

# III<sub>2</sub>  
Third Couplet, Second Line

子不學 . 斷機杼  
tzu<sup>3</sup> pu<sup>4.5</sup> hsioh<sup>2.5</sup> . tuan<sup>3.4</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> ch‘u<sup>3</sup>

Rhyme: 杼 - 語 yü<sup>3</sup> . When meaning “the shuttle”, 杼 is normally read chu<sup>4</sup>/ch‘u<sup>3</sup> and carries the 御 yü<sup>4</sup>, or the 語 yü<sup>3</sup> rhyme respectively. VIE (followed by SC) defines: 杼 音 暑 “杼 *sounds like* 暑” shu<sup>3</sup> “hot” (as in “a hot day”) which rhymes 語 yü<sup>3</sup> (*M.*, 6.14513 and 5.14051). Hence, for the sake of a correct rhyme in # III<sub>1</sub> and # III<sub>2</sub>, we should read 杼 “the shuttle” ch‘u<sup>3</sup>. The note of VIE (and SC) reveals the existence of two distinct traditions which we may term: tradition “A”, and tradition “B”.

Tradition “A”: 杼 sounds chu<sup>4</sup>/ch‘u<sup>3</sup>

Translation:

*[Because] the boy did not learn, she severed the shuttle from the loom.*

The verses of the *San tzu ching* are held in hieroglyphic style: *[There was] the boy’s not learning; [and there was] the machine’s shuttle cut off.* This is, what the text says, and there is no problem. Mother Meng severed the thread that was linking the shuttle to the fabric. Thus she marked her determination to end her weaving prematurely.

> 機 杼 may mean “a loom and a shuttle”; it may also mean “the loom” (cf. O. Franke, *Kêng tschi t’u*, index, p.184 a). In the present context, the first interpretation appears to be preferable.

Oddly enough, neither *Cd.*, p. 338b, nor *MTH.*, 1369.2, accept this obvious interpretation. Both dictionaries quote the

present line, 斷機杼, which by then had become a current saying; but, instead of a translation, they give (*Cd.* with noticeable hesitancy) what appears to be the oral explanation of native informants: *Cd.*, “The mother of Mencius, seeing that her son refused to study, broke her loom, her shuttle.” *MTH.*, for his part, gives: “to cut the web from the loom – as the mother of Mencius did, in grief at her son’s inattention to study.” These explanations not only contradict each other, they are, moreover, inconsistent: namely, neither a shuttle nor a loom (whatever it was) can be broken if not with an ax; and, *Mth.* supplements “the fabric” (which he took from an other text, cf. 3<sub>2</sub>-E). Now, were the informants unwilling, or were they unable, to tell the course of the events?

The legend, according to tradition “A”, is told by Liu Hsiang in his “*Biographies of meritorious women*”. This text, like that of “Changing residence thrice” (# 3<sub>1</sub>-C & ff), is reproduced in *M.*, 3.6960.255, a lemma entitled: 孟母斷機 “Mother Meng cuts the machine”. This version of the legend makes Mother Meng to shred her weaving. It corresponds to the A-level of Master Wang’s commentary.

Tradition “B”: 杼 sounds shu<sup>3</sup>

The other tradition, is retained in the present line of the *San tzu ching*, and in Master Wang’s commentary. Following the example of the present line # III<sub>2</sub>, Master Wang’s commentary follows – more or less – the tradition “A”; but, in contrast to the Liu Hsiang text which allows no alternative interpretation, it is replete with double entendres. These, however, are not merely malicious interpretations. They are explicitly commanded by the phonetic definition 杼音暑 “杼 sounds like 暑” shu<sup>3</sup>. They express the “B” tradition according to which Mother Meng either wounded her own private parts; or castrated her son.

> 杼 shows a wooden [object that] moves back and forth (cf. *W.*, 95A). The kanji does not occur in Liu Hsiang’s text.

