

ECHO OF THE MASTER, SHADOW OF THE BUDDHA:
THE *LIEZI* 列子 AS A MEDIEVAL MASTERS TEXT

by

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ABSTRACT

The present work examines the Chinese Masters Text (*zishu* 子書) the *Liezi* 列子, purported to be composed in the 5th century BCE, though more likely achieving its current form in the 4th century CE. It situates the claims *Liezi* in the intellectual and spiritual climate of 4th century CE in its role as a member of the Masters Text category, and reads the text's ontological and normative program in light of the flourishing *xuanxue* 玄學 and *prajñāpāramitā* discourse of that era. Chapter One traces the evolution of the Masters Text category from the Warring States period, through the Han dynasty, and into the early medieval period, relying on the understanding of “Masters Text” offered by Wiebke Denecke in her *Dynamics of Masters Literature* (2010). I argue that textual authority accrued by this category serves as a sufficient impetus to create such an inauthentic document in approximately 350 CE. Chapter Two reviews the most recent contributions to the debate over the authenticity of the *Liezi*, and concludes that the text is certainly a 4th century CE compilation, though containing some earlier material. Chapter Three is a concise survey of the ontological and normative position of the text, with a chapter by chapter analysis of the *Liezi*. Chapter Four uses this analysis of the *Liezi* to compare the thought therein with contemporary thinkers such as Wang Bi, Guo Xiang, Ruan Ji, and Xi Kang. I conclude that the *Liezi* was likely compiled in an effort to argue for the ontological scheme of Wang Bi against that of Guo Xiang, and that it does not explicitly follow Ruan Ji or Xi Kang in advocating for the pursuit or practice of longevity techniques. Chapter Five compares notions of “Nonbeing” and “emptiness” in the *Liezi* to Buddhist speculations on “emptiness” unfolding in China up to and during the 4th century CE. I conclude that despite frequent speculation on the part of modern and pre-modern commentators, there is little conceptual alignment between the *Liezi* and the developing Buddhist schools.

PREFACE

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Wayne Kreger.

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Finally, I wish to thank my family for their unfailing support both within and beyond academia. I am deeply grateful to my Aunt Gloria, my Uncle Greg, and my grandmother Helen Rotzien, who encouraged me from the very beginning of my studies. I am extremely appreciative to my parents, Gary and Mil Kreger, as well as my siblings Amy, James, and Tami, for their unfailing support and love. Finally, I wish to express my enduring and wholehearted gratitude to my wife Minami and my daughter Senli for all they have done for me. I am so fortunate to have had their care and patience to see me through to the end of this project and beyond. Everything I may accomplish is due only to their support, and nothing would be worthwhile if not for them.

DEDICATION

To my family

千里之行 始於足下

INTRODUCTION

The *Liezi* 列子, cousin to the much more widely read *Laozi* 老子 and *Zhuangzi* 莊子, is relatively under-studied in western sinology. Where the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* are accorded their due recognition in most courses dealing with Chinese thought, the *Liezi* will scarcely garner a mention. Likewise, an abundance of scholarly and popular publications have exhaustively challenged how we read and understand the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*. The *Liezi*, by comparison, has not received the same attention. This dissertation will explore the *Liezi* text in greater depth; this introduction is provided to explain why the *Liezi* is deserving of the attention it has heretofore been denied.

It is not that the *Liezi* has been ignored in the Chinese tradition as it has in recent western studies. During the Tang dynasty it was elevated by means of a new title, being called the “True Scripture of the Void” (*chongxu zhenjing* 冲虚真经).¹ At the same time it, along with the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Wenzi* 文子, became the basis for a new textual curriculum to replace the “Confucian” classics.² The text is referenced with great frequency and presumed authority in the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 on diverse matters. It is the source of common “set phrases” or *chengyu* 成語 in modern Chinese, such as *Qiren you tian* 杞人憂天 (“A man from Qi worries about the sky [falling]”, *Liezi* 1.13),³ *Yugong yi shan* 愚公移山 (“The foolish old man moves a mountain”, *Liezi* 5.3), and *Xiaoer bian ri* 小兒辯日 (“Small children debate about the sun”, *Liezi* 5.7). In the modern period, the contemporary spiritual teacher Nan Huaijin 南怀瑾 (1918-2012) has published a three volume interpretation for a popular audience.⁴

1 Schmidt in Schipper and Verellen (2004), p. 62.

2 Barrett (1996), p. 68.

3 To my knowledge there is no standard method for reference to *Liezi* chapters and pericopes. This dissertation uses a combination of two numbers: the first indicates which of the eight chapters is being referenced, and the second the pericope. Because this method is non-standard, I have provided a finding list as an appendix, which will help readers find equivalent passages in important critical editions and A.C. Graham's English translation. See the Appendix for more information.

4 Published as *Liezi Yishuo* 列子臆說 in 2011.

I suggest that the primary reason the *Liezi* is not a popular subject in western sinology is that its provenance is disputed. Indeed, when the *Liezi* does receive scholarly attention, it is usually only this question of the origin of the text that is pursued. This question is not unique to the modern period, as we shall see, but the modern period is unique in that for the past several decades the question of provenance has dominated virtually all discussion.

This provenance is rightly disputed. A great deal has been written about the authenticity of the *Liezi* – specifically, whether it is a legitimate pre-Qin text or a Jin dynasty compilation (or some combination of the two). Until the publication of A. C. Graham's important essay in 1960, *The Date and Composition of the Liehtzyy*, most western scholars were comfortable with the idea of a pre-Qin *Liezi*.⁵ Graham's article caused a sea change in western scholarship on the *Liezi*, so much so that his conclusion that the *Liezi* was a medieval forgery is now the assumption that implicitly undergirds western sinological explorations of the text.

In his research on the *Liezi*, Graham makes extensive reference to the relevant scholarship of Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (1909 - 1992). It is unsurprising, then, that he ultimately concludes that the *Liezi* is not to be read as an authentic pre-Qin text, for this is the conclusion of Yang's pioneering efforts. It is only in the past few decades that Chinese scholarship has largely begun to challenge the *Liezi* sceptics, claiming that the *Liezi* is authentically pre-Qin. This important research has mostly been ignored by sinologists in the west.

The paucity of scholarly investigation into the *Liezi*, in comparison to that directed at the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*, offers a great deal of opportunity for new discoveries in the study of Chinese thought. Moreover, that which has been written on the *Liezi* is often contentious and contradictory. This dissertation aims to both offer new insights into the text as well as evaluate existing research. It is my hope that such an endeavour will begin to fill the gap in our understanding of this text.

⁵ These positions are explored in detail in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

Below, I give a brief review of the major scholarly works produced in the last several decades since Graham's important 1960 article. I will offer my assessment of the strengths of weaknesses of each. Following this, I offer an outline of the present dissertation and conventions followed therein.

A Concise Literature Review

Alongside the aforementioned work of Yang Bojun, entitled *Liezi jishi* 列子集釋,⁶ an important Chinese study used by Graham is Wang Shumin's 王叔岷 (1914-2008) *Liezi buzheng* 列子補正, published in 1948 in four volumes. The strength of Wang's meticulous work is his identification of parallel passages that link the *Liezi* and other texts in the extant record. His findings are neatly summarized in Graham (1990b), pp. 225-228. While Wang only comments on sentences and sentence fragments that he has deemed worthy, Yang's work is a complete critical edition, and notes textual variations and includes important commentaries. Moreover, Yang is critical of the text, and in both his commentary and appended essays presents a strong case for the compilation of the document in the early medieval period.

