

I₁
First Couplet, First Line

人之初 . 性本善
jen² chih¹ ch'u¹ . hsing⁴ pen³ shan³

Rhyme: 善 shan³ is a 銑 hsien³ rhyme (“glossy metal, scissors”).

Note: Rhymes occurring in the *Odes* (詩經), Chinese prosody was probably the world first to use this ornament.

Chinese has two types of rhyme:

a) The vulgar rhyme. It appeals to the ear, and is used in popular songs. It is not used in literary texts except in case of *force majeure*, e.g. when faced with two quotations – as in the present couplet # I₁-I₂.

b) The literary, or scholarly, rhyme. Literary Chinese has 106 rhymes, 韻 yün⁴: 30 平 rhymes, viz. 15 上 平 rhymes (1st tone) and 15 下 平 rhymes (2d tone); 29 上 rhymes (3d tone); 30 去 rhymes (4th tone); 17 入 rhymes (5th tone). Each rhyme is named after a paradigmatic kanji (for a list, see *W.*, p. 20 = *M.*, 12.43265.5 or 43307.10). Every kanji has one rhyme, or several rhymes, depending on its various readings and/or meanings. The literary rhyme does not necessarily imply consonance (e.g. the present instance where 善 shan³ rhymes with 銑 hsien³). Hence, the need was felt to have the rhymes codified in special dictionaries (cf. *TENG & BIGGERSTAFF*, p. 146-147). Scholars of old knew the rhyme(s) for each kanji by heart: this was part of their trade; and we must check them, conveniently in *MOROHASHI*, *sub vocabulo*.

The Chinese literary rhyme has many functions, e.g.:

– aside from being a literary ornament, and proof of higher education,

– it serves to list kanjis in order, a device used in major dictionaries such as the *P'ei wen yün fu*;

- in prose compositions, it underscores important passages;
 - in this instance it functions as a sort of punctuation, the rhyme marking the end of the sentence;
 - and in verse and prose alike the rhyme defines the reading, hence the meaning, of the last, the crucial kanji.
 - In addition to all these overt functions, the rhyme may also convey covert messages. The paradigmatic kanji of the rhyme may provide a hint indicating “how a statement was meant”. This happens regularly in the *San tzu ching* where the meaning of the paradigmatic kanjis relates logically to the general meaning of the couplet. As a feat of literary ingenuity, an author may choose kanjis of which the rhyme kanjis, when combined to a sentence, would give a message of their own (e.g. *Fu*, p. 59-63, or, below, the “Little preface” of Ode 70.)
 - Nor should we forget an advantage which, in former days, was deemed of great importance: in the poetry test of the State examination the highly artificial rhyming system precluded any unfair advantage which some candidates could have derived from their native dialect.
 - Familiarity with the rhymes was a prerequisite for various convivial games. (Basically: a line was proposed to be followed up by lines rhyming in appropriate fashion – and the penalty for making a mistake was having to empty a tumbler of brandy.) &c. To the Chinese, and to the amateurs of Chinese poetry at foreign courts no less, the rhyme was a literary tool of great importance. A Sinologue is mistaken if he dismisses it as a mere quillet.
- N.B.: At foreign courts, the correctness of a Chinese verse was left to the judgement of professionals. These were dressed *à la chinoise*, and seated at a little distance from the noble company, but close enough to be at hand (cf. e.g. *Genji monogatari*, beginning of ch. VIII, & *passim*).

Translation:

At the inception of a human being, sociability is the chief factor of its character.

(The words underlined are quotations to be discussed below.)

It is characteristic of the hieroglyphic style that the preceding kanji determines the one subsequent; and the last kanji (possibly underscored by the rhyme) is “what it is all about”. Hence: *there is goodness, goodness of the base, goodness of the base of incipient nature of the human being.*

> 人 (*W.* 25A) “a human being”. In literary texts 人 is usually “an adult man”. However, the present context speaks of the very moment of conception, when the sex is not yet defined. Semen will normally develop fully into a male child; but this felicitous eventuality depends on the virtue of the mother (cf. # 2-G-J), much in the same way as the ulterior development of a male child into a scholar-official depends on the virtue of the father (cf. # IV₁ & ff.).

For an ontological definition, see *M.*, 1.334.I.; *Li chi*, Li yün, *HY.* 9/24 (*C.*, I, p. 518): 故人者 . 其天地之德 . 陰陽之交 . 鬼神會 . 五行之秀氣也 . *Etenim homo ille (producitur) caeli terraeque actione, duorum corporeorum principiorum concursu, sensitivae animae et intellectualis animae conjunctione, (et habet) quinque elementorum subtilissam partem.*

> 五行 “the five elements” are 水火木金土;

> 秀氣 hsiu⁴ ch’i⁴ is usually translated as “the most subtle part” – whatever that may mean: “fine manners; talent; lucky influences – as of a place; elegant” (*Mth.*, 2803(a) 4).

> 初 (*W.* 16B) means etymologically “to cut a piece of cloth in order to make a garment”, hence “the very start”, meaning here “at the moment of conception” (cf. # 1₂-C).

> 性 “natural disposition, character” is defined in the opening line of the *Chung yung*, *Li chi*, *HY.* 31/1 (*C.*, p. 28; *L.*, p. 383):

天命之謂性

率性之謂道 . 脩道之謂教

We call “nature” what Heaven has conferred on us. It stands to reason that what is conferred by Heaven cannot but be good (cf. # 1₁-C-D). *We call conforming to nature “treading the way”, and we call “instruction” the promotion of the correct*

“*treading the way*” – which defines the aim of the present children’s primer: 教 “instruction”, viz. “the act of instructing a child”, is but 脩 hsiu¹ “putting in order, aligning” the Tao, 道 “the Way”, which is but 率 shuai⁴ “the conforming to” Nature.

> 道 shows a “head” and a “walking step by step” (*W.* 160A and 112E).

> 教 shows a “child” submitted to a teacher’s “instruction” and “whip” (*W.* 39H).

N.B.: For further references see *M.*, 4.10478.47, 性說 “Discussions on nature”. We may also consider Legge’s translation and compare it with those by Couvreur and their respective commentaries. (In fact, Couvreur gives four translations: two in French and two in Latin, for his translations of the *Ssu shu* text are not identical with those of *Li chi*, vol II, p. 427.)

> 善 shows “a dialogue of sheep”, the sheep being symbolic of social harmony (*W.* 73D), hence “good” as a social virtue (cf. below, # 1₁-D), hence my translation “sociability”. The Chinese ethic, viz. the Confucian ethic, is essentially social: it aims at a smooth rapport among individuals within the framework of Chinese society. The practice of these harmonious rapports is detailed in the 禮記 *Li chi*, the “Book of Ceremonies”, a “Précis of social behaviour”.

> 本 “the root”; “the base”, “the chief factor”. It calls to mind the second pericope of the *Lun yü*, *HY.* 1/1/2 (*L.*, p. 138-139; *C.*, p. 71), a pericope that defines the ethics proper to State officials:

君子務本。本立而道生

The gentleman devotes his attention to what is basic. This being established, the Tao lives. (L.: all practical courses naturally grow up; C., French, paraphrases: La racine une fois établie, donne naissance au tronc et aux branches; C., Latin: radice stante, jam virtus oritur.) Notice that 本 functions as a noun. In his commentary, Chu Hsi defines “the basics” as

being 仁 jen², the ideal rapport among gentlemen (君子 chün¹ tsu³, viz. among mandarins), which derives from 孝 hsiao⁴ and from 弟 ti⁴, the filial and the brotherly piety, to be discussed, respectively, in # IX and # X.

Some authors unmindful of the quoted pericope interpret 本 as an adverb of manner: “basically, fundamentally, radically”, e.g. *des Michels*, p. 1, *la nature est foncièrement bonne*; 本 *radicalement*; Giles avoids the problem (as usual), and skips the kanji 本: *are naturally good*.

Oriental translators, viz. the Manchu and the Mongol versions, understand 本 as an adverb of time, hence, at a first glance, a pleonastic insistence. Manchu: *niyalma tuktan de : banin daci sayin*; Mongol, *kümün-ü angyan-dur : cinar ijaar-ece sayin*: “at a human’s beginning, nature is originally good” (*daci = ijaar-ece*, “from the beginning, from its origin”). However, on closer inspection, this translations lead us to the metaphysical dimension of the text. Namely, the commentary to the quoted *Lun-yü* logion glosses:

本猶根也

a) Exoteric translation: 本 *equals* 根, which in turn is glossed as 根本 “the root, the origin”.

b) Esoteric translation: *The penis is the basis* (i.e. the chief factor); *the vagina the beginning*, meaning in the present context of the *San tzu ching*, that “nature”, as contained in the semen about to be injected into the vagina, is good. Master Wang will develop this idea in the commentary.

> 也 yeh³, used as a particle, is a “wrong borrowing” (假借 chia³ tsieh⁴); properly it is a “pictogram” (像形 hsiang⁴ hsing²) representing a “vagina”, and the kanji means what it shows (cf. *M.*, 1.171.XII; also *W.* 107B).

> 猶 yu² “moreover, in addition” is also a “wrong borrowing”; the kanji is properly a “shape-and-sound” (形聲 hsing² sheng¹) and stands for “a small monkey” known to be shy: when frightened he hides in a bush, and it is not easy to get

him out again. It is a metaphor for the penis in a state of erection (cf. Bischoff, *Orchis*, =42= & *passim*).

N.B.: cf. Mencius, *HY*. 75/7B/31:

君子之言也不下帶而道存焉

A gentleman's discourse does not descend below the belt, but keeps [such] meanings concealed.

Ignore this apophthegm only if you wish to fool yourself. (*Wil.*, p. 180; *L.*, p. 495; *C.*, p. 645, with the interpretation of Chu Hsi.)

Note: Chinese school folklore quotes this second hemistich:

性本懶

> 懶 has two readings (neither of which results in a scholarly rhyme):

a) lan³ “lazy”; hence: *laziness is the basis* (i.e. the chief factor) of human nature – which to the ears of schoolboys sounds sensible enough.

b) lai⁴ “abominably bad”: it shows the “heart” radical + 賴 lai⁴ “enmity, vengeance”. Hence: *viciousness is the basis* (i. e. the chief factor) of human nature, viz. as contained in the semen. This second interpretation is 異 yi⁴ “heterodox = heretical”: it represents the views of 荀子 Hsün-tzu (298-238 B.C.), a Confucianist philosopher who held anthropological views contrary to those of Mencius. He professed that human nature was bad:

人之性惡. 其善者僞也

Human nature is evil, and whatever good there may be to it is sham (*FORKE*, I, p. 226/227; *LEGGE*, *Mencius*, p. 79). The Confucianism of Mencius was the official theory universally taught and preached; the Confucianism of Hsün-tzu represents the practice of Chinese daily life up to the present day.

Ornatus: The etymological meaning of the last kanji of the first hemistich, 初 “to cut a piece of cloth in order to make a garment”, corresponds to the meaning of the rhyme, 銑 “scissors”.