- A - pronounced chu<sup>4</sup>/ch'u<sup>3</sup>, 杼 means either “a shuttle”; or “any object made of wood (or as hard as wood) that is shaped like a shuttle”.

- B - pronounced shu<sup>3</sup>, 杼 means “a sewer, a drain pipe allowing a liquid to escape”; or = 杼 chu<sup>3</sup> “to pour forth, to allow a liquid to escape”.

> 機, translated as “the loom”, means properly a “machine”. The kanji is (like 杼) absent from the “*Biography*”. Used in the present line of the *San tzu ching*, it allows a double-entendre: “machine” may designate “sexual organs” both male and female (*M.*, 6.15561.XI & XX). As an example we may mention the *nom de guerre* of the famous literate T'ang prostitute 魚玄機 the Lady Yü Mystery-Machine, *M.*, 12.45956.321.

Alternative translations:

[*Because*] the boy did not learn,

1) she cut the sewer that was [*her own*] machine.

2) she cut the drain pipe that was the machine [*of her son*].

Note: The Chinese method of castrating a man consisted of the ablation of the penis together with the testicles.

Parenthesis: 杼 chu<sup>4</sup>/ch'u<sup>3</sup>, may as well signify the “chestnut” or the “acorn”, which are in Western idiom eponymous symbols of the *glans penis* and of the testicles respectively; but do these two fruits also carry such meanings in China normally? I felt it more prudent to simply mention the matter, and stay safely with the “shuttle”, which is a usual, clear enough symbol.

Etymologies: 斷 *W.* 90E; 機 cf. *W.* 90D.

### Master Wang's Commentary

#### # 3<sub>2</sub>-A

杼者織機之梭

杼 che<sup>3</sup> chih<sup>1.5</sup> chi<sup>1</sup> chih<sup>1</sup> suo<sup>1</sup>

杼 *is the shuttle of a weaving machine.*

Tradition “A” (杼 sound chu<sup>4</sup>/ch’u<sup>3</sup>):

Master Wang’s definition is redundant, apparently, and does not solve any problem. However, remember the axiom: In case of a “perfectly clear” text, a “redundant” word definition puts the finger on a “pregnant spot”. What Western tradition calls “commentary” is called in Chinese chu<sup>4</sup> 註 / 注 “a mind fixer, an attention catcher”. It signifies to us: “Watch out! Fix your mind!” In the present instance, Master Wang, by his definition, attracts our attention to the existence of that other reading, namely shu<sup>3</sup>, put forwards by the phonetic definition: 杼音暑 “杼 sounds like 暑”. In so doing, he refers us to the tradition termed “B”.

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#### # 3<sub>2</sub>-B

孟母平居以織紡爲事

meng<sup>4</sup> mu<sup>3</sup> p’ing<sup>2</sup> chü<sup>1</sup> yi<sup>3</sup> chi<sup>1.5</sup> fang<sup>3</sup> wei<sup>2</sup> shih<sup>4</sup>

*Weaving and spinning was the ordinary business of Mother Meng.*

Literally: *Mother Meng, ordinarily, considered weaving and spinning to be her business.* This indication is lacking in the “*Biography*” that starts: 自孟子之少也 *Because of Meng tzu’s youth* (parallel to # 3<sub>1</sub>-J, quotation) and goes on to relate his unseasonable return, &c.

> 平居 “ordinary, normal”, *M.*, 4.9167.129 = 居常 or 平常. Notice the restriction! What then was her extraordinary business? Well: prostitution, of course, as explained in # 3<sub>1</sub>-C. It is worth repeating that there was hardly a choice: for a destitute Chinese woman prostitution was the most normal trade with which to survive. Or was she perhaps not all that

destitute after all? If that would have been the case, she would not have changed residence in the way she did, but would have stayed with, and served, some relatives (even distant ones).

