

LUN-HÉNG.

PART I.

PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS OF WANG CH'UNG.

TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE AND ANNOTATED

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To carve a fowl with a butcher's knife, to reap sun-flowers with a *Shu*¹ spear, to cut chop-sticks with an iron halberd, and to pour a glassful into a basin or a tureen would be incongruous, and few would recommend it. What is the principle of debating? To illustrate deep thoughts by simple ones. And how do we prove that we possess knowledge? By illustrating difficult points by easy ones. Sages and worthies use to weigh, what suits the different talents. Hence the difference of style, which may be difficult or easy.

Since *Wang Ch'ung* deplored the popular feeling, he wrote his *Censures on Public Morals*, and also lamenting the vain efforts of the emperor's government, which was endeavouring to govern the people, but could not find the right way, nor understand what was required, and mournful and disheartened did not see its course, he wrote the book on government.² Furthermore disgusted with the many deceitful books and popular literature devoid of veracity and truthfulness, he composed the *Disquisitions* (*Lun-heng*).

The worthies and sages are dead, and their great doctrine has split up. Many new roads have been struck out, on which many people have stumbled. Every one must have his own school. Intelligent men have seen this, but were unable to find the right way. Old traditions have been transmitted, either written down, or spread by hearsay. Since they were dating from over a hundred years backwards and growing older from day to day, people have regarded them as antique lore and therefore near the truth, and this belief became so rooted in their minds, that they themselves were incapable of eradicating it again.

For this reason the *Disquisitions* have been written to show the truth. They are in a lively style and full of controversy. Every specious and futile argument has been tested, semblance and falsehood have been rejected, and only what is real and solid has been preserved. Loose manners have been suppressed, and the customs of *Fu Hsi*'s time³ revived.

Wang Ch'ung's writings are lucid and easy to understand. There are those who pretend that the words of a good debater must be profound, and the compositions of an able writer obscure. The

¹ An old State in *Anhui*.

² *Ch'ung-wu*.

³ The Golden Age.

style of the classic literature and the sayings of worthies and sages are grand and majestic, beautiful and refined, and difficult to grasp at first. Those who study their whole life, learn to understand them with the necessary explanations. The genius of the first thinkers being so wonderful, their expressions cannot be the same as those of ordinary people. Gems, they say, are concealed in stones, and pearls in fish-maws. Only jewel-lapidaries and pearl-experts can find them. These precious things cannot be seen, because they are hidden, and thus truisms must be profound and deep, and hard to grasp.

The "Censures on Morals" are intended to rouse people, therefore the meaning is perspicuous and the style quite plain. But why must the *Lung-heng* be like this too? Is the talent of the author so shallow, that it was absolutely impossible to hide anything? Why is the style so perspicuous, and quite a different principle followed than in the classical literature?

My reply is as follows. A gem is concealed in a stone and a pearl in a fish-maw, and therefore they are covered and in the dark. But, when the colour of the gem beams from the heart of the stone, and the lustre of the pearl breaks through the fish-maw, are they still hidden? They are like my thoughts, before they have been fixed in books. Enshrined in my bosom, they are like gems or pearls in their concealment, shining forth, brilliant as the splendour of the heavenly bodies, and clear as the distinct lines of the surface of the earth.

Lest things should remain doubtful and obscure to us, we can describe them all by names, and, provided that the names are clear, all the things become defined. The *Lun-heng* discusses these questions impartially.

In speaking, it is essential to use clear words, and in writing, to employ plain signs. The style of eminent scholars is refined, but their words can always be understood, and their meaning always be caught. Their readers are suddenly enlightened like blind men who recover their sight, or stirred up like deaf men who suddenly learn to hear. When a child who has been blind for three years, unexpectedly sees his parents, he would not, at once, know them on perceiving them, why then should he give utterance to his joy?

Let a huge tree stand by the road-side, and a long ditch run along a bank, then the locality is well defined, and everybody knows it. Now, should the tree not be huge any more and disappear, and the ditch not be long and be hidden, and the place be shown to people, even *Yao* and *Shun* would be perplexed.

The human features are divided into more than seventy different classes. The flesh of the cheeks being pure and white, the five colours can be clearly discerned, and the slightest sorrow, pleasure, and other emotions, all find expression in the features. A physiognomist will not once be mistaken in ten cases. But if the face be blackened and begrimed, or covered with a layer of dirt so, that the features are hidden, then physiognomists will give wrong answers nine times out of ten.

The style is formed of words. It may be shallow, perspicuous, and distinct, or deep, abstruse, elegant, and polished. Who shall distinguish it?

We speak to express our thoughts, and from fear, that our words might be lost, we commit them to writing. Writing having the same purpose as speaking, wherefore should it conceal the meaning?

A judge must hate wrong. Now, would a magistrate, who while deciding a doubtful case gives a confuse and unintelligent verdict, be a better official than another, who clearly distinguishes every point, and can easily be understood?

In oral discussions, one makes clear distinctions out of regards for the audience, and in written disputations one elucidates one's meaning to be understood. In historical works, a clear and intelligible style is most appreciated, and of profound productions, full of beautiful thoughts, but hard to read, there are only pieces of irregular verse and dithyrambs. As for the classical and semi-classical works and the words of the worthies and sages, the ancient and modern languages are different, and speech varies in the different parts of the empire. At the time, when these men spoke, they did not wish that their words should be difficult to understand, or that their meaning should be hidden. If later ages did not understand them, this is owing to the remoteness of time. Therefore one may speak of the difference of language, but not of genius or shallowness of style. If the reading offers great difficulties, the works may be considered as not very cleverly written, but this should not be reputed a great wisdom.

Ch'in Shih Huang Ti reading *Han Fei Tse's* work exclaimed with a sigh! "Alas! that I am alone, and have not got this man!"¹ They were contemporaries, he could understand his words and

¹ According to the *Shi-chi* chap. 63 p. 11v (Biography of *Han Fei Tse*) the emperor said:—"Alas! If I could see this man, I would be willing to live and die with him!"

reflect upon what he said. If the book had been so profound and exquisite, that he wanted a teacher to comprehend it, he would have flung it to the ground, and it was no use sighing!¹

An author wishes his work to be intelligible, but difficult to write, and he does not care, if it be hard to grasp, but easy to write. In lectures one aims at perspicuity, that the hearers can follow, and does not affect obscurity and ambiguity to baffle the readers. *Mencius* knew an intelligent man by the sparkling of his eyes.² One learns to know what a text is worth by its lucidity.

The book of *Wang Ch'ung* is of another type than the usual writings. The following objection might be raised against it:—

In literature it is of importance to conform to the public feeling, and not to be in opposition to received ideas. Then not one out of a hundred readers will find anything to blame, and not one out of a thousand hearers will take exception. Therefore *K'uan Tse*³ said that, where somebody is speaking in a house, the audience must fill the whole house, and, when he speaks in a hall, the entire hall should be full. Now *Wang Ch'ung's* arguments are not in accordance with public opinion. Consequently his words controvert all common ideas, and do not tally with the general views.

I reply that in arguing, the essential thing is truth, not elegance, that the facts should at all events be correct, and that *consensus* is not the highest aim. Investigating a question, one discusses the *pros* and *cons*, how would it be possible not to deviate from old ideas and perhaps offend the ears of the common hearer? When the general feeling is wrong, it cannot be followed. One denounces and discards that which is false, and keeps and establishes that which is true. If we were to go by majority, and conform to the public feeling, we could only follow the good old rules and precedents, and recite them over and over again, but how could there be any discussion?

¹ *Han Fei Tse* was sent as envoy from his native State (*Han*) to *Ch'in Shih Huang Ti*, who first appreciated him very much and wished to appoint him to some high post. By the intrigues of *Li Sse*, however, he was induced to imprison him, and to condemn him to death. The emperor afterwards repented, and cancelled the death warrant, but it was too late, for meanwhile *Han Fei Tse* had taken poison. (Cf. p. 170.)

² Cf. Chap. XXXII.

³ The philosopher *K'uan Chung*.

Han Fei Tse's work is like the branch of a tree. The chapters are joined together by tens, and the sentences count by ten thousands. For a large body the dress cannot be narrow, and if there be many subjects, the text must not be too summary. A great variety of subjects requires abundance of words. In a large extent of water, there are many fish, in an emperor's capital, there is plenty of grain, and on the market of a metropolis, there is a throng of people.

My book may be voluminous, but the subjects treated are manifold. T'ai Kung Wang¹ in ancient times and recently Tung Chung Shu² produced books containing more than a hundred chapters. My book also contains more than a hundred chapters. Those who contend that they are too many, only mean to say that the author is of low origin, and that the readers cannot but take exception to it.

