

XI
Eleventh Couplet

首 孝 弟 . 次 見 聞 : 知 某 數 . 識 某 文
shou³ hsiao⁴ ti⁴ . tz'u⁴ chien⁴ wen²
chih¹ mou³ shu⁴ . shih^{4.5} mou³ wen²

Rhyme: 文 wen² “culture / literature / the liberal arts”.

Translation:

First of all, [practice] filial piety and a younger brother's [deference]; then you shall observe and listen in order to acquire some knowledge of numerology, to obtain some expertise in letters.

Generally speaking, TEN means completeness; ELEVEN opens the perspective on wider horizons. Following this rule of numerology, the *San tzu ching* has defined Confucian learning and its aims in TEN couplets. As for Couplet # XI, its first hemistich closes the introductory disquisitions; the remaining three hemistichs open the perspective on the material which constitutes the object of Confucian learning.

1) 孝 “filial piety”. In # 1₁-F, Mencius is quoted for telling us that even a baby recognises, and loves, his mother. Fate helping, it may even save her life, e.g. *Chin P'ing Mei*, see *Index, sub voc.* “Dschou Goldi”, p. 214-215 = vol. 5, ch.99, p. 528).

2) 弟 “the subservience of younger brothers” comes later; but our K'ung Yung had it mastered at the age of four (# X-C).

3) Still a little later comes numerological counting. Its basics, at least till the number SIX, were taught by the womenfolk of the “inner apartments” (# 2-M); but, no matter how advanced one's knowledge, numerology was considered “elementary learning” (cf. Wang Ying-lin's gigantic and immensely

learned 小學紺珠 “*The purple pearl of elementary learning*”, precisely).

4) As for 文 wen² “the letters”, the *San tzu ching* means the 四庫 ssu⁴ ku⁴, the “four arsenals [of erudition]” (cf. Introduction, “The Content”). The study of the letters takes a lifetime.

> 首 “first“: Master Wang makes a *distinctio*: he has used this kanji in # 9-A, meaning “rule” (while 先 meant “first“).

N.B.: Be patient when such “mere trifles” are treated at length. If you cannot bring yourself to enjoy them, leave Chinese literature alone; for, as you may have noticed by now, Chinese literature is replete with them.

> 孝弟, this pair appears to be extracted from the FOUR yi, q.v. # 10-B. The two remaining virtues of that tetranome, 忠 “fidelity” and 信 “truthfulness”, although not mentioned in our text, are illustrated by the events at which # 10-I-J hinted.

> 見聞 are the means by which we attain “knowledge and experience”, namely 知識, the knowledge imparted by the teacher; and 經驗, the verification of its correctness (rather than “empirical experience“), cf. *MTH.*, 1123 (a) 10-15. The binome is not of classical origin (cf. *M.*, 10.34796.148); but it occurs in the commentary to the logion which Master Wang will quote, starting in # 11-F.

> 數 “a number” is a “wrong borrowing” meaning properly “to govern a women’s jail”. The kanji shows, “the whip” as its radical, and “women locked away” 女女毋中, *W.* 67N. Reading further into the *San tzu ching*, it appears that *shu* means “numerology” rather than “numbers“. Our primer does not teach abstract numbers, “one, two, three ...”, it teaches numerological categories, starting with the FIVE units 一十百千萬; the number TWO is omitted. (why? is it because the binary *yin-&-yang* was deemed too complex a topic to be explained to six year olds?); and it continues with “THREE lights” (sun, moon, stars), “FOUR seasons”, “FIVE

directions” &c. till 十義 (q.v. # 10-B; GILES, pp. 23-49, DES MICHELS, pp. 21-48).

> 識 we may hesitate over whether we should read shih^{4.5} “to know”, or chih⁴ “to keep engraved in one’s memory”, but it makes no difference to the meaning.

Master Wang’s Commentary

11-A

孝弟之道. 人倫所當盡

hsiao⁴ ti¹ chih¹ tao⁴ . jen² lun² so³ tang¹ tsin⁴

The fulfillment of social duties consists in the practice of filial piety and of (the subservience of) younger brothers.

... either by analogy, as in the case of *ti* viz. modesty, yielding to elders or to person of higher rank; or imperatively, as in the case of *hsiao*. Filial piety forbids one from bringing trouble upon one’s own family, cf. # 9-H.

> 盡 “to depend” = “to be contained entirely” (same acceptation as in *ST. MATTHEW*, 22:40).