> 織 紡 “weaving and spinning”, cf. O. Franke, *Kêng tschi t’u*, second part. Looking at the plates, it strikes one that even the smallest Chinese loom (pl. 91) is much too big and costly to fit in a pauper’s home. Mother Meng must have worked in a sweat shop; as for the “spinning”, she may have carried some yarn home in the evening, and processed it by the dim light of an oil lamp, as shown on pl. 89 (cf. 3<sub>2</sub>-E). The present kanji 紡 is not mentioned in the index to the *Kêng tschi t’u*, nor the binome 織 紡.

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### # 3<sub>2</sub>-C

孟子稍長 . 出從外傅

meng<sup>4</sup> tzu<sup>3</sup> shao<sup>1</sup> chang<sup>3</sup> . ch’u<sup>1.5</sup> ts’ung<sup>2</sup> wai<sup>4</sup> fu<sup>4</sup>

*Mencius having grown a little older, left the house in order to follow [the instructions of] an external teacher.*

According to the prescriptions of the *Li chi*, Mencius was then in his tenth year (cf. the quotation below); according to Chu Hsi, he was eight years old (cf. # 2-P, N.B.1).

> 外 傅 is a school master, head of a boarding school (cf. the excellent film “Farewell my concubine” 霸王別姬).

### Quotation:

*Li chi*, Nei tse, HY 12/52 (C., I, p. 673, same pericope as in # 2-K-P):

十年出就外傅

*At ten, [a boy] left [his father’s house] in order to follow the teaching of an external teacher. He stayed there day and night, and learned to read and to reckon; he wore no silken underwears ... &c.*

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# 3<sub>2</sub>-D

偶倦而返

ngou<sup>3</sup> chüan<sup>4</sup> erh<sup>2</sup> fan<sup>3</sup>*It happened that, because he felt tired, he returned home.*

> 倦 is, according to the *Li chi*, what one should never ever be if one intends to become a Confucian scholar, cf. # 2-Q.

The “*Biography*” tells the story differently:

既學而歸

*He abandoned the studies and returned home.*

The excuse: *Mencius* was still very young (# 3<sub>2</sub>-B).

This is quoted from *Li chi*, Tseng tzu wen, *HY* 7/29 (C., I, p. 450):

既封而歸

... *he returned home before the earth was heaped over the coffin.* – referring to the ritual of royal funerals. Unrelated to the present context? Not at all! 封 feng<sup>1</sup> “to heap earth on the coffin” may also mean “(to be endowed with an) official seal; to become rich on public money”. Hence, foolish young Mencius “gave up and returned home before having obtained the position of a successful mandarin.”

But there is more to it:

> 歸 actually means “to come home from an alcoholic celebration” (which, incidentally, included funerals as well as orgies): cf. *Li chi*, Shao yi, 17/11 (C., II, p. 9): 燕遊曰歸 *The returning from a feast or from an excursion, is called kuei<sup>1</sup>* (cf. also *Lun-yü*, 22/11/24, *Orchis*, p. 21), and the kanji shows the three things, of which an inebriated man should beware: “stairs” and “steps” in general, his own “feet”, and the “broom” in the “hand” of his wife.

> 燕 yen<sup>4</sup> “the swallow” (yen<sup>1</sup>, is the ancient name of Peking) is symbolic of inebriation, cf. *Odes*, frequently, e.g. *HY* 34/161/3 (L., p. 247):

我有旨酒以燕樂嘉賓之心

*I have excellent wine fit for procuring a swallow-contentment to the heart of my admirable guest* (i.e.: “for merrily inebriating”). Note that “swallows” may signify by extension

a disorderly lifestyle, in particular, an overly close intimacy, as for example (and perhaps not unrelated to the present context) *Li chi*, Hsioh chi, *HY* 18/5 (C., II, p. 36):

燕朋逆其師 . 燕辟廢其學

*Swallow [-like] friends oppose their teacher, swallow [-like] comrades neglect their studies* (M., 7.19429.206 *sub voc.* 燕辟 & commentary.)