When we compare a river, whose waters overflow the banks, with others, which is the biggest? And, when the cocoons of a certain species of worms are especially heavy and big, which worms yield most silk?

Wang Ch'ung was not lucky in his official career, and only wrote books and this autobiography. Some one might find fault with him, arguing thus:

"The important thing is always that a man of great talent should make a good career. When he finds employment, and his words are listened to, he can distinguish himself by his work, and thus rise to high honour. Now, you are living in misery, and your career has been spoiled. You had no opportunity of trying your talents in practice, or using your strength in the fulfilment of official duties. Therefore you only committed your speculations to writing and made your notes. What use are your beautiful words to yourself, and what aim are you pursuing with your extensive writings?"

Nobody was ever more talented than Confucius, and yet his talents were not appreciated. He was expelled, and a tree felled over him. He had to hasten the washing of his rice³ and was

¹ T'ai Kung Wang is the full appellation of Wên Wang's minister, usually called T'ai Kung, on whom cf. Chap. XXXIX.

² Cf. p. 39 and Chap. XXXVII.

³ When forced to leave Ch'ü. (Vid. *Mencius* Bk. V, Pt. II, chap. I, 4, *Logge* Vol. II, p. 247.)

surrounded. His traces were obliterated, he was tormented by hunger between Ch'ên and T'sai, and his disciples looked starved.¹ Now, my talents do not come near those of Confucius, but my hardships do not equal his. Am I to be despised therefore?

Besides the successful are not always clever, or the distressed, simpletons. The lucky win, and the unlucky lose. With a liberal fate and good fortune, even a vulgar person becomes noble and genteel, with a niggardly fate and bad fortune, the most remarkable man remains wretched and miserable. If talents and virtue were to be measured by success, then the great lords invested with the domain of a town, and living on the soil, would all be wise men. (Confucius and M' Ti were noble of themselves, but their rank was low. If, therefore, people are living in pure spheres, but do black deeds, or if they have a yearly income of a thousand chung to live upon, but not a single accomplishment, we can only smile. Provided that our virtue be high and our name untarnished, then our office may be low and our income meagre, it is not the fault of our talents, and we should not feel oppressed by it.

Scholars would like to share the hut with Hsien,² but not to be put on a level with T'se,³ they would gladly wander about with Po Yi, but decline to associate with robber Ché. Great scholars have other ambitions than their people. Therefore their fame is not that of the world. Their bodies decay like grass and trees, but their glory shines as long as the sun and the moon send their rays. Their condition may be as poor as that of Confucius, provided only that their writings rank with those of Yang Hsiung. That is my ideal. Outward success, but a limited knowledge, a high post, but little virtue: that is the ambition of others; I would consider it a bondage.

If somebody has the luck to be heard with his advice, and lives in honour and well being, all this is gone after a hundred years like other things. His name does not come down to the next generation, and not a word from his hand is left in any document. He has had stores full of emoluments perhaps, in the

¹ Cf. Chap. XI.

² Hsien = Yuan Sze, a disciple of Confucius, noted for his contempt of worldly advantages. Made governor of a town, he declined his official allowance (*Shieh* VI, 3) (Huang Tse makes him live in a mud hut. He contrasts him with T'se, another follower of Confucius, who came driving up to his door in a fine chariot and in a white robe lined with purple.

³ T'se = Tuan Mu T'se, or T'ue Kung, a disciple of Confucius, who became a high official, and very wealthy (vid. Chap. XXXI and XXXIII). He was a swell, just the reverse of Hsien.

realms of literature and virtue he leaves no riches. That is not what I prize. Vast virtue of the highest excellence, abundance of extensive knowledge, a pencil dripping with characters like rain, and an overflowing spring of words, rich talents, a wonderful erudition, generous deeds, and a noble mind, with such qualities a man's body may belong to one generation, his name will be transmitted for a thousand years. That seems extraordinary and desirable to me.

Wang Ch'ung is from a simple family, in which he stands quite alone. A caviller might say:—

"Your ancestors have not left you a treasure of pure virtue, nor a collection of literary works. You may yourself write the most brilliant essays, you have no basis to stand upon, and therefore no claim to our admiration."

"When a force bursts upon us quite suddenly, not by degrees, we call it a phenomenon. When a creature is born from quite dissimilar parents, we call it a wonder. When something quite unusual appears all at once, it is regarded as a supernatural appearance, and when something different from anything else quite abruptly comes forth, it is termed a miracle."

"Who are your ancestors? Their names have not been recorded in former times. You did not spring from a learned family, whose members have already walked the path of literature, and you write disquisitions of several thousand or ten thousand sentences. This must be considered a supernatural phenomenon. How could we appreciate such writings, or think them able productions?"¹

I beg to reply that a bird without a pedigree is a phoenix, an animal without a family, a unicorn, a man without an ancestry, a sage, and a thing without a peer, a jewel. And so it is with men of great talents, who are browbeaten and viewed with disfavour by their age. Scholars of worth appear single, and precious things grow solitary. How could literature be inherited? If a man could learn to become a sage, then the water of the *Fêng river*² would have a source, and auspicious grain an old stem.

¹ The Chinese are in awe of, but do not like wonders, miracles, monsters, in short all that is against the regular course of nature. So they are prejudiced against *Wang Ch'ung*, because he is a *homo novus*. Not being a descendant from a literary or a noble family, he should not attempt to rise above the average of his fellow-citizens.

² The source of the *Fêng*, an affluent of the *Wei* in *Shensi* is well known. I presume that for "*Fêng river*" 豐水 we ought to read "*Wine Spring*" 醴泉. The phonetic element for *Fêng* and *Li* "Wine" is very similar, and the *Wine Springs* are often mentioned as auspicious omens in connection with phoenixes, unicorns, and auspicious grain.

When a remarkable scholar appears and puts forward his noble doctrines, he does not fall under the general rule, and his capacity cannot be measured by the bushel. Therefore events which seldom happen are recorded on tablets and books, and rare things engraved on bronze vases. The Five Emperors did not rise in one generation, and *Yi Yin*¹ and *T'ai Kung Wang*² did not issue from one family. There was a distance of thousand li between them, and one lived several hundred years after the other. When scholars of note quietly develop their marvellous faculties, they do not become famous as descendants of noble lines.

The calf of a black cow may be brown, this does not affect the nature of the animal. The ancestors of a scholar may be coarse, provided that he himself is pure, it has no influence upon his character. *K'ün*³ was wicked, and *Yu* a sage, *Sou*⁴ was perverse, and *Shun* divine. *Po Niu*⁵ was visited with a horrible disease, and *Chung Kung*⁶ was clean and strong. *Yen Lu*⁷ was vulgar and mean, and *Yen Hui* outwitted all his companions. *Confucius* and *Mé Ti* had stupid ancestors, and they themselves were sages. The *Yang* family had not been successful, when *Yang Tse Yün* rose like a star, and the house of *Huan* had been tolerably well off, until *Huan Chên Shan*⁸ took his brilliant flight. A man must have been imbued with more than the ordinary dose of the original fluid to become an able writer.

In the third year of *Yuan-lo*,⁹ *Wang Ch'ung* emigrated to *Tan-yang*,¹⁰ *Ch'ü-chiang*,¹¹ and *Lu-chiang*¹² in the province of *Yang-chow*,¹³ and was appointed sub-prefect. His abilities were small, and his office

¹ Minister of *T'ang*, the founder of the *Shang* dynasty.

² Cf. p. 78.

³ *Yü*'s father.

⁴ *Ku Sou*, *Shun*'s father.

⁵ A disciple of *Confucius*, who suffered from leprosy (cf. Chap. XXXIII).

⁶ Another disciple of *Confucius*, a relation of *Po Niu*, both belonging to the *Jen* clan.

⁷ *Yen Hui*'s father.

⁸ Cf. p. 39 and Chap. XXXVII.

⁹ 86 A.D.

¹⁰ Under the *Han* a circuit comprising parts of *Kiangsu* and *Anhui*.

¹¹ A circuit in *Anhui*.

¹² Another circuit in *Anhui*.

¹³ A very large province under the *Han* dynasty, comprising nearly the whole territory of the modern provinces of *Kiangsu*, *Anhui*, *Kiangsi*, *Fukien*, and *Chekiang*.

was important. His chief duties were in connection with official correspondence. All plans of writing anything he had given up for many years. In the second year of *Chang-ho*,¹ his business in the province ceased. He lived at home, and gradually advanced in age, till he reached about seventy years. Then he gave up his official carriage, and his official career was definitely closed. He could not help it. He had many annoyances, and his body felt the infirmities of age. His hair grew white, his teeth fell out, he became older from day to day, and his comrades dispersed. He had nothing to rely upon, was too poor to nurse himself, and had no joy left. But time went slowly on, the *kéng* and *hsing* years² came to an end, but though he was afraid that his death was near at hand, he was still full of silly ideas. Then he wrote a book on *Macrobiotics*³ in sixteen chapters.