之 and 本, both kanjis are taken from the floral kingdom; together they illustrate a growing: 之 shows “a little plant that starts rising from the ground” (*W.* 79B); 本 shows “a big tree that has risen from the ground” (*W.* 120A).

Brocade: As the tree is a metaphor for “the great man, the official”, the two kanjis combined, 之 and 本, encompass the maturing of the human individual from conception on to his appointment as a state official. This is the subject matter of the introductory part of the *San tzu ching* (# I - X).

N.B.: “Brocade” (錦 chin³) is the proper term for a literary ornament much appreciated by the Chinese. It consists of expressing a thought alien to the context, either on the A-level, or on any other level. Calling for an additional, independent interpretation (frequently suggested by parallelism, as in the present case), it acts in the way of a marginal note, a parenthesis.

Quotations:

Of verse # I₁ under scrutiny, each one of the two hemistichs is a quotation:

I₁-a: 人之初 (*at*) a human's beginning alludes to Ode 70, Stanza 1, verse 3: 我生之初 (*at*) the Beginning of my existence.

I₁-b: 性本善 is quoted from Chu Hsi's commentary of *Mencius*, *HY.* 42/6A/2.

Because of the pertinence of these two quotations (to be studied below), # I₁ is superb by the standards of Chinese literary taste.

Ode 70

cf. *L.*, p. 117-118

(see attached text)

§ Quoting from the Classics being a device paramount in Chinese literary expression, the detecting and understanding of quotations is fundamental to a correct understanding. In the present instance we will discover, little by little, that Ode

70 serves as the backdrop against which the *San tzu ching* unfolds its pessimistic weltanschauung, its demanding anthropology, and its heroic ethic.

§ When tackling an ode, any one of the *Odes*, we should keep in mind what Confucius said about them, *Lun yü*, *HY*. 2/2/2 (C., p. 77; L., p. 146):

子曰 . 詩三百 . 一言以蔽之 . 曰思無邪

The Master said: "Three hundred are the Odes, yet with a single word you may sum them up: 'Think no malice!'" (hsieh²)

This "single word" is quoted from Ode 297 in praise of the intelligence, the uprightness and the honesty of a prince of the steppes (a Hun, perhaps, but anyway a proto-Turk or proto-Mongol) and of his large herds of beautiful horses.

There are two surprises here:

- a) the existence of such an ode in itself; and
- b) Confucius quoting this ode, precisely, as the epitome of the spirit of the hallowed *Classic of the Odes*. However, to have this ode quoted in the first line of the official children's primer constitutes a kowtow (叩頭 k'ou⁴ t'ou² "a pounding [the ground with the fore-] head") to the ruling Manchu dynasty.

N.B.: The high-mindedness of Inner Asian princes must have been truly impressive. A concordant testimony, roughly contemporary with Ode 297, comes from the other end of the Asian Continent, namely from Homer: "*Praiseworthy Maremilkers* (Ἰππημόλγοι), *nomads thriftily feeding on milk, of all men the most righteous*", they were allies of the Trojans; Zeus rested his eyes upon them (*Iliad*, XIII:5-6).

A third surprise occurs when checking the *Lun yü* quotation. As a general rule, Confucius' words of wisdom (text and the various translations) need to be checked. By checking the interpretation of the present apophthegm, we discover that the meaning of 蔽 pi⁴ "to sum up, to contain" is in the *Lun yü* a *hapax legomenon*. The kanji occurs nine

times in the *Lun yü* (HY. 3/33640), eight times with the meaning “to blur, to confuse, to hide”, and only in the present instance was it given the contrary meaning. This was probably done deliberately. Because *the Master* in that case said: “300 are the Odes; yet with a single word you may blur their entire message [, namely with the word]: ‘Think no malice!’”

Conclusion: Do think malice!

§ The “Little prefaces” and the main commentary on the *Odes* are attributed to 毛萇 Mao Ch’ang (ca. 150 B.C.): hence the *Odes* are indiscriminately referred to as 毛詩 “The Odes of Mao”, as 詩經 “The Classic of the Odes”, or simply as 三百 “The CCC”. The subcommentary (箋 tsien¹) is by 鄭康成 Cheng K’ang-ch’eng (A.D. 127-200); and, in my edition, the sub-subcommentary is by 朱熹 Chu Hsi (1130-1200).

§ Methodologically we may retain:

1) Our commentator – any Chinese commentator – was a scholar who knew Chinese infinitely better than anyone alive today, no matter whether Han or Hu.

Conclusion: The commentator is right. If the Sinologue disagrees, he is the one likely to be wrong: either in his understanding of the text, or in his understanding of the commentary, or in his understanding of both.

2) Not being a paleophonetician, I would (perhaps wrongly) make an exception for the phonetic definitions. Two thousand years have passed since they were made, and much has happened in the meantime which may cause confusion when definitions do not agree with our dictionaries (cf. e.g. the rhymes that are not necessarily perceptible to modern ears).

Conclusion: Abandon a phonetic definition only once you have made sure that you are unable to put it to good use in one way or an other.

3) According to *WEBSTER*, a **com.men.tary** is “a series of explanatory notes or annotations”. Basically, the commentaries we used in high school helped us understand classical texts by transposing complex Greek or Latin sentences into a more regular syntax. They were written for us, schoolboys. Not so the Chinese commentaries: they were written for scholars, and, far from facilitating comprehension, they aim to draw the student’s attention to the intricacies of the text. A Chinese commentator only gives a single interpretation explicitly; the other meanings within the text result by implication. By his definitions and his paraphrases the commentator gives the interpretation considered to be the official one; but all these word definitions and paraphrases imply that other interpretations are also possible, and do also make sense: if the text was univocal, what need would there be for definitions? The word definitions are intended to attract the student’s attention to the so called “pregnant spots”.

> 註 / 注 chu⁴ “the commentary” actually means “to pay attention, to fix the mind on”: 注意 “chu⁴ yi⁴ “attention please!”, “watch out!”. Etymologically 註 shows a “lamp” enlightening the “word” (*W.* 83D); 注, the alternate graph, means “erudite explications”, “water” being symbolic of learnedness, as in *Lun Yü, HY.* 11/6/23 (*L.*, p. 192; *C.*, p. 132):

知者樂水. 仁者樂山

Scholars enjoy water; virtuous men enjoy the mountains.

Conclusion: The commentary demands an increased level of thought.

4) In order to decode an ode (or any multilayered text commented on in this way), we must:

– Firstly, consider the commentator’s definitions. Through these we obtain the official meaning which the author who quoted the ode knew, of course, but which he did, or did not, follow. In the present instance: Master Wang quotes Ode 70 without following the official interpretation.

– Secondly, we must carefully consider the “rejected meanings”, namely the possible meanings which the

commentator has rejected implicitly by means of his definitions. Through these “rejected meanings” we obtain further levels of interpretation. Not surprisingly the “second” level is generally more obvious and comes off more easily than the first, the “official”, level for which we may truly need a commentary.

– Thirdly, we must consider the lexicographical meaning of the kanjis used for the phonetic definitions: they may hint at the interpretation favoured by the commentator.

Conclusion: Take your time; do not get impatient!

5) This way of annotating classical texts, and of decoding them, was advocated by Confucius, *Li chi*, K’ung-tzu hsien chü, *HY*. 29/3 (C., II, p. 394): Concluding a dialogue, the Master said:

君子之服之也。猶有五起焉

A gentleman follows it (viz. my interpretation), and five more [interpretations] will probably occur to him.

Having thus been given licence to search for novel interpretations, we may at once read the present apophthegm: *It befits a gentleman approaching (second 之) a woman and serving her (服), that “little monkey” has five erections.*

Conclusion: Once again, do think malice! Be assured, your author did so. For the only way to express political opinions was to display wit and erudition for which an impertinence may have met with Imperial leniency. This translates for the Sinologue into the ten-figured reference numbers of *MOROHASHI*’s.

The “Little preface”:

The title: 兔爰閔周也

“The hare delays”, a lament over Chou.

> 爰 “to delay”. This interpretation is provided by the commentary to Stanza I, hereafter.

The text: 桓王失信。諸侯背叛。構怨連禍。王師傷敗。君子不樂其生焉

King Huan having lost his credit, the Estates turned their back on him, and deserted. Enmity and hatred combined for

兔爰閔周也。桓王失信，諸侯背叛，構怨連禍，王師傷

敗。君子不樂其生焉。不樂其生者，寐不欲覺之謂也。背，音佩。樂，岳洛二音。兔，古孝

同反下。○有兔爰爰，雉離于羅。羅，與也。爰爰，緩意。鳥網為

心之不均。箋云：有緩者有所聽縱也。有急者有所驟蹙也。○羅，七刀反。沈，七威反。兔于大反。我生

之初，尚無爲。尚無成人為也。箋云：尚庶幾也。言我幼

雅之時，庶幾於無所為，謂軍役之事也。

毛詩卷四

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我生之後，逢此百罹，尚寐無吪。罹，憂也。吪，動也。箋云：我

役之多，憂今但庶幾於寐，不欲見動，無所樂生之。其○罹，力知反。吪，五戈反。長，張丈反。大，代賀反。○

有兔爰爰，雉離于學。學，覆車也。○學，音孚。反。我生之初，

尚無造也。造，為也。我生之後，逢此百憂，尚寐無覺。○有兔

爰爰，雉離于置。置，張勞反。爾雅謂之學，覆車也。我生

之初，尚無庸。庸，用也。箋云：庸勞也。我生之後，逢此百凶，尚寐無

聰。聰，聞也。箋云：百凶者，王構怨連禍之凶。

兔爰三章章七句

the common ruin. The king's divisions suffered injury and were defeated. A gentleman takes no pleasure at his being alive.

In the course of the poem it will turn out that “the gentleman” was the army general who had to cope with the disaster.

Notice: The regular construction of the “Little preface” invites us to search for a message hidden in the rhymes: 信 *hsin*⁴ is a 震 *chen*⁴ rhyme; 叛 *p'an*⁴ is a 翰 *han*⁴ rhyme; 禍 *huo*⁴ is a 哿 *ko*³ rhyme; 敗 *pai*⁴ is a 封 *feng*¹ rhyme; and 焉 *yen*¹ is a 先 *hsien*¹ rhyme. 震 翰 哿 封 先 [*It would have been*] *paramount to grant adequate promotion to [men endowed with] a forceful writing brush.* And henceforth, throughout Chinese history, political disasters will be blamed on precisely this type of disorder: credit is given to slander and flattery, while the worthy men, honest and able, meet with contempt and distrust.

> 震 翰 : for the “thunderous writing brush” cf. *Fu*, p. 63.

The Mao commentary explains:

不樂其生者寐不欲覺之謂也

The man who takes no pleasure from his being alive, expresses the desire never to awaken from sleep.