The gay life and the easy money in the red light district gave young Mencius an aversion to learning, and so he *abandoned* it. By expurgating the text, Master Wang attracts our attention to the scandalous aspect of the story, which we might otherwise have overlooked. With him, the boy did not “abandons his studies”, as in the “*Biography*”, but “it just happened that he felt tired” once, or perhaps a couple of times, before Mother took action; and, according to Master Wang, “he came home” in a condition that did not betray intoxication.

Etymologies: 燕 *W.* 141A; 樂 *W.* 88C; 學 *W.* 39I.

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# 3<sub>2</sub>-E

孟母引刀 . 自斷其機

meng<sup>4</sup> mu<sup>3</sup> yin<sup>3</sup> tao<sup>1</sup> . tzu<sup>4</sup> tuan<sup>4</sup> ch'i<sup>2</sup> chi<sup>1</sup>

*Mother Meng reached for a kitchen knife and set about cutting [the fabric from] her loom.*

For a justification of this translation, see below, the text of her “*Biography*”.

A-level:

自 is ambiguous: “she set about (cutting)”, or “she herself (cut)”. The sentence is repeated *infra*, # 3<sub>2</sub>-J: there it clearly means “I myself”; and it sets the mood in the *irrealis*: “as if I were to cut...”

B-level:

It is not clear to whom 其 refers: “her own machine”, or “his machine”? In fact, the ambiguity is intentional, and allows four interpretations:

- a) Mother Meng really wounded herself: 自 “she herself”; 其 “her own”.
- b) M.M. only set about wounding herself: 自 “she set about”; 其 “her own”.
- c) M.M. really mutilated her son: 自 “she herself”; 其 “his”.
- d) M.M. set about mutilating her son: 自 “she set about”; 其 “his” machine.

The interpretations a), b) and d) are equally possible as a logical reaction to little Mencius’ gross impertinence reported in the “*Biography*” (cf. below). As for c), it is contradicted by the story as it progresses. Probably, 自 “setting about” is the better interpretation anyway, and we should discard the interpretations a) and c) -- not without having acknowledged them .

“*Biography*”:

孟母方績 . 問曰 . 學所至矣 : 孟子曰自若也  
孟母以刀斷其織

*Mother Meng was just about (方) to finish [weaving a piece of silk]. She ordered [her son]: “Go [back] to your classroom!” Mencius said: “Fuck yourself!”. With a knife Mother Meng cut what she had woven.*

> 績 tsi<sup>1.5</sup>, first meaning: “to spin thread”; however, one may wonder why Mother Meng destroyed her web when actually she was spinning. Second meaning: “to complete”. This makes good sense: Mother Meng shredded the piece of cloth which she was about to finish. The third meaning, “a meritorious action”, provides Mother Meng’s doing with a flair of virtue:

> 問 “to inquire” and “to invite”; here “to give an order”. Both mother and son express themselves in hieroglyphic



style: 矣 “there is most definitely” 至 “a going-and-arriving-at” 所 “the place” 學 “of learning”.

> 自若也 literally “You tend your vagina!”, a rascal’s answer which rightly exasperated his mother. The course of the story reported by Master Wang appears to derive from little Mencius’ boyish spite.

> 若 “to take care of; to minister to” is a *Shu ching* acceptance, e.g. *L.*, p. 46: Shun asks “Who will tend the grasses and trees, the birds and beasts of my highlands, of my lowlands?” However, if we feel astricted to polite language, we may misread 也 as a final particle; and mistranslate 自若 as “as before” (both *MTH.*, 6960.272 and *R.*, 1531), to the effect that the boy expresses the intention to resume his former, pre-school, life style on the meat market. *Cd.*, p. 306b (quoting Ou-yang Hsiu), translates 自若 “*se trouver bien, être content*” viz. “I am just fine”.

Notice that the “*Biography’s*” wording does not lend itself to an interpretation that would imply any mutilation.