In the decades following Graham's studies (which will be discussed below), several works in Chinese have been published which challenge Yang's conclusions. Important works include Xiao Dengfu's 蕭登福 *Liezi tanwei* 列子探微 (1990), Chen Guangzhong's 陳廣忠 three part series of essays in the periodical *Daojiao wenhua yanjiu* 道教文化研究 (1996), and five short chapters by Zheng Liangshu 鄭良樹 in a collection of his works entitled *Zhuzi zhuzuo niandai kao* 諸子著作年代考 (2001). Xiao's book is primarily topical, aimed more at addressing the theoretical framework and philosophical claims of the *Liezi*, though it does include insights into the nature of the text. Chen's three part series, collected under the general title *Liezi fei weishu kao* 《列子》非偽書考, argues that Zhang Zhan could not have been the compiler of the text, that the presence of textual parallels in the text are

6 Originally published in 1958 in Shanghai by Longmen lianhe shuju 龍門聯合書局. I have used Zhonghua shuju's 中華書局 2007 reprint of this document as my basic source text.

not convincing in establishing a late date for the *Liezi*, and that the language of the text itself is evidence of the document's early origin. Perhaps because of the succinct nature of Chen's argument, this series of essays is often cited in defense of the antiquity of the *Liezi*. Most of Zheng's essays are more focused on particular chapters of the *Liezi*, and many aim to establish the antiquity of these with reference to their presumed adaptation of parallel sentences in other works (such as the *Zhuangzi*). Zheng also includes a chapter on the grammar of the *Liezi*. The most extensive survey of the textual history of the *Liezi* to date is Liu Peide's 劉佩德 *Liezi xue shi* 《列子》學史 (2015), which is comprehensive in its survey of commentaries to the text.

The most extensive recent attempt to advocate for the authenticity of the *Liezi* is Ma Da's 馬達 *Liezi zhenwei kao bian* 《列子》真偽考辨 (2000). The author argues that the text is definitely pre-Qin, and systematically considers most arguments made against this proposition. An entire chapter is dedicated to deconstructing Ma Xulun's twenty arguments, as well as other sceptical essays such as those offered by Liu Zongyuan and Zhu Xi. Yang Bojun's work on the language of the *Liezi*, which he claims attests to its inauthenticity, is also singled out for special consideration.⁷ A. C. Graham's arguably more conclusive complement to this linguistic research receives no equivalent treatment.⁸ Another chapter is dedicated to elucidating the discrepancies between the *Liezi* and Zhang Zhan's commentary. The bulk of Ma's argument rests on his comparison of *Liezi* passages to parallels in other extant writings from both the pre-Qin and post-Qin periods. In each instance, he remarks that the *Liezi* is indisputably the earlier document.

I will challenge these claims of antiquity in Chapter Two. There are three reasons for this undertaking. First, it is simply a matter of course that any modern, substantial discussion of the *Liezi* must at least address the debate, as the bulk of the scholarly work published on the text is focused on

7 See both Ma's preview (p. 137) and deeper discussion (pp. 398-417) in Ma (2000).

8 Ma's bibliography, while among the most extensive I have found in the Chinese language, does not mention Graham's work.

this aspect. Second, at the time of this writing no summary of recent publications on this question (especially those in Chinese) exists. Though this is not the central aim of this work, I hope that my project here can at least temporarily fulfill this role, until a dedicated study emerges. Finally, knowing when the *Liezi* was likely compiled can tell us a great deal about what it is saying. Situating the claims of the text in their cultural context reveal to us the concerns that were driving the compilation of the text. If we conceive of the claims of the *Liezi* as answers, knowing more about the situation in which it came together will begin to disclose what the questions they were intended to answer were.

The earliest translation of the *Liezi* into English is Lionel Giles' nearly complete edition, first published in 1912, entitled *Taoist Teachings from the Book of Lieh Tzū*. The translation is often stilted and lacks the nuance of later scholarly works, but it is certainly suitable for its time. Certain small pericopes are omitted, as is the entirety of the “Yang Zhu” 楊朱 chapter. In that same year, a translation of the “Yang Zhu” chapter by Anton Forke, entitled *Yang Chu's Garden of Pleasure*, was published. Both translations are part of the *Wisdom of the East* series of translations.

The translation by Angus C. Graham has become the standard English version, and as such it deserves a closer investigation.⁹ The translation is complete, and well annotated with notes that explain allusions made in the text as well as the translator's own interpretation of more complex philosophical problems. Graham, well known as a percipient interpreter of Chinese works of philosophy, rarely offers opportunity for criticism of his work. The latest reprint also offers a new preface, a general reading list, and textual notes that are especially valuable for researchers hoping to match Graham's interpretation with what they find in the source text.

In terms of translations, there is also the 1995 Eva Wong work *Lieh-Tzu: A Taoist Guide to Practical Living* from Shambala Publications. Wong is explicit in her introduction in letting her readers

⁹ Though Graham's translation was originally published in 1960, I have made use of the 1990 reprint.

know that this volume is not a translation,¹⁰ though the work seems to be more or less a complete paraphrase of the basic *Liezi* text. Because of this, and the fact that the book lacks any kind of scholarly apparatus¹¹ and is uncritical in its approach to the text,¹² I will not make reference to Wong's book in my study. It is perhaps more useful as a “self-help” style guide to readers uninterested in the historical context or philosophical nuance of the text.

In addition to his translation, Graham has also produced scholarly literature on the *Liezi*. One, mentioned above, is his 1960 *The Date and Composition of the Liehtzyy*.¹³ It is a neat summary of the controversy over authenticity up to the time of the article's publication, the passages shared between the *Liezi* and other texts, the linguistic evidence for a late dating of the text, and remarks on the structure of the document as a whole. There is also Graham's earlier (1959) short article *The Dialogue between Yang Ju 楊朱 and Chyntyzy 禽子*, which is narrowly focused on one pericope of the *Liezi* (7.11). It offers a concise summary of the Yangist argument as it is found in this chapter, as well as commenting on the nature of the “Yang Zhu” chapter of the *Liezi* as a whole.

Without question the most important work in English on the *Liezi* produced since Graham's is June Won Seo's 徐峻源 doctoral dissertation, “The *Liezi* 列子: The Vision of the World Interpreted by a Forged Text” (2000). As suggested in the title, Seo agrees with the claim made by Yang and Graham that the *Liezi* is not best read as an authentically pre-Qin text – a claim which is presented alongside abundant textual evidence. Where Seo's work is truly remarkable is in its reading of the *Liezi* as a

10 Wong (1995), p. 20. It is, however, explicitly listed as a translation on the Shambala Publications website.

11 Wong's book does not include a bibliography, and there is no information about which edition of the text forms the basis of her paraphrase.

12 For example, Wong suggests that “Most historians now agree that [Lie Yukou] was born around 400 BCE, about two hundred years after Lao-tzu and Confucius”. (Wong (1995), p. 3). Though this is a logical deduction, based on the biographical information about Liezi the person, it is far from accurate to suggest that this is a majority view among historians; indeed, a significant number of scholars are reluctant to suggest that Liezi was a person at all. This is covered especially well in Seo (2015), pp. 449-450.

13 Though I have made use of both the original 1960 printing and the 1990 reprint found in the collection *Studies of Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature*, for reference purposes I will make reference to the more widely available 1990 version.

medieval text in dialogue with the *xuanxue* 玄學¹⁴ discourse of the Wei-Jin period. The arguments he makes are crucial to my own discussion of the *Liezi* and *xuanxue* in Chapter Four.