To keep himself alive, he cherished the vital fluid. As a stimulant for the appetite he used wine. Closing eyes and ears against external influences, he spared his energy as a means of self-protection. Using medicines he kept up his forces, and by following this method he hoped to prolong his days. For a while he did not age, but when it was too late, there was no return.

This book was left as a guide to posterity. But the duration of human life is limited. Men like animals live for a while and die. We can only remember the years gone by, who can order them to stand still? We must go down to the yellow sources, and become earth and ashes. From *Huang Ti* and *T'ang* down to the *Ch'in* and *Han* many have been guided by the holy doctrine and have found the truth by their genius, just like a scales and bright like a mirror, yet young and old they have lived and died, of old and now all have been included. Life cannot be prolonged, alas!

¹ 88 A.D.

² The cyclical years *kéng-yin*: 90 A.D. and *hsing-mao*: 91 A.D.

³ *Yang hsing shu*.

CHAPTER II.

Replies in Self-Defense (*T'ui-so*).

Some one might put the following question: The worthies and sages were not born for nothing; decidedly their minds were required. How is it that from *Confucius* and *Mé Ti* down to *Hsün Tse*¹ and *Mencius* they all acted as teachers and left their works to posterity?

Our reply is that the sages wrote the Classics, and the worthies composed their records. They rectified the depraved customs, and enjoined upon the people to revert to truth and sincerity. The thirteen thousand chapters of the Six Departments of Literature² increased the good and diminished the evil, sometimes restricting, sometimes expanding, and urging on the stragglers, with a view to leading them back from their by-paths into the right way.

Confucius wrote the *Ch'un-ch'iu* in consequence of the depravity of the people of *Chou*. He, therefore, established the smallest merit, and blamed the slightest wrong; he removed every disorder, and re-established propriety. The ways of men as well as those of the sovereign were well ordered by him. To check extravagant and mean practices one must take every precaution, and use every means. When a dyke breaks, and no measures are taken, there will be a disastrous inundation. When a net opens, and is not shut again, the animals caught in it are lost. Had the ways of *Chou* not degenerated, the people would not have been uncultured, and had the people not been uncultured, the *Ch'un-ch'iu* would not have been written.

If the doctrines of *Yang Chu* and *Mé Ti*³ had not perverted the traditions, the records of *Mencius* would not have been published. Had the *Han* State not been small and weak, and its system of government corrupt, *Han Fei Tse*'s book would not have appeared.⁴ Had *Kao Tzu* not contested that the conquerors of

¹ The philosopher *Hsün Tse*: *Sun Ch'ing*, cf. Chap. XXXII.

² Vid. Chap. XXXVII and the Catalogue of Literature, *Han-shu* chap. 30.

³ The philosophers of egoism and altruism, both combated by *Mencius*.

⁴ The philosopher *Han Fei Tse* was the son of a Duke of the *Han* State in *Shan-shi*.

empires had not alighted from their horses nor changed their martial habits, *Lu Chia* would not have written his memorials.¹ If the truth had not been lost everywhere, and scientific researches not been in a state of great confusion, the discussions of *Huan Tan* would not have come forth.

Ergo, when worthies and sages write something, they do not do so for nothing, but have their good reasons. Thus their writings are by no means purposeless, but conducive to reforms, and their reforms to re-establish the right principles.

Accordingly the *Han* created the censorate to review books and examine their contents. *Tung Chung Shu* wrote a book on magical arts, in which he spoke much about calamitous events as being caused by the faults of the government. When the book was complete, and the text revised, it was presented to the Imperial Court of the *Han*. *Chiu Fu Yen* from jealousy slandered the book in a memorial to the throne. The emperor handed *Tung Chung Shu* over to the tribunal, and the judges declared that he was very stupid, and deserved to die, but the emperor pardoned him. *Msiao Wu Ti* did not punish *Tung Chung Shu* for his remarks on calamities, on the contrary, he honoured him. How much more would he have done so for *Tung Chung Shu's* inoffensive utterances, for his researches into the nature of the fundamental principles and his collection of old and true sayings?

As long as a wise man holds an official position in this world, he is perfectly loyal to his sovereign, and propagates his reforms to enlighten the government. When he has retired, he still teaches and criticises to rouse the simple-minded who have gone astray. They cannot find their way back to the right path, their principles are shallow, and their doings wrong. Unless we scholars hurry to their rescue, they come to perdition, and do not awake from their slumber. This has prompted me to write the *Lun-hêng*.

¹ An allusion to an event in the life of *Lu Chia*, narrated in his biography, *Sih-chi* chap. 97 p. 7. When *Lu Chia* had returned from his successful mission to the King of *Yüeh*, whom he induced to acknowledge the suzerainty of the *Han*, *Kiao Tzu* conferred a high rank upon him. Subsequently, when relating his adventures, *Lu Chia* would always refer to poetry and history. The emperor displeased with these utterances, told him that he had won his laurels on horseback, why must he make such a fuss about literature. Then *Lu Chia* showed him, how former conquerors had lost the empire again, if they had not consolidated their power by the arts of peace. This conversation with the emperor led to the composition of a series of memorials, in which *Lu Chia* developed his ideas about government. This collection of memorials received the title "New Words", *Hsin-yü*, cf. Chap. XXXVII.

← In a great many books reality has no place left: falsehood and immorality triumph over truth and virtue. Therefore, unless such lies be censured, specious arguments cannot be suppressed, and, as long as they spread, truth does not reign. For this reason the *Lun-hêng* weighs the words, whether they be light or heavy, and holds up a balance for truth and falsehood. It does not trouble about polishing the phrases and embellishing the style, or consider this of great importance.

It has its *raison d'être* in the innate human weakness. Consequently it criticises the common people most vigorously. By nature these people are very prone to strange words and to the use of falsehoods. Why? Because simple truisms do not appeal to the imagination, whereas elegant inventions puzzle the hearers, and impress their minds. Therefore, men of genius, who are fond of discussions, will magnify and exaggerate the truth, and use flowery language. Masters of style, they simply invent things, and tell stories, which never happened. Their hearers believe in them, and are never tired of repeating them. Their readers take these stories for facts, and one transmits them to the other in an unbroken chain so, that at last the words are engraved on bamboo and silk. Being repeated over and over again, these stories impose even upon the wise. May be that even His Majesty honours such a man as a teacher, and spreads his forgeries, and that magistrates and wearers of red girdle pendants¹ all read these inventions.

He who knows how to discriminate between truth and falsehood, must feel a pang at it; why should he not speak? *Mencius* was grieved that the discussions of *Yang Chu* and *Mé Ti* did great harm to the cause of Confucianism, therefore he used plain and straightforward language to recommend what was right, and to reject what was wrong. People fancied that he was a controversialist, but *Mencius* replied, "How should I be a controversialist? I cannot do otherwise."²

Now I also cannot do otherwise. Lies and folly appear in the garb of truth, veracity and sincerity are superseded by imposture. People are in a state of apathy, right and wrong are not determined, purple and vermilion confounded,³ and tiles mixed up with jade-stones. As regards my feelings, how could my heart endure such a state? The lackey in *Wei* riding the outer horse

¹ Princes and nobles.

² *Mencius* Bk. III, Pt. II, chap. IX, 1.

³ Vermilion is regarded as a primary colour, and much liked, purple as secondary, and not much esteemed.

transgressed his functions, crying out for the carriage. His sympathy carried him away, for he was apprehending a danger for his prince.¹ Critics commiserate the world, and feel sorry for its deceptions, a sentiment similar to that of the outtrider in *Wei*. A sorrowful mind and a melancholy spirit disturb the tranquil fluid in our breast, which tells upon our years, shortens our span, and is not beneficial to our life. It is a greater misfortune than that suffered by *Yen Hui*,² and against the rules of *Liung Tz* and *Lao Tse*, and nothing which men like to do. But there was no help, therefore I wrote the *Lun-heng*. Its style is indifferent, but the meaning all right, the diction bad, but the feeling good. The *Cheng-wu*³ treats of the system of government; all the chapters of the *Lun-heng* may be read by ordinary people, for it is like writings of other scholars.

As for the Nine Inventions and the Three Exaggerations, and the essays on Death and on Ghosts,⁴ the world has long been led astray by the errors exposed therein, and people did not become aware of it.

When a ruler goes wrong, representations must be addressed to the highest place, when the citizens are blindfold, one speaks to them. If this be of effect, their leader will learn also. I fervently desire to rouse the misguided minds, and to teach them, how to tell the full from the hollow. As soon as the difference of reality and emptiness is fully understood, specious arguments will be discarded, and then the progress made in true and real knowledge will daily increase.