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# 3<sub>2</sub>-F

孟子懼跪而請問

meng<sup>4</sup> tzu<sup>3</sup> chü<sup>4</sup> kuei<sup>4</sup> erh<sup>2</sup> ts’ing<sup>3</sup> wen<sup>4</sup>

*Mencius was frightened. He bent the knee and begged to be allowed to ask a question.*

B-level:

Suppress the radicals of 懼 and of 跪 and read 瞿 ch’ü<sup>2</sup> “a long spear”, and 危 wei<sup>2</sup> “to topple; to be in a precarious, dangerous situation”: *the ‘spear’ of Mencius toppled as he asked ... or: Mencius, [sensing that his] ‘spear’ was endangered, asked ...*

The “*Biography*” reads:

孟子懼而問其故

*Mencius was frightened and asked the reason for it.*

(namely, of her shredding the fabric she had woven). Again, the wording of the “*Biography*” allows no other interpretation.

Quotation:

The boy’s polite manner of asking a question is taken from *MENCIUS*, HY 42/5B/9 (L., p. 392; C., p. 556), where a king who misbehaved is asking Mencius for advice, and receives a fitting answer:

王曰 . 請問 (...) 君有大過則諫 (...) 王勃然變乎色  
*The king said: “May I ask (... ?” Mencius replied:) “If the prince commits a grave error, he will be admonished (...)”*  
*The king at once changed countenance &c. (L. erroneous; C. correct).* The expression also occurs elsewhere, of course; but this locus classicus fits our context: it is pedagogically pungent to show a king in the same embarrassing situation vis-à-vis great Mencius, as little Mencius vis-à-vis his mother. Moreover, the present ninth pericope closes chapter 5B; while the subsequent pericope 6A/1 was quoted in # I<sub>1</sub>.

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# 3<sub>2</sub>-G

母曰 . 子之學猶吾之織也

mu<sup>3</sup> yüeh<sup>1.5</sup> tzu<sup>3</sup> chih<sup>1</sup> hsioh<sup>2.5</sup> yu<sup>2</sup> wu<sup>2</sup> chih<sup>1</sup> chih<sup>1.5</sup> yeh<sup>3</sup>

*The mother said: “Your learning is like my weaving.”*

B-level:

Read two parallel sentences:

子之學猶 : 吾之織也

*“You are a learn-‘monkey’; I am a weave-vagina.*

Vulgar language all over the world (Chinese is no exception) may designate a person by referring to his/her sexual parts. Whether expressed in a vulgar or in a polite way, the argument remains unchanged. Master Wang (as opposed to the “*Biography*” cf. below) makes no direct reference to the economic damage resulting from Mother Meng’s (intended) action.

“Biography”:

孟 母 子 之 廢 學 若 吾 斷 斯 織 也

*Mother Meng: Your abandoning your studies  
is like my shredding this [piece of fabric that I have] woven.*

Here the rest of Mother Meng’s original discourse  
(“Biography”, text in *M.*):

*Now, a gentleman studies in order to make a name for himself; he craves for broadening his knowledge. Thus he will, when at rest, enjoy peace; in action, he will escape ruin. But if now you give up [learning], you cannot avoid becoming a menial or a bailiff,<sup>1)</sup> and there will be no way of escaping misery. There is, you know, a direct relation between [my] weaving and spinning, and [our] eating. Were I to give up midways without doing anything further, how could I clothe you honourably? And banish famine for long? This will happen if I, who am a female, neglect to provide for food. But if you, who are a male, neglect the cultivation of your potency,<sup>2)</sup> you will become a thief or a robber; in other words: be either jailbird or jailor.<sup>3)</sup>*

1) Viz., instead of himself being the entrepreneur or the mandarin.

2) 德, often translated as “virtue”, is not so much “moral virtue” (in our sense: that would rather be 仁, cf. *infra*, # 3<sub>2</sub>-L, Note), as “potency”: intellectual, social, sexual potency; it is conductive to power and wealth, to health and longevity, and to earthly bliss in general for one’s family, hence for one’s self.

