

The law of Heaven is called nature. To follow this direction is called the Way, or the natural law. To particularize and order this natural law is called to make positive law. (*La legge del Cielo si chiama Natura. Il seguir la direttione di questa, si chiama via, o legge naturale. Particularizzare, e ordinar questa legge naturale, si chiama far legge positua.*⁶³)

⁶⁰ Huang Zhengqian 黃正謙 (Wong Ching Him Felix), “Lun Yesuhui shi Wei Fangji de Ladingwen Mengzi fanyi” 論耶穌會士衛方濟的拉丁文《孟子》翻譯, *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 57 (July 2013), pp. 166–68.

⁶¹ “Seine Ausgabe ist nicht, wie die Ausgabe Couplets, ein Ausdruck der China-Politik der jesuitischen Mission.” See Michael Albrecht, “Einleitung,” in Christian Wolff, *Oratio de Sinarum Philosophia Practica; Rede über die praktische Philosophie der Chinesen* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1985), S. XXVII.

⁶² Dudink, *Chinese Books and Documents (pre-1900) in the Royal Library of Belgium at Brussels*, pp. 43–44.

⁶³ Daniello Bartoli, *Dell'istoria della Compagnia di Giesv: la Cina, terza parte dell'Asia* (Rome: Nella Stamperia del Varese, 1633), p. 812. Discorso del P. Aleni in vna Accademia di Letterati.

Noël's Hermeneutics and Reconstruction

Unlike the *Confucian Sinarum Philosophus*, Noël did not actively engage himself in transforming his personal reflections of the text into substantial paragraphs in *Libri Sex*, apart from some recapitulating remarks found in the preface and the synopsis offered at the opening pages of the book. His chief labour dwells on his lengthy and occasionally rhetorical paraphrasing, though he candidly confessed that his Latin style was unpolished and his translation was hastily prepared for printing.⁶⁴ This partly requests researchers to exert themselves to reading between the lines of the translation with the aim of extracting Noël's own interpretation of *Zhongyong* or even of Confucianism at large.

Contemporary scholars of translation studies concur on the fact that translation is essentially a reproduction or reconstruction of another text.⁶⁵ As Axel Bühler specifically pointed out, to say that every translation is an interpretation is completely trivial, and it remains vacuous if we do not state clearly which of the different kinds of interpretation are involved.⁶⁶ In my view, Noël's translation of *Zhongyong* reveals some traits of "interpretation as rational reconstruction" as proposed by Bühler among a total of thirteen categories in his list.⁶⁷ One of the stunning points I find is a purposeful classification of different types of "unalterable mean" on the part of Noël in *Libri Sex*. In translating You Zuo's 游酢 (1053–1123) commentary cited by Zhu Xi in article 2, Noël reprocessed the text grounded on his holistic comprehension of the work, and advanced a new understanding which essentially goes beyond the parameters of the Chinese source. According to Noël, the word *Medium* can be construed in three ways. Firstly, if it is taken for *nature*, it is called rational and correct mean (*si sumatur pro natura, dicitur rectæ rationis Medium*). Secondly,

⁶⁴ "Verum ne speres quoad latinatam & styli ultima lima politum opus; advertas enim & in Missione confectum, & in festinatione impressum." See *Libri Sex*, "Parefatio ad Lectorem," p. a3. Noël's proficiency in the Latin language can be seen in his composition of Latin poems in early years. See Noël, *Reverendi Patris Francisci Noel e Societate Jesu Opuscula Poetica, in quatuor partes distributa, cum Licentia Superiorum* (Francofurti: Apud Thomam Fritsch, 1717).

⁶⁵ Cees Koster, "The Translator in Between Texts: On the Textual Presence of the Translator as an Issue in the Methodology of Comparative Translation Description," in Alessandra Riccardi, ed., *Translation Studies: Perspectives on an Emerging Discipline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 25.

⁶⁶ Axel Bühler, "Translation as Interpretation," in *ibid.*, p. 56.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

if it is viewed to be the natural affection or passion, it is called perfect rational and correct harmony with passionate commotion (*si pro naturae affectione aut passione, dicitur perfecta rectae rationis cum passionis commotione Concordia*). Thirdly, if it is considered with reference to virtue, it is called unalterable mean of virtue (*si pro virtute, dicitur immutabile virtutis medium*).⁶⁸ You's explanation in fact does not include the first point,⁶⁹ and most important, such a definition exhibits a new categorization developed by the translator himself.

Noël attached different attributes to “unalterable mean” throughout the translation with reference to the context and based on his own judgement.⁷⁰ He translated *zhongyong* as “unalterable mean of virtue” (*immutabile virtutis Medium*) where human behaviour or morality is involved,⁷¹ and as “correct mean of reason” (*rectae rationis Medium*) when human nature or *dao* is being referred to.⁷² *Immutabile virtutis Medium* does not straightforwardly originate from “the virtue of *zhongyong*” 中庸之德 mentioned in the annotation of Zhu Xi in article 3,⁷³ for Noël would have said “virtue of unalterable mean” should it have been the case, but I do not rule out the possibility that he may have been inspired by these words in coining new terms in *Libri Sex*. In the translation of article 2 “the noble man's centrality and unalterability is his being a noble man and at all times central” 君子之中庸也，君子而時中， the two classes of *zhongyong*, *immutabile virtutis Medium* and *rectae rationis Medium*, were distinctly

⁶⁸ *Libri Sex*, n. 9, p. 44.

