

AN EARLY NINTH CENTURY DEBATE  
ON HEAVEN:

Liu Tsung-yüan's *T'ien Shuo* and Liu Yü-hsi's *T'ien Lun*

An Annotated Translation and Introduction

by H. G. LAMONT

PART I

ABBREVIATIONS

CSYPTLHSC	<i>Chu-shih vin-pien T'ang Liu Hsien-shang chi</i> (SPTK ed.)*
CTS	<i>Chiu T'ang shu.</i>
CTW	<i>Ch'in-ting Ch'üan T'ang wen.</i>
HCLC	<i>Han Ch'ang-li chi</i> (Shang-wu yin-shu kuan ed.).
LHTC	<i>Liu Ho-tung chi</i> (Chuang-hua ed.)*
LMTWC	<i>Liu Meng-te wen-chi</i> (SPTK ed.)*
LPKC	<i>Liu Pin-k'o chi</i> (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng ed.)*
SPTK	<i>Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an</i> (reduced size ed. of 1936 only).*
TCTC	<i>Hsin-chiao Tzu-chih t'ung-chien chu</i> (Shih-chieh shu-chu repr.)*
WH	<i>Wen Hsuan</i> (Shang-wu vin-shu kuan ed.)*
WYYH	<i>Wen-yüan ying-hua.</i>

A Introduction

Long before Liu Tsung-yüan and Liu Yü-hsi took up the question of Heaven and man in the early ninth century, Chinese writers had considered the relationship between man and the higher powers of the universe. The question had not always focused on the conventional term, "Heaven" (*t'ien* 天), but was frequently discussed in other contexts. In fact, for a number of reasons Heaven never became as important a term in philosophical discussions as did such concepts as *tao* 道, "the Way", or *hsing* 性, "human nature". Heaven was basically a concept limited by its etymological evolution and by its political connotations.

The very word *t'ien* can be used in a variety of meanings in different contexts and it is not impossible for two separate meanings to be implied at

---

I should like to thank Professor D. C. Twitchett, Dr. M. A. N. Loewe, and Dr. David McMullen for their help and advice on various aspects of this brief work; any misinterpretations or errors contained in it, however, are entirely my own.

\* indicates continuous pagination in Western style for citations.

the same time. The very etymology of the word has caused considerable debate, although the theory of H. G. Creel seems to be prevalent now: according to his theory, Heaven was originally an ideograph of a large man, a person of high rank, which later came to represent the greater gods and ancestors controlling human affairs. But these in turn came to be regarded as a kind of corporate entity, so that *t'ien* came to represent a single divinity and its dwelling place, the sky, came to be designated by the same term. After the Chou people, among whom this concept first developed, conquered and gradually merged with the Shang people, *t'ien* came to be identified with its Shang counterpart, *Shang-ti* 上帝, "the Lord-on-High", and the two terms came to be alternate names for the same sky divinity.<sup>1</sup>

At this early period Heaven was conceived as having a powerful and intentional role in human affairs, especially in regard to the ruler; its actions, moreover, were often conceived as moral responses to human affairs:

Heaven intervened in the world through Its commands. For example, Heaven had commanded the Chou to destroy the Shang, to rule the various regions, and to be lenient in punishment. The ruler had an obligation to know what the commands were, and if he neglected or despised them he would reap punishment. Heaven commands (*ming* 命) and the ruler received (*shou* 受) the command. It was possible for man to disobey these commands, though not with impunity. Moreover, some commands could be "retained", or continued in effect, as in the case of the command to rule a certain region (in popular terminology the "Mandate"). One did have some control over this retention, since in many cases virtuous conduct was a means of achieving it. Heaven also commanded certain disasters (plagues, destruction of cities) and bounties (a good harvest) for man. Prayers could sometimes affect these events; but it is clear that they were usually considered impossible to avoid or alter after they were commanded, partly because their occurrence was unpredictable by men.<sup>2</sup>

The element of anthropomorphism is evidently still relatively strong at this stage: in some ways the actions of Heaven are like those of an earthly ruler. Although, as we shall see, the concept of Heaven evolved away from this idea of a celestial divinity among many writers, in some cases, at least "the virtues that had been attributed to the personalized Heaven were preserved in nature".<sup>3</sup> Obviously this development was potentially the cause of much ambiguity in Chinese ideas about Heaven and its relationship to man.

<sup>1</sup> H. G. Creel, "Shih t'ien" 釋天 (The Meaning of Heaven), *Yenching Hsueh-pao* 燕京學報, XVIII (1935), 71; Joseph Needham et al., *Science and Civilization in China* (Cambridge, 1956), II, 581.

<sup>2</sup> Donald J. Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford, 1969), 85-6. Characters supplied.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

It is somewhat difficult to locate precisely the factors which caused this evolution of Heaven away from the concept of a personalized sky god to an impersonal moral or even amoral force in late Chou times. One plausible explanation is the corporate nature of Heaven in very early times noted above: this collective identity, though eventually lost as Heaven became a single great sky god, nevertheless prevented it from developing a distinctive personality of its own.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the ancient Chinese sky divinity may well have fallen prey to trends similar to those which have affected the sky fathers of the Indo-European and other peoples: in many cases the sky god or demi-urge becomes increasingly remote from his worshippers and eventually evolves into a *deus otiosus*, while his place is taken by other divinities.<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note in this regard that the cult of Heaven has been rather jealously guarded by the imperial houses until recent times on political grounds, for the open worship of Heaven as such came to be a political act of deep significance, a claim to *de jure* power.<sup>6</sup> This was probably at least partly responsible for the replacement of Heaven by other divinities in the popular mind; at the same time, we shall see that the idea of Heaven as a divinity was maintained in rather fossilized form by the rulers of China century after century, after its revival and revitalization in Han times.

Nevertheless, in the latter half of the Chou period, with the rise of speculation, scepticism, and rationalism, the role of Heaven came in many quarters to be regarded as increasingly impersonal and remote from human affairs. At first, this trend seems to have expressed itself in terms of an increasing separation between the Heavenly and the human spheres of activity with increasing importance being placed on the latter. Human institutions, once thought of as under the control of Heaven or the Lord-on-High came to be regarded as produced by men for the benefit of men.<sup>7</sup> Similarly the ruler's chief object of concern was supposed now to be the human, not the Heavenly, sphere. The *Tso chuan* records this saying under the year 662 B.C., "It is when a State is about to flourish that (its ruler) listens to his people; when it is about to perish, he listens to the spirits",<sup>8</sup> and again for the year 524 B.C. it records, "The Way of Heaven is distant, while the Way of man is

<sup>4</sup> J. Needham, *Science*, II, 581.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, tr. R. Sheed (Cleveland and New York 1963), pp. 46ff. While Eliade speaks of the absence of cults of such gods in general, and while T'ien did retain a limited stereotyped cult, it probably had much less religious reality for the most people than more immediate personal deities (*shen* and so on).

<sup>6</sup> See C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1961), 183-5.

<sup>7</sup> Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, tr. Derk Bodde (Princeton, 1959), I, 33-4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 31. Cf. James Legge, tr., *The Chinese Classics* (Taiwan repr. of 1874, 5 vol. ed.), V, 121.

near. We cannot reach the former; what means have we of knowing it?"<sup>9</sup> Both these sayings seem to indicate a significant shift in attitude by this time from the concepts mentioned above. The concept of Heavenly commands and retribution (*pao* 報) in response (*ying* 應) to human actions is no longer as prominent; in its place we see an emphasis on the moral and pragmatic sanctions of government, an emphasis so important that the early view has come to be regarded as potentially dangerous for the ruler. It is noteworthy, however, that the concept of Heaven as divinity and source of warnings and punishments expressed through the natural order was not absolutely denied at this time.<sup>10</sup>

It would seem that the Confucian school came to be the major repository for these trends in late Chou times, probably because their esteem for the literature of the earlier Chou period with its fairly numerous references to Heaven or Shang-ti caused them to accept these traditional concepts after a fashion; by contrast, other schools, creating their literature more or less out of whole cloth, could to some extent dispense with the concept of Heaven or replace it by other concepts such as the *tao* of the Taoists. (An exception to this, however, as we shall see, were the Mohists.)