3) “Bailiff” = “turnkey”: these were the most absolutely despised individuals of Chinese society: they combined extreme poverty with power, and their extortions added to the suffering of the prisoners.

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# 3<sub>2</sub>-H

積 絲 成 寸 . 積 寸 成 尺 . 尺 寸 不 已 . 遂 成 丈 疋  
tsi<sup>1.5</sup> ssu<sup>1</sup> ch’eng<sup>2</sup> ts’un<sup>4</sup> . tsi<sup>1.4</sup> ts’un<sup>4</sup> ch’eng<sup>2</sup> ch’ih<sup>3.5</sup>  
ch’ih<sup>3.5</sup> ts’un<sup>4</sup> pu<sup>4.5</sup> yi<sup>3</sup> . sui<sup>4</sup> ch’eng<sup>2</sup> chang<sup>4</sup> p’i<sup>3.5</sup>

*Threads add up to make an inch,  
inches add up to make a foot;  
feet and inches without intermission,  
in the end make a full length roll [of silk cloth].*

Apparently a popular proverb in form of a singsong. It does not rhyme according to the scholarly rules. It is not contained in the “*Biography*”.

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# 3<sub>2</sub>-I

今子學爲聖賢。乃厭倦而求歸  
chin<sup>1</sup> tzu<sup>3</sup> hsioh<sup>2.5</sup> wei<sup>2</sup> sheng<sup>4</sup> hsien<sup>2</sup>  
nai<sup>3</sup> yen<sup>4</sup> chiün<sup>4</sup> erh<sup>2</sup> ch'iu<sup>2</sup> kui<sup>1</sup>

*Presently you study in order to become a worthy of the first order or of the second order, but you get fed up, tired, and want to return home:*

> 厭 has many pronunciations and many meanings that could fit our context: yen<sup>4</sup>, *satiated, disgusted*; yen<sup>3</sup>, *aversion, to hate*; yen<sup>1</sup>, *peaceful, happy*; ye<sup>5</sup>, *to reject, refuse*. In order to determine the right pronunciation of the kanji and the right meaning, the reader is supposed to refer to the quoted logion, cf. second quotation, below, where we are told to read it yen<sup>4</sup>.

Quotations:

First quotation:

*Yi ching*, HY 31/50 t'uan (Wil., p. 642):

大亨以養聖賢

*The supreme power (of Heaven, heng<sup>1</sup>) therefore nourishes the worthies of the first and of the second order.*

This appears to be the only *locus classicus*; and the quotation fits admirably. No doubt, Confucian studies are essentially career oriented (cf. the *Li chi* quotation in # 3<sub>2</sub>-D, or the words of Mother Meng in # 3<sub>2</sub>-G). The Censor, however, may raise his eyebrows, because, in the present *Yi ching* context, 聖 actually means the emperor. Hence, what Master

Wang makes Mother Meng say, smells of subversion as it encourages every schoolboy to strive – not just to become a minister (a worthy of the second order), which would be all right – but to become emperor. In fact, we are entering the very real domain of political Confucianism, ever aggressive and very redoubtable. Hence, for security's sake, a disclaimer (cf. below) was in order.

Second quotation:

*MENCIUS*, HY 11/2A/2 (C., p. 366-367; L. 192-193):

孔子曰聖則吾不能我學不厭而教不倦也

*Confucius said: "A worthy of the first order! I cannot [accept this title]. I study insatiably, and I teach tirelessly."*

When Mencius is asked whether he would lay claim to the title "worthy of the first order", he denies it by quoting the above logion of Confucius (not contained in the *Lun yü*) and concludes indignantly:

夫聖孔子不居是何言也

*"Now, since Confucius would not allow himself to be regarded as a Sage, what words were these?"* (Legge)

But his interlocutor does not give up, he only lowers the key:

學不厭智也教不倦仁也仁且智夫子既聖矣

*"To study insatiably means wisdom, to teach tirelessly means benevolence. Benevolent and wise, Master, you ARE a sage."*

(cf. Legge) – This is what Mother Meng is made to mean.