⁶⁹ You Zuo said that “when it is spoken of in terms of nature and emotion, it is called ‘*zhonghe*’ (central and harmonious); when it is spoken of in terms of virtue and conduct, it is called ‘*zhongyong*’ (central and unalterable). Nevertheless, the *zhong* of *zhongyong* actually embraces the meaning of *zhonghe*” 游氏曰：「以性情言之，則曰中和，以德行之言，則曰中庸是也。」然中庸之中，實兼中和之義。See Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p. 19.

⁷⁰ For *he* 和, Noël also translated the term by adding some attributes: *perfecta passionis cum recta ratione concordia*. This approach is also shared by Intorcetta and Couplet.

⁷¹ See *Libri Sex*, pp. b, 45–46. The Latin word “virtus,” despite its polysemy, can be translated only as “virtue” in this context. In “Index & Synopsis Librorum,” Noël explicitly noted that “this unalterable mean, in which one is not mistaken by excess or by insufficiency, and that is observed by very few persons, is derived by various examples of prudence, piety and fortitude. Wise men who have observed the unalterable mean are brought back to these virtues.” (Hoc Immutabile Medium, in quo nec per excessum, nec per defectum peccatur, quodque à paucis servatur, per varia prudentiae, pietatis, fortitudinis exempla deducitur. Sapientes, qui in his virtutibus Immutabile Medium tenuere, referuntur.) See *ibid.*, p. b.

⁷² Noël did not differentiate *dao* and *zhongyong* in many instances.

⁷³ *Sishu jizhu zhijie*, *juan 2*, p. 206.

presented.⁷⁴ In the eyes of the translator, the former *zhongyong* concerns the behaviour and morality of the *junzi* 君子 himself,⁷⁵ while *zhong* emphasizes human nature or *dao* in the latter case.

In articles 7 to 9, *zhongyong* is considered to have direct reference to virtue, and thus *immutabile virtutis Medium* is employed in every case to stand for the term.⁷⁶ Even though *zhongyong* is not found in the original Chinese text, the translator still inserted *immutabile virtutis Medium* in his paraphrases where he believed the context embraces such an implication. In article 10 while the Chinese simply gives “Zilu asks about strength” 子路問強, Noël expanded it to several lines, and *immutabile virtutis Medium* was used according to his own understanding.⁷⁷

In summarizing the point “Becoming *cheng* is the way of mankind” 誠之者，人之道也 in article 20, Noël said in the synopsis that “veracity is the way of Heaven’s doing, and the study of veracity is the way of human beings’ doing in order to acquire the unalterable mean of virtue.”⁷⁸ *Immutabile virtutis Medium* was employed here because, in similar fashion, the translator thought of the mean as something to be attained by moral self-cultivation. But as argued in the latter part of this paper, Noël was not always consistent in his rendering. In the main text, the same sentence was translated as “the study of veracity is the way of human beings or *correct reason*.”⁷⁹ Correct reason (*recta ratio*) normally refers to *li*, a key concept pertaining to Neo-

⁷⁴ “Quæ verba explicans Doctor *Tsu Su*, vir sapiens, inquit, ideò in omnibus suis gestis immutabile virtutis Medium jugiter servat; quia interiori cordis sui solitudini intimisque animi motibus assidue invigilat; atque ita dum tempus agendi se offert, potest semper rectæ rationis Medium rectamque æquitatis viam tenere.” See *Libri Sex*, pp. 43–44, n. 8.

⁷⁵ Zhu Xi: 君子之所以為中庸者，以其有君子之德。See *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p. 19.

⁷⁶ *Libri Sex*, p. 45, nn. 18, 20. In articles 7, 8, and 9, it reads: “All men say, ‘I am wise,’ [yet] they choose [the Way that is] central and constant but cannot sustain it for one whole month” 人皆曰予知，擇乎中庸而不能期月守也；“Hui was a man who chose [the Way that is] central and constant. If he acquired one [aspect of] goodness, then he held it close, wore it on his breast, and did not lose it” 回之為人也，擇乎中庸，得一善則拳拳服膺而弗失之矣；“All under Heaven, states and houses, can be peacefully ordered, rank and salary can be declined, and naked blades can be trampled underfoot, yet [the Way that is] central and constant may not be able to be achieved” 天下國家可均也，爵祿可辭也，白刃可蹈也，中庸不可能也。

⁷⁷ “Post hæc Discipulus *Tsu Lu* fortitudinis bellicæ amator, ratus immutabile virtutis Medium idcirco ab hominibus negligi ac sperni, quòd illis animi robur deesset, rogavit Magistrum suum Confucium, ut explicaret, quid esset fortitudo?” See *Libri Sex*, p. 46, n. 24.