Confucius himself seems to have been reticent about discussing the sphere of Heaven (*t'ien tao* 天道),<sup>11</sup> although he seems to have accepted some sort of sanction from Heaven as a divinity or moral force for his mission.<sup>12</sup> In Mencius, moreover, we can find instances of Heaven used as a designation for a sphere of action beyond human control: "As to the accomplishment of a great deed, that is with Heaven."<sup>13</sup> This seems to be akin to a Han period use of Heaven meaning a *sine qua non*.<sup>14</sup> It should be noted, however, that Mencius does often cite early Chou texts which refer to Heaven in rather personalized terms.<sup>15</sup>

In general, however, the tendency of the Confucian school seems to have been to minimize the importance of Heaven. The culmination of this trend is seen in the writings of Hsün-tzu in the third century B.C. First, he emphasizes the idea of the separation of the human and heavenly spheres with the human sphere as the chief concern of the ruler: "When he turns his thoughts to Heaven, he seeks to understand only those phenomena which

can be regularly expected. . . . The experts may study Heaven; the ruler himself should concentrate on the Way."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, he notes, "he who can distinguish between the activities of Heaven and those of mankind is worthy to be called the highest type of man."<sup>17</sup> But aside from such assertions, which are more or less in line with the general tendencies we have noted above, Hsün-tzu seems to have gone even further and reduced Heaven to a largely amoral force:

The ranks of stars move in progression, the sun and moon shine in turn, the four seasons succeed each other in good order, the yin and yang go through their great transformations, and the wind and rain pass over the whole land. All things obtain what is congenial to them and come to life, receive what is nourishing to them, and grow to completion. One does not see the process taking place, but sees only the results. Thus it is called godlike. All men understand that the process has reached completion, but none understands the formless forces that bring it about. Hence it is called the process of Heaven. Only the sage does not seek to understand Heaven.<sup>18</sup>

From this passage it is evident that in some ways, at least, Hsün-tzu's concept of Heaven is much more akin to the spontaneous *tao* of the Taoists than to the more traditional concepts of Heaven and the pronouncements of Confucius and Mencius on the subject.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Hsün-tzu sometimes reduces the concept of Heaven to the idea of the physical sky with its regular motions unaffected by human actions, and spontaneously acting without regard to human prayers.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, it may well be that the general regularity of celestial phenomena was a starting point for Hsün-tzu's concept of an indifferent, amoral Heaven, which he subsequently identified with the whole natural order, thus making Heaven equivalent to the phrase "Heaven and Earth" (*t'ien-ti* 天地). Whatever the ultimate sources of his theory of Heaven, however, it is quite evident that his conclusions were a fairly radical departure from traditional ideas on the subject. In Hsün-tzu we see united for the first time two approaches to the problem of Heaven: the rather more traditional division of human and Heavenly spheres with emphasis on human actions, and the more positive scepticism which denied any moral or supernatural reality to Heaven. As we shall observe, these two approaches

<sup>9</sup> Fung, *History*, I, 32, and Legge, *Classics*, V, 671.

<sup>10</sup> Fung, *History*, I, 32.

<sup>11</sup> Legge, *Classics*, I, 177.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 218, 288-9.

<sup>13</sup> Fung, *History*, I, 31. Fung's description of this as "fatalistic" is perhaps slightly misleading. Cf. Legge, *Classics*, II, 175.

<sup>14</sup> B. Watson, tr., *The Records of the Grand Historian of China* (New York and London, 1962), 271, n. 1. *Shih Chi* 史記 (*Chung hua* 中華 ed., Hongkong, 1969), VIII, 2694.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Legge, *Classics*, II, 156, 199, and 291. But see also *Ibid.*, 208-9, where Mencius proclaims the dominance of human factors over Heavenly ones.

<sup>16</sup> B. Watson, tr., *The Basic Writings of Hsün Tzu*, 81-2, in *The Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu* (New York and London, 1967). Text in *Hsün Tzu yin-te* 荀子引得 (*A Concordance to Hsün Tzu*), (Taipei, 1966, repr.), p. 63, l. 16-19.

<sup>17</sup> B. Watson, *Hsün Tzu*, 79-80; *Hsün Tzu yin-te*, p. 62, l. 5-6.

<sup>18</sup> B. Watson, *Hsün Tzu*, 80; *Hsün Tzu yin-te*, p. 62, l. 8-10.

<sup>19</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, tr., ed., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton and Oxford, 1963), 117.

<sup>20</sup> B. Watson, *Hsün Tzu*, 85-7. *Hsün Tzu yin-te*, p. 64, l. 38-46. However, it should be noted that Hsün-tzu also emphasized a unity between Heaven, Earth, and man through *Li* 理 (see Munro, *Concept*, 39).

were to become part of the on-going Chinese sceptical tradition and are present in the writings of Liu Tsung-yüan and Liu Yü-hsi.

This tendency away from early Chou religious ideas about Heaven, however, did not go unchallenged. Mo-tzu, a rival of the Confucian school at a fairly early date, strongly supported the idea of Heaven as a just, loving, and all-seeing sky god, who sent down punishments upon the wicked and rewards upon the good. Indeed, there is some implication in his statements (or those of his followers) on Heaven that he identified it with a rather anthropomorphic god who physically "saw" the doings of men and judged them.<sup>21</sup>

If so, he was returning to an extremely archaic concept of Heaven, although it is also fairly clear that his emphasis on ethical rather than proper ritual conduct was probably more in harmony with the tendencies of later times than with the early Chou religion. To Mo-tzu the ruler's major concerns were worship of Heaven and the spirits and love toward his people: the result of such conduct would be rewards from Heaven. Furthermore, Heaven was conceived of as "proclaiming its will (*ming* 命)"<sup>22</sup> rather as the early Chou had thought.

Although ultimately Mohism did not become the official orthodoxy of the Chinese State, it is interesting to note that the concept of Heaven held by a number of prominent Han thinkers was quite close to the anthropomorphic Heaven proclaimed by Mo-tzu.<sup>23</sup> This concept of Heaven by Han times had gradually become mixed up with the ideas of various schools of "Naturalism";<sup>24</sup> while Hsün-tzu had been reducing Heaven to a kind of natural process and had emphasized the ruler's proper concern with human rather than Heavenly events, various wandering scholars had evolved elaborate correspondences between the forces and cycles of nature and political events. Although the major factors in these speculations were such natural powers as yin and yang and the "Five Elements" (*wu-hsing* 五行), the important point with regard to our present discussion is that man and the universe were being correlated in such theories; the human and non-human spheres, which had been in many ways effectively separated by writers such as Hsün-tzu were now being brought together in a much more systematic way. It is difficult to say from the scanty fragments extant from this school how important the concept of Heaven was for these writers; Tsou Yen does mention that "when some new dynasty is going to arise, Heaven

<sup>21</sup> B. Watson, tr., *The Basic Writings of Mo Tzu*, 78-9, in *The Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu* (New York and London, 1967). Text in *Mo Tzu yin-te* 墨子引得 (A Concordance to Mo Tzu), (Tokyo, 1961, repr.), p. 40, l. 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, *Source Book*, 219; Watson, *Mo Tzu*, 81; *Mo Tzu yin-te*, p. 41, l. 26, 29.

<sup>23</sup> Fung, *History*, II (Princeton, 1966), 53.

<sup>24</sup> For an account of this school and its influence in Han times, see J. Needham, *Science*, II, 232-53.

exhibits auspicious signs to the people",<sup>25</sup> but it is difficult to say whether he means nature or the sky god or perhaps a kind of ambiguous combination of both concepts.

It is only when the synthesis of these ideas takes place in Han times that Heaven comes to have a prominent place in these theories, as far as we can tell. By the time of Ssu-ma Ch'ien in the late second and early first centuries B.C., the Naturalists had died out as a school and their Five Elements theories had become the common property of various schools, including those who are generally labelled "Confucians".<sup>26</sup> Already in the first decades of the dynasty the scholar Fu Sheng 伏勝 (*fl. c. 250-175 B.C.*) had incorporated Five Elements theories into the *Shu Ching* or Classic of Documents.<sup>27</sup> It is quite possible that here the older concept of Heaven as a personalized sky deity, recorded in the early Chou documents, became fused with the Naturalists' speculations. But it is in the writings of Tung Chung-shu 董仲舒 (178-104 B.C.) that we see the anthropomorphic (or anthropopathic) concept of Heaven fully resurrected and combined with the elaborate correlations which were supposed to exist between the human and natural worlds. Here the earlier concept of Heaven as a moral, purposeful high god was used to bolster the theory of correspondences and interaction by acting as the unifying force behind the whole system. Although Heaven once more was regarded as an active force in human affairs with the concept of *pao* 報 or retribution as a prominent feature of its activity, as in early Chou times, the Han writers tended much more to identify its workings with the cosmic cycles of the yin and yang and the Five Elements, so important in the earlier Naturalists' speculations. Even here, however, the anthropomorphic element was present:

The constant (principle) of Heaven and Earth is the succession of the *yin* and *yang*. The *yang* is Heaven's beneficent power, while the *yin* is Heaven's chastising power . . . In Heaven's course, there are three seasons of formation and growth and one season of mourning and death. Death means the withering and decay of various creatures; mourning means the grief and sadness (engendered) by the *yin* ether. Heaven has its own feelings of joy or anger, and a mind (which experiences) sadness or pleasure, analogous to those of man. Thus if a grouping is made according to kind, Heaven and man are one.<sup>28</sup>

Here Heaven as process has been effectively combined with the old anthropomorphic concept of a sky deity; more than ever before, the human and

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>26</sup> The conventionally accepted labels for Chinese schools of thought are quite difficult to apply in Han times, both by reason of eclecticism and the general fluidity of the intellectual scene. Dr. M. A. N. Loewe pointed out to me the extreme difficulty of labelling the intellectual currents of the time.

<sup>27</sup> Needham, *Science*, 247.

<sup>28</sup> Fung, *History*, II, 29-30.

heavenly realms are interconnected by the numerous correspondences of the Naturalists. Thus to some extent the idea of Heaven as nature is accepted, but the older moral attributes of the sky god have become deeply embedded in it.