> 仁 "benevolence" (Legge): for a definition of this difficult concept, see the note at the end of # 3<sub>2</sub>-L.

Related to the above *MENCIUS* quotations is *Lun yü*, HY 11/7/2 (C., p. 137; L., p. 195): *The Master said, 'The silent treasuring up of knowledge; learning without satiety (厭); and instructing others without being wearied (倦): – which one of these things belongs to me?'* (Legge)

# 3<sub>2</sub>-J

猶吾織布未成而自斷其機也

yu<sup>2</sup> wu<sup>2</sup> chih<sup>1.5</sup> pu<sup>4</sup> wei<sup>4</sup> ch'eng<sup>2</sup> . erh<sup>2</sup> tzu<sup>4</sup> tuan<sup>4</sup> ch'i<sup>2</sup> chi<sup>1</sup>  
yeh<sup>3</sup>

*This is as if I would not weave the piece of cloth to the end and cut it myself [from] this machine.*

B-level:

*Since [you,] prick (猶), are disobedient (吾), [I] will not weave...&c., and*

a) *I myself cut into this vagina machine* (and deprive us of our income, cf. the discourse in # 3<sub>2</sub>-G);

b) *I will now cut off this machine* [of yours] which she seized and was holding in her hand. This is not a burlesque anti-thesis to the solemn thesis of the tender teaching of loving mothers (# 3<sub>1</sub>-A). Endowed with a keen sense of honour, the lady was prepared to accept any form of disgrace if that was the price for having the family restored to former glory. If her son chooses to be a scoundrel, he should be prevented from fathering a posterity that would bring shame upon his ancestors. Better no posterity at all than a degenerated one.

> 其 presents the same ambiguity as above, # 3<sub>2</sub>-E: “this machine”, of mine / of yours.

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# 3<sub>2</sub>-K

孟子感悟. 乃往受業於子思之門

meng<sup>4</sup> tzu<sup>3</sup> kan<sup>3</sup> wu<sup>4</sup> . nai<sup>3</sup> wang<sup>3</sup> shou<sup>4</sup> ye<sup>4.5</sup> yü<sup>2</sup> tzu<sup>3</sup> ssu<sup>1</sup>  
chih<sup>1</sup> men<sup>2</sup>

*Mencius was moved to compunction. Eventually he went abroad and took instruction at the gate of Tzu-sse.*

Tzu-ssu, cf. *M.*, 3.6930.381; *FORKE*, I. p. 158-169: a grandson of Confucius, and putative author of the *Ta hsioh* and the *Chung yung*.

Quotation:

Ssu-ma Ch'ien reports that Mencius was:

受業子思之門人

Hence, Mencius was not a personal disciple of Tzu-ssu (who would then have been at least 130 years old), but a disciple of his school. However, there are other traditions as well, cf. FORKE, I, p. 191.

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# 3<sub>2</sub>-L

紹明聖學。皆母教也

shao<sup>4</sup> ming<sup>2</sup> sheng<sup>4</sup> hioh<sup>2.5</sup> chieh<sup>1</sup> mu<sup>3</sup> chiao<sup>4</sup> yeh<sup>3</sup>

*Henceforth he dedicated himself to the study of the ingenius and the sages: this was all [the fruit of] maternal instruction.*

> 紹 “he dedicated himself continually” as in *MENCIUS*, HY 23/3B/5 (C., p. 445; L., p. 273): 紹我周王 *henceforth we shall continually serve the kings of Chou (pergemus servire)*. Meaning: “be faithful mandarins” (cf. “The foot of the lin<sup>2</sup>”).