Some say that the sages create, whereas the worthies relate, and that, if worthies create, it is wrong. The *Lun-heng* and the *Cheng-wu* are creations, they think. These works are neither creations nor relations. The Five Classics can be regarded as creations. The History of the Grand Annalist,⁵ the Introduction of *Liu Tse Cheng*,⁶ and the Records of *Pan Shu P'i*⁷ may be called

¹ Cf. p. 154.

² The favourite disciple of Confucius, who died very young, cf. Chap. XXXIII.

³ Another of Wang Ch'ung's works, which has been lost.

⁴ *Lun-heng* N. 16—24, N. 25—27, N. 62 and 65 (cf. p. 48 seq. and p. 57 seq.).

⁵ The *Siu-chi*.

⁶ The *Hsi-hsi*.

⁷ *Pan Shu P'i* = *Pan Piao*, the father of the historian *Pan Ku*. He also was devoted to the study of history, and intended to continue the *Siu-chi*, which was finally done by his son.

relations, and the "New Reflections"¹ of *Huan Ch'iu Shun* and the "Critical Reflections"² of *Tsou Po Chi*,³ discussions. Now the *Lun-heng* and the *Cheng-wu* are like the two Reflections of *Huan Ch'iu Shun* and *Tsou Po Chi*, and not what they call creations.

To produce something new that did not exist in the past, as *T'sung Hsieh*⁴ invented writing and *Hsi Chung*,⁵ chariots, is creating. The *Yi-king* says of *Fu Hsi* that he created the eight diagrams. They did not exist before, and *Fu Hsi* made them,⁶ hence the term creating is used. *Wen Wang* evolved these eight pictures, and brought their number up to sixty-four, which is called amplifying. To say that the composition of the *Lun-heng* is similar to that of the sixty-four figures is not correct either. In regard to the sixty-four diagrams, these figures were increased by an amplification of their forms, and their number was thus augmented. Now in the *Lun-heng* the current literature is taken up with the object of defining right and wrong and distinguishing between truth and falsehood. It is not an original production of something that did not exist previously. The Confucianists take the sayings of former teachers and criticise them, as clerks subject the decisions of the lord chief-justice to a new examination. If the term creating be applied to the *Lun-heng*, would the same word be used of the Confucianists and the clerks?

In their reports to the throne and their memorials the memorialists use to propose useful measures. There is always the desire to help the government. Now the creators of classical works are like those memorialists. Their words proceed from the innermost heart, and it is their hand which reduces them to writing. Both cases are identical. In regard to those who address the emperor one speaks of memorialising, whereas for those records another word has been adopted viz. writing.

During the first years of *Chien-chi*,⁷ there was a great dearth in *Chung-chou*.⁸ The people from *Yin-chi wan*⁹ and *Ju-nan*¹⁰ had to

¹ Cf. Chap. XXXVII.

² *Chien-lun*.

³ Cf. Chap. XXXVII.

⁴ A mythical personage.

⁵ Another legendary person, who is said to have been a descendant of *Huang Ti* and director of chariots under *Yü*.

⁶ Vid. Chap. XXXVI, where *Wang Ch'ung* maintains that *Fu Hsi* did not make the diagrams, but received them in a supernatural way.

⁷ The first year of the emperor *Chang Ti*: 76 A.D.

⁸ An old name for *Honan*.

⁹ A circuit in *Anhui*.

¹⁰ A place in *Honan*.

leave their homes, and were scattered in all directions. His Holy Majesty felt very much distressed, and many edicts were issued. The writer of the *Lun-hêng* presented a report¹ to the prefect, urging that all dissipations and extravagancies should be prohibited in order to provide for the time of need. His suggestions were not accepted however. He went home and entitled the draft of his report "Provisions for Times of Want."

When the grain is used for the distillation of wine, robbery is rampant, and as long as there is much drunkenness, robberies never cease. In a memorial sent to the prefect the writer proposed that the use of spirits should be interdicted, and afterwards gave to this report the name "Prohibition of Spirits." From this it may be seen that the writing of the classical authors is like that of memorialists. Those reports are regarded as independent creations presented to the emperor. Reports and memorials to the throne are always creations.

In the *Ch'êng* of *Ch'in*, the *T'ao-wu* of *Ch'u*,² and the *Ch'un-ch'iu* of *Lu* persons and things are all different. As regards the diagrams *ch'ien* and *k'ui* of the *Yüking*, the *guan*³ of the *Ch'un-ch'iu* and the mystical principle of *Yang Tse Yün*, they use diverse terms for divination and time periods. From this we may infer that the *Lun-hêng* and the *Ch'êng-wu* have the same aim as the memorials of *Yang Liu* and the essays of *Ku Yang*.

The *Han* time is very rich in literary talents, and the number of essays is especially large. *Yang Ch'êng Tse Chang* produced the *Yüeh-ching*⁴ and *Yang Tse Yün* the *T'ao-hsuan-ching*. These two books were current in the court and read in the side-halls. The impression they caused was enormous, they were not relations but creations, and people doubted, whether the ingenious authors were not sages. The court found nothing to blame in them. Now, fancy the *Lun-hêng* with its minute discussions and thorough arguments, intended to explain the common errors and elucidate the right and wrong principles so, that future generations can clearly see the difference between truth and falsehood! Lest all this be lost, I have committed it to the writing tablets: remarks on chapters and passages of the classics of our ancestors, and on queer sayings of former

¹ A report for the emperor, which *Wang Ch'ung*, not being of sufficiently high rank, could not present directly.

² The official chronicles of these two States. (Cf. Chap. XXXVI.)

³ A term employed for the first year of a sovereign, also denoting the original fluid of nature.

⁴ The "Classic of Music."

masters. I offer critical remarks and reject many common traditions. The delusion caused by such traditions and the spread of so many lying books give endless pain to the knowing. *Confucius* said:—"When a man is touched by poetry, he cannot remain silent. When I am moved, I cannot keep quiet, but must speak."

Jade is being confounded with stones. People cannot distinguish it, as for instance the inspector of works in *Ch'u* took jade for a stone, and suddenly ordered *Pien Ho* to have his foot cut off.¹ Right is being turned into wrong, and falsehood into truth. How is it possible not to speak of it?

As the common traditions are full of exaggerations, so the common books teem with falsehoods. *Tsou Yen e.g.* pretends that our world² is one continent, and that beyond the four seas there are still nine other continents like our world.³ *Huai Nan Tse* says in his book that, when *K'ung Kung*, fighting for the throne with *Chuan Hsi*, was not victorious, he ran against Mount *Pu-chow* in his wrath so, that he caused the "Pillar of Heaven" to break, and the confines of the earth to be smashed.⁴ In *Yao's* time ten suns appeared simultaneously. *Yao* shot an arrow at nine of them.⁵ During the battle fought by the Duke of *Lu-yang*⁶ the sun went down. Swinging his spear he beckoned to the sun, when he came back. There are a great many books and records of a similar nature in the world. Truth and reality are drowned in a flood of inventions and fabrications. Can we remain silent, when our heart swells to overflowing, and the pencil trembles in our hand?

Discussing a question we must examine into it with our mind, and demonstrate it by facts, and, if there be any inventions, proofs must be given. As the history of the Grand Annalist testifies, *Hsi Yu*⁷ did not hide, nor did *Yan*, the crown-prince of *Yen*, cause the sun to revert to the meridian. Nobody can read these passages without applauding.

¹ Cf. p. 113.

² China.

³ Cf. Chap. XIX.

⁴ Vid. Chap. XIX.

⁵ Cf. Chap. XX.

⁶ A city in *Honan*. We learn from the *Lun-hêng* V, 6v. (*Kan-lui*) that this battle was fought by Duke *Hsiang* of *Lu* against *Han*. This prince reigned from 572 to 541. *Huai Nan Tse* VI, 1v., however, from whom this passage is quoted, speaks of the Duke of *Lu-yang* and the commentary remarks that this was a grandson of King *P'ing* of *Ch'u* (528-515), called *Lu-yang Wen Tse* in the *Kuo-yü*.

⁷ A legendary hermit of *Yao's* time. (Cf. Chap. XXXV.)

sacrifices, for, says he, provided the spirits are mist and vapours, they cannot do any harm, should they really exist, however, then they would indubitably not allow themselves to be driven off. They would not only offer resistance, but also resent the affront, and take their revenge upon the exorcist (Chap. XLIV).