Quotation:

人倫 = 大倫 occurs many times in the classics, but the passage most fitting to the present context appears to be *MENCIUS*, *HY.* 19/3A/3 (*L.*, p. 242-243; *C.*, p. 415). Quoting the Dragon’s son (龍子 *M.*, 12.48818.248.IV) Mencius praises judicious taxation and agricultural cooperatives as the only means of enabling men to nourish their parents and their children in a year of bad harvest. But to this end, education is needed. After relating what schools were called under the rule of former dynasties, Mencius concludes:

皆所以明人倫也人倫明於上小民親於下
(Scholae) omnes sunt in quibus explanantur hominum mutua officia. Elucidatis hominum officiis ab alto, i.e. superiorum cura, plebei homines invicem diligunt in imo. Which is better than: *The aim of all (these schools) was to clearly state the*

social duties. *When the social duties are clearly stated by the authorities, kindly feelings will prevail down there, among the populace.* (It is easier to turn this sort of statement into Latin.)

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11-B

見聞之理幼學所宜知

chien⁴ wen² chih¹ li³ yu⁴ hsioh^{2.5} so³ yi² chih¹

It profits schoolboys to know the proper way of acquiring knowledge.

In # 10-B we read: 兄弟之義幼學所宜知也. This means that the proper comportment (義) precedes the acquisition of knowledge in time and in importance (cf. below, #11-C).

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11-C

子曰行有餘力則以學文

tzu³ yüeh^{1.5} hsing² yu³ yü² li^{4.5} tse^{2.5} yi³ hsioh^{2.5} wen²

The Master said: “[...] while practicing [these virtues] he should use his excess energy for polite studies”

This quotation is taken from the *Lun Yü, H.Y. 1/1/6 (L., p. 140; C., p. 72-73).*

> 文, the commentary defines it restrictively, as comprising the six 藝 yi⁴ = the six “Classics” (經 ching¹), namely 易 . 詩 . 書 . 禮 . 春秋 . 樂記 .

The quotation makes it clear that, in # XI, 次 ought to be understood primarily as indicating a ranking in importance, rather than a sequence in time. Indeed, the quoted logion starts (= the passage omitted above): “*A youth, when at home, should be filial, and, abroad, respectful to his elders. He should be earnest and truthful. He should overflow in love to all, and cultivate the friendship of the good.*” (Legge)

The commentary says:

德行本也. 文藝末也

The appropriately ethical behaviour is the root/trunk of the tree. Polite arts constitute the tree top.

> 文藝 includes abilities such as poetry, chess, painting, [seal] engraving &c., viz. arts befitting the literatus, as opposed to the martial arts (*M.*, 5.13450.285).

Notice: 汎愛眾而親仁 (A well-educated) young man) “should overflow in love to all, and cultivate the friendship of the good.” This translation of Legge was quoted verbatim by *MTH.* (1773.8) – proof that, by the beginning of the XX. century, the line was a current saying understood in a way that rings a distinctly Christian accent objectionable in a Confucian text. Hence we should give it a closer look.

Notice the contrast between 眾 *hoi polloi*, the general populace, and 仁 (glossed to be a noun, 仁者) the precious few learned men endowed with a (social, intellectual, sexual &c.) potency 德 fit for a mandarin.

Our text distinguishes two social classes. Our young gentleman who strives to belong to the latter should indeed cultivate his social contacts within the mandarin caste.

As for the general populace, he should love it in the way recommended by Confucius (cf. the logion immediately preceding:

The Master said, ‘To rule a country of a thousand chariots, there must be reverent attention to business, and sincerity; economy in expenditures, and love for men (愛人); and the employment of people (民) at the proper season.’

> 愛 *ai*⁴ “to love” amounts here to an intelligent benevolence towards the masses, as fit for an administrator (cf. # 9-B Quotation, > 親).

> 汎 *fan*⁴ glossed 廣 *kuang*³ “broadly, wide” is correctly rendered by *C.*, p. 73 Latin, *universatim*, “generally, indifferently”.

B-level: the rejected meaning “to float, to drift; careless, reckless” gives licence to the young gentleman – if only he shows himself well-behaved – to freely enjoy visiting the “willow lanes”.

> 親 ts'in¹, glossed 近 chin⁴ “to draw close to”; Legge’s “to cultivate the friendship of” is correct as long as we understand “friendship” in a Western sense (cf. # 10-K, Appendix, conclusion).

> 仁 “the good ones” of Legge, cf. # 3₂-L, the note on 仁 .

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11-D

知其目則為數. 識其義則為文

chih¹ ch'i² mu^{4.5} tse^{2.5} wei² shu³ . chih^{4.5} ch'i² yi⁴ tse^{2.5} wei² wen²

Once [the boy] has understood every detail of it, he may proceed to numerology; once he has obtained knowledge of its significance, he may proceed to the letters.

At face value, the first 其 “of it” refers to the virtues of 孝 and 弟 of # 11-C (exemplified in # IX and # X); and the second 其 refers us to the numerology just mentioned, and which is about to be discussed in the next few distiches. However, Master Wang confronts us with two quotations by which the first ch'i² comes to mean jen², the second ch'i² li³.