Chu Hsi's sub-subcommentary:

1) [背] 音 佩 ; 2) [樂] 岳 洛 二 音 ; 3) [覺] 古 孝 反 ; 4) 下同

Commenting upon the text of the “Little preface”:

1) 背 *sounds like* 佩 *p'ei*⁴. *Cd.* does not know of any such reading: 背 is pronounced *pei*³, and 佩 is pronounced *p'ei*⁴ s. pp. 659c and 661b; *Chi yün*, cf. *M.*, 1.543 and 9.29363.II:

> 佩, 蒲 昧 切 = *p'u*² + *mei*⁴ = *p'ei*⁴, rhyme 隊 *tui*⁴;

> 背, a) 補 妹 切 *pu*³ + *mei*⁴ = *pei*⁴; b) 蒲 昧 切 *p'u*² + *mei*⁴ = *p'ei*⁴, common rhyme 隊 *tui*⁴. (A distinction is also made in Japanese: 背 *pei*⁴, is pronounced *hai* or *he*; 背 *p'ei*⁴ is pronounced *hai* or *bai*.)

This means that we are invited to read 背 aspirated, p'ei⁴, “to be antagonistic, to turn one’s back on”.

The “rejected” interpretation, pei⁴ “to carry a heavy load”, makes equally good sense: “As the responsibilities became unbearable, the officers ran away.”

2) 樂 has two valid pronunciations: 岳 yo^{4.5} and 洛 lo^{4.5} “to take pleasure”. Rejected meaning: yao³ “to love”.

Commenting upon Mao’s commentary:

3) 覺 古 孝 反 ku³ + hsiao⁴ = chiao⁴ “to awake from one’s dream, to wake up in the middle of one’s sleep”.

Rejected meaning: chioh^{2.5} “big, high, to grow up, perfect; to rise up in a career”. This makes also good sense: “he wishes, he were not a high officer.” In times of crisis a modest living may well appear more desirable than an exalted position.

4) 下同 *The same [meaning] later on.* The kanji 覺 recurs, with the same double meaning, in St. 2, verse 7.

*

Stanza I

The text of 1/1-2:

有兔爰爰 . 雉離于羅

There is a hare that delays, delays; and the pheasant is trapped in the net.

The commentary of Mao:

1) 興也 2) 爰爰緩意 3) 鳥綱爲羅 4) 言爲政有緩有急 . 用心之不均

1-A) *This is an allegory.*

1-B) *The vagina was enjoyed.*

> 興 hsing⁴ “an allegory” and “to enjoy”.

1-A) Indeed, the rabbit and the pheasant lead us into a web of allegories which ought to be disentwined forthwith.

– a) Rabbits, in China, are males only (there is no such thing as a female rabbit); they multiply by getting pregnant from a ray of moonlight falling into their mouth. Being a transcendental animal, the rabbit (= hare) is politely referred to as 老兔 “a venerable rabbit”; in vulgar language it is called

a 兔子 t'u⁴-tzu^o which, interpreted as a “rabbit boy” (and pronounced correctly t'u⁴ tzu³) means “a boy of pleasure” – whose characteristic comportment may be likened at times to that of princes and State officials (cf. 3₁-G, note).

– b) The pheasant, in contrast, is the emblem of the FIFTH, the median, mandarinal degree. It is emblematic of constancy and firmness, hence of marital fidelity (*Hartman*, p. 145). In the *Odes*, the pheasant occurs four times, twice as a male bird (Odes 33 and 197), and, as a female bird, in Ode 34 and in the present Ode 70.

Ode 34, St. 2, v. 4: 雉鳴求其牡 *the pheasant [hen] calls for her quadruped mate*. This verse, quoted in PÉTILLON: 雉求牡匹 *a pheasant hen is seeking a quadruped mate*, is interpreted as “*relations adultères*” (p. 521), or *Cd.* (p. 856c): “*mariage mal assorti*”. Recalling the well-known equation of the ruler-minister relationship with that of husband and wife, “an ill-assorted marriage” stands for a woeful relationship between a minister and his ruler.

– Conclusion: Legge (notes to Ode 34, p. 54a-b): “To suppose that the female pheasant is here calling to her a male quadruped is too extravagant.” No: this is precisely the point! And things are even worse in Ode 70, because “the male quadruped” is here “a rabbit”, viz. a “pleasure boy”, hence a creature incapable of being a husband, meaning a king incapable of keeping his ministers. Our “pheasant”, viz. the earnest minister, is serving a “rabbit”, viz. a lunatic, grotesquely incompetent king. Once again: the *ego*-person, 我 ngo³, of the poem is identified with the pheasant; the rabbit with the ruler.

1-B) All this being said, if still “the vagina was enjoyed”, it means that, albeit highly unsatisfactory, the relationship between rabbit and pheasant had nonetheless the matrimonial character of a ruler-minister relationship. Indeed, if the relations between the ruler and his minister had deteriorated to the point where the two men could no longer communicate with each other, the minister would not have quoted the *Odes*: he would have quoted the *Ch'u tz'u*.

2-A) 爰爰 convey the idea of 緩. Rejected meaning: “diligent”.

> 緩 huan³, according to the *Shuo wen*, means “to delay” → “to be slow, negligent”: it was accepted by Mao.

2-B) Normally, however, when faced with a kanji absolute, viz. a kanji that does not stand within a context that would decide the meaning, the commentary should be valued as the second instance. The first and most important instance is the *Shuo wen*. And the *Shuo wen* definition of 爰 reads: 相付取相引之意 [*The kanji conveys*] the idea of mutual giving and taking, of attracting one another. In our context this definition allows two interpretations:

– a) Quite often, a person lazy and negligent in fulfilling the actual duties, may, on the contrary, be most industrious when it comes to blackmailing and intriguing.

– b) Much more important, however: the definition fits the “matrimonial” relationship between the ruler and his minister.

3-A) A net (for catching) birds is a 羅 lo². For the device, see discussion L., p. 118b.

3-B) There appears to be no other meaning to the kanji 綱 – so, what about the “pregnant spot”? What else can/should we find? Logically we ought to find (according to 1-B and 2-B) a reference back to the “matrimony” between ruler and minister. This is easy enough: for 綱 kang¹ read 剛 kang¹ “hard, stiff”, and for 羅 lo² “the net” read 維 wei² “the rope, to tie together, a uniting”. Hence: *It comes to a union when the bird gets hard.*

> 鳥 niao³ “the bird with the long tail” (as opposed to 隹 chui¹ “the bird with the short tail”) is a normal euphemism for the male organ.

N.B.: For literati of old, this way of juggling kanjis – just a little tampering with radicals – presented no problem. It actually amounted to graphic punning. In fact, the ode itself makes such a graphic pun in its first stanza: verse 2: 羅 lo² “the net”; and verse 6: 罹 li² “sorrow”, the former being a

metaphor for the latter. Change the “rope” element into a “heart” element, and “the net” becomes “sorrow”.

4) *Paraphrase*: In every administration there are those who tend to delay actions, and those who are energetic. It all depends on how they set their heart at their task.

The subcommentary of Cheng K’ang-ch’eng:

箋云 1) 有緩者有所聽縱也 2) 有急者有所躁蹙也

The subcommentary says: 1) *Those who delay action acquiesce and relax*; 2) *the energetic ones get active and are zealous*.

Chu Hsi’s sub-subcommentary comments upon the subcommentary:

[躁] 七刀反 ts’ih^{1.5} + tao¹ = ts’ao¹ (*Cd.* and *Chi yüin*: tsao³, *M.* 10.37906); 沈 *antiquated*: 七感反 ts’ih^{1.5} + kan³ = ts’an³.

[蹙] 子六反 tzu³ + lu^{4.5} = tsu^{4.5}. The rejected pronunciation ts’u^{4.5} brings no change of meaning.

*

The text of 1/3-4:

我生之初. 尙無爲

At the inception of my existence, I devoted myself to the practice of quietism.

Being an embryo in one’s mother’s womb is the only stage in life in which we really can, and do, practice *wu²-wei²*, the famous “non-interfering” of mystical Taoism.

Notice: The words underlined are quoted in the initial verse of the *San tzu ching*. To the untrained eye it may seem that 之初 “at the beginning of ...” was too meager a hint at any specific passus. Not at all! Given the fact that I am a human, *At a human’s inception*, 人之初, is simply a generalization of the present *At the inception of my life*, 我生之初. As a rule, we should assume that in a grand Confucian text (such as the *San tzu ching*) there are no accidental, no “dud”, quotations, least of all from the *Odes*, least of all in the initial

line – besides, at a close look the quotation makes perfect sense.

Commentary:

尙無成人爲也

Devoting oneself to deeds not [fit for] mature men. Mao interprets the Taoist meaning away: maybe, because he did not like Taoism, or because his “gentleman’s words do not descend below the belt” – or both. Cheng K’ang-ch’eng, however, brings it back as a “rejected meaning”.

> 成人 may be taken here in a general sense of “grown up”. It is, however, a term laden with Confucian ethics (cf. below, # 7-D, & quotation).

Subcommentary:

箋云 1) 尙庶幾也

2) 言我幼稚之時。庶幾於無所爲。謂軍役之事也

The subcommentary says:

1) 尙 shang⁴ equals “to desire, to long for”.

Rejected meaning: “to sit cross-legged” = 徇 ch’ang³: “I was sitting cross-legged in my mother’s womb, and practiced *wu-wei*.” For a Chinese worthy, a cross-legged position *in utero* is in order.

2) *Paraphrase: When I was young, I longed to do those things one should not do, namely business pertaining to the military. (Rather than martial arts, I should have studied the Confucian Classics in preparation for the civil service.)*

The text of 1/5-7:

我生之後。逢此百罹。尙寐無吡

After I was born, I encountered all these sorrows; and I longed to sleep without movement.

Commentary:

1) 罹憂 2) 吡動也

1) 罹 *equals* 憂 *yu*¹ “concern; that which causes concern or sorrow”. Rejected meaning: “a fowler’s net; to fall into a trap” (= 羅 *lo*²), hence: I met with a thousand traps.

2) 吡 *equals* 動 *tung*⁴ “to move oneself”. Rejected meaning: “slander, lie, fraud”: “Could I but sleep unconcerned by slander and fraud!” (*Cd.* knows only of two pronunciations *wo*² and *ngo*², used interchangeably.)

Subcommentary:

箋云 1) 我長大之後 . 乃遇此軍役之多憂今但庶幾於寐

2) 不欲見動 . 無所樂生之甚

The subcommentary says: 1) “After I had become successful and important, I met with these many concerns of the military. Now I only long to sleep.”

2) *To wish never to wake up, is the highest degree of not enjoying being alive.*

Sub-subcommentary:

a) commenting upon the commentary:

1) [罹] 力知反 2) [吡] 五弋反

b) commenting upon the subcommentary

3) [長] 張丈反 4) [大] 代賀反

a-1) [罹] 力知反 *li*^{4.5} + *chih*¹ = *li*¹ (modern *li*² : ancient definitions may not distinguish between 上平, the first tone, and 下平, the second tone). There is no other pronunciation. The definition appears to be aimed at insisting on the difference between 罹 *li*² and 羅 *lo*², or, rather, at attracting the attention to the graphic pun discussed above.

a-2) [吡] 五弋反 *wu*³ + *ko*¹ = *wo*¹ “the lie”.