⁷⁸ “Veritas est Coeli agenda via, & veritates studium, est hominis agendi via ad acquirendum Immutabile virtutis Medium.” See *Libri Sex*, p. b.

⁷⁹ “. . . veritatis studium est hominis via, sive recta ratio.” See *Libri Sex*, p. 61, n. 90.

Confucianism, and it is *rectæ rationis Medium* that provides a close approximation. In reality, it is difficult to clearly demarcate a line between *immutabile virtutis Medium* and *rectæ rationis Medium*. To a certain extent the insistence on the part of the translator on classifying *Medium* generates some confusion that virtually does not exist in the original.

In “Index & Synopsis Librorum” and “Lectori,” Noël presented his overall understanding of the classic with a particular stress on the procedures of observing the mean. The attainment of *Medium* begins by distinguishing our own human nature and natural affection, and then one should proceed with various examples of *Medium*, namely piety, prudence, fortitude, and filial observance. The text brings forth the practice of *Medium* which is the veracious way of the wise men, and is to be followed by the masters and rulers. In the final stage the perfect *Medium* is situated in the consummate virtue after which one is to strive.⁸⁰

We know for certain from this introduction that Noël gave much credence to the fact that in *Zhongyong* there is logically coherent argumentation. He seemingly never harboured the idea that the work may be assembled from fragmentary quotations of Confucius or the writings of Zisi 子思 (c. 481–402 B.C.) himself. This explains why he said “Confucius was adding again (that)” (*rursus addebat Confucius*) and the like, to account for the repetitions like “Alas! The way is not practised” 道其不行矣夫 in article 5,⁸¹ whereas Zhang Juzheng and even Couplet realized that this is only a matter of textual organization. Viewing the book as an organic whole, the translator took piety, prudence, fortitude, and filial observance as the manifestations of the unalterable mean, and *cheng* 誠 (veracity; *veritas*) as the pinnacle one may either possess by nature or acquire by indefatigable study. The translator applied the concept of *zhongyong* throughout the text, even though the original does not contain any references to it. Article 12 runs: “Despite the greatness of Heaven and Earth, people still have things they are dissatisfied with” 天地之大也，人猶有所憾。 Noël said that it is because Heaven and Earth themselves with all their magnitude cannot hold the mean absolutely.⁸² For Confucius’s words “the way is not far removed from people” 道不遠人 in article 13, Noël translated *dao* as “the correct way of the unalterable mean” (*Hæc recta immutabilis Medii via*), while Zhu Xi simply says *dao* is “merely

⁸⁰ *Libri Sex*, “Lectori,” p. 31.

⁸¹ “Atque hæc est causa, rursus addebat Confucius, cur ista publica rectè agendi via nunc à nemine teratur.” See *Libri Sex*, p. 44, n. 14.

⁸² “Quin imò ipsum Cælum & Terra cum omni sua magnitudine non potest ita prorsus illud Medium tenere; ut hominum querelæ non exurgant.” See *Libri Sex*, p. 48, n. 34. Cf. *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, p. 46 translates Zhang’s commentary:

following *nature*” 率性而已。⁸³ Sometimes he directly rendered *dao* as unalterable mean. He translated *Dao* in the sentences “the Way of the noble man is far-reaching and yet hidden” 君子之道費而隱 of article 12 and “the Way of the noble man may be compared to travelling a long distance—one must start from nearby” 君子之道，辟如行遠必自邇 in article 15 as “the Doctrine of unalterable mean” and “the Way of unalterable mean” respectively.⁸⁴

Tian and Guishen in Zhongyong

Zhongyong is certainly the most religious and metaphysical among the *Four Books*, embracing a wide array of terms like *Tian*, *Shangdi* 上帝, *tianming*, *xing*, *dao*, *zhong*, *he*, *guishen*, *cheng*, and so forth. It provides certain evidence that would have given rise to conflicts of ideas between Confucianism and Christianity, and has indeed posed some challenges to the missionary translators. This can be in part demonstrated by Couplet’s evident effort to interpose copious notes concerning *spirits* in the second book of *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*.⁸⁵ Noël, on the other hand, cited important phrases from *Zhongyong* in his first treatise of *Philosophia Sinica* “On the Knowledge of the First Being or God among the Chinese” (De cognitione primi Entis, seu DEI apud Sinas) and extensively made references to *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, *Sishu zhijie*, *Sishu mengyin*, *Rijiang Sishu jieyi* 日講四書解義 as supportive documentary evidence for his project of harmonizing Christianity and Neo-Confucianism, which was commonly considered an “impossible mission” from Ricci down to the team of translators in which Couplet took the lead. In contrast to *Confucian Sinarum Philosophus* where a series of explanations were offered to clarify a diversity of controversial points, Noël opted to stay loyal to the meaning of the original without adding any personal comments in *Libri Sex*, and sought to distinctively establish his own arguments in *Philosophia Sinica*. As will be expected, he resorted to the concepts of the “four causes” in Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition,⁸⁶ and more important, he

⁸³ “Hæc recta immutabilis Medii via non procul abest ab hominis.” See *Libri Sex*, p. 48, n. 38; Zhu Xi, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p. 23.