The revival of the old high god was partly political due to its usefulness in Emperor Wu's (140-87 B.C.) unification of China: "The unification of separate regions, each with its own local gods, would be facilitated by the introduction of belief in a supreme spirit whose commands are binding everywhere."<sup>29</sup> In this respect, the necessity for a personalized god to hold a hegemony over local deities is rather obvious, and this may have contributed to the anthropomorphism found in Han ideas of Heaven. Indeed, it is not impossible that the weakness of the concept of Heaven as sky god in late Chou times may well have been an expression of the feebleness of the royal house of Chou, the legitimate keepers of the cult. In any case, the Han period saw a revival<sup>30</sup> of this type of worship, and, whatever the ultimate fate of the rest of the Han system of cosmology, the cult of Heaven as high god conferring its "Mandate" upon the ruler remained a permanent part of imperial propaganda and official pronouncements down to the present century.

The Later Han period saw a reaction to the Han synthesis along two lines, already noted above in the writings of Hsün-tzu: first, we find a strongly sceptical attack by Wang Ch'ung 王充 (A.D. 27-100?), and, secondly, the rather more traditional and cautious doctrine of the Heavenly and human spheres with emphasis on the latter, as enunciated by Chung-ch'ang T'ung 仲長統 (A.D. 179-219).

Wang Ch'ung's approach in his *Lun Heng 論衡* ("Discourses Weighed in the Balance") is a fairly thorough attack on the system of correspondences and interaction and on the anthropomorphic concept of Heaven. His reasoning follows Taoist lines by denying consciousness to Heaven and affirming the principle of spontaneity (*tsu-jan* 自然) as against the eclectics' teleology:

Some people are of the opinion that Heaven produces grain for the purpose of feeding mankind, and silk and hemp to cloth [*sic*] them . . .

Reasoning on Taoist principles we find that Heaven emits its fluid everywhere. Among the many things of this world, grain dispels hunger, and silk and hemp protect from cold. For that reason man eats grain, and wears silk and hemp. That Heaven does not produce grain, silk, and hemp purposely, in order to feed and cloth [*sic*] mankind, follows

<sup>29</sup> Munro, *Concept*, 41.

<sup>30</sup> I am not suggesting, of course, that the rites were actually a revival of the ceremonies of Chou or earlier, whatever the Chinese came to believe about them. However, it seems to me obvious that in the Han period there was a reinforcement of the older theistic concept of Heaven as a cult object.

from the fact that by calamitous changes it does not intend to reprove men. Things are produced spontaneously, and man wears and eats them; the fluid changes spontaneously, and man is frightened by it, for the usual theory is disheartening.<sup>31</sup>

This theory of spontaneous fluid or ether (*ch'i* 氣) is a very important concept, for, as we shall see, Liu Tsung-yüan makes use of it in a slightly different form. It is, in any case, quite opposite to the purposeful actions seen in the universal order by Tung Chung-shu and others. The theory of spontaneity makes the events of the universe "like the flushed colour appearing on the face".<sup>32</sup> Naturally, Wang Ch'ung specifically denies that human actions or prayers can provoke any response from Heaven because it is merely an unconscious thing emitting fluid or ether spontaneously. At the same time, Wang Ch'ung takes great pains to refute any anthropomorphism in the concept of Heaven. It would seem that his concept of Heaven is much more material than that of Hsün-tzu, who tended more to the idea of Heaven as a process; both writers, of course, use the term in the sense of the physical sky, but one gets the impression that this idea of a material Heaven is more prominent in Wang Ch'ung.

Wang's ideas are thus a straightforward and fairly consistent denial of a purposeful Heaven with a relationship to man's moral actions. The whole basis of the Naturalists' or Phenomenalists'<sup>33</sup> speculations on correspondences and interactions is denied; Heaven, while relevant to human life, is so only because of the material dependence of man on nature and its products. It is interesting to note that Wang Ch'ung, while reducing Heaven more or less to an unconscious object, also reduces man's position to that of a mere insect crawling on the face of the earth, although he naturally admits the superiority of man over other creatures in his nobility and intelligence.<sup>34</sup> This denial of anthropocentrism is a natural conclusion of his theory of spontaneity and makes the unique relationship between man and the cosmos or Heaven, emphasized by Tung Chung-shu,<sup>35</sup> even more untenable.

Wang Ch'ung's scepticism was balanced by the approach to the problem used by Chung-ch'ang T'ung; instead of an outright denial of teleological explanations of phenomena or of the moral nature of Heaven, he

<sup>31</sup> Alfred Forke, tr., *Lun Heng* (New York, 1962, repr. of 1907 ed.), I, 92; *Lun Heng chiao-shih 論衡校釋* cf. Huang Hui 黃暉 (Taipei, 1969), III, 775.

<sup>32</sup> Forke, *Lun Heng*, I, 102; *Lun Heng chiao-shih*, III, 786.

<sup>33</sup> This school, the most hated by Wang Ch'ung, was designated "the change and reverse school" (*p'ien-fu chih chia* 變復之家), as Needham translates it, was called the "phenomenalist" school by Forke, though without reference to any modern European philosophical school; the term has been retained out of convenience. See J. Needham, *Science*, II, 377, n. i.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 374, n. d, which refers to Forke, *Lun Heng*, I, 103, 109, 183, 322; texts in *Lun Heng chiao-shih*, I, 136, 152; II, 650; III, 996.

<sup>35</sup> Naturally, the same conclusions were reached by the Taoists, who rejected the personalization of Heaven as well as anthropocentrism.

insists on a clear distinction between the activities of Heaven and man; it is interesting to note how Heaven to him can mean either the cosmos beyond human control (Heaven and Earth), the Heavens, or perhaps even the old sky god. In one surviving fragment of his *Ch'ang yen* 昌言 ("Sincere Words")<sup>36</sup> he described his ideas on the separation of the two spheres of activity; referring to dynastic restorations and political achievements of Han times, he continued:

These are totally human affairs and that is all; there is no study of the Way of Heaven in them. Thus being a true king over the empire or being a great minister do not wait upon understanding the Way of Heaven. What is esteemed in employing (*yung* 用)<sup>37</sup> the Way of Heaven is pointing out the constellations in order to inform the people of their [seasonal] affairs.<sup>38</sup> To arouse effectual action in accordance with the four seasons: such as the great strategy [of the ruler]. What further does one gain from portents of good or ill fortune? Therefore, those who understand the Way of Heaven yet have no strategy for man<sup>39</sup> are the crowds of shamans, medicine men, diviners, and priests, those sunk in the lowest ignorance with whom one would not wish to be classed. Those who put their faith in the Way of Heaven and turn their backs on the strategy for man are the rulers who are befuddled and superstitious and the ministers who overthrow the State and lose their families.

A questioner asked, "Does governing the empire well depend solely on human affairs or does it also derive something from the Way of Heaven?"

[Chung-ch'ang T'ung] said, "What is derived from the Way of Heaven is called 'appropriate action for the four seasons'. What is solely dependent on human affairs is called 'the reality of good government and disorder'."

"Then do the *P'ing-hsiang* 禩相 and the *Pao-chang* 保章 [court astronomer-astrologers] in the *Chou-li*<sup>40</sup> have no function?"

<sup>36</sup> Etienne Balazs, *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy*, tr. H. M. Wright, ed. A. F. Wright (New Haven and London, 1966), 218. Chung-ch'ang T'ung's philosophy is discussed as a whole there, pp. 213-25.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Hsün-tzu on utilizing the Mandate of Heaven (*chih T'ien-ming erh yung chih* 制天命而用之); B. Watson, *Hsün Tzu*, 86; *Hsün Tzu yin-te*, p. 64, l. 44.

<sup>38</sup> This phrase, "*chih hsing-ch'en i shou min shih*" 指星辰以授民事 shows that Heaven here is basically reduced to its astronomical sense; this idea of making Heaven simply an object of study for agricultural purposes, is paralleled by Liu Yu-hsi's expression, *shou-shih* 授時, in the *T'ien lun*; see below, n. 237.

<sup>39</sup> An emendation in the text suggests *jen-shih* 人事 for *jen-lieh* 入略; I prefer the latter.

<sup>40</sup> Chou Li 周禮, *SPTK* ed., p. 126; Edouard Biot, tr., *Le Tcheou-li ou Rites des Tcheou* (Taipei, 1969), repr. of Paris, 1851, ed.), II, 112-13. Biot reads *p'ing* as *foung*.

[Chung-ch'ang T'ung] said, "They serve as a general perfection for the ways of Heaven and of man and that is all. It is not fundamental to governing the empire well nor is it an essential factor in ordering the common people."

[The questioner] asked, "In that case wherein do this fundamental and this essential factor lie?"

