CONTRIBUTION TO A NEW TRANSLATION
OF THE LUN HENG

BY

DONALD LESLIE

CONTENTS

Introduction and bibliography ................................ 100
Grammatical forms and particles ................................. 104
Particles ........................................................... 104
Sentences ......................................................... 114
Logical words and phrases ........................................ 125
Inference and evidence ........................................... 125
Classification .................................................... 128
Introductions and finals ......................................... 131
Technical vocabulary ............................................. 134
Fate and man's endowment ......................................... 135
Chance and harmony .............................................. 136
Omens and divination ............................................. 139
The life's breath and living creatures .......................... 142
Ethics and human nature ......................................... 144
Miscellaneous .................................................... 147
Conclusions ........................................................ 148

INTRODUCTION AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Forke's translation of the Lun Heng 論衡 by Wang Ch'ung 王充 (27-96 A.D.) is one of the great works of western Sinology, praised by Pelliot and Karlgren amongst many. To criticise and improve someone else's translation is a comparatively easy sinological task. To translate from scratch without a Chinese commentary (as Professor Forke had to do) was a formidable task. However, now we have the excellent, annotated edition, the Lun Heng Chiao Shih 論衡校釋 of Huang Hui 黃暐, published in 1938, we can see the need for a new translation.

The Lun Heng is over six times the size of Mencius and thirteen times that of the Analects (of which Waley's translation takes up
101

150 pages with 100 pages of comment): — even with Huang Hui’s help, a complete translation is a huge task. As a preliminary contribution to such a translation 1), I give here an attempt to summarise the results, from the point of view of grammar and vocabulary, that would be found by a concordance (as yet none exists 2)). The whole is meant to be more suggestive than definitive, but it is hoped that it will be useful, not only as a preliminary for any future translation, but also for comparison purposes by historians of grammar and philosophy.

Why concentrate on the Lun Heng when there are lots of untranslated works? There are two answers. Firstly, the Lun Heng, written about 85 A.D. by one of the few original thinkers whose work has survived, is a main link in the chain, from the classical Chou philosophers, through Tung Chung-shu, Huai-nan Tzu and Yang Hsiung of the Former Han, to the Sung Neo-Confucians. Though no adequate discussion of its influence on later times exists, there is no doubt that it is not outside the main stream of thought (as has been suggested). In any case, it is one of our most valuable texts for providing parallels and checking traditional history.

Secondly it is comparatively easy to understand, and consequently ideal for analyses of grammar, logic and vocabulary. When we read “two examples in the Lun Yü and three in Mencius”, we appreciate the security of the Lun Heng with its twenty or more cases to be checked against one another. Hardly a phrase or idea is found in one chapter only. Words and grammar that appear difficult in other books become easy and obvious. Moreover it is homogeneous and written by one man. It is possible that in its transmission chan-

1) I have translated chapters 4, 7, 14, 15 and 62, and parts of chapters 6, 10, 43, 50 and others, in an as yet unpublished work, Man and Nature: Sources on Early Chinese Biological Ideas.

2) The Index du Louen Heng of the Centre franco-chinois d’études sinologiques, though useful, is concerned mainly with names.