⁸⁴ For article 12: “Hæc enim immutabilis Medii doctrina, quamvis rerum obviarum & quotidianarum actionum limites non egrediatur, reverà tamen ad subtilissima naturae & rationis infusae arcana pertingit.” See *Libri Sex*, pp. 47–48, n. 34; For article 15: “Sapiens longam sublimémque immutabilis Medii viam conficiendo, si milis est aut peregrino.” See *ibid.*, p. 51, n. 49.

⁸⁵ *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, liber secundus, pp. 50–51.

⁸⁶ For instance, he cited the dictionary *Zihui* and said that “the word *hua* signifies ‘to effect’ or ‘to produce.’ Heaven and earth, cold and heat, day and night are made by their efficient causes.”

(Continued on next page)

was very shrewd in sorting out annotations from the Chinese interpreters that were beneficial to his overall reasoning. But the question as to whether his justifications are viable or sufficiently convincing is not within the realm of our discussion.

The fact that the content of *Zhongyong* seemingly contradicts Christian views principally lies in the overemphasized power of a *shengren* 聖人 who can attain the *Dao* of the Heaven and the role of humans in assisting Heaven and Earth in the production of all things in the world. Based on the description in article 27 of the capability of *shengren* as comparable to Heaven and Earth,⁸⁷ Noël wrote in the synopsis as follows:

Not only in this veracity but also in other fields does the wise man achieve perfection; he looks ahead to the future things as if he foresees them; he extends himself to all things, in Heaven or Earth. If he is the emperor, he makes sacred the best, most fruitful laws with success. His power is similar to both the universal and particular virtue of Heaven; all people respect and honour him everywhere.⁸⁸

Veritas is the way of Heaven, and it is only *shengren* who can by nature possess it and not need acquire it by study. He also states that “everything which is brought

(Note 86—*Continued*)

(Dictionarium *Tsu guey* in littera *hoa* sic: hæc vox *hoa* significat efficere, aut producere. Cælum & terra, frigus & æstus, dies & noctes à causa efficiente fiunt.) See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 82. Cf. 「造化，天地寒暑晝夜皆造化所為也。」 See *Zihui*, p. 461. In Chinese here there is of course no such term “efficient cause.” He also pointed out that, with reference to the interpretation of Zhang Juzheng, the universal virtue is the first root of all things, and the first origin of all productions (. . . denique hæc universalis virtus est prima omnium rerum radix, atque primum omnium productionum principium). He immediately emphasized that the God is essentially the “first and universal cause” (Hæc omnia si Deo ut Causæ primæ & universali). *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, pp. 36, 42.

⁸⁷ Noël’s rendering of article 27 runs as follows: “for if you look at his total greatness in general, so vastly does it fill the course of this world that it can be found in the production and growth of all things, and so lofty in his flight does he raise himself that he reaches heaven and the completion of heaven.” (Si enim totam ejus magnitudinem generatim spectes; ita vasto cursu hunc orbem implet, ut in omnium rerum productionibus augmentisque reperiatur; & ita sublimi volatu se sursum effert, ut ad ipsum usque cælum cælique effectus pertingat.) See *Libri Sex*, pp. 66–67, n. 117. Cf. 「大哉聖人之道，峻極於天。」

⁸⁸ “Hac veritate Sapiens non tantum se, sed etiam alios perficit; rebus futuris prospicit, eas quasi prævidendo; ad omnia se extendit sive in cælo, sive in terra. Si sit Princeps, optimas leges felicissimo successu sancit. Ejus vis est similis Cæli virtuti tum universali, tum particulari; illam ubique omnes suspiciunt ac colunt.” See *Libri Sex*, “Index & Synopsis Librorum,” p. b.

back to veracity is in fact much the same as to the first principle.”⁸⁹ In similar fashion, for the saying *Keyi zan tiandi zhi huayu, ze keyi yu tiandi san yi* 可以贊天地之化育，則可以與天地參矣 in article 22, Noël’s paraphrase is in the main faithful to the original, and he apparently did not find it problematic to state that human beings bear a critical part in the production and perfection of everything in the world, so as to be said to be, together with Heaven and Earth, the third origin of all things.⁹⁰

We can learn some approaches by which the translator justified his assertion that vestiges of Christianity can be detected in ancient and even recent authors in historical China in *Philosophia Sinica*. *Tian* can be construed in two senses: God and sky. Noël successfully identified several places where God is being referred to in *Zhongyong*, including, among others, “what Heaven decrees is called nature” 天命之謂性 in article 1 and “the decree of Heaven—Ah! How profound and unending!” 維天之命，於穆不已 in article 26. For article 26, Noël linked the phrase with another one “what heaven contains has neither sound nor smell” 上天之載，無聲無臭 in the final article, and judged that undoubtedly it refers to the Lord and Governor.⁹¹ In particular, the sentence “the ceremonies of *jiao* and *she* were the means of serving *Shangdi*” 郊社之禮，所以事上帝也 that appears in article 19 aroused his considerable attention,⁹² and it is for this article he successfully solicited support from the Chinese

⁸⁹ “Ad veritatem enim tamquam ad primum principium omnia referuntur.” See *Libri Sex*, “Index & Synopsis Librorum,” p. b.