[Chung-ch'ang T'ung] said, "As to the ruler, let his officials be impartially [selected], let him love only the worthy, let him be industrious and solicitous in regard to governmental affairs, let him repeatedly look for meritorious ministers, let his rewards and grants be in proportion to merit and efforts, let his punishments and fines be properly in accord with the crime or evil committed, so that the government is running smoothly and the people are at peace, each attaining his proper place; then Heaven and earth of themselves will be correct in accordance with me [the ruler], good omens and portents will of themselves gather in response to me, evil things will of themselves shun me. If one seeks to [prove] this is not so, one will not succeed. But if those whom the ruler makes officials are either his relatives or personal favourites, if those whom he loves are either beautiful or insinuating, if he takes those who agree and those who disagree [with him] as good and evil [respectively], and those whom he likes and those whom he hates as worthy of rewards and punishments [respectively], if he is given over to beautiful women and idle in the myriad affairs of government, so that the common people resent their uncorrected wrongs . . . ; then, even though with good omens in the five quarters he never misses the rites of the four seasons, even though in the administration of judgments he does not overstep the winter time limit,<sup>41</sup> even though divining stalk and tortoises pile up within the gates of the temple and sacrifices are heaped up among the beautiful tables [on the altar], even though the *P'ing-hsiang* continually sits on his platform [to observe the celestial omens], and the priests continually prostrate themselves beside the altars, these will still be of no benefit to [a ruler who is] lost. In accordance with this I would say that human affairs are fundamental and the Way of Heaven is secondary. Is it not so? Therefore, to judge what one is already good at and not to trust any further to the Way of Heaven is best; to doubt what one is not yet good at and so bring in the Way of Heaven to help oneself is second; one who does not seek it within himself but rather seeks it from Heaven is a ruler sunk in the lowest ignorance. Let the ruler sincerely devote himself to introspection and concentrate his thoughts on the way of good government, so that in his introspection

<sup>41</sup> Executions were supposed to take place only in the winter, according to the almanac, the *Yüeh ling* 月令, which Liu Tsung-yüan sharply criticized later on.

there is no fault [for him to find] and in his way of good government there is no error; then these are production of suspicious things and the arrival of good omens: they are like the water coming out when I draw it from the well or the flames blazing up when I light the stove and that is all. How are they worthy to be matters for congratulations? Therefore, happiness at retribution (*pao-ying* 報應) and joy at rare omens are the emotions of the vulgar and never may be called the universal virtue of the highest man."<sup>42</sup>

Here we see that omens are acknowledged but declared to be secondary in importance to human activities; the role of the traditional court astronomer-astrologer is reduced to the mere announcement of seasonal changes for the benefit of the agrarian population rather than observing the heavens for omens of good or ill fortune sent by Heaven. This is obviously in line with Hsün-tzu's ideal of observing only regular, predictable events in the celestial sphere. This tradition of criticism in regard to beliefs about Heaven was more common than the total scepticism of Wang Ch'ung, for it had much more traditional backing both by writers such as Hsün-tzu and by passages in the Confucian scriptures such as the *Tso chuan* citations given above. Some writers such as Hsün-tzu combined the two lines of argument, so that they were not always completely separate traditions.

After Han times, in general, the sceptical tradition seems to have been drawn away from traditional questions such as that of Heaven and man to the questions raised by the spread of Buddhism during the Six Dynasties period; sceptical writers such as Fan Chen 范縝 (d. c. 515) and Ho Ch'eng-t'ien 何承天 (370-447) devoted their energies to combating the new ideas on retribution, karma and rebirth, rather than against the phenomenologists or Han ideas about Heaven's relationship to man. Although there is some criticism of Han writers on the basis of the belief that all things are determined by vast cycles (*yün* 運) and schedules (*shu* 數),<sup>43</sup> it would seem that the Han system of omens, correspondences, and interaction between Heaven and man still had widespread acceptance.

On the official level, aside from the imperial cult of Heaven, which helped bolster dynasties, Han theories such as that of the Five Elements still

<sup>42</sup> *Ch'üan Hou-Han wen* 全後漢文, 89, 7a-8a, in Yen K'o-chün 嚴可均 *Ch'üan Shang-ku San-tai Ch'in Han San-kuo Liu-ch'ao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (Kuang-chou, 1887-93).

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g., Liu Hsiao-yuan 劉孝遠, "Ming-yün lun" 命運論 (on the Cycles of Fate) in Hsiao T'ung 蕭統, cf., *Wen Hsüan* 文選 Commercial Press, Hongkong, 1965), II, 1141-9. Dr. D. McMullen suggested this translation when *shu* is equivalent to *yün*; of course, the basic meaning is "number", and this gives rise to the idea of the "inherent dimension" or quality of things. See, for example, E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden, 1959), II, 369, n. 335; *Chou I chu-su*, II, 16a, in *Shih-san Ching chu-su* 十三經注疏 (Reprint of Palace ed., Canton, 1871). This latter meaning is more in accord with the interests of Liu Yü-hsi, who based many of his ideas on a general numerological theory: see below, pp. 51-6.

remained fairly important, although it is not unlikely that they increasingly became a mere traditional observance without much serious intellectual backing. Etienne Balazs's figures on the monographs of the dynastic histories tend to show a slight decline in the amount of material on the "pseudo-sciences" such as omen reports, astronomy-astrology, and the calendar included in the Standard Histories (*Cheng-shih* 正史) during this period.<sup>44</sup> My own rough calculations, based on the number of pages in the various monographs,<sup>45</sup> tend to confirm this decline; moreover, the amount of omen and Five Elements material included in the histories seems to have declined somewhat more sharply than that on the "pseudo-sciences" in general. This may indicate that the Han synthesis was, in fact, becoming less important politically and perhaps intellectually as well.

A real break in this tradition seems to have come in early T'ang, however, with the compilation of the Sui History (*Sui shu* 隋書), in which both the "pseudo-sciences" in general and omen reports in particular fell well below the amount previously assigned to them. The Chin History (*Chin shu* 晉書) compiled in the same year, 644, had had the largest amount of "pseudo-science" material of any of the dynastic histories,<sup>46</sup> yet the losses suffered by this type of monograph in the *Sui shu* proved to be irreversible; as far as I have been able to ascertain, none of the subsequent dynastic histories contained the amount of material on this subject included in pre-T'ang histories. Although there is some evidence that the Emperor T'ai-tsung 太宗 (r. 626-649) was sceptical about the value of traditional omens,<sup>47</sup> this reduction may have been the result of a long period of decline in this

<sup>44</sup> Balazs, *Civilization*, 139-40.

<sup>45</sup> Although I did not have time to compile really accurate percentages based on the page count which was based on the *Erh-shih ssu shih* Shanghai, 1887, ed., my own figures reveal that not only did the "sciences" as a whole take up considerably less space in the Histories after the *Chin-shu*, but also there was a decline of over 40 per cent in the amount of omen lore and Five Elements theory that was included among the "sciences". This development was important, I believe, because it shows that this particular theory was becoming less important even apart from the general decline in the non-human and irrational sectors of knowledge from the point of view of the official historians.

<sup>46</sup> According to Balazs' figures (*Civilization*, 139) no subsequent dynastic history ever came near this history in terms of the amount of "scientific" material involved. My own figures show that there was a much larger amount of material on the "sciences" in the *Chin shu* than in the *Han shu* itself (Balazs' calculations reveal only a 1 per cent deviation between the two histories in this respect). However, my figures also show that the percentage of omen and Five Elements material in relationship to the "sciences" as a whole in the *Chin shu* was much lower than in the *Han shu*: this, too, may be significant because it would show that even the sudden upsurge in the amount of "scientific" material included in the *Chin shu* did not stop the general decline in this specific theory. This may have some connexion with the work of Lü Ts'ai 呂才 (600-665) who edited the traditional omen book, adding his own sceptical comments in 641. See below, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup> *CTS*, 37.10a.

field. In the eighth century, the historiographer Liu Chih-chi 劉知幾 (661-721) attacked the Five Elements Monograph (*Wu-hsing chih* 五行志), chapter 27 of the Han History (*Han shu* 漢書).<sup>48</sup> I suspect that, although it was an important break with tradition, the blow delivered by Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修 to the Five Elements tradition in 1060 by eliminating all correlations between events in nature and political actions in the *Wu-hsing chih* of the New T'ang History (*Hsin T'ang shu* 新唐書)<sup>49</sup> was, in fact, a *coup de grâce* to a tradition which had long since been on the wane. Within the official historiographical tradition, at least, the relationship between man and Heaven, whether conceived of as a god or a benevolent natural order, had evidently become less important by early T'ang times.

Of course, we must also note that certain stereotyped forms of political documents, aside from the actions of the state cult of Heaven, were expressed in terms of the Han synthesis. There were, for example, "memorials of congratulations" (*ho-piao* 賀表) offered to the throne on the appearance of traditionally auspicious omens. The extent to which these were merely formal political exercises is shown by the fact that Liu Tsung-yüan, whose scepticism was fairly consistent, presented such memorials in the course of his duties, invoking such phrases as "Heaven and man conjointly respond" and "It is Heaven that produces good omens."<sup>50</sup> Clearly such phrases were not borne of intellectual conviction on his part, but were required as part of the formalities of state.

In T'ang times there seem to have been, on the one hand, defenders of the traditional omen lore and the close relationship between Heaven and man and, on the other hand, conservative and rather more radical sceptics. We have already noted that the decline of the Han synthesis seems to have been marked in the reign of T'ai-tsung. It was at this time that the sceptic Lü Ts'ai 呂才 (600-665) edited the traditional prognostication tests by imperial command in 641, adding his own extremely sceptical remarks on the subject. Little has survived from his works but it is quite possible that the whole task of editing was a governmental attempt to standardize and manipulate this type of literature. Lü Ts'ai himself mentions almost nothing about his ideas on Heaven and man in the fragments now extant, but it would seem that he did conceive of a rather mechanistic universe in which

<sup>48</sup> Liu Chih-chi, *Shih-t'ung t'ung-shih* 史通通釋 (A Survey of Historiography with Comprehensive Explanations), (Taipei, 1969), 261-80. A discussion of it is found in Hou Wai-lu 侯外廬 *Chung-kuo ssu-hsiang t'ung-shih* 中國思想通史 (A General History of Chinese Thought), (Peking, 1963), Vol. 4, Pt. 1, pp. 304-13.