Quotations:

其目 and 其義 are both borrowed from the *Lun yü*, HY. 22/12/1 and HY. 38/18/7, respectively.

1) 其目 (C., p. 198; L., p. 250; *Wilh.*, p. 118): Yen Yüan asks Confucius about the virtue jen² (問 仁) which, we may remember, is the ethical aim of Confucian education (cf. 4₁-I quotation), the virtue of the successful mandarin (# 3₂-L, note). Confucius gives a sweeping answer: 克己復禮為仁 *To subdue oneself and return to propriety is perfect virtue* (Legge). Whereupon Yen Yüan asked:

請問其目

I beg to ask the steps of this process (Legge);

Couvreur: *à quoi se résume la pratique de la vertu parfaite*, or: *rogo quaerere illius summam* (= “outline“); Wilhelm, correctly: *Darf ich um Einzelheiten davon bitten?* (“May I ask

for the particulars of it?”). Confucius answers that, no matter what one does or thinks, all should be in conformity with li³.

> 目, glossed as 條件 “an article (as in a contract)” presents us with semantic difficulties, perhaps, but its meaning is clear enough, viz. “the essential points” (as in 目錄 “an index” or “a table of content”).

> 禮, cf. the discussion in LEGGE’s footnote. He maintains that, in the present context, li³ does not mean “ceremonies”, but his explanations appear “confused” (confusing?) to Wilhelm (cf. his first footnote) and to me too. *COUVREUR*: *honnêteté / honestas* meaning “an honourable, respectable deportment”: he is certainly right and, to my understanding, there is no need to give to the kanji a meaning substantially different from the normal one. Here, as elsewhere, li³ is the proper way of doing things, the Chinese way, the one conforming to Nature (viz. to “Heaven” 天). Wilhelm equates ethics and aesthetics when he renders li³ as *Schönheit* “beauty”. This may be enticing to a western mind reared on Plato, and it is certainly interesting, but it is sinologically inadmissible (Wilhelm’s questionable justifications notwithstanding): “to subdue oneself and submit to the laws of beauty” (*Sich selbst überwinden und sich den Gesetzen der Schönheit zuwenden*).

Following Master Wang’s thought, we recognize 仁 jen² as the essence of 孝 hsiao⁴ and 弟 ti⁴; we define numerology, 數 shu⁴, as the proper world order, and acknowledge it as prerequisite to 禮 li³, the Chinese orthopraxy, namely the proper way of dealing with the world.

2) 其義 is taken from a complex *Lun yü* pericope to which the reader may refer (*C.*, p. 278-280; *L.*, p. 335-336; *Wil.* p. 204-205). The story goes that Tzu-lu encounters a gardener-recluse proficient in numerology (he talks about “the FOUR limbs” and “the FIVE grains”) and who behaves in a “benevolent” (仁) way. The second part of the story reports the discourse of Tzu-lu:

It is not right to avoid taking office. If the duties ruling the relations between old and young may not be neglected, how is it that he neglects those between sovereign and subject? Intent on maintaining his personal purity, he allows the great (social) order (大倫) to come to confusion. A gentleman takes office and performs the righteous (duties) belonging to it (君子之仕也行其義也).

N.B.: the exaggerated concern for one's "personal purity" reminds one of Ch'ü Yüan 屈原 as presented in "The fisherman" 漁父, the seventh section of the *Ch'u Tz'u* (cf. Hawkes; also *Orchis tower*, p. 143; also 3₁-G).

By duck-and-drake, Master Wang warns us once again that a mandarin's career is full of pitfalls. Tzu-lu closes his discourse with resignation:

道之不行已知之矣

That a career is no easy thing, this has been known for a long time already.

Taking the meaning of the two quotations into account, we may translate the sentence # 11-D: *To know the essentials of the correct behaviour is what numerology is all about; to possess a correct understanding of the righteous duties pertaining to public office is what letters are all about.* Master Wang will develop this thought by means of the *Yi ching* quotations of # 11-E.

> 爲 meaning both "to do" and "to be", I decided to render it with the equally ambiguous "what it is all about".

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11-E

易曰. a) 君子多識前言往行 b) 日新其德

yi⁴ yüeh^{1.5} . chün¹ tzu³ to¹ shih^{4.5} ts'ien² yen² wang³ hsing² .
jih^{4.5} hsin¹ ch'i² te^{2.5}

The Changes say: a) A gentleman acquaints himself extensively with the words of wisdom of former [generations] and with the deeds of bygone [times]. b) His potency renews itself every day.