Rejected: *ngo*² “to move” (according to the *Chi yün, M.*, 10.35256). Notice the subtle way in which Chinese commentators express themselves: Mao has put forward one meaning: “to move oneself”; and suggests implicitly the other interpretation: “to slander”. The subcommentary paraphrases the verse according to Mao’s interpretation; and the sub-

subcommentary, in a phonetical definition, puts forwards the meaning “to slander” which Mao “rejected”.

N.B.: Complaints about court intrigues and intrigues among officers is a favourite topic, ubiquitous in Chinese literature. It must have been terrible. Yet it ought to be remembered that these gentlemen wrote most of their artful rhetoric when they had leisure to do so, namely when they were disgraced and banished to the dark side of the moon.

b-3) [長] 張 丈 反 chang¹ + chang⁴ = chang⁴ “excess, overabundance”. But 張 丈 means also “a highly esteemed gentleman”.

b-4) [大] 代 賀 反 tai⁴ + ho⁴ = t'o⁴. Pronunciation neither mentioned in *Cd.* nor in *M.*, 3.5831. 代 can be interpreted as meaning “in turn, in proper succession”; and 賀, as meaning “to shoulder a burden”.

Hence:

– Suggested by the phonetic definitions: “after I had in turn, as an esteemed gentleman, shouldered the burden of an exalted position”, a paraphrase of the subcommentary.

– Reading the “rejected” chang³ ta⁴ “to grow up”. This fits the Taoist statement: “after I had (left my mother’s womb, and) grown up”.

Stanza II

The text of 2/1-2:

有兔爰爰. 雉離于學

Same meaning as in Stanza I.

Commentary:

學 覆 車 也

學 is “an inverted carriage”; *Cd.*, p. 84a, reads fou² or fu¹ and defines it as a trap constructed from a net with an automatic trigger, see *L.*, p. 118b: according to the *Erh ya*, there are three terms for the same device.

Sub-subcommentary:

1) [學] 音孚 2) [覆] 芳服反 3) [車] 赤奢反

1) [學] *sounds like* 孚 fu¹.

The rejected reading fou² brings no change of meaning. However, if we read the phonetic definition as a gloss (孚 “honest, trustworthy, faithful”, cf. *W.* 94B: “as a bird watching over its nest”), we may understand that “the pheasant” was the victim of his faithfulness to a worthless ruler (cf. below, sub-subcommentary 3, and Stanza III, verse 2). Notice that all the “rejected meanings” and definitions of pronunciation, without exception, suggest an attempt on the “pheasant’s” life.

2) [覆] 芳服反 fang¹ + fu¹ = fu¹.

Rejected reading: fou³ “soldiers in an ambush”. This “rejected reading” invites us to muse on accidents that, at the turn of a road, may befall an overly efficient General “clad in righteousness” 芳服. The “ambush” may be presented, possibly, as a traffic accident (cf. in the above “Commentary”, the “carriage turned upside down”).

> 芳 “the plant of ‘squareness’”, is a fragrant plant ubiquitous in the *Ch’u tz’u*. It is symbolic of the highest virtue.

3) [車] 赤奢反 ch’ih^{4,5} + shê¹ = ch’ê¹.

The rejected reading ch’ü¹ brings no change of meaning; but a “red wasting” suggests in our context a “gratuitous murder”; “red” is moreover the colour eponymous of the royal palace: “the extravagance of the Palace”.

The text of 2/3-4:

我生之初 . 尙無造

Same meaning as in Stanza I.

Commentary:

造 爲 也

造 tsao⁴ equals 爲 wei² “to make, to do”. Rejected meaning: ts’ao⁴ “to progress”, which suggests a Taoist interpretation: “(In my mother’s womb) I did not long for a career.”

The text of 2/5-7:

我生之後 . 逢此百憂 . 尙寐無覺

After I was born I encountered all these concerns. I want to sleep without ever waking up.

> 憂 was proposed by Mao as the equivalent of 懼 (cf. Stanza I, verse 6).

> 覺 “big, high; to rise up in career” was the meaning “rejected” by Ch’u Hsi commenting upon Mao’s commentary of the “Little preface”. It also makes good sense here: “I wish to sleep and not to be a high officer.”

Stanza III

The text of 3/1-2:

有兔爰爰. 雉離于罝

Same meaning as in Stanza I.

Commentary:

罝 罝也

罝 *equals* 罝.

Sub-subcommentary:

1) [罝] 昌鍾反 2) 又上凶反 3) [罝] 張劣反 4) 爾雅謂之罝覆車也

1) [罝] 昌鍾反 ch’ang¹ + chung¹ = ch’ung¹,

2) *also*: 上凶反 shang⁴ + hsiung¹ = chung¹ (*Cd.*, p. 906c : tch’ung¹, t’ung²).

3) [罝] 張劣反 chang¹ + lieh^{4.5} = chieh^{4.5} which is of the *Chi yün*: 株劣 chu¹ + lieh^{4.5}; *Cd.*, p. 910b: tchouo⁵, *M.*, 9.28296: chuo².

Here again, as in the previous stanza, the commentary suggests an attempt on the General’s life: the lexicographic meaning of these phonetic definitions appear to hint:

> 昌鍾 at “a sunshine cup”, a poisoning;

> 上凶 at “the cruelty, the evilness of those who sit at the top”;

> 張劣 at “the weakness of the Exalted One” (of King Huan, paradigmatically); or, according to the other definition “the iniquity of an accusation requesting the death penalty”.

4) and *The Erh ya says that a 學 equals 覆車* “an overturned carriage” (cf. St. II, verse 1).

The text of 3/3-4:

我生之初尚無庸

At the inception of my existence I devoted myself to not being useful to the public.

Commentary:

庸用也 yung² equals yung⁴ “to be useful”.

Rejected meaning, “to be stupid”.

Subcommentary:

箋云 *The subcommentary says:*

庸勞也 yung² equals lao² “to toil, to suffer”.

The text of 3/5-7:

我生之後 . 逢此百凶 . 尚寐無聰

After I was born I encountered all these countless abominations and wanted to sleep and not to hear of them any longer.

Commentary:

聰聞也 ts'ung¹ equals wen² “to hear”.

Rejected meaning: “to be clever, to understand”. Already in his mother’s womb (cf. *San tzu ching*, # 2-G & ff.) the speaker devoted himself to learning in order “not to be stupid”; but faced with all that abomination, he now wishes he had remained a happy fool, in good Taoist fashion (e.g. *Tao tê ching*, 20).

Subcommentary:

箋云 *The subcommentary says:*

百凶者王構怨連禍之凶

The hundred abominations, they proceed from the king, from enmity, from selfishness, and some may even be sent by Heaven.

> 構怨連禍 is quoted from the “Little preface”, but presently there is more to it.

Please refer to the previous sub-subcommentary (3/1-2):

> 百凶 recalls 上凶 “the evilness of those on top”;

> 王 recalls “the weakness of the Exalted One”;

> 構怨 kou⁴ yün⁴: the expression is taken from *Mencius, HY. 3/1A/7* (C., p. 318; L., p. 144), a passage much to the point, it reads: (14) ‘You collect your equipment of war, endanger your soldiers and officers, and excite the resentment of the other princes; – do these things cause you pleasure in your mind?’ (15) The king replied, ‘No. How should I derive pleasure from these things? My object in them is to seek for what I greatly desire.’ (16) [Mencius] said, ‘May I hear from you what it is that you greatly desire?’ The king laughed and did not speak....(Legge)

> 連 lien² has no immediate interpretation. One would be tempted to interpret it (mindful of the Japanese acceptations) as the nefarious activities of “parties and factions”, and it may be just that. However, the kanji receives a definition in *Mencius, HY. 6/1B/4* (C., p. 334; L., p. 160): 從流上而忘反謂之連 *pressing up against the current, and forgetting to return, is what I call urging the way against it* (Legge). The commentary informs us that what is meant by “pressing against the current”, is “to devote oneself solely to satisfy one’s royal fantasies”. Hence, my translation “selfishness”. However, the one meaning does not exclude the other; and let us modify our translations according to the changing context (cf. “Little preface”).

Aftertitle:

兔爰三章章七句

“The hare delays”: 3 stanzas, 7 verses to each stanza.

Finally, and for orderliness' sake, let us consider the ode's rhyming pattern (according to the *Chi yün*):

Stanza I: 羅 *luo*² or *lo*² rhymes 歌 *ko*¹ and 支 *chih*¹, respectively; 爲 *wei*² rh. 支; 罹 *li*² rh. 支; 吡 *wo*¹ “the lie”, and *ngo*² “to move oneself”, both rh. 歌. Hence we obtain the rhyming pattern: A B B A, or A A A B.

Stanza II: 學 *fou*² or *fu*¹ rh. 尤 *you*² and 虞 *yü*², respectively; 造 *tsao*⁴ “to do” rh. 皓 *hao*⁴, rejected *ts'ao*⁴ “to progress” rh. 號 *hao*⁴; 憂 *yu*¹ rh. 尤; 覺 *chio*^{2.5} rh. 效 *hsiao*⁴. Hence we obtain the rhyming pattern: C D C E. However, Chu Hsi insists that we should read 學 like 孚 *fu*¹. We then obtain an irregular rhyming pattern: C D E F. Obviously, the meaning was more important to him than the formality of a rhyming pattern.

Stanza III: 置 *ch'ung*¹ rh. 冬 *tung*¹, or *t'ung*² rh. 東 *tung*¹; 庸 *yung*² rh. 冬; 凶 *hsiung*¹ rh. 冬; 聰 *ts'ung*¹ rh. 東. Hence we obtain the same rhyming patterns as in Stanza I: either G H H G, or G G G H.

Thus we have (rather laboriously) decoded the nightmarish Ode 70. If we believe Confucius, three more interpretations remain to be formulated. I believe this to be the case, but these interpretations would be largely *ad hoc* and would not concern us here and now. Here and now, let us call to mind that our children's primer opens with a quotation from Ode 70. The obvious reason for doing so is to give a Classical reference for the point to be made, namely, that by “inception of life” the moment of conception is meant, not the moment of birth. This will be made explicit in Master Wang's commentary on couplet # II. Moreover, and more subtly, we are referred to couplet # X, and to the catastrophe full of glory recorded there. A Chinese mandarin – should he want to stay without blame – cannot expect his career to be pleasant: it may, on the contrary, require martyrdom.

In this context it might be appropriate to recall the famous lines of the chorus in Sophocles' (497-406) “Oidipous on Kolonos” v. 1225 & fol.: *Never to be born surpasses /*

everything that counts. / If one comes to light, however, / the second is this: / to return whence one came, at the fastest. / Once youth is gone with its / light-hearted unconcern, / what painful aberration / then remains outside? What torment / does not enter? / Murder, sedition, brawl, fights / and envy – and in addition / comes at last the decried, / the impotent, unsociable / senility deprived of friends, / where then in common / dwell all the evils of evils.