<sup>49</sup> Hsu Dawlin 徐道鄰, "Crime and Cosmic Order", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, XXX (1970), 116-17. He is, of course, correct that Ou-yang Hsiu's move was a distinct break in some ways; but in others it was merely the final step in the long process of decline. The tradition was surely already moribund by the end of T'ang, at least.

<sup>50</sup> *LHTC*, II, 594.

there was no relationship between human action and the universal order.<sup>51</sup> A few years after this in 653 a memorial to throne after a disaster denied the traditional relationship between Heaven and man:

According to the *Ch'un-ch'iu* 春秋, "There fell stones in Sung 宋, — five [of them]. The historiographer of the interior in passing said, 'It is not from these developments of the *Yin* and *Yang* that good fortune and evil are produced.'" From ancient times disasters and strange events have been obscure and unfathomable, but probably the spontaneity of things does not necessarily have any connexion with human affairs. If Your Majesty issues an edict forbidding fear, blaming himself, and practises introspection, it does not have to be unfortunate.<sup>52</sup>

This sort of criticism is fairly conservative and cautious, although both the theory of separate spheres and the idea of spontaneity are invoked. Based on a text of the *Tso chuan* not unlike those cited above, this sort of criticism would have been acceptable in a political document. The real point involved is not so much an attack on the omen lore and supramundane intervention into human affairs as the primacy of moral action by the emperor.

The concept of the Heavenly and human spheres and a conservative criticism is seen in the writings of Lu Tsang-yung 盧藏用 in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. While admitting a definite relationship between Heaven and man, he insists on the primacy of human affairs; if the government is not properly run, no amount of attention to divination and government by almanack can save the ruler; on the other hand:

If one relies on the worthy and makes use of the able, then affairs will go well without [selecting the proper] season or day. If the laws are discriminating and the statutes are correct, then affairs will be auspicious without divination. If one nourishes the hard-working, and rewards the meritorious, then one will obtain good fortune without praying. This is what is meant by "Heaven's seasons are not as good as Earth's advantages; Earth's advantages are not as good as human harmony."<sup>53</sup>

Later in the same essay, Lu specifically castigates the view that all the traditional ritual and prognostication practices should be abandoned. He insists that they have practical value of a sort and were used by the sages to "assist their plans".<sup>54</sup> It is quite possible that this sort of cautious acceptance

<sup>51</sup> See Hou, *T'ung-shih*, Vol. 4, Pt. 1, 108-40, especially quotation on 131. Also Shigezawa Toshio 重澤俊郎, "Ryū U-shaku no tetsugaku" 劉禹錫の哲學 (The Philosophy of Liu Yü-hsi), *Tōhō gaku ronshū* 東方學論集 (Tokyo, 1960), 116-18.

<sup>52</sup> *CTS*, 37:32; for the story referred to, see Legge, *Classics*, V, 170-1.

<sup>53</sup> *CTW*, 238.8a. Cf. the memorial by Lu Chih 陸贄 to Te-tsung 德宗 in 783: *TCTC*, XII, 7364-5 (ch. 228) Lu there urges the primacy of human affairs as opposed to the "Mandate of Heaven", though he does not deny some sort of retribution.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.9a.



of traditional ideas of interaction were fairly widespread among literate men of the time.

On the other hand, even aside from the stereotyped memorials of congratulations noted above, there were writers who emphasized the idea of *kan-ying* 感應 or stimulus and response between man and Heaven; in Liu Tsung-yüan's own time, the Chief Minister Li Chang 李絳 (764-830) presented an explanation of an earthquake in 812 in terms of Han cosmology and the actions of the government.<sup>55</sup> A contemporary of Li Chiang's, Li Te-yü 李德裕 (787-849) wrote a series of essays more or less defending the concept of man's involvement with Heaven and other supramundane powers; although his emphasis on man's relationship to these powers was more ethical than ritual and although his interpretations seem to have differed somewhat from the more usual concepts of omens, he was clearly defending the idea that the beings beyond the human world can and do respond to man's actions and entreaties.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, on a somewhat more popular level, fate-calculation literature continued to be widely used throughout the T'ang and after.<sup>56a</sup> As we shall see, some of this seems to have had influence on the ideas of Liu Yü-hsi.

At this point we can begin to examine the sources and development of the thought of Liu Tsung-yüan and Liu Yü-hsi and the sceptical attitudes which they brought to the question of the nature of Heaven and its relationship to man. Liu Tsung-yüan's intellectual development is somewhat easier to trace than is Liu Yü-hsi's because of the type and amount of material that has survived from each, and, since Liu Tsung-yüan initiated their debate on this question, we shall first consider his ideas and the *T'ien shuo* 天說 or "The Theory of Heaven".

Perhaps the greatest single intellectual influence on the development of Liu Tsung-yüan's scepticism was the school of interpretation of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Ch'un ch'iu*) founded by Tan Chu 啖助 (725-770) after the An Lu-shan rebellion (755-763); the writings of the members of this group were characterized by a "cool, detached, and methodical rationality with which they attempted to get at the truth",<sup>57</sup> and which distinguished them from their predecessors. It was clearly their influence that pervades Liu Tsung-yüan's single greatest critical work, "Against the *Kuo yü*" (*Fei Kuo yü* 非國語) dating from his exile in Yung-chou around the years 808-09.<sup>58</sup> Although it is an independently written work, there is little

<sup>55</sup> CTS, 37.2b.

<sup>56</sup> See *Li Wen-jao wen-chi* 李文績文集 (SPTK ed.), 189-91 (*wai-chi*, ch. 4).

<sup>56a</sup> See Chao Pei-wang, "The Chinese Science of Fate Calculation", *Folklore Studies*, V (1946), 284-6.

<sup>57</sup> Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "Neo-Confucianism and Neo-Legalism in T'ang Intellectual Life 755-805", in A. F. Wright, ed., *The Confucian Persuasion* (Stanford, 1960), 77.

<sup>58</sup> See Shih Tzu-yü 施子愉 *Liu Tsung-yüan mien-p'u* 柳宗元年譜 (A Chronology of Liu Tsung-yüan), (Wuhan, 1958), 58; *LHTC*, II, 746.

doubt that it embodies a good deal of the methodology of Lu Ch'un 陸淳,<sup>59</sup> a principle disciple of Tan Chu, whom Liu Tsung-yüan had come to admire after reading his works; he finally was actually able to meet Lu Ch'un in 804 after the latter returned to Ch'ang-an from the provinces.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, although the members of this school seem to have strongly influenced Liu Tsung-yüan to adopt a "spirit . . . of independence, of unwillingness to accept tradition blindly",<sup>61</sup> there is little evidence in their extant writings to show how they affected his ideas on Heaven and the idea of retribution and interaction. The proof that we do have comes largely from the writings of Liu's cousin Lü Wen (772-811), who was a pivotal figure in the relationship between the *Spring and Autumn Annals* school and Liu Tsung-yüan. During the time he was in Ch'ang-an in the first years of the ninth century, Liu Tsung-yüan's interest in the *Annals* and this type of criticism was apparently aroused by hearing Lü Wen and others in debate, even before he was introduced to the writings of Lu Ch'un.<sup>62</sup> After his exile began in late 805, his thought especially along sceptical lines continued to be strongly influenced by Lü Wen. In a letter discussing the *Fei Kuo-yü* with Lü Wen and probably written in 809, he says:

I named it, "Against the *Kuo yü*, but once it was completed, I was depressed and unhappy about it for days on end because the Way is difficult to clarify and set customs cannot be changed. Who would there be, in fact, to understand me? All those who have attained the Way would, in fact, understand it all right, but as for those who will come after, I have not seen them. Might they not be indifferent? Therefore, I greatly desire to end its flaws in order to distinguish and clarify what is exactly proper. As for one who would assess and perfect what I have written, unless it is you Hua-kuang 化光 [呂溫] [Lü Wen], then who could it be? So I sent off a letter at once.<sup>63</sup>

Clearly Liu Tsung-yüan had great respect for the opinions of Lü Wen, especially in regard to rationalistic criticism of tradition. The close relationship between the two doubtless remained an important factor in the way Liu's thought developed until Lü Wen's death in 811. Moreover, not only were the two bound together by ties of kinship but also both had been associated with the Wang Shu-wen 王叔文 clique in 805, although Lü Wen's disgrace came somewhat after Liu's.<sup>64</sup> Naturally Liu's grief and bitterness at his death almost verged on total despair, for it was on Lü that Liu

<sup>59</sup> Ota Tsugio 大田次男 "Chōan jidai no Ryō Sūgen ni tsuite" (Liu Tsung-yüan in the Ch'ang-an Period), *Shidō Bunko Ronshu*, II (1962) 131.

<sup>60</sup> Pulleyblank, "Neo-Confucianism", 96.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *LHTC*, II, 507.