Quotation:

明聖 makes a duck-and-drake: *Li chi*, Yo chi, HY 19/3 (C., II, p. 60):

.... 明聖者述作之謂也

*Those who knew to express feelings through ceremonies and music were capable of inventing new forms; those who knew the rules of these arts were capable of teaching them. Those who invented were called “sages of the first order”; those who taught were called “ingenious”. “Ingenious” and “sages” meant the teachers and the inventors.*

Ceremonies and music are, of course, the essence of Mencian Confucianism. 明聖 construed as “ingenious sage” is not registered as referring to Confucius (cf. M. 5.13805.351) who, on the contrary, said of himself:

述而不作

*I transmit and do not invent.*

(*Lun yü*, HY 11/7/1 (C., p. 136; L., p. 195), meaning in our particular context that, through his mother’s teaching methods, Mencius

*never thereafter rose up in erection.*

This final duck-and-drake closes in a fittingly ambiguous way the story of Mencius and his mother, as told by Master Wang.

> 述 shu<sup>4.5</sup> “to transmit, hand down”; but also “to continue, continually”.

> 作 tso<sup>4.5</sup> “to do, to begin”; but also “to rise up”.

In *Orchis*, p. 93, Confucius never “rose up” because, afflicted with priapism, he never came down. For the chastity of the Confucians, *ju*, see above, # 2-Q.

Mencius, however, had descendants – or nephews. Until the end of the monarchy, viz. the end of Chinese culture, the head of the Meng clan enjoyed the privilege of a Court carriage, and perpetual membership of the Hanlin Academy (*FORKE*, I, p.193).

#### Note on 仁 jen<sup>2</sup>

Written as a *hui-yi* composed of 人, a “human”, and 二, the number “two”, 仁 is the emblem of the ideal human intercourse. In Western idioms it is variously translated as “benevolence” (Legge, Couvreur), as *vertu parfaite* “perfect virtue” (Couvreur) or as *Sittlichkeit* “morality” = ethical comportment (Wilhelm), for *jen* is viewed as a sort of super-virtue that includes all the other virtues. Without *jen*, one is not really a human being (*Cd.*, p. 301c): just one of those yokels which we were invited to despise (# 2-B). On the contrary we may understand “to be really human” as to be a 成人 *ch’eng<sup>2</sup> jen<sup>2</sup>*, an “Accomplished man”, about whom Master Wang will have much to say (# 7-D & fol.) Indeed, the virtue of *jen* calls for studies, and not only because, quite in general, 人不學不知道 (# VII), but, more specifically, because 好仁不好學其蔽也愚 “to love *jen* and not to love to study, is but deception, is foolishness.” (*Lun yü*, *HY* 35/17/7; *L.*, p. 322; *C.*, 265).

.....But what is *jen*?

*Tzu-chang* asked Confucius about *jen*. Confucius answered: “To be able to practice the FIVE [for the Benefice of] Under Heaven (i.e., as a mandarin): this is *jen*.” He [*Tzu-chang*]



*begged to ask what these were (請問之) and was told: 恭寬信敏惠 "Gravity, generosity, sincerity, diligence, and kindness. – Be grave, and you will not be taken lightly; be generous, and you win the populace; be sincere, and people will trust you \* ; be diligent, and you will be successful; be kind, and you will be fit to employ the services of others." (Lun yü, HY 35/17/5; L., p. 320; C., p. 263.)*

*\*) 任 jen<sup>2</sup> "trustworthy"; jen<sup>4</sup> "to be trusted; to be appointed to a public Office".*

From this it appears that "the FIVE", as well as *jen* itself, are part of a judicious behaviour, useful means set into practice in order to achieve certain desired results: ultimately, the well-being of one's parents and the prosperity of one's own family. Confucian virtues are essentially immanent, utilitarian, social, and success-oriented.

> 五 "five", in numerology, means "the middle"; it does not necessarily mean that there are but the five virtues just mentioned. There may be any other number of them, all contributing to *jen*, the virtue of the ideal, of the successful mandarin.