The only collection of scholarly essays on the *Liezi* in English is Ronnie Littlejohn and Jeffery Dippman's *Riding the Wind with Liezi* (2011), which is comprised of twelve essays related to the textual history, philosophical content, and practicable elements of the text. Certainly there are within this volume very good reflections and investigations into the nature of the text; however, some chapters deal only tangentially with the text, and appear to me more as an afterthought to an unrelated book project than to a targeted study of the *Liezi*. Second, almost all essays ignore the important academic work done on the *Liezi* since Graham's study and translation in the 1960's – both the abundance of textual work done in Chinese, as well as the June Won Seo's groundbreaking dissertation. Despite these drawbacks the work is valuable and does offer innovative and thoughtful perspectives on the text.

The best recent summary of the *Liezi* in English is that by June Won Seo for the *Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy* (2015), which neatly summarizes his dissertation discussed above. As in that work, Seo comes down firmly on the sceptical side of the argument, suggesting that “[the *Liezi*] is highly likely a fourth-century forgery concocted by a person within [the Zhang] family.”¹⁵

Structure of this Dissertation

This work will be divided into two parts. In the first part, Chapters One and Two, I explore both the motivation for the creation of the *Liezi* in the early medieval period and review evidence both for and against this relatively late date. In the second part, Chapters Three to Five, I interpret the teachings of the *Liezi* text in the context of the intellectual climate of the early medieval period. I believe each of these chapters offers something of value to the study of ancient and medieval Chinese thought in general and the study of the *Liezi* in particular, as will be summarized below.

14 The term “*xuanxue*”, usually translated indefensibly as “Neo-Daoism”, will be discussed at length in Chapter Four.

15 Seo (2015), p. 450.

In Chapter One I will make use of recent publications on the topic of Masters Texts (*zishu* 子書). I will recruit the arguments found here to lay out a broad history of this textual category, with special reference to their elevation in status over time. I argue that this elevation in status fostered a reluctance to produce new Masters Texts. In an era in which great authority was invested in a Masters Text, but in which the outright production of a new Masters Text was discouraged, a compiled Masters Text like the *Liezi* makes a great deal of sense.

Chapter Two reviews the best evidence to date on the question of the authenticity of the *Liezi*. I will review both sides of the argument in detail in an effort to reach a tentative but reasonable conclusion, in order to expand *Liezi* research beyond the narrow scope of authentication studies. To do so, we need to situate the text historically. I will ultimately argue the *Liezi* is a compilation created around the middle of the fourth century of the common era, and speaks to third and fourth century matters of a philosophical and religious nature. Though I believe the compiler of this text was working in the third century, it is likely that earlier material was used and adapted for this purpose. It is likely (and unsurprising) that some of this material can be legitimately traced to the early Warring States period. I remain unconvinced that the main commentator of the *Liezi*, Zhang Zhan 張湛, is the compiler of this text.

The third chapter of this dissertation is a survey of the contents of the *Liezi*. I outline both the broad general themes of the text as well as the narrower intellectual and spiritual claims of individual chapters. This chapter also offers some detail on the literary qualities and style of the text. The chapter ends with a classification of the text's chapters into two parts, which I call the “Core Chapters” (i.e., Chapters One to Five) and the “Appended Chapters” (i.e., Chapters Six to Eight). I argue this division mainly based on qualitative differences of the material presented, with some additional reference to quantitative differences and historical textual evidence.

Chapter Four situates the *Liezi* in the context of *xuanxue* thought as found in the writings of Wang Bi 王弼 (226 – 249 CE), Guo Xiang 郭象 (died ~310 CE), Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210 – 263 CE), and Xi Kang 嵇康 (223 – 262 CE). This work builds upon the pioneering efforts of others, especially Seo's groundbreaking dissertation. I argue that the *Liezi* is unique in the manner in which it sheds light on and addresses the intellectual controversies found in *xuanxue*: as a medieval document masquerading as a much earlier one, it can unselfconsciously and with presumed authority make claims where commentaries and writings outside the collection of recognized Masters Texts must resort to precedent and careful argumentation.

In the fifth chapter I explore the question of the *Liezi's* relationship to the Buddhist thought of the period. I review the most common claims of “Buddhist material” in the *Liezi*, and suggest that while a small minority are compelling, most of these claims are not convincing. Following this, I compare the notions of Nonbeing (*wu* 無) and emptiness (*xu* 虛) as they are found in the *Liezi* to popular notions of Buddhism present in China during the third and fourth centuries of the common era. I conclude that though both the *Liezi* and Buddhist accounts employ similar language their ultimate goals are divergent. I argue that the *Liezi* is best understood as an alternative to Buddhist thought, rather than as strongly influenced by such notions.

This dissertation concludes by presenting the claims of the *Liezi* clearly in their context. It was a fabricated textual object, though certainly containing material from an earlier era, designed to be inserted into *xuanxue* debates over the primacy of Nonbeing (*wu* 無). Despite the great deal of scholarly emphasis placed on Buddhist material in the text, we discover that the *Liezi* position is parallel to Buddhist responses developing at that time, rather than springing from them. Taken together with the positions of Wang Bi, Guo Xiang, and Buddhist *xuanxue* participants, the *Liezi* presents a more complete picture of the ontological crisis in intellectual circles in early Medieval China.

Notes on Conventions and Definitions

Finally, I conclude this introduction with some words on the citation conventions and definitions employed in this work. I have endeavoured to cite as source texts reliable and widely available publications. I have taken as my primary source for the *Liezi* Yang Bojun's critical edition. Because there is no standard citation for the *Liezi*, I have provided an appendix to facilitate readers in locating particular passages from this dissertation in Graham's translation and two important critical editions.

All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own. For the purposes of this dissertation I have emphasized literal fidelity over elegant rendering in my translation work. As a result some translations may seem slightly unnatural, though remain comprehensible. In this project I have placed highest value on philosophical precision, and in the translations aim to exchange literary sophistication for clarity.

Finally, this work will occasionally use the English words “Daoist” and “Confucian” in reference to certain textual lineages and communities. When used, I strive to address the difficulties of such terminology, and employ them only as a convenience. Generally, when I employ the term “Daoist”, I refer principally to texts categorized in the *Hanshu yiwenzhi* 漢書藝文志 under the rubric *daojia* 道家; likewise, reference to “Confucian” works are those categorized in the *Yiwenzhi* as *rujia* 儒家. Exceptions and clarifications will be noted as appropriate. I will resist the use of the translation “Neo-Daoism” for *xuanxue*, and offer reasons for doing so in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER ONE: THE *LIEZI* AND MASTERS TEXTS

In the fifth century CE, Liu Xie 劉勰 (465-522) wrote in his *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 about the value of the various masters (*zhuzi* 諸子):

若乃湯之問棘¹，云蚊睫有雷霆之聲；惠施對梁王，云蝸角有伏尸之戰；列子有移山跨海之談，淮南有傾天折地之說，此踳駁之類也。是以世疾諸子，混同²虛誕。³

When Tang questioned Ji⁴, Ji told him that in the eyelash of a mosquito there was the sound of a thunderclap; Hui Shi, in responding to the King of Liang, said that on the horns of a snail there were the fallen corpses of a battle.⁵ The *Liezi* has a tale about moving a mountain and stepping across the sea,⁶ the *Huainanzi* has talk about Heaven collapsing and Earth breaking⁷ – these [writings] are of a contrary and contradictory type. This is why our era detests the [writings] of the various masters – they are mixed with and permeated by empty deceptions.