⁹⁰ “Sed qui & homines & animantia & viventia dirigit & adducit ad explendum naturæ suæ munus, hic potest dici cælum ac terram adjuvare in rerum productione atque perfectione; qui autem cælum ac terram adjuvat in rerum productione atque perfectione, hic potest unâ cum cælo ac terra dici tertium illarum principium.” See *Libri Sex*, p. 63.

⁹¹ In this case, Noël was enlightened by Cai Qing to establish the association. “Oh! How the law of Heaven never ceases his progress in a secret and mysterious way!” “Interpres *Tsay hiu chay* in comm. *Su xu mum yn* tom. 4. ad lib. immutab. Medii art. 26. sic: . . . Resp. Dum dicitur: *Proh! quàm arcano ac mysterioso modo Cæli lex suum cursum nunquam sistit!* istud verè est quod alibi sic dicitur: *excelsi Cæli natura est voce & odore expers*, nimirum id intelligitur de Domino ac Rectore.” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 143. 「曰維天之命，於穆不已，此正是上天之載，無聲無臭處，以主宰者言也。」 See *Sishu mengyin*, p. 136. He directly quoted the original sentence in *Shijing* 詩經，and also introduced *Rijiang Sishu jieyi* to provide further explanations of *Zhongyong*, see *ibid.*, pp. 20, 90. Contrary evidence in the same note: 「天道、聖人，一也，此章大旨不過如此。」 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁹² “The sacrifice offered to the Heaven is called *jiao* 郊，and that to the Earth is called *she* 社，and therefore such an offering to both Heaven and Earth essentially also serves the Lord of Heaven.” “Confucius enim afferit litamen Cæli sub dio in suburbano aggere, dictum *Kiao*, & litamen Terræ in terrestri suggesto, dictum *Xe* esse id, quo servitur cæli Domino seu *Xam Ti*; ergo litando Terræ in terræ suggesto, servitur etiam cæli Domino.” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, pp. 114–15.

commentators to verify the inferiority of the standing of the Earth to Heaven (and by extension humans to Heaven), although juxtapositions of *Tian* (Heaven) and *Di* (Earth) are not infrequent in *Zhongyong* to the extent that the two apparently play an approximately equal role in the evolution and production of everything. After citing *Sishu mengyin*, he added:

Heaven is the total and complete Productor of things, and in the production of things Heaven only receives the support of nourishment from the Earth. The Earth therefore cannot be compared with Heaven. When we say Heaven, the concept of Earth has already been included.⁹³

As the term *Di* carries an implication of *houtu* 后土 in Zhu Xi's interpretation,⁹⁴ Noël in the same way stressed what even the interpreters sufficiently hint as follows: They say that “only the Lord of heaven or Heaven is mentioned here because the concept *houtu* is already comprehended in it.”⁹⁵ *Zhouyi zhengjie* 周易正解 (*Cheu ye chin kiay*; *The True Exposition of the Book of Changes and Productions [vera libri mutationum ac productionum explicatio]*)⁹⁶ also pointed out that “unlike the Earth,

⁹³ “Interpres *Tsay hui chay* comm. *Su xu mum yn* tom. 1. in lib. Scientiæ Adulorum, explicans hæc Interpretationis Doctoris *Chu hi* verba . . . Cælum est totus & integer Productor rerum Dominus, & ad rerum productionem tantum accipit à terra alimenti sustentationem. Ideò terra non potest Cælo æquiparari, & cum eo conferri. Dum dicitur Cælum, terra in eo comprehenditur.” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 124. Noël had in actuality reiterated this idea a number of times. Cf. “Interpres *Tsay hui chay* in comm. *Su xu mum yn* tom. 3. ad lib. immutab. Medii art. 1. sic: . . . Deinde paulò infrà sic: Quidquid terra producit, id omne à Cælo sibi communicante accipit, idcirco dicitur terra nullo modo posset cum Cælo conferri, illique æquiparari; atque hæc est ratio cur dicitur tantum Cæli lex.” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 133. 「凡地之所生，無非是得於天之所施，所以謂地對天不過也，所以獨言天命也。」*Sishu mengyin*, p. 81. 「天包地則太極之全體亦在其中矣，故曰夫天專言之則道也。」*Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁹⁴ 郊，祀天。社，祭地。不言后土者，省文也。 See *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p. 27.

⁹⁵ “Quod etiam interpretes hîc satis innuunt sic: *dicitur*, inquiunt, *tantum cæli Dominus seu Cælum, quia Heu tu in eo comprehenditur.*” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 115. Cf. “Ad hunc eundem locum, sic Interpres *Cham Kiu chim* tom. 3: *Kiao*, id est litare Cælo, *Xe* id est litare Terræ; *Xam ti* idem est ac Cælum; dum dicitur *Xam ti*, in eo comprehenditur *Heu tu.*” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 132. 郊是祭天，社是祭地。上帝即是天，言上帝則后土在其中。 Or “when *shangdi* is said, *houtu* is comprehended in it.” See Zhang, *Sishu jizhu chanwei zhijie*.