Primitive Chinese religion has not produced a mythology worth speaking of, but a variety of superstitions have clustered around it. Some of them *Wang Chi'ung* brings to our notice. The principle aim of Chinese religion is to obtain happiness and to remove evil. But it does not suffice to worship the spirits, one must also avoid such actions, as might bring down misfortune. In the popular belief there is a certain mystic connection, a sort of harmony between fate and human activity, though one does not see how. When the Yamen officials are very bad, the number of tigers increases so much, that plenty of people are devoured by them. The rapacity of the underlings is believed to cause grubs and insects to eat grain (p. 55, N. 48-49). It is dangerous to extend a building to the west, one must not see women who recently have given birth to a child, and children born in the first or the fifth months should not be brought up, for they will be the cause of their parents death (p. 59, N. 68). Exceptional precautions must be taken in building a new house (p. 60, N. 74).

For most actions in every-day-life the time chosen is of the utmost importance. An unlucky time spoils everything. The Chinese at the *Han* epoch had not only their *dies fasti* and *nefasti*, but propitious and unpropitious years, months, days, and hours. Special books gave the necessary information. For some actions certain lucky days had to be chosen, for others certain unlucky ones had to be avoided. Special days were assigned for the commencing of a new-building or for funerals. Bathing on certain days, women were sure to become lovely, on others they would become ill-favoured. Moving one's residence one should avoid a collision with the Spirit of the North, *T'ai Sui* (p. 59, N. 70, 72, 73). People neglecting these rules would fall in with malignant spirits, or meet with evil influences. These ideas have come down to our time, and are still cherished by the majority of the Chinese. The calendar published every year by the Board of Astronomy serves them as a guide, noting that which may be safely done on each day, and that which may not. *Wang Chi'ung* has done his best to eradicate these superstitions, showing their unreasonableness and futility, as we see with little success, so deeply are they still rooted in the Chinese mind after nearly two thousand years.

4. Table of Contents of the Lun-hêng.

Book I.

1. Chap. I. *Feng-yü* 逢遇.

This chapter treats of the relation between officers and their sovereign. To be appreciated and successful an official must find the right prince, who understands him and puts him in the right place. One must not make the successful responsible for their success, or the unsuccessful for their failure, because not their talents, but time and circumstances are decisive.

2. Chap. II. *Lei-hai* 累害.

The difficulties and annoyances which people have to endure come from abroad, and are not the result of their own works. Therefore they must not be blamed. Fear and good conduct have no influence on *fortune* or misfortune. "Fortune is what we obtain without any effort of our own, and misfortune what happens to us without our co-operation." The chief annoyances of officials at the court and in the provinces are slanderous reports of envious persons. Three kinds of calumnies are distinguished. The wise do not feel troubled about this, and lead the life which most suits them.

*3. Chap. III. *Ming-lu* 命祿 (On Destiny and Fortune).

Destiny predetermines the length of man's life, and whether he shall be rich and honourable, or poor and mean. There is no correspondence between human virtue and fate. The wicked and the unintelligent are very often happy, whereas men endowed with the highest faculties and the noblest character perish in misery, as is shown by various examples from history. The knowing, therefore, do not hunt after happiness, but leave everything to Heaven, suffering with equanimity what cannot be avoided, and placidly awaiting their turn. The opinions of several philosophers holding similar views are given.

*4. Chap. IV. *Chi-shou* 氣壽 (Long Life and Vital Fluid).

There are two kinds of fate, the one determining the events of life, the other its length. The length of life depends on the

Note:—The chapters marked with an asterisk have been translated.

quantity of the vital fluid received at birth. Accordingly the body waxes strong or weak, and a strong body lives longer than a feeble one. The normal length of human life should be a hundred years. The Classics attest that the wise emperors of the Golden Age:—Yao, Shun, Wen Wang, Wu Wang, and others all lived over hundred years.

Book II.

*5. Chap. I. *Hsing-ou* 幸偶 (On Chance and Luck).

Happiness and misfortune are not the outcome of man's good or bad actions, but chance and luck. Some have good luck, others bad. Good and bad fortune are not distributed in a just way, according to worth, but are mere chance. This is true of man as well as of other beings. Even Sages are often visited with misfortune.

*6. Chap. II. *Ming-yi* 命義 (What is meant by Destiny?).

The school of *Me Ti* denies the existence of Destiny. *Wang Ch'ung* follows the authority of *Confucius*. There are various kinds of destinies. The length of human life is regulated by the fluid of Heaven, their wealth and honour by the effluence of the stars, with which men are imbued at their birth. *Wang Ch'ung* rejects the distinction of natural, concomitant, and adverse fate, but admits contingencies, chances, and incidents, which may either agree with the original fate and luck, or not. The fate of a State is always stronger than that of individuals.

*7. Chap. III. *Wu-hsing* 無形 (Unfounded Assertions).

At birth man receives the vital fluid from Heaven. This fluid determines the length of his life. There are no means to prolong its duration, as the Taoists pretend. Some examples from history are shown to be untrustworthy. At death everything ends. The vital force disperses, and the body is dissolved.

*8. Chap. IV. *Shuai-hsing* 衰性 (The Forming of Characters).

There are naturally good, and there are naturally bad characters, but this difference between the qualities of low and superior men is not fundamental. The original fluid permeating all is the same. It contains the germs of the Five Virtues. Those who are

endowed with copious fluids, become virtuous, those whose fluid is deficient, wicked. But by external influences, human nature can turn from good into bad, and the reverse. Bad people can be improved, and become good by instruction and good example. Therefore the State cannot dispense with instructions and laws.

*9. Chap. V. *Chi-yen* 吉驗 (Auspicious Portents).

Auspicious portents appear, when somebody is destined to something grand by fate, especially, when a new dynasty rises. These manifestations of fate appear either in the person's body, or as lucky signs in nature, or under the form of a halo or a glare. A great variety of instances from ancient times down to the *Han* dynasty are adduced in proof.

Book III.

10. Chap. I. *Ou-hui* 偶會.

Fate acts spontaneously. There are no other alien forces at work besides fate. Nobody is able to do anything against it. Human activity is of no consequence.

*11. Chap. II. *Ku-hsing* 骨相 (On Anthroposcopy).

The heavenly fate becomes visible in the body, and can be foreseen by anthroposcopy. The Classics contain examples. The physiognomists draw their conclusions from the osseous structure and from the lines of the skin. The character can also be seen from the features.

*12. Chap. III. *Ch'u-ping* 初稟 (Heaven's Original Gift).

Destiny comes down upon man already in his embryonic state, not later on during his life. It becomes mind internally and body externally. This law governs all organisms. Heaven never invests virtuous emperors, because it is pleased with them, for this would be in opposition to its principle of spontaneity and inaction. Utterances of the Classics that Heaven was pleased and looked round, etc. are to be taken in a figurative sense. Heaven has no human body and no human qualities. Lucky omens are not sent by Heaven, but appear by chance.

*13. Chap. IV. *Pen-hsing* 本性 (On Original Nature).

The different theories of Chinese moralists on human nature are discussed. *Shih Tse* holds that human nature is partly good, partly bad, *Mencius* that it is originally good, but can be corrupted, *Sun Tse* that it is originally bad, *Kao Tse* that it is neither good nor bad, and that it all depends on instruction and development, *Lu Chia* that it is predisposed for virtue. *Tung Chung Shu* and *Liu Hsiang* distinguish between natural disposition and natural feelings. *Wang Chi'ung* holds that nature is sometimes good and sometimes bad, but essentially alike, being the fluid of Heaven, and adopts the Confucian distinction of average people, people above, and people below the average. The latter alone can be changed by habit.

*14. Chap. V. *Wu-shih* 物勢 (The Nature of Things).

Heaven and Earth do not create man and the other things on earth intentionally. They all grow of themselves. Had Heaven produced all creatures on purpose, it would have taught them mutual love; whereas now one destroys the other. Some have explained this struggle for existence by the hypothesis that all creatures are filled with the fluid of the Five Elements, which fight together and overcome one another. *Wang Chi'ung* controverts this view and the symbolism connected therewith.

*15. Chap. VI. *Chi-kwai* 奇怪 (Miracles).

Wang Chi'ung proves by analogies that the supernatural births reported of several old legendary rulers, who are said to have been procreated by dragons or a special fluid of Heaven, are impossible. The Spirit of Heaven would not consort with a woman, for only beings of the same species pair. Saints and Sages are born like other people from their parents.

BOOK IV.

16. Chap. I. *Shu-hsi* 書虛.

The chapter contains a refutation of a series of wrong statements in ancient books. The assertion that *Shun* and *Yu* died in the South is shown to be erroneous. *Wang Chi'ung* explodes the idea that the "Bore" at *Hang-chow* is caused by the angry spirit of *Wu Tse Hsu*, who was thrown into the *Chi'en-tang River*, and remarks that the tide follows the phases of the moon. (Bk. IV, p. 5v.)