*

MENCIUS 6A/2

cf. C., p. 558; L., p. 395-396

(see attached text)

Translation on level A:

Text, first part:

The philosopher Kao said: “Nature is like water flowing rapidly. Open a passage to the east, and it flows to the east; open a passage to the west, it flows to the west. Man’s nature makes no distinction between social and anti-social, just as water makes no distinction between east and west.”

> 善 and 不善, see the definition of the kanji following the translation of # I₁. The generally accepted translation is the sleek “good” and “bad”. These terms, however, are too vague. Given the fact that Confucian ethics are essentially immanent and aim at a successful integration of the individual into society, I opted for “social” and “anti-social”; the latter including any type of socially nefarious action, including Buddhist and Taoist monasticism or hermitism.

The commentary (of Chu Hsi):

a) 湍他端反 t’¹a¹ + tuan¹ = t’uan¹ “to flow rapidly”; rejected reading: Chuan¹, the name of a river. This superfluous phonetic definition holds for its semantic meaning: “A hetero[-dox] axiom”, viz. “a bad principle held by other people” (cf. 端 in # 1₁-A).

也。○告子曰：性猶湍水也。決諸東方則東流，決諸西方則西流。人性之無分於善不善也，猶水之無分於東西也。

孟 子 卷六 一 中華書局聚 珍做宋版印

方則西流。人性之無分於善不善也。猶水之無分於東西也。

湍他端反。湍波流濛回之貌也。告子因前說而小變之。近於揚子善惡混之說。

子曰：水信無分於東西，無分於上下乎？人性之善也，猶水之就下也。人無有不善，水無有不下。

言水誠不分東西矣。

然豈不分上下乎？性即天理，未有不善者也。今夫水搏而躍之，可使過額。

激而行之，可使在山。是豈水之性哉？其勢則然也。人之可使為不善，其性亦猶是也。

夫音扶。搏補各反。搏擊也。躍跳也。額額也。

也。水之過額在山，皆不就下也。然其本性未嘗不就下，但為搏激所使而逆其性耳。○此章言性本善，故

順之而無不善，本無惡，故反之而後為。○告子曰：生

惡非之本無定體，而可以無所不為也。

○告子曰：生

b) 湍 conveys the image of a whirling water flow. The philosopher Kao follows the previous idea (see *MENCIUS*, 6A/1) while modifying it a little; the expounded theories are close to those of Yang Hsiung (53 B.C. - A.D. 18): they confuse good and vicious. A “heterodox axiom” indeed.

Text, second part:

Mencius replied: “Water surely does not distinguish between east and west; but does it not make a distinction between up and down? Human nature is social, just as water tends to flow downwards. There is no such thing as a man anti-social [by nature]; nor is there such a thing as water that does not flow downwards.”

Commentary:

Paraphrase: Water verily makes no distinction between east and west. But how can it not distinguish between up and down? Nature is but Heaven’s law: there has not yet been anyone who was [naturally] anti-social.

Text, third part:

“Now, by striking water and causing it to leap up, you may make it go over its margin, and, by damming and channelling it, you may force it up a mountain; but how can this be natural to water? It is the applied force which makes this happen. Men can be made to behave in an anti-social way, in which case their nature has suffered similar [coercion].”

Commentary:

a) 夫 sounds like 扶 fu², = demonstrative pronoun. The “rejected” meaning: fu¹ “man”, holds for the B-level.

b) 搏補各反 pu³ + ko^{4.5} = po^{4.5} (modern po^{2.5}); the rejected readings fu⁴, pu⁴ bring no change of the meaning. However, its semantic meaning “everybody derives comfort [from it]” holds for the B-level.

c) 搏 = 擊 chi^{1.5} “to hit, to beat” holds for the A-level. The “rejected” meaning “to hold in the fist, to seize” holds for the B-level.

d) 躍 = 跳 t'iao⁴ “to jump, to squirt” holds for the A-level; the “rejected” meaning, t'i^{4.5} “a hare that jumps and runs very fast; swiftly, merrily” holds for the B-level.

e) 額 = 額 ê^{2.5} “the forehead; a fixed limit, a dike”. The kanji 額 sang³ means “the forehead” and nothing else; the gloss extends its meaning for the A-level's sake. “The forehead”, odd within the A-context (yet adopted by Legge and Cuvreur), holds (like the rest of the above definitions) for the B-level.

The commentary goes on paraphrasing the A-level:

Water trespassing its margin, or staying on top of a mountain, are instances where water has not run downwards. However, it has always been its basic nature to run downwards: it is the compulsion of pressure and of damming that has opposed its nature.

The present pericope says: Sociability is at the root of [human] nature. Hence, where nature is followed, there cannot be any anti-social behaviour, for, at the root, there is no evil. Hence, also, evil occurs only when nature has been perverted. Evil is not the original amorphous state which indeed is capable of producing anything.*

This last sentence refers us to the previous pericope, *MENCIUS*, 6A/1.

> 無定體, rendered as “the state of amorphousness” see the Corollary at the end of # 1₁-A.

*) Quoted in the second half of the first hemistich of the *San tzu ching*.

Level B:

The A-level is the orthodox interpretation; it appears contrived, particularly in its third part. By applying the meanings to which the commentaries draw our attention (by rejecting them, or by means of phonetical definitions), it appears that rather than hydraulics, erotics are meant to serve as a simile for the basic excellence of Nature: man is naturally

good (meaning “social”), just as semen is normally meant to flow downwards into a vagina; and sex was, anyway, part of the discussion, since the next pericope opens with the propositions: 食色性也 *Nature calls for food and sex.*

Explicating Ode 70, we encountered the kanji 也 yeh³ used in its original meaning, “the vagina”; we also became acquainted with 猶 yu² the shy little “monkey”. Less timid is 然 jan² the huge “flaming ape”, bluish and with purple stripes 色青赤有文 (*M.*, 7.19149.XVIII = 20693), or “the mountain” 山 shan¹, which, as a pictogram, resembles the male genitals. “Water” 水 shui³ stands for any sort of “liquid”; and, as “the water of little monkey”, it means here semen.* Keeping it within the “mountain” refers to the *coitus reservatus* (featuring an intercourse without ejaculation), a practice common among Chinese. Finally, 人 jen² means a male “man”, of course, as normal in Chinese literature. Following the example set by Heaven and Earth, Chinese heterosexual intercourse assigns to the woman the lower, to the man the upper position.

*) To modern Westerners, “semen” and “urine” are words for different things. In ancient times, however, e.g. Pliny, the two words tended to be used indifferently.

Translation on the B-level:

Text, first part:

The philosopher Kao said: “By nature ‘little monkey’ spurts its juice. If the vagina makes him pour forth towards the east, then east it flows; if he is made to pour forth towards the west, it will flow west. [Likewise] a man does not by nature distinguish between a morally correct and a morally incorrect vagina, no more than for little monkey’s juice it makes a difference whether the vagina is turned east or west.”

Text, second part:

Mencius replied: “Certainly, to semen, there is no difference between east and west; but is there also no difference between up and down? Man, by nature, finds the vagina delightful;

and little monkey's juice comes and falls into the vagina. There is no man who would not take delight in having his semen always flowing down [into it]."

Text, third part (the references hold for the commentary of the A-level):

*"Now, the male ^(a) juice: by rubbing * [little monkey] ^(b+c) swiftly ^(d) within the fist, one may make it squirt past one's forehead ^(e), or one may hinder the gush and make it stay within the 'mountain'. But is this in accordance with the nature of semen? ** [No!] Its (viz. Nature's) power sets the standard: 'flaming ape' – vagina. [Likewise] man can be brought to act in an anti-social way, but by nature [he tends towards the good] in the same way as 'little monkey' tends to a real vagina."*

*) The commentary's phonetic definition means: "each one derives comfort [from it]." This statement is remarkable, for, in the East no less than in the West, self-masturbation tends to be subject to superstitions and bigotry.

***) Pun: *This is the natural beginning of really good joy water.*

> 豈, read k'i³, it is a question particle; read k'ai³, it equals 愷 and means "joy". The Chinese attach great importance to the abundant secretion of "joy water" by the man as well as by the woman. To this effect, the erotic treatises recommend an extreme protraction of the coital foreplay. This will eventually result in the aforementioned *coitus reservatus*: while the semen is retained "within the mountain", the sexual appetite, unquenched, may remain alive indefinitely.

Master Wang's Commentary

1₁-A:

此立教之初.發端之始

ch'ih³ li^{4.5} chiao⁴ chih¹ ch'u¹

fa^{1.5} tuan¹ chih¹ shih³

Here starts education, begins the start.

“Here”, namely the very moment of the conception of a human being, cf. the first hemistich.

The verses of the *San tzu ching* are held in hieroglyphic style: A determines B; B determines C; C, the last kanji of a syntagm, is “what it is all about”. The commentary, on the other hand, is held in hieratic style: subject - verb - object (as in English).

Parallelism is a major device of literary Chinese: it must be taken into account wherever it occurs. Failing to see it, not taking it into account, is an error. Master Wang faces us with two binomes in parallel position

> 立教 “instruction”, literally “a set instruction”, and

> 發端 “the start”. The start for what? The start for an official career: see below, > 端 c.

However, instead of two binomes we may as well read four individual kanjis: the meaning would be the same, approximately, and we would credit Master Wang with a more elegant style.

Parallelism may be antonymous, meaning that it opposes contraries; or it may be synonymous, meaning that it opposes similar things:

> 立 and 發 are antonyms: (*W.* 60H / 112H) “to stand upright, to fix” / “to shoot off (an arrow), to send forth”.

> 初 and 始 are perfect synonyms as defined by the *Shuo wen*: 初始也. Yet they are also antonyms in that the radicals, 刀 *tao*¹ and 女 *nü*³, suggest a *yang* / *yin* opposition: “the knife” being a euphemism for the penis; and the *Shuo wen* defines 始 as 女之初也 “the inception of (being) a woman”, viz. her defloration and first pregnancy (*M.*, 3.6166.I-II.i): yet another hint at “the moment of conception”.

> 教 and 端, in a similar fashion, are synonyms: either kanji means “to teach, to educate”; yet they are antonyms in that they suggest a *yang-yin* opposition:

– 教 (*W.* 39H) shows “a child submitted to a teacher’s influence and rod”: it refers to the formal education pertaining to the world of the male (# 2-P); and

– 端 (*W.* 164B) shows “a plant that has been set and now grows above, and below, the ground”: this suggests the “uterine education” incumbent on the mother (cf. # 2-G-O).

“Teaching, doctrine”, for 端, is not a usual acceptance. The kanji was borrowed from *Lun yü*, *HY.* 3/2/16 (*C.*, p. 81; *L.*, p. 150):

子曰 . 攻乎異端 . 斯害也已

The Master said, ‘To study heterodox doctrines is injurious indeed.’