⁹⁶ “. . . liber dictus *vera libri mutationum ac productionum explicatio*, sinice *Cheu ye chin kiay*, compositus, seu in lucem editus paucis ab hinc annis, à tribus authoribus literatis ex urbecula *Tam yam* Provinciæ Nankinensis. . . .” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, pp. 32–33. The edition of this work (Jap-Sin, I, 19), found in the Jesuit Archives in Rome, was published in 1693

(Continued on next page)

Heaven is not something corporal or perceivable; and the Lord of heaven commands the virtue of the servitude of the earth to follow and support.”⁹⁷ In order to exaggerate the connotation of *Tian*, Noël quoted the authoritative dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 of the Eastern Han dynasty that the character *Tian* 天 is derived or formed by the words *yi* 一 and *da* 大, and arbitrarily concluded that *Tian* is anything Uniquely Great, or the United Great, or Unique Greatness.⁹⁸

The topic of *guishen* (*spiritus*) is explained in great detail in *Philosophia Sinica*, where the translator gave a fairly close translation of the interpretation of Zhu Xi in *Zhongyong zhangju* that is not provided in *Libri Sex*. What is distinct from *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* is Noël’s undaunted acceptance of the elucidation of Song authors, especially the unvarnished Latin reproduction of the seemingly materialistic thought of Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–1077) who claimed that *spiritus* is the natural *origin* of the double vital airs (*qi* 氣).⁹⁹ But whether *qi* is materialistic or not is subject to the interpretations of different authors. Noël astutely cited *Xingli daquan* 性理大全 which stated that *qi* is itself *Spiritus*. It would not bewilder the European reader that the Chinese could explain the word “air” or “vital air” as *spiritus*, as the Latin word *spiritus* is adopted from the word *spiro*, which means by itself “airy breathing.”¹⁰⁰ The dictionary *Zihui* also says that although *Reason* should not be confused with *Air*, it is

(Note 96—Continued)

and compiled by Wu Sunyou 吳蓀右, Ding Keting 丁柯亭, and Wu Nanzou 吳南騷, all from Danyang 丹陽. Albert Chan reminded us that one must not confuse this with another book with the same title authored by Hao Jing 郝敬 (1558–1639). See Chan, *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome*, p. 19.

⁹⁷ “Denique Cælum non est, ùt terra, aliquid corporeum & sensibile.” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 57; “Hic cæli Dominus terræ virtutem jubet id servitij subire, ac sustinere.” Ibid., p. 133.

⁹⁸ “Juxta enim vetus dictionarium *Xue Ven*, litterâ 天 *Tien* derivatur seu formatur ex his duabus 一 *Ye* & 大 *Ta* . . . nempe 天 *Tien* Cælum est quid Unicum Magnum, seu Unitas Magna, vel Unica Magnitudo.” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 161.

⁹⁹ “Interpres *Chu hi* in lib. immut. medii art. 16. citans doctorem *Cham* sic: Spiritus destruens ac producens, inquit Doctor *Cham*, est duplicis auræ vitalis naturale Principium; . . .” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 96. 張子曰：鬼神者，二氣之良能也。This translation for 良能 may be wrong: 四書蒙引：「良能者，其往來屈伸自然能如此，不待安排措置也。自然能如此處即其靈也。」See *Sishu mengyin*, p. 100.

¹⁰⁰ “Liber *Sim li ta ciuen* tom. 28 pag. 37. sic etiam habet: Juxta explicationem libri *Ye Kim* Spiritus destruens & producens est rerum effector, sinicè *Tsao hoa*, paulò infrà sic: aër est ipse Spiritus. Nec fortè tibi mirum videbitur, quòd per vocem *aër* vel *vitalis aura* Sinæ expriment Spiritum, si animadvertas istam vocem *Spiritus* apud Latinos esse etiam tantùm adscititiam, à voce *spiro* derivatam, quæ ex se significat *aëreum spiramen*.” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 75.

in fact not separated from *Air*.¹⁰¹ This is another vivid example of how the translator resolved the incompatibility of Christianity and Neo-Confucianism.

We can see the impact of *Sishu mengyin* again on Noël in his rendering of *guishen* as “producing and destroying Spirit” (*Spiritus destruens & producens*). *Gui* does not play an active part of “destroying” in the context of *Zhongyong*, for Confucius overtly says that “in their being virtuous, how great are ghosts and spirits” 鬼神之為德，其盛矣乎 in article 16.¹⁰² Zhu Xi merely said that “*gui* is the spirit of *yin*” 鬼者陰之靈也 and that “those who go back are called *gui*” 反而歸者為鬼；he did not ascribe any negative elements to the word *gui*.¹⁰³ To think of *gui* as necessarily a destroying spirit may have been partly influenced by its general usage in Chinese. But what decisively assured Noël of the legitimacy of *destruens* is the explanation given in *Sishu mengyin*. The author Cai stressed that “although this Spirit is void of corpus, it makes and destroys all corporeal substances of the universe.”¹⁰⁴ The passage of *Zhongyong* focuses exclusively on the production of multitudinous things, and does not touch on the devastating effect of any power. Noël himself also noted on another page that Spirit as well is only reason.¹⁰⁵