17. Chap. II. *Pien-hsi* 變虛.

Wang Chi'ung points out that many reports in ancient literature concerning extraordinary phenomena, not in harmony with the laws of nature, are fictitious and unreliable, e. g. the story that touched by the virtue of Duke *Ching* of *Sung*, the planet Mars shifted its place, that Heaven rewarded the Duke with 21 extra years, or that the great Diviner of *Chi* caused an earthquake.

BOOK V.

18. Chap. I. *Yi-hsi* 異虛.

The impossibility of some miracles and supernatural events is demonstrated, which have been handed down in ancient works, and are universally believed by the people and the literati, e. g. the birth of *Pao Sse* from the saliva of dragons.

19. Chap. II. *Kan-hsi* 感虛.

Wang Chi'ung contests that nature can be moved by man and deviate from its course. Various old legends are critically tested:—the alleged appearance of ten suns in *Yao's* time, the report that the sun went back in his course, the wonders which happened during the captivity of *Tsou Yen* and *Tan*, Prince of *Yen*.

The tenor of the last four chapters all treating of unfounded assertions or figments "*hsi*" is very similar.

BOOK VI.

*20. Chap. I. *Fu-hsi* 福虛 (Wrong Notions about Happiness).

Happiness is not given by Heaven as a reward for good actions, as the general belief is. The *Mohist* theory that the spirits protect and help the virtuous is controverted by facts. *Wang Chi'ung* shows how several cases, adduced as instances of how Heaven recompensed the virtuous are illusive, and that fate is capricious and unjust.

*21. Chap. II. *Huo-hsi* 禍虛 (Wrong Notions on Unhappiness).

The common belief that Heaven and Earth and the spirits punish the wicked and visit them with misfortune, is erroneous, as shown by examples of virtuous men, who were unlucky, and of wicked, who flourished. All this is the result of chance and luck, fate and time.

*22. Chap. III. *Lung-lsi* 龍虛 (On Dragons).

The dragon is not a spirit, but has a body and lives in pools. It is not fetched by Heaven during a thunderstorm, as people believe. The different views about its shape are given:—It is represented as a snake with a horse's head, as a flying creature, as a reptile that can be mounted, and like earthworms and ants. In ancient times dragons were reared and eaten. The dragon rides on the clouds during the tempest, there being a certain sympathy between the dragon and clouds. It can expand and contract its body, and make itself invisible.

*23. Chap. IV. *Lei-lsi* 雷虛 (On Thunder and Lightning).

Thunder is not the expression of Heaven's anger. As a spirit it could not give a sound, nor could it kill a man with its breath. It does not laugh either. Very often the innocent are struck by lightning, and monsters like the Empress *Lu Hsi* are spared. The pictorial representations of thunder as united drums, or as the thunderer *Lei K'ung*, are misleading. Thunder is fire or hot air, the solar fluid *Yang* exploding in its conflict with the Yin fluid, lightning being the shooting forth of the air. Five arguments are given, why thunder must be fire.

BOOK VII.

*24. Chap. I. *Tao-lsi* 道虛 (Taoist Untruths).

Man dies and can become immortal. The Taoist stories of *Huang Ti* and *Hsui Nien Tse's* ascension to heaven, of the flying genius met by *Lu Ao*, and of *Hsiang Man Tse's* travel to the moon are inventions. The magicians do not possess the powers ascribed to them. The Taoist theory of prolonging life by quietism and dispassionateness, by regulating one's breath, and using medicines is untenable.

*25. Chap. II. *Yi-tsheng* 語增 (Exaggerations).

Wang Ch'ung points out a number of historical exaggerations e. g. that the *embowpoint* of *Chieh* and *Chou* was over a foot, that *Chou* had a wine-lake, from which 3,000 persons sucked like cattle, that *Wen Wang* could drink 3,000 bumpers of wine, and *Confucius* 100 gallons, and some mis-statements concerning the simplicity of *Yao* and *Shun*, and the cruelty of *Shih Huang Ti*, and tries to reduce them to the proper limits.

BOOK VIII.

*26. Chap. I. *Ju-tsheng* 儒增 (Exaggerations of the Literati).

Wang Ch'ung goes on to criticise some old traditions:—on the abolition of punishments under *Yao* and *Shun*, on the wonderful shooting of *Yang Yu Chi* and *Hsiung Ch'ü Tse*, on the skill of *Lu Pan*, on *Ching K'o's* attempt upon *Shih Huang Ti's* life, on the miracles connected with the Nine Tripods of the *Chou* dynasty, etc.

27. Chap. II. *Yi-tsheng* 藝增.

People are fond of the marvellous and of exaggerations, in witness whereof passages are quoted from the *Shuking*, the *Shiking*, the *Yüking*, the *Lun-yü*, and the *Ch'ün-ch'ün*.

BOOK IX.

*28. Chap. I. *Wen K'ung* 問孔 (Criticisms on *Confucius*).

The Confucianists do not dare to criticise the Sages, although the words of the Sages are not always true and often contradictory. It is also, because they do not understand the difficult passages, and only repeat what the commentators have said. *Wang Ch'ung* vindicates the right to criticise even *Confucius*. Such criticisms are neither immoral nor irrational. They help to bring out the meaning, and lead to greater clearness. *Wang Ch'ung* then takes up a number of passages from the *Analecfs* for discussion, in which he discovers contradictions or other flaws, but does not criticise the system of *Confucius* or his theories in general.

BOOK X.

*29. Chap. I. *Fei Han* 非韓 (Strictures on *Han Fei Tse*).

Han Fei Tse solely relies on rewards and punishments to govern a State. In his system there is no room for the cultivation of virtue. He despises the literati as useless, and thinks the world to be so depraved and mean, that nothing but penal law can keep it in check. *Wang Ch'ung* shows by some examples taken from *Han Fei Tse's* work that this theory is wrong. Men of letters are as useful to the State as agriculturists, warriors, and officials, for they cultivate virtue, preserve the true principles, and benefit the State by the good example they set to the other classes.

*30. Chap. II. *T'se Meng* 刺孟 (Censures on Mencius).

Wang Ch'ung singles out such utterances of *Mencius*, in which according to his view his reasoning is defective, or which are conflicting with other dicta of the philosopher.

Book XI.

*31. Chap. I. *T'an-t'ien* 談天 (On Heaven).

The old legend of the collapse of Heaven, which was repaired by *Mu Wa*, when *Kung K'ung* had knocked with his head against the "Pillar of Heaven," is controverted, as is *Tsou Yen's* theory of the existence of Nine Continents. Heaven is not merely air, but has a body, and the earth is a square measuring 100,000 *li* in either direction.

*32. Chap. II. *Shao-yih* 說日 (On the Sun).

A variety of astronomical questions are touched. *Wang Ch'ung* opposes the view that the sun disappears in darkness during the night, that the length or shortness of the days is caused by the *Yin* and the *Yang*, that the sun rises from *Pu-sung* and sets in *Hsi-tu*, that at *Yao's* time ten suns appeared, that there is a raven in the sun, and a hare and a toad in the moon. Heaven is not high in the south and depressed in the north, nor like a reclining umbrella, nor does it enter into or revolve in the earth. Heaven is level like earth, and the world lying in the south-east. The sun at noon is nearer than in the morning or in the evening. *Wang Ch'ung* further speaks on the rotation of the sky, the sun, and the moon, on the substance of the sun and the moon, on their shape, the cause of the eclipses, meteors, and meteorological phenomena.

33. Chap. III. *Ta-ning* 答佞.

On the cunning and artful.

Book XII.

34. Chap. I. *Ch'eng-t'sai* 程材.

The difference between scholars and officials is pointed out. *Wang Ch'ung* stands up for the former, and places them higher than the officials, because they are of greater importance to the State. The people however think more of the officials.

35. Chap. II. *Liang-ch'ih* 量知.

The same subject as treated in the preceding chapter.

36. Chap. III. *Hsieh-tuan* 謝短.

Men of letters as well as officials have their shortcomings.

The former are interested in antiquity only, and neglect the present, the *Ch'in* and *Han* time. They only know the Classics, but even many questions concerning the age and the origin of the Classics they cannot answer. The officials know their business, but often cannot say, why they do a thing, since they do not possess the necessary historical knowledge.

Book XIII.

37. Chap. I. *Hsiao-li* 効力.

The chapter treats of the faculties of the scholars and the officials, and of their energy and perseverance displayed in different departments.

38. Chap. II. *Pieh-i'ung* 別通.

There is the same difference between the learned and the uncultivated as between the rich and the poor. Learning is a power and more important than wealth.