Presently, the kanji serves in many functions:

a) It alludes to the above logion that is apparently unrelated to our context. The importance of the quotation will become apparent when it will surface again in the last sentence of the introductory part of the *San tzu ching* (# 11-H). The expressed idea, zealously put into practice, sounds throughout our text like a *basso continuo*. (DE GROOT has chosen this very logion as the motto for his *Sectarianism and religious persecution in China*.)

b) In another acceptance, as a philosophical term, the kanji refers us to *MENCIUS* (see below, second quotation).

c) Still on another level 端 refers us to the *Shuo wen* definition: 端直也 . While *chih*^{2.5} normally means “right, exact”, it may, restrictively, mean “to hold an official position in an upright, correct way; an official position” – which is precisely the aim of a Confucian education as proposed by the *San tzu ching*. Hence our understanding 發端 as meaning “to start an official career”, indeed, at the moment of conception (see below, 1₁-B). We may therefore correctly interpret # 1₁-A as meaning:

Education starts here, sending forth [your child] on an official career.

d) Stylistically, the kanji is necessary for the sake of parallelism.

Quotations:

First quotation:

立教 “to set the teaching” is taken from the *Li chi*, Wang *chih*, *HY.* 5/42 (*C.*, I, p. 300), where the “teaching” is “set” in

four subjects (立四教), namely 詩書禮樂 poetry, history, ceremonies, and music (*M.*, 3.4682.231.I).

N.B.: *M.*, *ibid.* III, mentions another set of 四教. It encompasses what princesses must learn before their wedding: 婦德 . 婦言 . 婦容 . 婦功 fu⁴ tō^{2.5}, fu⁴ yen², fu⁴ yung², fu⁴ kung¹ “ladylike virtue, ladylike speech, ladylike forbearance, ladylike skills” i.e. craftsmanship in silk and hemp (*inter alia*, *Li chi*, Hun yi, *HY.* 44/7 : C., II, p. 648; the same, *Chou li*, ch. 7, fol. 10-9).

On a secondary level the binome refers us to the educational treatise 小學內篇 *Hsiao hsioh nei pien*, composed by Chu Hsi: its first chapter, 立教第一, is the major source from which Master Wang draws his disquisitions on “maternal education” (cf. # 2-G & ff.).

Second quotation:

端 “the plant that has been set and now grows above, and below, the ground” is a philosophical term meaning “the principles” of ethical behavior, a concept of *Mencius*, *HY.* 13/2A/6 (C., p. 376; L., p. 202-203). These “principles” are four, and they are natural to everybody; hence they need to be “developed” (發) by a mother, rather than taught by a teacher.

(5) *The feeling of commiseration is the principle of benevolence. The feeling of shame and dislike is the principle of righteousness. The feeling of modesty and complaisance is the principle of propriety. The feeling of approving and disapproving is the principle of wisdom.*

(6) *Men have these four principles just as they have their four limbs. When men, having these four principles, yet say of themselves that they cannot [develop them], they play the thief with themselves, &c, (cf. Legge).*

Third quotation:

發 “to develop”, supplemented by Legge, and quoted by Master Wang, was supplied by Chu Hsi’s commentary:

端. 緒也 . 因其情之發而性之本 . 然可得而見

tuan¹ means to disentwine, for indeed these feelings develop from there, and they are basic to human nature; yet they require awareness and discernment.

Corollary:

This first line of the *San tzu ching*, # I₁, and the first definitions of the commentary, # 1₁-A, state the anthropological dogma fundamental to the teaching of Mencius, hence of orthodox Confucianism: every fully developed human being (meaning: every well bred human male) is capable of positive feelings, even those as noble as commiseration and decency – theoretically! Notice this all-important restriction: the fundamental, the initial goodness of (human) nature is a metaphysical, a theoretical postulate. It applies only to the first moment of existence, that is, from the first rising of the sperm up to the very moment of ejaculation.* No longer does it apply to the time of birth when physical and moral qualities are already shaped by nine months of (good or bad) “uterine education” (cf. # 2-J). Hence the axiom of the fundamental goodness of nature (of all nature, not just of human nature) means that life (in fact any form of existence) is necessarily good, as it proceeds from “Heaven”. Christians would agree with that: *Gen.* 1:31, and *St. John’s Gospel* 1:3, or, at random, Hugh of St. Victor (in *Areopagita*): *Dona naturae optima, dona gratiae autem perfecta*. The China-craze of the Enlightenment (e.g. J.J. Rousseau) aggressively professed the natural goodness of human nature as an actual fact; and in order to give the discovery more weight, claimed that it was Chinese wisdom. It clearly was not, but who cared? Besides, Enlightenment was blissfully ignorant of the fact that the “good” of one ethical system may well be the “evil” of another ethical system. Confucian ethics are essentially an orthopraxy (meaning: “how to do things correctly”, in the Chinese way, of course), and the Confucian “good” is a social quality. Guided by this insight, we ought to stress the social aspect of 善 (“the dialogue of sheep”) and read # I₁ as “man is basically a social being”.

But who cared? What imported to the Enlightenment was to get rid of the concept of Original sin, the need for Redemption and for the Christian religion as a whole. It was not in anyone's interest that the sinfulness of mankind and the need for redemption should sneak in again through the back door in the shape of that generalized human imperfection which was indisputable even to the Chinese (indeed, as formulated by Hsün-tzu). According to the Christian concept of Original sin, human nature is forever viciated, figuratively, through the common disobedience of Adam and Eve, and is therefore evil at the very moment of conception. According to the Mencian view ignorant of any first human couple that could have sinned, human nature is submitted to negative as well as to positive influences starting with the moment after conception. The difference is the matter of one jiffy. This jiffy, however, means in practice that the sperm of a Christian is rotten and loaded with sin (cf. Psalm 50:7). In contrast, there is nothing wrong with the sperm of a Chinese heathen: the evil comes from his wife. At this point we should read (if we have not done so already): Marcel Granet, *La pensée chinoise*, ch. III, the 3d subchapter which discusses the concept of 性 (p. 401): for we are entering the classical *yin-yang* speculations, the negative 陰 *yin* pertaining to the female, and the positive 陽 *yang* to the male; we may observe the respective positions which Chinese civilization assigns to the sexes; and note that, following the example of Confucius, Confucianists are known to be pederasts and detestable husbands (cf. e.g. in the novel *Chin P'ing Mei* the personage of Hsi-men Ching's secretary, Wen Pi-gu, a typical member of the philistine ** tribe of Confucian mini-scholars. Notice that his name sounds to the ear like "the Backside of letters": in florid Chinese, literally, "a rump farting classical quotations").

*) The Chinese concept of fertility resembles the one familiar to us from the Bible. As if it were a vegetal seed, animal semen is thought to contain the entire future being. Deposited in the maternal womb, it develops there like a seed in the soil. And, as the virtue of soils are diverse, good soil, bad soil, the virtue of women

also vary: women are more or less fit to bear sons healthy of body and mind.

***) Contrary to the prevailing opinion (e.g. *WEBSTER*), this word “philistine”, *n. & adj.*, has nothing to do with the ancient Palestinians, and it should not be written with a capital P. It comes (*via* the German *Philister*) from the Greek φιλίστωρ (*filístōr*) “fond of learning”. This laudable propensity having been dislodged by the Romantic movement, “philistine” has received a bad connotation and became a synonym of “pedant”. This word, in turn, is derived (*via* the French *pédant*) from the Italian *il pedante* “a punctilious school teacher”. Philistinism and pedantry may rightly be viewed as the less attractive sides of erudition in general, and of Confucian erudition in particular; but they are an integral part of it, and this will excuse the present, admittedly pedantic, note.

In our discussion of the good and the bad of human nature, we inadvertently pulled the argument to the Western side and were carried far away from the first line of the *San tzu ching*. In order to re-enter its frame, let us return to Chu Hi’s commentary to the first part of the *MENCIUS* quotation (# 1₁): *Kao follows the previous idea while modifying it a little*. In 6A/1, Kao argued that human nature made no distinction between good and evil just as a willow tree whose wood may be worked indifferently into cups or into bowls. In reply Mencius points out that, in order to render a man 仁義 (*viz.* “ethical” within the framework of Confucianism), there is no need to change his nature since it was good right from the beginning. It simply needs to have its good dispositions preserved and developed. The difference between the heterodox simile used by Kao, namely the cups and bowls one may carve from one and the same willow tree, and the orthodox simile taken from the *Li chi* and to be quoted in # VII, namely that jade needs to be polished in order to become a jewel, consists in that the willow tree must first be killed or, at least, amputated of a limb, whereas the piece of raw jade needs only to be polished, its nature remaining unaffected. Mencius concludes that, if education meant to deal with boys in the same way as does the woodcarver with a willow tree, *it would certainly lead all men on to reckon education to be a calamity*. (cf. Legge, p. 395)

1₁-B:

故本於人之初生而言之

ku⁴ pen³ yü² jen² chih¹ ch'u¹ sheng¹ erh² yen² chih¹

Hence, we start with the human being's incipient existence, and explain it (namely, the first verse, in the following way):

> 言, the “paraphrase”, is a technical term: we have already encountered it in the commentary to Ode 70.

Quotations:

First quotation:

初生, “incipient existence”, is quoted from the *Shu ching*, V.XII.19 (*L.*, p. 430-431):

嗚呼. 若生子. 罔不在. 厥初生. 自貽哲命

今天其命哲. 命吉凶. 命歷年. 知今我初服

Oh! Happily (jo^{4.5}) a child is begotten, verily (wang³ pu^{4.5}) it is alive. At its (chüeh^{2.5}) incipient existence, let us start imparting to him (yi²) a teaching (ming⁴) of wisdom (che^{2.5}). Heaven, indeed (chin¹), has decreed (ming⁴) to him the level of intelligence, decreed his good and bad fortune, decreed the number of his years (and about that we neither can know, nor do, anything); but we do know that we must start taking care (fu^{2.5}) of the child now.

Legge had a hard time with this logion for not having perceived the *ornatus*, namely the *distinctio*. The *distinctio* makes use of the so-called “derivations” 轉注 chuan³ chu⁴ (the third “hexagraph” 六書 lu^{4.5} shu¹). It consists in using the same kanji repeatedly while changing its meaning: 生 to beget / the existence; 哲 wisdom / intelligence (they may be considered synonyms); 命 the teaching / to decree; 今 a transition particle / now. The *distinctio* appeals to the Chinese taste: it allows both the author and his reader to revel in their lexicographic virtuosity. In a handwritten text, some small calligraphic changes in the ductus of the recurring kanji may serve to render the *distinctio* more evident (see *Orchis*, p. 26).

N.B.: Master Wang makes himself a *distinctio* when, from # I₁, he borrows the kanji 本, meaning *loco* “the root”, and endows it here, in # I₁-B, with the meaning “to start”.