<sup>64</sup> Wu Wen-chih 吳文治, *Liu Tsung-yüan p'ing-chüan* 柳宗元評傳 (A Critical Biography of Liu Tsung-yüan), (Peking, 1962), 150.

had placed much of his hope for a future reprieve from exile; with Lü's death, he said, the will to work in him died.<sup>65</sup> This may refer not only to his worldly ambitions but also to his intellectual activities, especially concerning sceptical writings such as the *Fei Kuo yü*. Later on, I shall consider the possible relevance of Lü Wen's death to Liu's development as a sceptic and tentative dating of Liu's sceptical writings in the Yung-chou period.

Fortunately, we do possess evidence of a positive and specific nature concerning Lü's ideas about Heaven and their influence on Liu Tsung-yüan. One of the passages criticized by Liu in the *Fei Kuo yü* concerns the Chou minister, Ch'ang Shu 長叔 (or Hung 宏) and others who undertook to repair the walls of the Chou royal capital (Ch'ang-chou 城周) in 510-509 B.C. In doing so they usurped prerogatives of the Chou king and it was predicted at the time that they would eventually all suffer disaster from Heaven for this according to the *Kuo yü*, all of them did, in fact, perish sooner or later.<sup>66</sup> In his criticism of this passage, Liu Tsung-yüan aside from some very brief remarks basically refers to Lü Wen's remarks on the subject, as well as to a somewhat later work by Niu Seng-ju 牛僧孺 (779-847) along the same lines. Interestingly enough, neither work seems to tend to ward more radical criticism of the concept of Heaven.

After recounting the incidents in the *Kuo yü*, Lü Wen continues by praising the superiority of ethical conduct over concern with supramundane powers and the "pseudo-sciences":

The minister Ch'ang Hung spoke against the collapse [of Chou] yet was accused of summoning the feudal lords [a function of the king] to build up the walls of the Royal City; although it was a subtle, far-reaching plan, he truly received a good name. That he should deserve good fortune yet receive evil, how harmful is that to our understanding? He took his stand on the fundamentals of being a minister: he presented gifts and assigned places; practising benevolence, he did not divine; in approaching his duty, he did not ask [the consequences]. Not in Heaven, not in the spirits, only in the Way did he put his trust. When the State was in danger, he had to support it; when the State was mighty, he had to urge it to action. He sought but did not obtain [his goal] and consequently died. Ascendency and collapse, good government and disorder depend on virtue, not on cosmic cycles (*yün* 運). That his crime was against Heaven may not be taught.<sup>67</sup>

Niu Seng-ju continues along similar lines with an even clearer reference to

<sup>65</sup> LHTC, II, 644-5.

<sup>66</sup> *Kuo yü* 國語 (The Conversations of the States), (Hupei, 1869; *T'ien sheng ming-tao* 天聖明道 ed.), 3, 19a-20b. Cf. *Tso chuan* version in Legge, *Classics*, V, 740-1.

<sup>67</sup> *Lü Ho-shu wen-chi* 呂和叔文集 (SPTK, ed.), 43 (ch. 8). Also reprinted in Hou Wai-ju, ed., *Liu Tsung-yüan che-hsiieh hsüan-chi* 柳宗元哲學選集 (Peking, 1964), 134.

the well-established tradition of the separation of the spheres of Heaven and man:

If [what the *Kuo yü* says] is correct, then should the emperor and kings not devote themselves to running the administration but rather devote themselves to praising the Mandate of Heaven? Should their inferiors not devote themselves to being loyal to the utmost but rather devote themselves to avoiding ascendancy and decline? . . . If they insist that what Heaven has destroyed is not to be supported, then from antiquity have there been no rulers who have had mid-dynastic restorations? If a cycle of decline cannot be mended, then from antiquity have there been no Ministers who have supported [their State] in danger? . . . Moreover, if Piao Hsi 彪僎 [the critic who predicted Ch'ang Shu's doom] says that a minister's planning for his ruler is contrary to Heaven, then is not supporting [the State] in danger in accord with Heaven? If assisting Heaven by the Way of man is contrary to the Way, then is casting away man and inquiring after Heaven in accord with the Way? If inducing people to exert themselves for the king is being a deceitful man, then is urging people to revolt against the king being a trustworthy man? The confusion of his words has gone to these lengths. Now the way of man is near; to the loyalist [Ch'ang Shu] human relationships are orderly principles. The Way of Heaven is distant; to the speaker [Piao Hsi] human relationships are vain. Making use of the Way of Heaven to aid human relationships is like thinking of discussing false accusations with those at fault. How much more is it the case that abandoning human affairs and inquiring after the Way of Heaven, abandoning the near and seeking the far have no advantage for instruction.<sup>68</sup>

Both these pieces are significant not only for Liu Tsung-yüan, but also for Liu Yü-hsi, who emphasized the distinction between the human and Heavenly spheres. They demonstrate the contemporary acceptance of this type of fairly conservative criticism of the Han system of correspondences and even the Chou beliefs about Heaven and the ruler, which were hallowed by scriptural authority. Lü Wen's inscription on Ch'ang Shu is perhaps the only piece that could suggest a direct connexion between Liu Tsung-yüan's thought on Heaven with the school of Tan Chu and Lu Ch'un; as has been noted above, Lü was probably a pivotal figure, in general, between the school of Lu Ch'un and Liu, and Liu's acceptance of this piece along with that of Niu Seng-ju in the *Fei Kuo yü* would tend to demonstrate that his own ideas on Heaven, in particular, were influenced by Lü. Unfortunately, we have no evidence that shows a similar connexion between Lü's ideas on Heaven with those of the older members of the Lu Ch'un school except for the obvious relationships which he has with the school in general terms. The

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 135. Also CTW, 682, 136-17a.

only other evidence of the school's ideas on phenomenalism is the essay on divination by the noted *ku-wen* 古文 writer, Li Hua 李華, some decades before, but even here his own trends were not strictly within the school of *Ch'un-ch'iu* criticism.<sup>69</sup> Another interesting piece of evidence in regard to Lü Wen is a remark by Liu Yü-hsi in his preface to Lü's writings comparing him to Hsün-tzu in his "ability to clarify the Kingly Way". The remark is vague, but it may refer to his ideas on government conducted without superstition.<sup>70</sup> Whatever the immediate sources of Liu's critical ideas on Heaven were, it would seem that Lü was still largely within the bounds of the more conservative type of scepticism, and it is obvious that Liu ultimately went beyond this to a more direct and critical attack not only on Han ideas about the relationship between man and Heaven but on the "spiritual" and purposeful nature of Heaven itself.

Certainly his tendencies in this direction can be traced to the Ch'ang-an period. While he was a censor from 803 to 805, he was concerned with sacrificial duties in the capital, and, although such duties were to a large extent formal and politically-motivated like the "memorials of congratulations" mentioned above, as is shown by the large number of sacrificial texts to gods found in the writings of Chinese officials of different dynasties, the more religious and positive nature of such rites doubtless made them a more suitable target for comment and criticism. On one such sacrifice, the *cha* 蟻, in which spirits from various localities were worshipped except if they failed in their protective duties towards their area, Liu Tsung-yüan wrote what is perhaps one of his earliest really sceptical pieces. Dated 804,<sup>71</sup> it follows the more traditional idea of spheres through most of the argument. At one point he remarks:

I am unable to see the spirits. I cannot tell whether they accept the sacrificial offerings. This is because they are unfathomable and beyond comprehension, obscure creatures that one cannot grasp or hold. The sages always had in mind the Tao and that is all. The sacrifices is not for the spirits; it must be for men . . .<sup>72</sup>

This obviously does not go beyond the explanation of sacrifices found in the *Record of Rites* (*Li Chi* 禮記) and Hsün-tzu's writings, where ancient rites are rationalized in humanistic terms.<sup>73</sup> It is noteworthy that at this point Liu

<sup>69</sup> Pulleyblank, "Neo-Confucianism", 88, describes the *ku-wen* movement, with which Li Hua was associated, as "parallel" to the *Ch'un ch'iu* critics' school. Yet there was a distinction between the two, and Pulleyblank (96) puts Liu Tsung-yüan more in the *Ch'un ch'iu* group.

<sup>70</sup> *Lu Ho-shu wen-chi*, 1, *LMTWC*, 141; *LPKC*, 150. Cf. Hou, *Chung-kuo shih*, 370, who uses this piece to show a connexion between Liu Yü-hsi and Hsün-tzu.

<sup>71</sup> Shih, *Nien-p'u*, 31.

<sup>72</sup> J. Mason Gentzler, "A Literary Biography of Liu Tsung-yüan, 763 [sic]-819". Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1965 [80]; *LHTC*, I, 296.