Liu's readings of these writings is decidedly negative, though he does praise other works in the same category, such as the *Mengzi* and the *Xunzi*. While his attitude may have been true for his time and place, it does not hold true for much of the history of the writings of the masters, known to us as “Masters Texts”, or *zishu* 子書. We know that the writings of the masters were highly regarded, though perhaps rarely as highly regarded as the Classics (*jing* 經), and that these works had invested in them a high degree of authority.

In this chapter, I intend to address two central questions. First, what is a Masters Text? Second, why does it matter if the *Liezi* is a Masters Text? To answer the first question, I will critically review

1 Reading *ce* 棘 as *ji* 荊, in accordance with the *Liezi* text.

2 Reading *dong* 洞 for *tong* 同.

3 Source text from Shih (1983), pp. 190-192.

4 Liu here is referring to the first section of the *Liezi* chapter “Tang wen” 湯問; see *Liezi* 5:1 and 5:2.

5 This is in reference to a story about Hui Shi 惠施 (370-310 BCE) in the *Zhuangzi* chapter “Ze yang”, found in the *Mixed Chapters*.

6 Liu may have in mind here *Liezi* 5:3, where a determined man resolves to slowly remove a mountain. Various other floating mountains are mentioned in this section.

7 See *Huainanzi Tianwen*. This may be a reference to Major et. al. (2010), p 115.

the recent effort by Wiebke Denecke to produce a descriptive category for Masters Texts, as found in her *The Dynamics of Masters Literature: Early Chinese Thought from Confucius to Han Feizi* (2010; hereafter “*Dynamics*”). I then give a brief account of the creation of the category of Masters Text as it occurs in the early bibliographical works of the Han period. Following this, I offer a condensed survey of Masters Texts from the early Warring States period into the Han and Wei-Jin periods, demonstrating their rise in prestige, as well as the eventual complications that accompanied their production.

Ultimately, I intend to show that Masters Texts had a special kind of intellectual power, but as that power grew it began to preclude the production of new Masters Texts. This is to say that, as Masters Texts were invested with greater authority, their special status was a barrier for further production. Masters Texts were hallowed works that came to their readers from antiquity; contemporary writers could not claim that degree of prestige for their own thought. One response to this problem was to reclassify one's work: instead of explicitly producing a Masters Text, one could produce a work of a similar nature without claiming that title. Another response to this problem was to manufacture a Masters Text with a false history and attribution. I will argue in Chapter Two that this second alternative was the motivation for the production of the *Liezi*.

Thus is it pertinent that I demonstrate the manner in which the *Liezi* is embedded in the Masters Text tradition, even if I believe its compilation took place centuries after the “golden age” of Masters Text production in the Warring States. In doing so, I aim to go beyond the question of whether or not the *Liezi* is an authentically pre-Han text (I will argue that it is not), and also address the question as to *why* the *Liezi* was compiled in the early medieval period. In this chapter I suggest that the document was intended to adopt the authority invested in the Masters Text category to lend credence to a particular philosophical position. Having established the impetus and evidence for the creation of the text in the early medieval period in my first and second chapter, I will investigate the philosophical

position in its context beginning in Chapter Three.

1.1 Masters Texts And Authority

Denecke offers a list of five attributes, deduced from her extensive survey of seven Masters Texts from the Warring States period, that are characteristic of the category. This is the goal of her project in *Dynamics*, as she sums up in her conclusion: “What happens if we scrape away as much as possible of the disciplinary and conceptual overlay that has accrued on the surface of Masters Texts, the interpretive branches of the last half millennium since the Jesuit mission?”⁸ The five characteristics that become apparent to her offer for us one useful framework by which we can categorize and interpret Masters Texts that goes beyond bibliographic lists.

The first characteristic Denecke suggests is the focus of these texts on their respective master figures.⁹ The master¹⁰ can be present and explicit, as Mengzi is in the *Mengzi* text, or a shadowy and implied teacher, as Laozi is in the *Laozi*. Though most Masters Texts give us a third person view of the Master – for example, we are often eavesdropping on Kongzi and his disciples in the *Lunyu* – it is important to note that the text of the *Laozi* never directly mentioning Laozi does not exclude it from the category of Masters Text. Denecke's second characteristic is related to the first – the presence of interlocutors with which the masters can debate, teach, or otherwise engage. Though she gives examples of how this characteristic is expressed in the *Mozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and other texts, Denecke is silent regarding the *Laozi* on this point of interlocutors – a silence that will be crucial for our interpretation below.

Denecke's third characteristic of Masters Texts is that these works make assertions that are inextricably bound up in their style. She cites the systematic arguments of the *Mozi* and the apophatic

8 Denecke (2010), 326. This is a reiteration of Denecke's program as outlined in the introduction to *Dynamics*.

9 Denecke (2010), 326. The description of the five characteristics that follow this note are all derived from Denecke's conclusion, specifically the section that comprises pages 326 to 329.

10 The vast majority of “masters” found in early and medieval Chinese writing, when identified either as historical or fictitious persons, are male – to the point of exclusivity. For this reason when using a third person pronoun in reference to a “master” I will generally use “he”; this is a function of the historical circumstances of the composition of these texts.

language of the *Laozi* (among others) as examples of this – the implication seemingly that the use of systematic thought in the *Mozi* is tacit endorsement of systematic thinking, and that the paradoxical claims of the *Laozi* betoken a more fundamental break with convention in thought. The fourth characteristic is the presence of “gestures of affiliation” found in Masters Texts that undergird their claims, at least internal to their respective traditions. The idea here appears to be the conscious and intentional self-identification with other people that is found in Masters Texts – take, for example, the conspicuous manner in which the *Mengzi* and the *Xunzi* take *Kongzi* as their primary authority, and thereby ground their authority with him. Although Denecke does not emphasize the point here, I think it is also relevant to point out that this grounding of authority is not linked only to people, but also to texts – consider again the *Mengzi* and the *Xunzi*, and their use of the *Shijing* 詩經.¹¹

Finally, Denecke points to a “deep structure” that fosters a sense of homogeneity in a particular Masters Text. This “deep structure” unites the disparate claims of a text and is the means by which we can begin to describe the nature of thought found in these individual 'discursive spaces'. One example Denecke gives is the “trope of exemplification” in the *Hanfeizi* – this is the frequent use of anecdotes in persuasive writing, which Denecke feels betrays Han Fei's paranoia typified in his reference to precedent (and consequent mitigation of criticism or punishment).¹²

This concept of “deep structure” is somewhat nebulous, and so I will turn to Denecke's discussion of the *Mengzi* in an attempt to further clarify the notion. She suggests that an unstated but important idea in the text is that of “depth” – in time, in texts, and in the body.¹³ In terms of depth of time, *Mengzi* is credited with beginning the Confucian lineage in his claiming the role of *Kongzi*'s

11 Of course, this question is certainly linked back again to the grounding of authority in a person. If the author of a Masters Text takes the compiler or author of another text as a figure of authority – as many in Han understood *Kongzi*'s relationship to the *Chunqiu* – then the authority of the text can in a sense become an extension of the authority of that person. This does not weaken the authority of the text, but rather broadens the authority of the person.

12 Denecke (2010), 328-329.

13 Denecke (2010), 156.

disciple.¹⁴ His contribution to “depth” in texts is that of exegesis, with a more concentrated and sustained focus on “classics” than that found in the *Lunyu*.¹⁵ Finally, by locating the boundary between the inner workings of the human heart-mind and their external manifestations, Denecke suggests that Mengzi deepens the understanding of the body.¹⁶ These unstated and seemingly unrelated ideas are the aspects of the “deep structure” which Denecke suggests exist in all members of the Masters Text category.