The paper of Igawa Yoshitsugu 井川義次 began by citing article 16 on *guishen* and in his discussion associated it with *linghun* 靈魂 essentially referring to the existence or non-existence of the human soul upon death. Igawa correctly affirmed that Noël took the interpretation of Zhu Xi which is comparable to the scholastic philosophy of the West. When a human dies, the rational part of the soul remains and will not be dissipated.¹⁰⁶ What I notice here is that *guishen* in *Zhongyong* indicates

¹⁰¹ “Dictionarium *Tsu guey* in littera *hoa* sic: . . . quamvis Ratio non confundatur cum Aëre, reverà tamen ab Aëre non separatur.” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 82. 理雖不雜於氣，而實不離於氣。See *Zihui*, p. 461.

¹⁰² “Rursum Confucius, ut hujus doctrinæ tum vastum usum, tum subtilem substantiam explicaret, sic aiebat: Numquid sanè spiritus producentis & destruentis virtus, potestas, natura est insignis & admirabilis?” See *Libri Sex*, p. 51, n. 52.

¹⁰³ *Zhongyong zhangju*, p. 25; *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 97.

¹⁰⁴ “Denique sic concludit paulò infrà: quamvis Spiritus producens ac destruens sit corporis expers, omnes tamen mundi substantias corporeas facit, ac destruit.” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, pp. 83–85, esp. p. 85. The word used by Cai is *san* 散. Cf. 「惟鬼神也，雖無其形、無其聲，而實有其理也，故陰陽之合，實有是合也，陰陽之散，實有是散也。惟其實有是合，故合則為物之始；惟其實有是散，故散則為物之終。」 See *Sishu mengyin*, p. 104.

¹⁰⁵ “Spiritus enim producens ac destruens est etiam tantùm Ratio.” See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract 1, p. 87. Also from *Sishu mengyin*, pp. 99–104.

¹⁰⁶ “この説明は中国鬼神論における人間の陰陽の気を、西洋における、人間の発する光輝を帯びた活力・生氣であり、死後に散ずるアウラという西洋の概念に重ね合わせつ

(Continued on next page)

the imperceptible power in the assistance of bringing out the multifarious states in the external world, and may not carry a strong and direct relation with the human soul.

Noël candidly articulated his principle of translation in the preface of *Historica Notitia Rituum ac Ceremoniarum*. He noted that “in the process of translating the text of the books, he has followed various routes. When he saw there was no special difficulty and ambiguity in the original text, he preferred to adhere to the very *meaning* of the original words rather than the words themselves (i.e. literal translation) for the purpose of avoiding obscurity.”¹⁰⁷ As mentioned in the early part of this paper, a substantial body of notes provided by *Sishu mengyin* on the analysis of *spiritus (guishen)* in the manuscript is unreservedly obliterated.¹⁰⁸ This was surely not an accidental and uncalculated move. All the comments of the translator congregate in the first treatise of *Philosophia Sinica*. One may assert that in a sense the publication of *Philosophia Sinica* in conjunction with *Libri Sex* in the same year provided the Catholic author with an opportunity to elucidate the coherent theoretical framework that is manufactured behind his rendition, and to refrain from adulterating the translation with too much argumentation. Without *Philosophia Sinica*, the doubts or questions on the translation and even the motive of Noël himself would certainly go unanswered. Christian Wolff (1679–1754) obviously gave inadequate attention to the argumentation in *Philosophia Sinica* and presumably he concluded that Chinese philosophy was atheistic in essence by chiefly referring to the translation provided in *Libri Sex*.

Concluding Remarks

Instead of recapitulating the essential points in this paper, I wish to affirm that Noël's *Immutabile Medium* was a new production by itself but not a revised version of the

(Note 106—Continued)

つ、その内なる理性「理法・理拠」の積極的機能に、個性化の原理と不変性を見ようというのである。それこそが人間の自然本性であるとノエルはとらえたのである。” Igawa, “Kishin to aura: Noeru *Chūgoku tetsugaku sanron ni okeru Chūgoku no reikonkan* • saishikan” 鬼神とアウラーノエル『中国哲学三論』における中国の靈魂観・祭祀, *Chūgoku bunka: Kenkyū to kyōiku* 中国文化：研究と教育, 69 (2011), p. 58. See also *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 2, p. 192.

¹⁰⁷ “In vertendis autem horum librorum textibus, variam secutus sum viam; ubi nullam vidi inesse verborum difficultatem aut ambiguitatem, me potius adstrinxi ad verborum sensum, quam ad ipsa verba, ut non obscurus forem.” See Noël, *Historica Notitia Rituum ac Ceremoniarum Sinicarum*, “Præfatio,” p. 2. Cf. “Recurrendum ergo est ad sensum, non ad litteram” (therefore one has to return to the meaning, not to the word). See *Philosophia Sinica*, Tract. 1, p. 75.