39. Chap. III. *Ch'ao-chi* 超奇.

There are various degrees of learning. Some remarks are made on the works of several scholars, e.g. the philosopher *Yang Tse Yin* and the two historians *Pan*.

Book XIV.

40. Chap. I. *Chuang-tzu* 狀留.

Scholars do not strive for office. As for practical success they are outvalled by the officials, who are men of business.

*41. Chap. II. *Han-wên* 寒溫 (On Heat and Cold).

Wang Ch'ung contests the assertion of the phenomenologists that there is a correspondence between heat and cold and the joy and anger of the sovereign. He points out that the South is the seat of heat, and the North of cold. Moreover the temperature depends on the four seasons and the 24 time-periods.

*42. Chap. III. *Ch'ien-ko* 讖告 (On Reprimands).

The *szeants* hold that Heaven reprimands a sovereign whose administration is bad, visiting him with calamities. First he causes extraordinary events. If the sovereign does not change then, he sends down misfortunes upon his people, and at last he punishes his own person. Heaven is represented like a prince governing his people. These heavenly punishments would be at variance with Heaven's virtue, which consists in spontaneity and inaction. Heaven does not act itself, it acts through man, and speaks through the mouths of the Sages, in whose hearts is ingrafted its virtue. The utterances of the Classics ascribing human qualities to Heaven are only intended to give more weight to those teachings, and to frighten the wicked and the unintelligent.

Book XV.

*43. Chap. I. *Pien-tung* 變動 (Phenomenal Changes).

Heaven influences things, but is not affected by them. All creatures being filled with the heavenly fluid, Heaven is the master, and not the servant. The *Yang* and the *Yin* move things, but are not moved. The deeds and the prayers of a tiny creature like man cannot impress the mighty fluid of Heaven, and the sobs of thousands of people cannot touch it. Heaven is too far, and its fluid shapeless without beginning or end. It never sets the laws of nature aside for man's sake.

44. Chap. II. *Chao-chai* 招致.

(This chapter has been lost.)

45. Chap. III. *Ming-yü* 明霽.

The rain sacrifice, which during the *Ch'ün-ch'ün* period was performed at times of drought, forms the subject of this essay. People use to pray for rain and happiness, as they implore the spirits to avert sickness and other evils. Some believe that rain is caused by the stars, others that it depends on the government of a State, others again that it comes from the mountains. The last opinion is shared by *Wang Ch'ung*.

46. Chap. IV. *Shun-ku* 順鼓.

The chapter treats of the religious ceremonies performed to avert inundations, in which the beating of drums is very important.

Book XVI.

47. Chap. I. *Luan-lung* 亂龍.

As a means to attract the rain by the sympathetic action of similar fluids *Yung Chung Shu* had put up a clay dragon. *Wang Ch'ung* attempts to demonstrate the efficacy of this procedure by 15 arguments and 4 analogies.

48. Chap. II. *Tsao-lu* 遭虎.

Wang Ch'ung controverts the popular belief that, when men are devoured by tigers, it is the wickedness of secretaries and minor officials which causes these disasters.

49. Chap. III. *Shang-ch'ung* 商虫.

The common belief that the eating of the grain by insects is a consequence of the covetousness of the yamen underlings is shown to be futile.

*50. Chap. IV. *Chiang-yü* 講瑞 (Arguments on Ominous Creatures).

Wang Ch'ung denies that the literati would be able to recognise a phoenix or a unicorn, should they appear, nor would they know a sage either. The phoenix and the unicorn are regarded as holy animals and as lucky auguries. The old traditions about their appearance at various times and their shape, which are very conflicting, are discussed. *Wang Ch'ung* holds that these animals do not only appear at the time of universal peace, that as ominous creatures they are born of a propitious fluid, and do not belong to a certain species, but may grow from dissimilar parents of a common species of animals.

Book XVII.

51. Chap. I. *Chieh-yü* 指瑞.

The discussion on the phoenix and the unicorn is continued. *Wang Ch'ung* impugns the opinion that these animals are not born in China, but come from abroad, when there is a wise emperor. They grow in China, even, when there is no sage.

52. Chap. II. *Shih-ying* 是應.

This chapter treats of the various lucky omens of the Golden Age:—the purple boletus, the wine springs, the sweet dew, the *Ching* star, the monthly plant, the phoenix, the unicorn, and of some other fabulous animals.

53. Chap. III. *Chih-chi* 治期.

The praise of antiquity, its high virtue and happiness is unfounded. There is nothing but fate. Human activity is powerless.

Book XVIII.

*54. Chap. I. *Tse-jan* 自然 (Spontaneity).

Heaven emits its generating fluid spontaneously, not on purpose. It has no desires, no knowledge, and does not act. These qualities require organs:—a mouth, eyes, hands, etc., which it does not possess. Its body must be either like that of Earth, or air. Heaven's fluid is placid, desirous, and unbused. This spontaneity is a Taoist theory, but they did not sufficiently substantiate it. Only Sages resembling Heaven can be quite spontaneous and inactive, others must act, and can be instructed. Originally men lived in a happy state of ignorance. Customs, laws, in short culture is already a decline of virtue.

55. Chap. II. *Kan-lei* 感類.

Natural calamities and unlucky events are not the upshot of human guilt, as a thunderstorm is not a manifestation of Heaven's anger.

*56. Chap. III. *Chi-shih* 齊世 (The Equality of the Ages).

People of old were not better, nor stronger, taller or longer lived than at present. Heaven and Earth have remained the same, and their creatures likewise. There is a periodical alternation of prosperity and decline in all the ages. The present time is not inferior to antiquity, but the literati extol the past and disparage the present. Even sages like *Confucius* would not find favour with them, if they happened to live now. And yet the *Han* dynasty is quite equal to the famous old dynasties.

Book XIX.

57. Chap. I. *Hsüan Han* 宣漢.

The scholars hold that in olden days there has been a Golden Age, which is passed and does not come back owing to the badness of the times. *Wang Ch'ung* stands up for his own time, the *Han* epoch. He enumerates the lucky portents observed under the *Han* emperors, and refers to the great achievements of the *Han* dynasty in the way of colonising and civilising savage countries.

58. Chap. II. *Hui-tao* 恢國.

Wang Ch'ung gives to the *Han* dynasty the preference over all the others, and again discourses on the lucky auguries marking its reign.

59. Chap. III. *Yen-fu* 驗符.

The discovery of gold under the *Han* dynasty, and of purple boletus, the sweet-dew-fall in several districts, and the arrival of dragons and phoenixes are put forward as so many proofs of the excellence of the *Han* dynasty.

Book XX.

60. Chap. I. *Hsi-sung* 須頌.

This chapter is a variation of the two preceding.

61. Chap. II. *Yi-wen* 佚文.

The subject of this treatise is purely literary. It discusses the discovery of the Classics in the house of *Confucius*, the Burning of the Books under *Chi'in Shih Huang* 7th, and the literature of the *Han* epoch, of which several authors are mentioned.

*62. Chap. III. *Lun-sse* 論死 (On Death).

Man is a creature. Since other creatures do not become ghosts after death, man cannot become a ghost either. If all the millions that have lived, became spirits, there would not be sufficient room for all the spirits in the world. The dead never give any sign of their existence, therefore they cannot exist any more. The vital fluid forming the soul disperses at death, how could it

become a ghost. A spirit is diffuse and formless. Before its birth the soul forms part of the primordial fluid, which is unconscious. When at death it reverts thereto, it becomes unconscious again. The soul requires the body to become conscious and to act. If sleep causes unconsciousness, and if a disease disorganises the mind, death must do the same in a still higher degree.

Book XXI.

*63. Chap. I. *Sse-wei* 死偽 (False Reports about the Dead).

A number of ghost stories are quoted from the *Tso-chuan* and other ancient works, where discontented spirits are reported to have taken their revenge upon, and killed their enemies. *Wang Ch'ung* either rejects these stories as inventions, or tries to explain them in a natural way.

Book XXII.

*64. Chap. I. *Chi-yao* 紀妖 (Spook Stories).

Several spook and ghost stories recorded in the *Shi-chi* and the *Tso-chuan* are analysed. *Wang Ch'ung* explains them in accordance with his theory on the spontaneity of Heaven, and on the nature of apparitions and portents.

*65. Chap. II. *Ting-fuwei* 訂鬼 (All about Ghosts).

Wang Ch'ung sets forth the different opinions on the nature of ghosts, propounded at his time. Some hold that ghosts are visions of sick people, or the fluid of sickness. Others regard them as the stellar fluid, or as the essence of old creatures, or as the spirits of cyclical signs. After an excursion on the demons, devils, and goblins mentioned in ancient books, *Wang Ch'ung* gives his own views, according to which ghosts are apparitions and phantoms foreboding evil, which have assumed human form, but are only semblances and disembodied. They consist of the solar fluid, the *Yang*, are therefore red, burning, and to a certain extent poisonous.