Taken together, these five characteristics offer us a useful set of criteria for defining Masters Texts outside of bibliographical listings. Having gotten clear about the criteria, the next crucial step is testing its limits. Below I aim to demonstrate that these five criteria are flexible enough to include a greater variety of work than the seven central texts discussed in *Dynamics*. Though Denecke does not suggest that these seven texts are the only Masters Texts, if I am to argue that the *Liezi* is a Masters Text it is useful to establish the bounds of such a category.

The imagined boundary that surrounds the category of “Masters Texts” must be permeable. Tian Xiaofei gives an account of this permeability in her assessment of medieval Masters Texts, noting that the category is more than simply a list of books with titles ending with the character *zi* 子.¹⁷ Michael Nylan also stresses the flexibility of titles in her discussion primarily on the meaning of the term *jing* 經,¹⁸ noting that “Masters Texts” can often be suffixed with the characters *shi* 氏 or *gong* 公.¹⁹ If we are to take Denecke's idea of a “discursive space” seriously, then we must consider all texts that fit her

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 157.

17 Tian (2006), 466.

18 It is also useful to discuss what qualities separate a Masters Text from what comes to be known as a “Classic” or *jing* 經 (here, not solely those texts which come to be known as the “Confucian” Classics). While some of the basic defining qualities of a Masters Text, as outlined by Denecke, are absent in the Classics, their often less explicit prescription of normative behaviour and greater emphasis on technical, historical, or aesthetic knowledge serve to exclude them from the category of Masters Texts.

19 Nylan in Lagerway and Kalinowski (2009), 732.

descriptive criteria of Masters Texts, regardless of whether or not they categorized as such by later bibliographers. After all, Denecke herself notes that our earliest bibliographic record, the *Yiwenzhi* of the *Hanshu*, lists the *Lunyu* in the *jing* 經 category, not that of Masters Texts.²⁰ This does not prevent her from categorizing the *Lunyu* as a Masters Text, and designating it the blueprint for later instances of the classification. As we shall see in the second part of this chapter, she is likely justified in doing so.

The expanding boundary of “Masters Texts”, if based on Denecke's concept of “discursive space”, will necessarily include a variety of texts not considered in her *Dynamics of Masters Literature*, as well as works that lay beyond the historical scope of her book. Here I intend to address the general question of archeological texts, with a focus on the important works found at Mawangdui and Guodian.²¹ Denecke does address at least one of these texts, discussing, for example, the Guodian text commonly referred to as *Xing zi ming chu* 性自命出 in her sixth chapter, as well as explaining in her introduction that the presence of these texts do not complicate her central thesis.²² In this she may be correct, though in a book review Guo Jue has demonstrated that, for any study of early Chinese thought, the Guodian texts now offer us an abundance of insight that cannot not be lightly dismissed.²³ Guo points out that among the finds recovered at Guodian are preserved versions of the *Laozi* text, the received version of which Denecke takes as a major exemplar of the Masters Text category. I intend to further press the point by suggesting that the same “discursive space” Denecke sees operating in the received tradition is present in the texts at Guodian that had eventually dropped out of the record.

As a representative example and test case of archeological texts that fit well in the classification

20 Denecke (2010), 91. Denecke suspects that this was done so as not to denigrate the work (or Kongzi) by associating it with texts (i.e., Masters Texts) considered lesser than the Classics, or *jing* 經.

21 For a general summary of the texts found at Mawangdui, see Yates (1997) and Chang and Feng (1998). For an introduction to the texts at Guodian, see Cook (2012). It is worth noting that the Mawangdui texts fall outside of the historical scope of Denecke's project, and this is the likely reason she does not address them. However, because of their importance in this chapter and discussion of the *Liezi* as a whole, I include mention of them here.

22 Denecke (2010), 28.

23 Guo (2014), 246-247.

of “Masters Text” I take the *Wuxing* 五行, or *Five Processes*.²⁴ There are three reasons to do so. First, the nature of the discourse is mostly congruent with Denecke's five point description of a Masters Text; in this case, the *Wuxing* closely resembles the “expository essay” format she associates most closely with the *Xunzi*. Second, I select the *Wuxing* because our knowledge of the document is relatively comprehensive when compared to other archeological finds: having recovered the document at both Mawangdui and Guodian offers two versions of the text (and a commentary) to compare, and suggests that the *Wuxing* was read in both the late Warring States and the early Han. Finally, the *Wuxing* is most interesting because it appears to fit into the debates on human nature and counterfeit *ru* that we know were taking place during the Warring States, and may have been directly engaged by the *Xunzi* in a critical way in the *Jiebi* 解蔽 chapter. Fitting the *Wuxing* into the discourse of the Warring States demonstrates that the category of Masters Text, if understood as “discursive space”, is much broader than the bibliographic lists from which the term “Masters Text” is derived. I suspect the same holds true for the majority of texts found at Guodian, as well as the *Huangdi sijing* 黃帝四經²⁵ recovered from Mawangdui.

The second and third points endorsing the *Wuxing* text as relevant to an investigation of Masters Texts are relatively straightforward, but the way in which the *Wuxing* fit Denecke's five characteristics of a Masters Text deserves further elaboration. I will take each of Denecke's points, described above, and indicate how each is can also reasonably be seen as characteristic of this archeological text, making use of both explicit and implicit claims in her conclusion. The point of this exercise is to test the limit of the Masters Text category, and demonstrate the variety of texts found under that rubric.

On Denecke's first point, the *Wuxing* appears somewhat lacking in the presence of a master.

24 Both the Mawangdui and Guodian versions of the *Wuxing* have been treated with deep and thoughtful analysis. Important studies include Csikszentmihalyi (2004), Holloway (2008), Meyer (2011), and Cook (2012).

25 I do not share the confidence of Chang and Feng (1998) that the texts recovered from Mawangdui are indeed the *Huangdi sijing* listed in the *Yiwenzhi* bibliography, but choose to employ that designation out of convenience.

However, this is only if we constrain ourselves to see Masters Texts as third party records of interactions between masters and interlocutors, as we find in the *Lunyu* or the *Mengzi*. If we instead recall that the *Laozi* takes the form of a collection of mostly first person teachings devoid of a named speaker, and see the association with a master (in this case, Laozi) as stemming perhaps from an oral tradition or popular title, we can see that the presence of a master in a Masters Text is at times implied.²⁶ The same is likely true of the *Wuxing*: common attribution of the text is given to Kongzi's grandson Master Zisi (子思子), in large part following the condemnation of his teachings as aberrant in the *Xunzi*. While this attribution can be plausibly questioned, the fact that the association with a master figure exists at all helps the *Wuxing* to meet the first criteria. Taking the *Laozi* as our model again, we find the *Wuxing* meeting the second criteria laid out above: as discussed above, Denecke's silence regarding the dearth of interlocutors in the *Laozi* seems to suggest that at the very least this will not exclude it from the category of Masters Texts, and perhaps is simply a shifting of the of interlocutor in the text to the role of the reader. Regardless of how much we are comfortable speculating about this silence, what is clear is that a lack of explicit interlocutors for a master, common both to the *Laozi* and the *Wuxing*, is not enough to warrant the rejection of either from the designation of Masters Text.