We may correct Legge on another point also, namely in his note: *we must understand not the infancy, but the early years, when a child becomes the proper subject of education.* Quite the contrary! We must understand neither “infancy” nor “early years”, but the foetal age: education does start immediately after conception. Legge has not consulted an obstetrician, nor even his own grandmother, nor has he read what Chu Hsi (in his 小學內篇 *Hsiao hsioh nei p'ien*), or Master Wang, have to say on the subject of “uterine education” (see # 2-G & ff.). Indeed, *we must take* very good *care* of the embryo, allowing its mother to *impart* it the appropriate uterine education, that would favour its development into a male child healthy of body and mind; who may through extra-uterine education, become a good boy; and who would, third step, through the joint efforts of father and teacher, be able to receive the scholastic training that might enable him to become a prince (viz. a mandarin) worthy of this title.

Second quotation:

言之 is a most elegant quotation and may refer to the official order for which Master Wang composed his commentary. It is taken from the *Li chi*, “The Questions of Duke Ai”, *HY*. 27/1 (C., II, p. 362):

– *Ai, Duke* [of Lu, Confucius’ home country] *asked Confucius, saying: “How about the great rules of Ceremony? When Gentlemen (君子) speak about the Ceremonies, they show the greatest admiration for them.”*

– *Confucius replied: “I, Ch’iu, I am a man of little worth: I am not able to comprehend the Ceremonies.”*

– *The lord said: 吾子言之也 “No! My Master explains them.”*

> 禮 “the ceremonies” is the accepted translation. It is understood that these are codified usages to which Chinese thought ascribed universal validity and cosmic efficiency.

Notice the way in which Master Wang shows both humility and arrogance at the same time – humility by quoting humble language; arrogance, by applying to himself the words of Confucius. Typical of a Confucianist!

N.B.: Master Wang may have felt that 言之 was too tenuous an Ariadne’s thread on which to guide unperceptive students (even the *HY.* index is of no help): so, in # 2-A, he will kindly return to the present pericope and give the game away.

> 君子 is rendered by *C.* as “*les sages*” (“the wise men”) which is of course correct; but in the present context the term appears to point rather to “the wise householder” who provides an education for his sons.

> 父 displays “a hand holding a stick” (*W.* 43G): “the father”, considered as the chief and the instructor of his family; the “gentleman” 君 displays the same “hand holding a stick” yet augmented with “the mouth” (*W.* 44C).

*

1₁-C:

天之所生 . 謂之人 : 天之所賦 . 謂之性

t'ien¹ chih¹ shu³ sheng¹, wei⁴ chih¹ jen²

t'ien¹ chih¹ shu³ fu⁴, wei⁴ chih¹ hsing⁴

What by Heaven is generated, one calls it “human being”;

what by Heaven is bestowed, one calls it “nature”.

Understand: “Heaven generates the individual, and provides its character”, namely, returning to the above *Shu ching* pericope: “the level of intelligence, the good and bad fortune, and the lifespan”.

N.B.: Although the Chinese often think of “Heaven” as being a personal god, in Chu Hsi’s philosophy it is not so; *Cd.* renders 天 with “*nature*”, meaning the physical universe and the powers and forces governing it.

Quotation:

The present verse appears to be an adjusted quotation from the commentary to the opening verse of the *Chung yung* (quoted above, # I₁):

天命之謂性

We call "nature" what Heaven has ordained.

Commentary:

命猶令也。性即理也

A-level: ming⁴ "to (give an) order" equals ling⁴ "to ordain"; hsing⁴ "nature" means li³ "order" (n., as in law and order); indeed: 天理 or 性理 "the natural order";

B-level: (天) 命 (by ordinance: "little monkey" (viz. the penis) commands (ling⁴) the vagina; it is conform to [his] nature to polish the vagina: cf. MENCIVS, HY. 42/6A/4 (L., p. 397; C., p. 559): 食色性也 "food and sex are natural necessities." N.B.: Jade being the *materia sexualis*, 理 properly "to polish jade" refers commonly to sexual activities (cf. # VII.)

天以陰陽五行化生萬物 : *By means of yin and yang, and the FIVE elements, Heaven generates by transformation everything in existence.*

氣以成形而理亦賦焉 : *[Heaven] also bestows the ch'i⁴ to bring about the material appearance and its immaterial principle.*

猶命令也 : *Once again, ming⁴ equals ling⁴; or, B-level: It is the penis' natural function to service (ling²) the vagina.*

於是人物之生。因各得其所賦之理。以爲健順五常之德。所謂性也 : *Consequently, at the coming into existence of a human being, each one obtains to participate into li³ (Mth., 3864.41: "eternal principles of right") with which it is endowed [by Heaven = nature]. Therefore we define the faculty which allows a continuous practice of the FIVE constants (i.e. "moral virtues"), as being hsing⁴ ("nature / natural"), and commonly refer to it as such.*

> 人物 “a human being”, but also the “male thing” = the penis: “Since we all, at the very moment of our conception, are endowed with li³, ...”

> 五常 “the five constants” are 仁義禮智信 jen² yi⁴ li³ chih⁴ hsin⁴ normally rendered as “humane”, “just”, “civilized”, “wise” and “sincere”; but there are other types of “five constants” as well, see *M.* 1.257.550.

> 氣以成形... *Cd.*, p. 93b (*sub voc.* 賦 fu⁴) translates: “Nature has made the human body of materia, and has put a non-material principle into it”.

> 理 li³ is defined *sub voc.* *Cd.*, p. 508b, as “the immaterial principle which, united to the materia, constitutes the beings.”

> 氣 ch'i⁴, often rendered by “ether”, results from the interplay of *yin* and *yang*; it is the vital energy that gives existence to everything that exists.

We are faced with the *Hexeneinmaleins* of Chinese philosophy, where the same kanjis are forever shuffled round and round, with only slight variations. Indices and dictionaries are of little help. Our present elucubrations are tentative, and we may abstract the lesson that it is infinitely more difficult to give a precise interpretation of a philosophical commentary than it is to provide for the commented text a sleek translation which “makes sense”.

*

1₁-D:

秉彞之良. 謂之善

ping³ yi² chih¹ liang², wei⁴ chih¹ shan⁴

The goodness of “normal nature”, is called “good”.

> 秉彞, etymological meaning: the former “a handful of grain” (*W.* 44I), the latter “an offering to the ancestors’ manes (consisting of a boar’s head, grain, and silk)” (*W.* 68D). The binome epitomises the ethics natural to mankind. Following the commentaries (see below) we may understand it as “to hold on to the norm”, viz. “the ethics of a normal human being” (*MTH.*, 3001.3), which in practice amounts to “the

behavioral standards ideally observed among Chinese”, viz. the Chinese orthopraxy. The expression is borrowed from Ode 260, a verse taken up in *MENCIUS, HY. 43/6A/6* (*L.*, p. 403; *C.*, p. 565): see below, first quotation.

> 良 : what exactly is meant by this “goodness” becomes clear from *MENCIUS, HY. 51/7A/15* (*C.*, p. 613; *L.*, p. 456): see below, second quotation.

> 善 “social harmony”, see # I₁, and below, second quotation.

Quotations:

First quotation: 秉彝 :

Ode 70 (quoted in # I₁) shows the dark, the gloomy *yin* side of an official career; Ode 260 shows its bright, *yang* side which, however, is not without hardship either. It sings the praise of a mandarin who is sent out to pacify some far off, uncivilized people, a mission which is hazardous in more than one way. There is no need to study the ode in its entirety: let the first four lines suffice.

Ode 260, first Stanza, Text (*L.*, p. 541):

天生烝民 *Heaven, in giving birth to the multitudes of the people,*

有物有則 *To every faculty and relationship annexed its law.*

民之秉彝 *The people possess this normal nature,*

好是懿德 *and [consequently] they love its normal virtue.*

(Legge)

Commentary:

Definitions (according to the *Shuo wen*, as always):

a) 蒸衆 ; b) 物事 ; c) 則法 ; d) 彝常 ; e) 懿美也

– a) cheng¹ “fiery vapours rising” equals chung⁴ “crowd, multitude”.

– b) wu^{4.5} “the [ten thousand] beings” equals shih⁴ “business”.

– c) tseh^{2.5} “a thing, an article, goods” equals fa^{3.5} “punishments”.

- d) yi² “a vase for wine libation” equals shang² “a constant rule”.
- e) yi⁴ “modesty” (said mainly of women) equals mei³ “comely”.

箋云 *The subcommentary says:*

– 秉執也 “a handful of grain” equals “feeling, habits, way of life”.

– 天之生衆民 *The multitudinous people that are the product of Heaven:*

– 其性有物象謂五行仁義禮知信也 *their nature is characterized by the five elements (水火木金土) and by being humane, just, civilized, wise and sincere (which are the “five constants” 常);*

– 其情有所法謂喜怒哀樂好惡也 *their feelings are conditioned by joy, anger, affliction, pleasure, love, hatred.* Cf. *M.*, 4.10756.I.i, and the *Purple pearl*, 3b 28, there may be SEVEN (*Li chi*), namely the quoted six, plus 欲 yü^{4.5} “desire”.

– 然而民所執有常道莫不好有美德之人 *Hence, there is no one amongst the ethical persons of our people who would not appreciate a man of fine virtue.* Namely the ethical ones among “the multitudinous people” (opening verse). This is the expression of the universalist claims of the codified ritualistic ethic of Confucianism, li³ 禮, the “orthopraxy” defining Chinese civilization.

Sub-subcommentary:

– [彝] 音夷 yi² *sounds like yi².* According to *M.*, neither of the two kanjis possess an alternate pronunciation, and both are 支 chih¹ rhymes. Therefore we may guess that Cheng K’ang-ch’eng is pointing to the fact that *Mencius*, 6A/6, when quoting the present passage, reads 夷 for 彝: a well-known scribal error caused, obviously, by the two kanjis’ exact homophony.

– [好] 呼報反 hu¹ + pao⁴ = hao⁴ “to love”; rejected reading: hao³ “good, well”.

– [惡] 鳥路反 $wu^1 + lu^4 = wu^4$ “to hate”; rejected reading: $o^{4.5}$ “evil, foul”.

Observing Cheng K’ang-ch’eng’s subcommentary, it appears that:

> 有物象 corresponds to 有物: nature is determined by the 五行 and the 五常.

> 有所法 corresponds to 有則: and is ruled by the 六情 (which may as well be seven).

> 所有道 “where tao is present” corresponds to 秉彝 “[those who hold on to] normal ethics”. This last equation inspired *MENCIUS*, 6A/6 (*L.*, p. 403; *C.*, p. 565; *Wil.*, p. 132):

The Odes say: (quotation of the above stanza, and then:) *Confucius said:*

爲此詩者其知道乎故有物. 必有則.

民之秉彝也故好是懿德

“[How well] the author of this ode knew the tao! Hence, when there is something (物 = 事), there also is a natural law (則 = 法), and human beings sacrifice to their ancestors; and for the same reason they love and cultivate virtue.