Master Wang quotes two independent sentences of *kua* # 26, 大畜 tai⁴ ch'u^{4.5} "the great amassing" (one would be tempted

to render it by the term “great rubber” of various card games) *HY.*, p. 17 b (*Wil.*, p. 516):

- 1) 象曰天在山中大畜君子以多識前言往行以畜其德

The image says: Heaven rests within the mountain: great amassing. To nurse his potency, a gentleman uses his extensive knowledge of words of wisdom of former generations, and of the deeds of bygone times.

> 天, 山, 中 “Heaven”, “mountain”, “middle” are metaphors, respectively, for the emperor, a high dignitary, and the court. Meaning: “at court, there is a high dignitary whom the emperor trusts”... which, for the dignitary, results in a “great amassing” of all kinds of earthly goods, including power.

> 德 “potency”, “power”. A final reminder: with Wilhelm, we may translate *te*^{2.5} as “virtue” only if it is clearly understood that, what is meant, are not Christian virtues, but Chinese ones, the latter being essentially immanent and success-oriented. The Chinese thought does not differentiate between natural, social, and moral order; and Chinese “virtue” results in health, sexual as well as political power, and in riches.

- 2) 日新其德 is borrowed from the “commentary on the decision” (preceding “the image”).

To this there is a duck-and-drake in that the commentary promises to the mandarin:

剛健篤實輝光

that he will be *healthy, honest, brilliant* if we read three binomes; if we read six asyndeta, he will be *tough, powerful, appreciated, renowned, splendid, glorious*.

> 剛 “tough, not easily moved”, viz. not easily removed from office, and not to be moved by tearful supplications. Also: = 罍 (same pronunciation kang¹) “the Big Dipper” who stays forever close to the North Star

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11-F

孔子曰. 多聞. 闕疑. 慎言其餘
多見. 闕殆. 慎行其餘

k'ung³ tzu³ yüeh^{1.5} to¹ wen² ch'üeh^{4.5} yi² shen⁴ yen² ch'i² yü²
to¹ chien⁴ ch'üeh^{4.5} tai⁴ shen⁴ hsing² ch'i² yü²

Confucius said: "Hear much; leave aside what is dubious and quote the rest with caution. Observe much; leave aside what is hazardous and practice the rest with caution, ...

Lun yü, HY. 3/2/18 (L., p. 151; C., 81). This is the first part (somewhat shortened) of the advice given to Tzu-chang who studied in view of State emoluments 子張學于祿 (The second part of the advice follows in # 11-H; and the conclusion follows by duck-and-drake.)

> 祿 lu^{4.5} "A favour or gift. Happiness; prosperity. Official pay; salary" *Mth.*, 4196 (*Cd.*, same). The phrasing suggests that Tzu-chang was primarily interested in these; not so much in doing the job.

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11-G

及乎聞見既廣知識既深

chi^{2.5} hu¹ wen² chien⁴ chi⁴ kuang³ . chih¹ shih^{4.5} chi⁴ shen¹

... till [your] instruction has reached utter breadth and [your] science utter depth:

These words are not part of the original apophthegm; nor are they quoted from the commentary. Master Wang insists on the high price for which only the desired result, # 11-H, may be obtained.

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11-H

則言寡尤而行寡悔矣

tse^{2.5} yen² kua³ yü² . erh² hsing⁴ kua³ hui³ yi³

then [your] words will [bring you] little blame; [your] deeds will [cause you] little repentance.

Master Wang continues quoting (freely) Confucius' words (cf. 11-F). He stops short of the all-important conclusion: a fine duck-and-drake:

祿在其中矣

The emoluments are to be found herein.

Wherein? According to Master Wang, the State emoluments come as a result of extensive learning (# 11-G); according to

Confucius they are the fruit of tact and prudence. There is no contradiction, only the accents are set differently according to the audience. Whereas Master Wang addresses himself to little boys who, first things first, must acquire basic knowledge; Confucius addresses a young man who already has a fair amount of knowledge and experience: let him now focus his attention on the judicious distinction between opportune and inopportune.

A double duck-and-drake drawn from the two apophthegms immediately preceding the quotation of # 11-F & H, provides our elucidations with two equally appropriate endings, one aimed at the student ju², 儒, one aimed at the sinologue:

- a) For the Confucian student:

子曰 . 攻乎異端 . 斯害也已

The Master said, 'To study heterodox doctrines is injurious indeed!'

This apophthegm was quoted in # 1₁-A: it is the α and the ω of Confucian learning.

- b) For the Sinologue:

子曰 . 由誨女知之乎 . 知之為知之 . 不知為不知 .
是知也

The Master said, 'Yu, shall I teach you what wisdom is? When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it: this is wisdom.'

> 知 makes a distinctio: the first and the last equal 智 and should be read in the fourth tone; the four in the middle should be read in the first tone.

**And herewith ends the introductory part
of the primer *San tzu ching*.**