The third characteristic outlined by Denecke was use of stylistic features to make what she calls “intellectual claims”.²⁷ In the case of the *Wuxing*, the stylistic elements are readily apparent to all who read it: the text is replete with repetition and sorites (or “chain arguments”). In the set of definitions of virtues that opens the text, we find four of these five virtues described in identical terms – the argument here is that these four are, in the *Wuxing* text, hierarchically equivalent. This argument is not made explicitly, but embedded in the format and style of the writing. So too are the use of sorites in the text,

26 The accretion of aphorisms that eventually made up what we call the *Laozi*, and its subsequent association with a person referred to as Laozi, is a complex matter worth much more deliberation than I can offer in the present project. The precise details of this process are not pertinent to our purposes here – what is pertinent is that the process did take place.

27 Denecke (2010), 327. I adopt this terminology here and throughout.

which recall (or perhaps prefigure) the expanding circle of influence we find in the *Daxue* 大學 chapter of the *Liji* 禮記. The implicit claim here is that the elements of the sorites chain enters into being follows the establishment of that which comes before it – so that the final result of the chain is the inevitable result of the initial element that initiates the chain. Again, the intellectual claim follows style.

The fourth mark of a Masters Text as described above is the “gesture of affiliation”. Simply by taking the *Wuxing*'s reference to poetry found in the *Shijing* as such gestures can we group it with texts such as the *Mengzi* and the *Xunzi*, in what may be best described as a radial category that takes the idea of “Kongzi as master” as the central point around which these texts, at varying distances, orbit. By quoting the *Shijing* as authoritative, the author of the *Wuxing* is affiliating with a mode of thought that values not only precedent as set in antiquity, but a very specific precedent captured in the compilation and transmission of the *Shijing*. The use of *Shijing* material signals to readers of the *Wuxing* that the author has invested time in this material, and consequently respect – an investment likely either shared or desired by the intended reader.

By Denecke's own account, the fifth characteristic is the most difficult to uncover: “It can be a vertiginous enterprise to search for intersections between local ideas in the text and a deeper structure of the argumentative thrust of the text within the framework of the genre's basic rules, but such analysis can clarify why these texts mattered to those who wrote and compiled them and why and how they might matter to us today.”²⁸ This undertaking is burdensome, as Denecke implies, and for this discussion of the *Wuxing*, serving as it does only as a prelude to the question of the *Liezi*, it must be sufficient only to point the direction rather than draw the map. In Mark Csikszentmihalyi's cogent and thorough analysis of the *Wuxing* in his *Material Virtue*, he suggests one primary impetus for the production and circulation of the text was to combat a growing suspicion of the authenticity of *ru* practice – that is, the increasingly common criticism that *ru* practitioners could put on an external

28 Denecke (2010), 329.

display of sincerity that would mask ulterior motives and a potential inner insincerity.²⁹ Csikszentmihalyi suggests that the *Wuxing* text does its part to combat these criticisms by laying emphasis on internal motivation as true virtue and the physical manifestations of this true virtue in the human body.³⁰ Framed in the style of trope identification, one way we may describe the *Wuxing* is as possessing the “trope of seeking authenticity” – here evident in the instructions for generating and recognizing authentic *ru* virtues.

This brief digression on a text that has little direct bearing on the study of the *Liezi* ought to serve as an illustration of how inclusive the category of Masters Text can be. This should not devalue the category, but instead enrich it, by demonstrating the variety it can contain. Yet the category does not become all-inclusive – there remain spaces outside that of the category of Masters Texts. Now that we have tested some of the boundaries of the idea of Masters Texts we can go on to trace the general outline of the term below.

This survey chapter is ultimately not intended to be a thorough or exhaustive evaluation of the individual texts considered below. Instead, I have two main goals for this chapter, both selected in service to the project of the paper as a whole: first, I hope to trace clearly the contours of the “discursive space” of the Masters Text category, as described by Denecke, from its inception in the early Warring States to the late Jin period, which we will take as our *terminus ad quem* for the *Liezi*. Drawing on Denecke's work on Masters Texts, as well as that of Michael Puett, Tian Xiaofei, and others, I hope to weave together many threads in order to give a brief but robust account of the kinds of assertions and claims surrounded the notions of “Masters” and “Masters Texts” up to the production of the *Liezi*.

29 Unable to explore these arguments in great detail here, I refer the reader to Csikszentmihalyi (2004), especially the discussion of criticisms of the *ru* that find their origin outside the *ru* social group in Chapter One, pages 32 ff.

30 For the discussion of internal motivations, see Csikszentmihalyi (2004) pages 70 ff., and for a discussion of the physical manifestations of virtue, see Csikszentmihalyi (2004), pages 77 ff.

In my selection of texts for this survey, I will not confine myself to Han or post-Han bibliographic lists, though these lists *will* be important in serving as starting points. At each historical stage investigated I intend to examine not only representative examples of Masters Texts, but also texts that occupy the same discursive space as Masters Texts while falling outside that bibliographic rubric (if they had indeed been catalogued in bibliographies at all). These will include encyclopedic texts (such as the *Lüshi Chuqiu* 吕氏春秋) and texts written in imitation of Masters Texts (such as Yang Xiong's *Fayan* 法言), among others to be discussed in this chapter.

The second main goal of the present chapter is to evaluate the texts and movements discussed below primarily on the ways that they relate to the *Liezi*. It is my hope that this will lay a groundwork for later chapters and undergird the discussion of the *Liezi*'s use of earlier material, and anticipate the ways in which this work borrowed from – and was divergent from – earlier thought. My ultimate aim is to explain the role the *Liezi* had as a Masters Texts produced in the early medieval period – this necessarily requires an examination and explanation of the role of Masters Texts up to and including the Wei-Jin period.

1.1.1 The Creation of Categories: Sima Tan, Liu Xiang, and Ban Gu

The final chapter of the *Lie zhuan* 列傳 section of the *Record of History*, entitled *Taishigong zixu* 太師公自序, includes a list and description the *jia* 家³¹ as categorized by Sima Qian's father Sima Tan. This is one of the earliest attempts to systematically categorize and classify the various traditions in the extant record, and the first give us the *jia* designation. Sima Tan's list has six categories, each with a description of their strengths and weaknesses as he sees them. An exhaustive translation here is

31 The term *jia* here is one worth examining in detail. Commonly in Classical Chinese it means 'family', and it is in this sense, extended and understood very broadly, that it is used here. In the context of its usage here it has often been translated as 'school', though this usage has recently been challenged after close scrutiny. For an in depth evaluation of the term and its history in Han historical writings, see Nylan and Csikszentmihalyi (2003). For my purposes here I will use either 'lineage' or 'expert', as the situation requires, or the untranslated term itself, with the understanding that the meaning and usage of this term was never fixed and often laden with many meanings for all the periods under consideration.

not necessary; below I give part of his description of the *dao*jia 道家 or “Daoist” lineage:³²

道家無為，又曰無不為，其實易行，其辭難知。其術以虛無為本，以因循為用。無成孰，無常形，故能究萬物之情。不為物先，不為物後，故能為萬物主。³³

The Way Experts³⁴ engage in non-action,³⁵ yet it is said there is nothing that is not done; the reality is easy to practice, yet the words are difficult to understand. Their methods take emptiness and Nonbeing³⁶ to be the root, and take being adaptive and following³⁷ to be the function.³⁸ They lack a fixed stance³⁹, and they lack constant forms⁴⁰ – and therefore are able to investigate the essence of the myriad things. They do not [put themselves] ahead of things, nor do they [put themselves] behind things, and therefore are able to be the lord of the myriad things.