Book XXIII.

*66. Chap. I. *Yen-tu* 言毒 (On Poison).

Animal and vegetable poison is the hot air of the sun. All beings filled with the solar fluid contain some poison. Snakes, scorpions, and some plants have plenty of it. Ghosts, which consist

of the pure solar fluid, are burning poison, which eventually kills. There is poison in some diseases, in a sun-stroke for instance and in lunbago. *Wang Ch'ung* discovers real poison in speech, in beauty, and in several tastes, which only metaphorically might be called poisonous, and mixes up the subject still more by improper symbolism.

67. Chap. II. *Po-tsang* 薄葬.

This chapter is directed against the extravagance in funerals, on the score that the dead have no benefit from it.

68. Chap. III. *Sse-wei* 四諱.

There is a popular belief that four things are dangerous and bring misfortune viz. to enlarge a house at the west side, to allow a banished man to ascend a tumulus, the intercourse with women, during the first month after they have given birth to a child, and the rearing of children born in the 1st and the 5th months, who will cause the deaths of their parents. *Wang Ch'ung* combats these superstitions.

69. Chap. IV. *Lan-shih* 諫時.

Wang Ch'ung discourses on the common belief that in building one must pay attention to an unpropitious time, which may be warded off by amulets. He further speaks of the spirits of the year, the months, etc.

Book XXIV.

70. Chap. I. *Chi-yin* 讖日.

Some more superstitions concerning unlucky years, months, and days, which must be shunned to avoid misfortunes, are investigated. For many actions the election of a proper time is deemed to be of great importance, e.g. for a funeral, or for commencing a building. Bathing on certain days, women become beautiful; bathing on others makes their hair turn white. On the day of *T'sang Hsieh's* death, who invented writing, one must not study calligraphy, and on the day of the downfall of the *Yin* and *Hsia* dynasties one does not make music.

*71. Chap. II. *Pu-shih* 卜筮 (On Divination).

People often neglect virtue and only rely on divination. They imagine that by means of tortoise shells and milfoil they

can interrogate Heaven and Earth about the future, and that they reply by the signs of the shells and the straws. *Wang Ch'ung* shows that such an opinion is erroneous, but, whereas *Han Fei Tse* condemns divination altogether, he upholds this science. In his idea visions, signs, and omens are true by all means, only they are very often misunderstood or misinterpreted by the diviners. The lucky will meet with good omens, which, however, are not the response of Heaven, but happen by chance.

*72. Chap. III. *Pien-sui* 辨祟 (Criticisms on Noxious Influences).

Most people are under the delusion that by disregarding an unpropitious time *viz.* years, months, and days of dread, they will have to suffer from noxious influences, falling in with evil spirits, which work disaster. This is an error, as shown by experience, but horoscopists and seers are silent on all cases contradicting their theory. A vast literature has sprung up on this subject, and the princes dare not take any important step in life, any more than their people, without reference to it.

73. Chap. IV. *Nan-sui* 難歲.

Wang Ch'ung impugns the view that by moving one's residence one may come into collision with the Spirit of the North Point, *Nan Sui*, which would be disastrous.

Book XXV.

74. Chap. I. *Ch'i-shu* 詰術.

The chapter treats of the precautions which used to be taken in building houses, special attention being paid to the family name, the number of the house, the situation, etc.

*75. Chap. II. *Chieh-ch'u* 解除 (On Exorcism).

By exorcism malignant spirits are expelled after having been feasted. Exorcism and conjurations are of no use, for either would the ghosts not yield to the force employed against them, and resent the affront, or, if they are like mist and clouds, their expulsion would be useless. In ancient times, sickness was expelled in this way. The propitiation of the Spirit of Earth, after having dug up the ground, is also useless, for Earth does not hear man nor understand his speech. All depends upon man, not on ghosts.

*76. Chap. III. *Sse-yi* 祀義 (Sacrifices to the Departed).

Sacrifices are merely manifestations of the feelings of love and gratitude, which the living cherish towards ghosts and spirits. The latter cannot enjoy the sacrifices, which are presented to them, because having no body, they are devoid of knowledge and cannot eat or drink. If Heaven and Earth could eat or drink, they would require such enormous quantities of food, that man could never appease their hunger. *Wang Ch'ung* treats of the nature of ghosts, and refers to the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, to the House, to the Gods of Wind, Rain, and Thunder, to the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars, and to the Ancestors.

*77. Chap. IV. *Ch'i-yi* 祭意 (Sacrifices).

The various old sacrifices are described, those to Heaven and Earth, to the Mountains and Rivers, to the Spirits of the Land and Grain, to the Six Superior Powers, to the Seasons, Heat and Cold, Water and Drought, the Rain Sacrifice, those to the Four Cardinal Points, to the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars, the Five Genii of the House, and to the Ancestors. All these sacrifices saving the last were State sacrifices and reserved for the emperor, the feudal princes, and their officials. They are thank-offerings for kindness received. There are no spirits present to enjoy them, nor can they bestow happiness on the sacrificers, or visit with misfortune those who neglect them. Therefore sacrifices are a beautiful custom, but of no great consequence.

Book XXVI.

78. Chap. I. *Shih-chih* 實知.

Saints and Sages are credited with an extraordinary knowledge. They need not learn or study, for they are cognisant of everything intuitively, and know the past as well as the future. This is a fallacy. There are no supernatural faculties, and even those of the Sages follow the natural laws.

79. Chap. II. *Chih-shih* 知實.

Confucius was not prescient and not a prophet, as has been asserted. 16 examples are given, all showing his inability to fore-know the future.

Book XXVII.

80. Chap. I. *T'ing-hsien* 定賢.

The nature of the Worthies is defined. Examples are adduced of what they are not. No exceptional talents are required, but a certain amount of intelligence and honesty. Worthies belong to the same class as Saints or Sages, but are somewhat inferior.

Book XXVIII.

*81. Chap. I. *Ch'eng-shuo* 正說 (Statements Corrected).

This chapter contains critical remarks on the composition and the history of the *Shu-ching*, the *Shih-ching*, the *Ci-un-ch'iu*, the *Yü-ching*, the *Liki*, and the *And'ects*. The meaning of the dynastic names of T'ang, Yü, the Hsia, Yin, and Chou dynasties is explained, and some hints as to how the Canons are to be interpreted are added.

82. Chap. II. *Shu-chieh* 書解.

The chapter deals with learning and erudition, with literary composition, and with the various kinds of men of letters.

Book XXIX.

*83. Chap. I. *An-shu* 案書 (Critical Remarks on Various Books).

Wang Ch'ung criticises the famous authors of his time and their works, beginning with some writers of the Chou epoch. He finds fault with *Me Yi*, the sophist *Kung Sun Lung*, and the speculative philosopher *Yao Yen*, and commends *Tao Ch'iu Ming*, the author of the *Tso-chuan* and the *Kuo-yü*. He speaks with great respect of the historians *See Ma Ch'ien* and *Pan Ku*, the philosopher *Yang Tse Yün*, and *Liu Hsiang*, and in the highest terms of *Lu Chia*, who published the *Ci-un-ch'iu-fan-lu*, and of *Huan Chün Shan* and *Huan K'uan*, the authors of the *Hsin-lun* and the *Yen-fieh-lun*.

*84. Chap. II. *Tui-tso* 對作 (Replies in Self-Defence).

Wang Ch'ung gives the reasons, why he wrote his principal works, the *Lun-hêng* and the *Ch'eng-wu*, a treatise on government. In the *Lun-hêng* he wishes to explain common errors, to point out

the exaggerations and inventions in literature, and thus deliver mankind of its prejudices. The *Lun-hêng* weighs the words and holds up a balance for truth and falsehood. *Wang Ch'ung* shows the advantage which might be derived from different chapters, and meets the objections which his opponents would perhaps raise.

Book XXX.

*85. Chap. I. *Tse-chi* 自紀 (Autobiography).

Wang Ch'ung is a native of *Shang-yü-hsien* in *Chekiang*. His family originally lived in *Chili*. He was born in a.d. 27, and already as a boy was very fond of study. In his official career he was not very successful. The highest post which he held about a.d. 86 was that of a sub-prefect. The equanimity of a philosopher helped him over many disappointments. His ideal was to possess an extensive knowledge, a keen intellect, and a noble mind. Besides his chief work the *Lun-hêng*, he wrote 12 chapters on common morals in a plain and easy style, and a treatise "*Macrobiotics*" in a.d. 91. He defends the style, the voluminousness, and the contents of the *Lun-hêng* against the attacks directed against it.