<sup>73</sup> See Fung, *History*, I, 297-9, 350-5.

does not specifically deny the existence of spirits. At one point, he seems to consider them to be more or less a term for those forces in the universe beyond human control:

How can drought, locusts, and pestilences . . . be caused by men? Hence, in such cases, the spirits should be dismissed. But violence and fatuousness, greed, and exhaustion are not due to the spirits, are they? Hence, in such cases, men are the ones who should be punished.<sup>74</sup>

The most interesting feature of the essay is a remark made by Liu in his conclusion; in attempting to explain the relation between nature and man, he attributes events to coincidence (*ou-jan* 偶然). Although at this point he does not expound on the concept any further, it was to become much more important in his later thought on man's actions and destiny in relationship to the universe. The only other formal remarks on the subject that Liu makes during the Ch'ang-an period are in his *Chen-fu* 貞符 or *Proper omens*, a piece begun while he was still in Ch'ang-an around 805 and completed when he was in exile in Yung-chou.<sup>75</sup> The piece is specifically aimed at the phenomenalist writers of the Han period such as Tung Chung-shu and Liu Hsiang 劉向 whose "words are comparable with those of unrestrained shamans and blind historians, deluding and confusing later generations."<sup>76</sup> Although Liu adopts a suitably (and necessarily) loyalist attitude toward the T'ang dynasty, it is evident that he has become considerably more critical of the Han synthesis and phenomenalism in general, especially as applied to government affairs; it is difficult to say whether this attitude was partially due to the bitterness after his fall from high office or whether he had begun to be more critical in his views even while in Ch'ang-an, because the composition of the *Chen-fu* spans both periods of his life. He sums up some of his conclusions as follows:

The people's support of T'ang is everlasting and endless; therefore, the reception of the Mandate depends not on Heaven but on the people. Good portents do not depend on favourable omens but on benevolence. It is only due to the benevolence of men, not favourable omens from Heaven. It is not due to favourable omens from Heaven. This alone is the proper sign. Never has there been one who, lacking benevolence, has lasted a long time [in power]; never has there been one who, trusting in favourable omens, has enjoyed long life.<sup>77</sup>

Even here, however, it is obvious that Liu is not criticizing the conception of Heaven as a spirit or as a benevolent natural order, but is repeating the old

<sup>74</sup> Based on Gentzler, "Biography", [80-81]; *LHTC*, I, 296-7.

<sup>75</sup> Shih, *Nien-p'u*, 43, simply lists it as dating from 805, but Wu Wen-chih, *Liu chuan*, 99, n. 1, says that a proper reading of the preface shows that the work was really completed while at Yung-chou.

<sup>76</sup> *LHTC*, I, 18.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

arguments that government is a human concern without much reference to supramundane powers.

The dating of many of Liu's sceptical writings is particularly difficult once we proceed beyond the writings of the Ch'ang-an period. Before we discuss some of those post-805 documents, therefore, we should investigate another source of critical remarks about Heaven and related concepts in Liu's writings, namely, his mortuary texts, most of which can be dated with a good deal of precision. Unfortunately, in works such as sacrificial texts, (*chi-wen* 祭文) and grave inscriptions (*mu-chih-ming* 墓誌銘), we again have to be extremely careful about the possibility of merely formalized expressions of grief rather than statements of intellectual importance. According to the survey made by Matsumura Shinji, 18 out of 54 grave inscriptions (of which eight are of the exile period) contain references to Heaven and related concepts while among the sacrificial texts, 17 out of 30 (14 being of exile date) have such references; it is noteworthy that many of these writings are related to people who died unnaturally early deaths<sup>78</sup> and to relatives and friends. In such emotional situations, Heaven would naturally become a convenient target for the writer's rage and frustration; moreover, Confucius's lament over the early death of his favourite disciple, Yen Hui 顏回, "Alas! Heaven is destroying me! Heaven is destroying me!",<sup>79</sup> provided a perfect classical precedent for this type of expression of grief. There is, furthermore, some evidence of a similar use of Heaven and such ideas can be seen in the mortuary writings of Tu-ku Chi 獨孤及 (725-777).<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, it does seem that Liu was more preoccupied with Heaven and the spirits in his writings of this genre than were many of his contemporaries. It is noteworthy that a large number of his close relatives died before his downfall in 805, and that the concept of Heaven does seem to disappear from his mortuary writings during the years 804 and 805,<sup>81</sup> the time during which his prospects seemed to be increasingly bright. It is just possible that the reverses he suffered in terms of personal losses before the exile and the shock of political failure after the eighth month of 805 helped to nourish his sceptical tendencies concerning the nature of Heaven.

Most of the references to Heaven in the mortuary writings are extremely brief and always quite negative, though not necessarily sceptical in tone.<sup>82</sup> A few representative examples with dates will suffice to show the nature of these expressions:

<sup>78</sup> Matsumura Shinji, "Ryu Sōgen no bungaku sakuhin ni miru gōrishugi-sokumen to higōri-teki sokumen no kōsaku 柳宗元の文學作品に見る合理主義側面と非合理的側面の交錯 (Rationality and Irrationality in the Works of Liu Tsung-yūan), *Chūgoku bungaku-hō* 中國文學報 XXII (1968), 42.

<sup>79</sup> Legge, *Classics*, I, 239.

<sup>80</sup> *CTW*, 391-3.

<sup>81</sup> Matsumura, "Ryū Sōgen", 43.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 42.

On his wife's death (c. 799) and referring to previous deaths in the family since 791: "With a wife's demure manner and retiring disposition, she should have lived to the oldest age. Intelligent and gracious, she should have been ranked with the most highly honoured."

In a number of cases he curses Heaven with such expressions as "For our declining house with its many gaps [caused by deaths], Heaven above has no favour",<sup>83</sup> or "Heaven has certainly deceived me."<sup>84</sup> Most of these expressions are very brief and even tend to describe Heaven in rather formal and stereotyped terms as if it had a personality or purposefulness of its own. Even early expressions of scepticism such as a denial that Heaven has knowledge (*chih* 知) in about 800<sup>85</sup> might well be mere expressions of grief. Nevertheless, some of this material may be of use to demonstrate Liu's growing concern with certain concepts.

In the pre-exile period Liu from time to time notes in some of his laments that there is a disparity between many people's actions and their fate; although this is also a fairly common theme in various types of laments, Liu does seem quite concerned with the problem. At one point he does seem to suggest the concept of Heaven as an unconscious or unknowing entity, which we noted just above, but it is only in the exile period that he starts to develop the idea of various factors thrown together by mere chance, just as in his essay on sacrifice in 804 he suggested in more formal terms the concept of coincidence (*ou jan* 偶然) as the real factor governing the universe, although he does continue to use more conventional expressions of anger and frustration in regard to Heaven, as he did before 805. Some of the expressions of this growing idea of mere coincidence as the real principle of the cosmos are brief sentences with little more than implications of his idea in them. "All the things produced by Heaven are not in orderly groups (*lei* 類): the fine and the coarse are mixed up in confusion; the wise and the stupid are mixed up together."<sup>86</sup> The really definitive expression of the idea of fortuity and the coincidental combination of various factors in human destiny comes in his lament for his friend, Chang Hou-yü 張後餘, who died in 808<sup>87</sup> not long after taking his *chin-shih* degree; here he

<sup>83</sup> *LHTC*, I, 213. Both this and the immediately preceding quotation are from this source.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 138.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 210. A note on p. 209 dates it around *Chen-yüan* 16 (800), as does Shih, *Nien-p'u*, 28.

<sup>86</sup> *LHTC*, II, 660.

<sup>87</sup> Matsumura, "Ryū Sōgen", 43, dates this as written at age 30 (i.e., 802), but Shih, *Nien-p'u*, 53, cites a commentary to show it was 808 (cf. *LHTC*, II, 657). Matsumura seems to have taken his dating from the note included at the beginning of the text (*LHTC*, II, 657), where it is definitely dated 802; that note says that "since the text states that he died the year after getting his *chin-shih*, it should have been while he was in the capital; it should stand in order as *Chen-yüan* 18" or 802. But the

considers a number of explanations for Chang's death before proposing his own solution; the language makes it clear that this is no mere formal expression of grief but a real attempt to come to grips with the problem:

Whenever a man knows the truth, yet does not become well-known in the world, they say, "It is not his time." When he knows the truth and succeeds in the world, yet still<sup>88</sup> is not well-known, they say, "It is fate." The subtleties of fate may not be known, but what we can know by investigation of external appearances is called the nature (*hsing* 性) and physical appearance (*mao* 貌).<sup>89</sup> Hou-yü's nature could be described as excellent and his physical appearance as grave. He was learned and magnanimous (?; *hung-yü* 弘裕), and should have become a high official and lived to a ripe old age. When I seek the reason why he should have died so young and in such a low estate, I cannot find any. The year after he obtained his *chin-shih*, he died of a cancer that broke out in his leg. Everyone grieved at Hou-yü's death and said, "How is that Heaven [is supposed to] favour good men, yet kills this fellow?" Those who [thought up answers] on the spur of the moment said, "The chastisements of Heaven always fall on the good men and it always favours the unworthy. Chuang Chou's 莊周 theory<sup>90</sup> holds that he who is a gentleman to men is a petty man to Heaven." But was Mr. Chang one whom Heaven would call a petty man? These two are not appropriate answers either. I say that good and evil, early death and long life, honour and lowliness are things which issue forth by different paths. One should not infer [Heaven's] joy or anger from them.<sup>91</sup> Out of what the [different] ways produce, many are quite separate (*li* 離) among them while few are certainly matched (*ho* 合) among them. Therefore, it is difficult for the gentlemen to be both honoured and long-lived.<sup>92</sup>

Although much of the rest of the lament is fairly conventional, this section shows that Liu was seriously thinking about this sort of problem by the year

—Continued from previous page

*Teng-k'o chi k'ao* (*Nan-ch'ing shu-yüan ts'ung-shu*, Series I, n. 1) 17.3a says that Chang died in 807 or *Yuan-ho* 2. Apparently the author of the note at the start of the text was misinformed about Chang's date of death.