The above quotation, brief as it is, illustrates the beginnings of the classification of Warring

32 For a full translation, see Harold Roth and Sarah Queen's rendering in *Sources of the Chinese Tradition*, (1999), p. 280-281.

33 *Shiji* (1973), vol. 10, p. 3292.

34 “Way Experts” here translates *dao*jia, more commonly translated as “Daoists”.

35 “Non-action” is *wuwei* 無為, a critically important term in texts that would eventually be grouped under the rubric of *dao*jia or “Daoist”, such as the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*. For a survey of the usage of the term in “Daoist” texts and the *Huainanzi*, see Liu (1991). For a comprehensive investigation of the term and related concepts as it was understood in the Warring States period, see Slingerland (2003). A survey of the term's usage in the Han is available in Csikszentmihalyi (2006).

36 “Emptiness” *xu* 虛 and “Nonbeing” *wu* 無 are crucial terms that are first explored, albeit vaguely, in the *Laozi*. They become significant in later periods, especially among the “*xuanxue*” thinkers of the post-Han period, and as such are critically important concepts in the *Liezi*. For more on these ideas and the choice of translations here, see Chapters Four and Five of this paper.

37 “Being adaptive and following” renders *yinxun* 因循. This binome is unknown in both the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*, which likely predate Sima Tan's composition here, and it is not found in the *Liezi* text. However, the term is present in both the *Wenzi* 文子 as well as the *Heshang gong* 河上公 commentary to the *Laozi*. The dating of the *Wenzi* remains controversial, and the *Heshang gong* commentary is dated to the Latter Han.

38 The pairing here of “root” *ben* 本 and “function” *yong* 用 is interesting. Typically “root” is paired with “branch” *mo* 末, while “function” follows “essence” *ti* 體. The root-branch dyad is found in both the *Lunyu* (19.12) and the *Mengzi* (6B1), but the essence-function dyad is probably first expressed in the work of Wang Bi 王弼, after the fall of the Latter Han and much later than Sima Tan's composition. While my translation here follows these standard translations – perhaps somewhat anachronistically – it is done to preserve the sense the parallelism intended in the original Classical Chinese, as well as reflect the standard pairings as they are found in subsequent writings.

39 Reading *shi* 勢 for *shi* 孰.

40 The phrasing *wu cheng shi wu chang xing* 無成孰無常形 seems to be unique in the received record, although some near matches exist. The nearest parallel I am able to locate is that found in the “Xu shi” 虛實 chapter of the *Sunzi bingfa* 孫子兵法 (better known as *Master Sun's Art of War*), in a passage extolling the virtues of water and the strategist's need to emulate it: 故兵無常勢水無常形 “Therefore in war there are no constant conditions; [just as in] water there is no constant shape”. See source in Liu (1996), p. 5. For the context of the entire passage in English translation, see Ivanhoe (2011), p. 40. The usage in the *Sunzi bingfa* recalls both the example of water in the *Laozi* and the metaphorical usage in the *Mengzi*. The *Huainanzi*'s usage of the expression *chang xing* 常形 in the “Bing lue” 兵略 chapter (here found as *wu chang xing shi* 無常形勢) seems to suggest a more than incidental commonality with military terminology. (see He (2006), vol. 3, p. 1051) For the “Bing lue” chapter, see Major et al., (2010).

States modes of thought in the Former Han, a process that reflects the equally polemical attempts seen in the “Tian xia” 天下 chapter of the *Zhuangzi* and the “Fei shi'er zi” 非十二子 and “Jie bi” 解蔽 chapters of the *Xunzi*.⁴¹ While this classification scheme is based around methods rather than textual collections, it does offer us the first set of *jia*, six in total: the *yinyang jia* 陰陽家 (“Yinyang Experts”), the *rujia* 儒家 (“Confucian Experts”),⁴² the *mojia* 墨家 (“Mohist Experts”), the *fajia* 法家 (“Law Experts”),⁴³ the *mingjia* 名家 (“Naming Experts”), and the *daojia* 道家 (“Way Experts”).

These six *jia* are included in the ten bibliographic subcategories devised by Liu Xiang and included in his *Bielu* 別錄, the document that formed the basis for the *Yiwenzhi* 藝文志 chapter of the *Hanshu* attributed to Ban Gu. Here, the six above *jia* are grouped with four additional lineages, to complete the *zhuzi shijia* 諸子十家 or “various masters of the ten expert lineages”: the *zonghengjia* 從橫家 (“Vertical and Horizontal [Alliance] Experts”), the *zajia* 雜家 (“Miscellaneous Experts”),⁴⁴ the *nongjia* 農家 (“Agricultural Experts”), and the *xiaoshuojia* 小說家 (“Lesser Explanation Experts”). Though the *Yiwenzhi* classification scheme does not promote the *daojia* above all others as Sima Tan had done in his list of six *jia*, it does place the Masters Text category as a whole in an inferior position to the Classics. As well, the nine *jia* worth discussing demonstrated increasing doctrinal divergence in a chaotic world:

諸子十家，其可觀者九家而已。皆起於王道既微，諸侯力政，時君世主，好惡殊方，是以九家之說蠱出並作，各引一端，崇其所善，以此馳說，取合諸侯。其言雖殊，辟猶水火，相滅亦相生也。仁之與義，敬之與和，相

41 These antecedents to Sima Tan's enumeration of the *jia* are discussed at length in Chapter One of Denecke (2010), p. 42ff.

42 Following, for simplicity, one standard rendering of the term *ru* as “Confucian”.

43 Like “Daoist” and “Confucian”, the rendering “Legalist” for *fajia* is burdened with outdated assumptions and is not employed here, in favour of the more awkward and context dependant “Law Experts”. For a good discussion of the problems with the designation “Legalist”, see Goldin (2011).

44 The designation “miscellaneous” for *za* is used instead of the equally useful translations “mixed”, “eclectic”, or “syncretic”. For a good overview of the understanding and translation of *za* as a category of Masters Text, especially as it applies to the *Huananzi*, see Major, et al. (2010), pp. 28-29.

反而皆相成也。⁴⁵

Regarding the various masters and ten *jia*: of those that ought to be investigated, there are actually only nine *jia*.⁴⁶ In all cases they arose from the Way of the Kings having become indistinct, and the feudal lords used force to engage in government. Present rulers and contemporary lords like or dislike different methods, and therefore the theories of the nine *jia* directly⁴⁷ out of this were created together; each [ruler] drew up one end, and honoured that which he found good; by this they spread the theories, and gathered the feudal lords. Although their doctrines are different, they regulated one another as though they were water and fire – mutually extinguishing one another, and then mutually generating one another. [Like] benevolence's relationship with righteousness, [like] respect's relationship with harmony, they mutually opposed one another – yet in all cases they completed one another.

Though divergent and corrupt, the *Yiwenzhi* recognizes the mutual influence and dependence these various types of expert learning have upon one another, and stresses that they merely capture part of a more complete picture of proper conduct and reality. This summary of the Masters Texts in the *Yiwenzi* goes on:

仲尼有言：「禮失而求諸野。」方今去聖久遠，道術缺廢，無所更索，彼九家者，不猶瘡於野乎？⁴⁸

Zhong Ni⁴⁹ had a saying: “If ritual is lost, then seek it out in the wilderness”.⁵⁰ Now at this time, our displacement from the Sages is remote and distant, and the method of the Way⁵¹ is defective and cast aside - there is nowhere that they can be sought again. These nine *jia* - are they not still better⁵² than the wilderness?