¹⁰⁸ See manuscript, n. 56.

second book of *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*. Of interesting note, Noël provided a pair of words of opposite meanings, *vir sapiens* (wise man) and *vir insipiens* (unwise man), to express the contrasting concepts of *junzi* and *xiaoren* 小人,¹⁰⁹ while Couplet appeared to have been unaware of this necessity, and introduced *perfectus vir* (perfect man) and *improbis vir* (evil man).¹¹⁰ It is also astonishing that Noël seemed to have been unwilling to place constant equivalents to some recurring terms or key concepts in his presentation. *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* brought forth a religiously loaded term *sanctus* (saint) to translate *shengren*,¹¹¹ while Noël did not seek to supply a consistent expression, with quite dissimilar variants including *consummata & doctrinae & virtutis vir* (a consummate man of doctrine and virtue), *vir omnibus numeris absolutissimus* (a supreme man in all its parts), *vir scientiâ & virtute absolutus* (a man absolute in knowledge and virtue), and *vir summa & veræ scientiæ & veræ virtutis perfectione absolutissimus* (a distinguished man of real knowledge and real virtue with supreme perfection).¹¹² He came up with *cultus Parentium* (reverence of Parents) and *observantia* (observance) for *xiao* 孝, and *variæ Sectæ prava dogmata* (evil dogmas of various Sect) and *perversa variarum Sectarum dogmata* (perverse dogmas of various Sects) for *yiduan* 異端.¹¹³ Noël did not produce equivalents of the key terms *zhong* 忠 and *shu* 恕 in “loyalty and reciprocity are not far removed from the Way” 忠恕違道不遠 in article 13.¹¹⁴ What the two Latin works share is their use of the proverb *Quod tibi non vis fieri, alteri ne feceris* to translate “What one does not wish to be done to oneself, one also does not do to others” 施諸己而不願，亦勿施於

¹⁰⁹ *Libri Sex*, p. 50.

¹¹⁰ *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, p. 42.

¹¹¹ Couplet, however, proclaimed that the word *sanctus* he used does not carry any religious connotations. It refers to nothing other than the exceptionally wise and intelligent, or *ren zhi zhi* 人之至 in Chinese: “*Non offendat, Lectorem vox Xim seu Sanctus; non enim hic aliud (uti in lexicis videre est) significat quàm eximiè sapientem & intelligentem, vel gîn chi ché, id est, hominis summum ad quod homo suis viribus potest pertingere.*” See *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, liber secundus, pp. 52–53.

¹¹² *Libri Sex*, pp. 47, 52, 66.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37. In like manner, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* opted for a term which carries religious connotations: “heresy” for *yiduan*. In the letter dedicated to Louis IV at the beginning of the book, the translator quoted the words *Gonghu yiduan* (Cum hu y tuon) of Confucius and rendered it as “attack the heretical dogmas” (*oppugna heretica dogmata*). See *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, unpaginated (the fourth page of “Epistola”).

¹¹⁴ “Proinde qui tantùm ritè noverit innatum sui cordis ductum omninò explere, & ex seipso alios metiri, hic à recta immutabilis Medii via non procul abest. Quí autem innatum cordis ductum omninò explere & ex se ipso alios metiri possit, hoc uno verbo illud expono: Quod tibi non vis fieri, alteri nè feceris.” See *Libri Sex*, p. 49, n. 40.

人 . It is believed that the proverb was first used by Siluio Antoniano (1540–1603), a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, in his seminal work *Tre libri dell'edvocatione cristiana dei figlivioli* (*Three Books on the Christian Education of Children*),¹¹⁵ and became a “natural law” (*naturae regula*) in the work authored by the prominent Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius (1583–1645).¹¹⁶ But this proverb actually originated in Tobit 4:16 in the *Vulgate*. As indicated by *Thesavrvs Catholicvs* (*Catholic Thesaurus*) published in 1600, two versions give exactly the same wording.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Siluio Antoniano, *Tre libri dell'edvocatione cristiana dei figlivioli* (Verona: Appresso Sebastiano dalle Donne, & Girolamo Stringari, Compagni, 1584), CAP. CIIII, p. 97.

¹¹⁶ “Probatur consequentia hac naturae regula: Quid tibi non vis fieri, alteri ne feceris.” See Carl von Kallenborn, *Die Vorläufer des Hugo Grotius auf dem Gebiete des Ius naturae et gentium sowie der Politik im Reformationszeitalter* (Leipzig: Verlag von Gustav Mayer, 1848), “Abtheilung II: Kritische Ausgabe der Autoren [Kritischer Abdruck der Autoren],” S. 40.

¹¹⁷ As for *Biblia Sacra Vulgata* available today, it reads: “Quod ab alio odis fieri tibi, vide ne alteri tu aliquando facias.” (Tb 5:16) See *Biblia Sacra Vulgata* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), p. 680. For the versions that give the same wording “Quod tibi non vis fieri, alteri ne feceris,” see Jodocus Coccius, *Thesavrvs Catholicvs* (Coloniae: Ex officina Typographica Arnoldi Quentelij, 1600), pp. 659–60. Another version given in the same book is “Quod tibi non vis fieri, alteri ne facias.” *Ibid.*, p. 658.