Summing up:

– Legge interprets $ping^3-yi^2$ in a physiological sense: “the normal nature”;

– Couvreur interprets it in an abstract ethical sense: Fr. “*la loi morale*”; Lat. “*lex naturalis*”; in fact, he equates 秉彝 and 則 which, in turn, equals 法.

– Personally, I consider 法 as the more general notion; 則 as the standards conforming to nature; and 秉彝 “the sacrifice to the manes”, as a synecdoche (*locus a minore ad maius*) of its practice, the Confucian orthopraxy, the irrefutable proof of moral standards natural to any human being (namely any Han-Chinese). However, one interpretation is as good as another, for “the normal nature” implies “the ethical norm”, and “the ethical norm” implies “the normal nature”. The Chinese, by expressing themselves in kanjis, think in metaphors, and their

philosophy calls for the oral explanations of a teacher professing the orthodoxy of his own school.

Second quotation: 良: *MENCIUS* 7A/15:1:

Text (C., p. 613; L., p. 456):

孟子曰. 人之所不學而能者. 其良能也
所不慮而知者. 其良知也

Mencius said: "Abilities which man possesses without having acquired them through learning, are 'good' abilities. Knowledge which man possesses without having thought of it, is 'good' knowledge."

Commentary:

良者. 本然之善也. 程子曰. 良知良能.
皆無所由. 乃出於天. 不繫於人

The liang² is fundamental of social harmony. The Ch'eng-tzu [brothers] say: "Instinctive knowledge, instinctive abilities are not caused by anything: they come from Heaven, they do not depend on man."

> 良 liang² means "good". *W.* 75F states that the kanji, in its present form, is modern and has developed along with Chinese ethical concepts. Originally, the kanji signified "the Gift" (as in "a gifted man"), namely the sum of all the natural, Heaven-imparted, abilities. At a second stage, the kanji graphically showed "the descent of the Gift from above" (cf. Ep. St. James 1:17). Therefore, in the text of *Mencius*, the translations "intuitive" (Legge), or "*naturellement*" (Couvreur) – I rather opt for "instinctive" – are perfectly justified, since according to the school of *Mencius*, "the intuition-nature-instinct" is radically good. As for the commentary, I see no way of translating 良 other than with the word "good".

> 程子 designates the two brothers Ch'eng Hao 顥 (1032-1085), and Ch'eng Yi 頤 (1033-1107), the great scholars of Sung neo-Confucianism. They were the grand-teachers of Chu Hsi (1130-1200). See *M.*, 8.25081.55, 23, 2, and 24; also

Feifel, p. 416 & fol. The formula 性本善 (# I₁) is theirs, as revealed by Chu Hsi commenting on *Lun yü*, HY. 35/17/3:

程子曰 . 人性本善

Master Wang will quote this commentary in # I₂-A.

*

1₁-E:

人生之初 . 始有知 . 則先識其母

始學語 . 則先呼其親

jen² sheng¹ chih¹ ch'u¹ .

shih³ yu³ chih¹ . tseh^{2.5} hsien¹ shih⁽⁴⁾⁵ ch'i² mu³

shih³ hsioh^{2.5} yü³ . tseh^{2.5} hsien¹ hu¹ ch'i² ts'in¹

After the inception of life, when a human being begins to be possessed of consciousness, it recognises its mother before [any other person]; when it begins to learn to talk, it calls its relatives before [any other people].

This statement obviously anticipates the subsequent Mencius logion (# 1₁-F), but it appears not to be a quotation – at least, I did not find a reference.

> 識, according to *Cd.*, p. 42 a, has three pronunciations: cheu⁵, “to know”, applicable here; tcheu⁴, cheu⁴, “to remember” which alludes to our foetal memory (cf. below # 2-J); cheu⁴, “to mark” = to soil his mother – as babies do.

> 親 are not “the parents” (this would be 父母), but “close persons” in general: viz. the womenfolk that crowds the inner apartments, wet-nurses, concubines and female servants forever fussing over the baby boy. As for the father, Confucian mores allow the infant (providing it is a boy, of course) to be brought before him on special occasions only.

> 始 cf. # 1₁-A. The incipient consciousness and the incipient talk are not the fruit of formal instruction: they are “Heaven-imparted”, need only to be developed, and therefore belong to the world of the mothers.

> 知 appears to be quoted from *Mencius*, see subsequent #1₁-F. Although 知 will be equated with 能 “to be capable of”, this capability is obviously meant to be intellectual. In

fact the kanji displays “the arrow” and “the mouth”, expressing the notion of “a statement hitting the mark as precisely as would an arrow” (*W.* 131E).

*

1₁-F

孟子曰。孩提之童。無不知愛其親也

及其長也。無不知敬其兄也

meng⁴ tzu³ yüeh^{1.5} . hai² t'i² chih¹ t'ung² . wu² pu^{4.5} chih¹ ai⁴
 ch'i² ts'in¹ yeh³ . chi^{2.5} ch'i² chang³ yeh³ . wu² pu^{4.5} chih¹
 ching⁴ ch'i² hsiung¹ yeh³

Mencius said:

“[Starting from the very moment, when] children smile and grasp, they all are capable of loving those who are close to them; and [when] they have grown [a little], they all are capable of respecting their elder brother.”

Mencius, HY. 51/7A/15:2 (cf. *C.*, p. 613, *L.*, p. 456): this is the second part of the logion first quoted in # 1₁-D, second quotation.

Commentary:

[長] 上聲。下同：長 carries the shang^{3,4} tone (the third), chang³; likewise below.

In the two instances the pronunciation is the same, but the meaning is different: here it means “to grow, the development”; later on it takes the meaning “the superior, the elder”.

[孩提] 二三歲之閒。知孩笑。可提抱者也

Within the second or third year of age, they become capable of smiling and of laughing; able to grasp and to hug.

> 孩 an “infant’s smile” is properly written 咳 hai². Smiling normally develops six weeks after birth.

> 提 t'i¹ “to grasp”. The grasping reflex is pre-existent to birth (a boy-foetus masturbates himself); but, since the grasping is mentioned after the smiling, what is meant is not the reflex, it is the conscious reaching for things. It develops after about three months. Mencius’ statement is clear and

correct: newly born children do react vigorously: in a friendly way to people they have come to know during their uterine life (viz. by the sound of their voice and the reaction of the mother); adversely to strangers. Should we then discard “two-three years of age”, and read “two-three months”? No! Chu Hsi means what he says and he means to precise Mencius: at two-three months, a baby cannot love any relative “consciously, knowingly” (知). Hence Chu Hsi adds “laughing” and “hugging” which is indeed the conscient behaviour of a child of two to three years.

N.B.: cf. *Tao te ching*, 20: 同嬰兒之未孩 [I am] like an infant that does not yet smile. Here 孩 “the smiling” is considered the first milestone; 提 “the (conscious) grasping” comes later and is not yet in sight.

– 愛親敬長 . 所謂良知良能者也

To love those close to us and to respect our superiors, this is called the good (= instinctive) knowledge, the good (= instinctive) faculties.

> 知 is here equal to 能, meaning a conscious action.

> 愛 “the affectionate love” etymologically means “to swallow down into one’s heart” (*W.* 99F).

> 敬, *W.* 54G “to keep [one’s] mouth [like] a sheep (the symbol of social harmony); [or else one will be] flogged”. Therefore, this “respect” should be viewed as “fear”, similar to the Biblical “fearing the Lord” (French “*déférence*” is a perfect translation).

And now, for the sake of orderliness, let us read the logion to the end:

Mencius 7A/15:3; *C.*, p. 613; *L.*, p. 456:

Text:

親親 . 仁也 . 敬長 . 義也 . 無他 . 達之天下也

To relate to relatives is “benevolence”; to respect authority is “righteousness”: that is how it is – indeed everywhere under Heaven.

Commentary:

言親親敬長。雖一人之私。然達之天下無不同者。
所以爲仁義也

Paraphrase: to relate to those close to us, and to respect our superiors, although particular to each individual, is common to all under Heaven without exception. That is why it is 仁 and 義.

This type of definition, somewhat startling to a western mind, refers the reader to the *Shuo wen*, namely to the kanji's etymology: jen² (*W.* 25G), by exhibiting “a man” and the number “two”, symbolises civilized, harmonious “human relations”. Notice that Mencius uses the kanji restrictively: the two persons belong to the same social unit (see # 3₂-L, note). As for yi⁴, the virtue that guarantees law and order, it displays 羊 yang² a sheep, symbol of social harmony, and 我 ngo³ “two crossed halberds” symbolising “conflict, my right, my person, I, mine” (*W.* 71Q).

Summing up:

We were told that “good” (shan⁴) includes the “five constants”. Presently, it was proven that at least two of them, indeed the two most important ones, jen² and yi⁴, are instinctive (liang²), not taught by any formal teaching. Proof that, fundamentally, human nature is good; and this is what Chu Hsi will now say:

*

1₁-G:

朱子曰。人性皆善

chu¹ tsu³ yüeh^{1.5}: jen² hsing⁴ chieh¹ shan⁴

Master Chu said: “As to the nature of each individual, they are all good.”

Either “the nature of each individual is good” or “human nature as such is all, completely good”: chieh¹ “all, every, entirely” allows both interpretations. In fact, the problem vanishes if we simply render 善 with “social” (instead of “good”) – which we should certainly do anyway. After all

that has been said so far, it has become clear enough that the Confucian ethic is essentially social (as opposed to e.g. the Buddhist ethic).

The present quotation may not be literal; rather is it adjusted from the commentary to *Mencius*, 6A/2 quoted in # I₁: *Nature is but the law of Heaven: there has not yet been any that was not good.* There are, however, many instances in which Chu Hsi makes the same affirmation; in particular when commenting upon the beginning of *Mencius*, 3A: “*Nature (viz. the sum of natural faculties) is a principle which man receives from Heaven together with the existence. Nature is entirely good / social (善). There has never been a man naturally evil. In this, nobody differs in the least from Yao and Shun. But most people abandon themselves to their passions and lose their natural goodness. On the contrary, Yao and Shun never allowed passion to tarnish their good qualities: they always followed the law of nature.*” (C., p. 406). The answer to the question why people, being entirely good, would then neglect their goodness and turn evil, may be found in the “Corollary” at the end of # 1₁-A.

*

1₁-H:

不其然乎

pu^{4.5} ch² i² jan² hu¹

Is it not true?

This rhetorical question which closes the discussion of the initial, the “fundamental”, goodness of human nature, appears to confirm Chu Hi’s apophthegm; in fact, it modifies it considerably.

Quotation:

The words are quoted from the *Lun yü*, HY. 15/8/20; C., p. 160; L., p. 214:

孔子曰 . 才難 . 不其然乎

Confucius said: “Talents are rare. Is it not true?”

This quotation serves as a transition from metaphysical to practical considerations. Ontological goodness in theory does not yet make a great political talent in practice.

The formation of talented State officials is ideally the aim of Confucian education. How this is achieved will be shown by the couplets which follow.