<sup>88</sup> Reading the variant *yu* 猶 for *jan erh* 然而.

<sup>89</sup> This refers to the "pseudo-science" of physiognomy, which enjoyed a long and widespread popularity in China. In theory, one's appearance, and in particular the face, was supposed to reveal one's destiny. Here Liu is simply noting how the supposed correspondence did not work out.

<sup>90</sup> *Chuang Tzu yin-te* 莊子引得 (*A Concordance to Chuang Tzu*). (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), p. 18, l. 74. Cf. B. Watson, tr., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York and London, 1968), 87.

<sup>91</sup> This sentence is ambiguous in the original and may also possibly mean that one should not react emotionally to one's lot; this interpretation, however, is rather unlikely in the context.

<sup>92</sup> *LHTC*, II, 657-8. The penultimate sentence follows the variant on the last line of 657, which makes better sense both in terms of meaning and of structure.

808. Indeed, he rejects the simple paradoxical explanation offered by those who would simply lament that Heaven's actions in this case are not in accord with its supposed moral intent. Neither does he accept the explanation of the Taoists that the moral judgment of the powers above is simply different from that of men. In the end, he postulates that there are various actions and events caused by different factors in our lives; although they may from time to time accord with one another, as when a good man finds prosperity, most of the time they have nothing to do with each other. They are nothing more than fortuitous circumstances in the world. It is not impossible that such a view developed in Liu's mind as he watched so many of those close to him die at an early age; although his essay on sacrifice may have been an early expression of his leaning in this direction, it is significant that his development of it comes at least once in his mortuary writings. To some extent we can see a connexion between the idea of coincidence developed here and the concepts in the essay, "The Heavenly Ranks" (*T'ien chüeh* 天爵) probably of the Yung-chou period,<sup>93</sup> and possibly contemporary with the lament for Chang. In this essay Liu Tsung-yüan demonstrates the factors which go to make up the sage and differentiate him from the stupid person. The qualities which are necessary for moral development are ultimately bestowed on each man by Heaven in various proportions but always in accordance with his own ether (*ch'i* 氣), probably referring here to his physical endowment in general; finally, at the end of the essay Liu identifies Heaven with the spontaneity (*tsu-jan*) of the Taoists. Although the *T'ien chüeh* is dealing with a different problem, its underlying assumptions seem rather close to those in the lament for Chang, for in both the factors governing man's character or destiny are merely fortuitous products of the processes of the cosmos. In the essay, moreover, Liu specifically identifies Heaven with this blind process and, in doing so, comes down quite evidently on the side of the more radical type of criticism. At last he has denied any idea that Heaven is a moral or purposeful entity.

At this juncture it might be of value if we should attempt to examine Liu's other sceptical essays of the Yung-chou period in regard to this view of Heaven. Unfortunately none of these essays can be precisely dated, although most would seem to lie within the period from 806 to 815.<sup>94</sup> Aside from the *Fei Kuo-yü*, Liu wrote other critical works even more specifically directed against traditional ideas of Heaven's relationship to man, particularly as it affected government.

The first of these was the *Shih-ling lun* 時令論 ("On the Seasonal Commands"), an attack on the system of government by almanac found in the *Yüeh ling* 月令 ("The Monthly Commands"), a pre-Ch'in work highly favoured in Han times, it was still a suitable target for criticism, for its

<sup>93</sup> *LHTC*, I, 49-51. Shih, *Nien-p'u*, 78.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-88, gives a list of all Liu's undated works from this period.

provisions were still embodied as part of governmental practice in the T'ang code of 653.<sup>95</sup> Here, however, Liu Tsung-yüan uses a more conventional approach; his grounds are primarily ethical and his insistence that the sages of antiquity never meant to teach a system in which the activities of the ruler were believed to be the object of Heavenly punishments whenever they did not correspond to seasonal prescriptions. He basically reiterates the idea that the astronomical ritual of government was meant only to communicate the arrival of the various seasons to the people and not to inculcate a belief in Heavenly retribution. Although the rites and prescriptions, hallowed by tradition, could not be abolished, their moral and instructive purpose had to be seen for them to be of use. Here Liu is not far from the views he held in Ch'ang-an or from the traditional rationalizations of various observances, although his critical tone is indicated by his use once again of such words as "blind historians"<sup>96</sup> in referring to phenomenalist writers.

Another essay, the *Tuan-hsing lun* 斷刑論 ("On Decisive Judgements"), of which only the second half survives, shows evidence of more sceptical ideas on the nature of Heaven itself. The essay is directed against the seasonal prescriptions which caused frequent delays in the administration of justice, especially in cases where sentences pronounced during spring were delayed until autumn and winter, considered more suitable seasons for executions. Many of his arguments are based on practical and ethical or humanitarian grounds, but he does emphatically deny the purposefulness of Heaven; instead he enunciates the doctrine that there is no mind in things:

Some think that frost and snow are Heaven's norm (*ching* 經) and that the rumbling thunder is Heaven's expedient (*ch'üan* 權). [By analogy they think that] to kill out of season in the case of unusual crime is man's expedient, while the necessity of killing in accordance with the [proper] season in the case of those who deserve punishment is man's norm. This is also wrong. Now the rumbling thunder and frost and snow are due to one ether (*i ch'i* 一氣) and that is all. It is not that there is any mind (*hsin* 心) in things (*wu* 物). The sages are the ones to [put] mind into things. When there is rumbling thunder in spring and summer, sometimes it bursts forth and shakes, breaking huge rocks and splitting large trees. How could trees and rocks be guilty of extraordinary crimes? When there are frost and snow in autumn and winter, they injure all the plants and trees. How could plants and trees be guilty of unusual crimes? How could this be a warning to [mere] things?<sup>97</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Hsu, "Crime", 113-14.

<sup>96</sup> *LHTC*, I, 55. Cf. *Chen-fu* preface, *ibid.*, 18. This term may have carried its full literal meaning as used by Lin, although, it was the title of ancient offices dealing with music and phenomenalist subjects. See *Chou Li* 周禮, *SPTK* ed., 190; Biot, *Tcheou Li*, II, 407.

<sup>97</sup> *LHTC*, I, 58.

It is quite obvious that this sort of argument is very close to the ideas in the last part of the *T'ien shuo*, in which Liu Tsung-yüan specifically compares the processes of the universe to ordinary inanimate objects; his idea there is that the large-scale phenomena that we perceive differ from minor events in the natural world only in degree: the cosmic ethers circulating are not essentially different from ordinary trees and plants. Moreover, all of them, he says, are mere things without the power to respond consciously to stimuli. Thus Liu complements his writings on spontaneity and fortuity in natural events by his exposition of the concept that the actual entities in these natural processes are merely material things (*wu*) without any conscious purpose or moral intent. Thus, he not only denies that the natural order as a whole has any teleological explanation, but also that individual constituents or forces can have any inherent consciousness. Here he has definitely embraced the more radical type of criticism of Wang Ch'ung rather than the somewhat more traditional views of writers such as Chung-ch'ang T'ung. However, the two types of criticism are not necessarily mutually exclusive or contradictory; as we have seen, Hsün-tzu seems to have emphasized the doctrine of separate spheres for Heaven and man, yet also reduced the concept of Heaven itself to that of an amoral natural order. Although it would seem that Liu Tsung-yüan's thought on the subject became rather more radical in later years, this did not mean that he rejected his earlier views; both types of criticism are found in the *Fei Kuo-yü*.<sup>98</sup>

From the few fragments of evidence we have, it may now be possible to attempt to determine, at least tentatively, a more precise date for Liu's sceptical writings while at Yung-chou between 806 and 815. First of all, it would seem that the years 804 to 809 were fairly crucial ones for Liu's intellectual development. In 808 the death of Chang Hou-yü occurred, giving Liu occasion to write seriously, though in a highly emotional context, on the theory of fortuity. In the same year, a new influence entered Liu's life: Wu Wu-ling 吳武陵 was exiled from the capital to Yung-chou. He was to encourage Liu and change his outlook in a number of ways. First of all, in general terms he seems to have caused Liu to come to have a higher opinion of the value of literature; no longer regarding it as a mere technical tool, Liu became deeply interested in literature as a way of "illuminating the Tao" for future generations; significantly this type of thought occurs in the preface to the *Chen-fu*, which also informs us that Wu Wu-ling was the man who urged the completion of that work.<sup>99</sup> Wu was also consulted by Liu on the *Fei Kuo-yü*.<sup>100</sup> Since many of Liu's works on these topics show a concern that the real intention of the sages concerning traditional practices be understood, I think that it is fair to assume that quite a number of these

<sup>98</sup> E.g., *Ibid.*, II, 748 and 766.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 18, Shih, *Nien-p'u*, 51; Gentzler, *Biography*, [162].

<sup>100</sup> *LHTC*, II, 508-9.

were composed at about this time, as Liu came to use literature in a more positive way. It is also possible that the death of Lü Wen in 811 was, in fact, a check to Liu's rationalistic writing, though there are later pieces in which he does from time to time express sceptical thoughts, such as his letters to Han Yü, which we will mention again. (*to be continued*)