45 *Hanshu* (1975), vol. 2, p. 1746.

46 The implication here is that the tenth kind of *jia*, the *xiaoshuojia*, is not of equal value with the other nine.

47 Reading *dun* 頓 for *feng* 蠱.

48 *Hanshu* (1975), vol. 2, p. 1746.

49 That is, Kongzi or Confucius.

50 As far as I can discern this is the first occurrence of this phrase attributed to Kongzi. The *Hanshu* also has: 夫禮失求之於野，古文不猶愈於野乎？ “As for ritual's being lost and seeking it in the wilderness – are the old texts not still better than the wilderness?” (*Hanshu* (1975), vol. 2, p. 1971). Like Ban Gu's selection from the *Yiwenzhi*, the point here is that though deficient, some writings – here the the “Old Texts” discussed later in this chapter – are still better than looking for the ritual outside of mainstream scholarly culture.

51 I take *dao shu* 道術 very broadly, so as to interpret in the context of Ban Gu's quoting of Kongzi and avoid anachronistic connotations of longevity practices. Compare Ban Gu's approach here with that of the opening of the “Tian xia” chapter of the *Zhuangzi*: 古之所謂道術者，果惡乎在？曰：无乎不在。： “That which was called the method of the Way – in the end, where is it? I say: there is nowhere that it is not present.” (source in Guo (2004), vol. 3, p. 1065). Ban Gu sees the method of Way as lost, while the author of the “Tian xia” chapter sees it everywhere. They both agree, however, that the various divergent schools capture part of the truth – though when ranking the various masters, the *Tianxia* author suggests Zhuang Zhou was most successful.

52 Reading *yu* 瘡 as *yu* 愈 based on the parallel passage quoted in note 50 of this chapter, above.

Ban Gu does suggest that the various *jia* – which, we must keep in mind, appear in the *Yiwenzi* primarily as an enumeration of Masters Texts, with only a minimal description of their methods – as the best way to repair the lost Way. This suggestion follows a thorough explanation of their partiality and resulting deficiency, elaborated on earlier in the *Yiwenzhi* in an explanation of the death of Kongzi and his disciples: 昔仲尼沒而微言絕，七十子喪而大義乖。 “Formerly, when Zhong Ni perished, subtle words⁵³ were cut short; after the seventy disciples were lost great righteousness was disordered”.⁵⁴ For Ban Gu, adopting the format of Liu Xiang and Liu Xin, the Masters Text class of texts is both necessary and limited. Finally, it is important to note that it is in the *Yiwenzhi* bibliography that the *Liezi* is first documented in eight *pian*.

1.1.2 Elements of Masters Texts

How does the *Liezi* fit the five point criteria of a Masters Text offered by Denecke? Below I will demonstrate the ways in which the *Liezi* fits Denecke's criteria, before proceeding on to a concise summary of Masters Texts and their reception up to the early medieval period. The question of the *Liezi*'s inclusion in the category of Masters Texts is relevant because I believe that it will help us explain why the text was created. We can trace the trajectory of these texts in history. We see the texts invested with a greater authority that precludes their continued creation, and understanding this process explains why a new Masters Text, like the *Liezi*, would be compiled in the medieval period. The latter part of this chapter will provide evidence for this trajectory, but below I first endeavour to provide evidence for the inclusion of the *Liezi* in this textual category. Denecke's characteristics, and how they apply to the *Liezi*, are useful for this purpose.

53 “Subtle words” here translates *wei yan*, a critically important hermeneutic term in Han thought. Its meaning stems from the understanding that Kongzi had composed the *Chunqiu* 春秋, and that his true meanings were, in a sense, in code, in accordance with his station as scholar, not king. These meanings were decoded later in the three primary commentarial works on the *Chunqiu* – the *Zuozhuan* 左傳, the *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳, and the *Guliang zhuan* 穀梁傳, as well as further interpretations on these texts during the Han period.

54 *Hanshu* (1975), vol. 2, p. 1701.

The first mark identified as distinctive of a Masters Text is the presence of a master. This is perhaps the most unambiguous of the five criteria, and evaluating the *Liezi* in light of it is likewise unambiguous. Like many of the Warring States texts discussed below, such as the *Zhuangzi* or the *Xunzi*, the *Liezi* takes its title from its ostensible intellectual hero, Lie Yukou, and suffixes his surname with the honourific “master” or *zi* 子. Like many of the other texts, the content of the *Liezi* often follows the titular character's interactions with his interlocutors – though, like the *Zhuangzi*, the *Liezi* text also relates many narratives of Kongzi or other characters, without mention of the eponymous master. Unlike most Masters Texts, however, Lie Yukou is often not presented as the ultimate authority, and at times takes direction from another master, such as Huzi 壺子.⁵⁵ The phenomenon of an imperfect master is not entirely unique to the *Liezi*: see, for example, a story about Zhuang Zhou's errors as can be found in chapter twenty of the *Zhuangzi*, “Shan mu” or “Mountain Tree”.⁵⁶ Moreover, even chapter titles in the *Liezi* are named after masters – in the text we find the chapters “Zhong Ni” 仲尼 (better known as Kongzi) and “Yang Zhu” 楊朱, where these masters serve as central characters (though not always heroes).

Interlocutors for the master are also found in the *Liezi*, and this satisfies the second of the five requirements. These interlocutors, like in other Masters Texts, are thinkers, specialists, or rulers. They serve as the foil to the master and his teachings, whether or not that master is Lie Yukou. As we find in the *Zhuangzi*, Kongzi often takes instruction from unlikely teachers in the *Liezi*, like boat handlers and cicada catchers.⁵⁷ As described above, Lie Yukou can himself act as interlocutor to the master as well.

The third characteristic is the presence of intellectual claims made through style. Here the *Liezi* again closely resembles the *Zhuangzi*, in its use of “scenes of instruction”, a format that Denecke sees

55 For example, see *Liezi* 2.13, which is mostly identical to a story of Liezi, Huzi, and the shaman Ji Xian as found in the *Zhuangzi* (see Guo (2004), vol. 1, p. 297ff.).

56 For an in-depth reading of this section, which includes comparative work between English interpretations, see Philip J. Ivanhoe's “Zhuangzi's Conversion Experience” (1991).

57 See for example *Liezi* 2.8 and 2.10, which parallel the *Zhuangzi* in part, but with some changes in meaning.

as originating in lore and writing surrounding Kongzi, which will be discussed in greater detail below.⁵⁸ As well, we do find occasional echoes of the *Laozi's* first person perspective, seemingly intended as a first person master passing on their instruction through the written medium to a reader.⁵⁹ Finally, the eighth chapter of the *Liezi* is comprised of anecdotes, at times relating snippets of narrative without explicit master figures. This use of anecdote recalls similar usage in the *Hanfeizi*, *Lüshi Chunqiu*, and *Huainanzi*, although this chapter lacks the explicit unifying context usually presented by these other Masters Texts.

The fourth characteristic is the making of “gestures of affiliation” that Denecke finds throughout Masters Texts. Here again the *Liezi* fits the pattern well. Like the *Zhuangzi*, the *Liezi* makes frequent reference to Lao Dan and uses him as a mouthpiece for his own agenda. This is not the same as Han Fei's use of the *Laozi* text in the *Jie Lao* 解老 and *Yu Lao* 喻老 chapters of that work – where Han Fei is commenting on the text of the *Laozi* document (as he had it), the *Zhuangzi* and the *Liezi* only occasionally make reference to that first person text, citing it the same way the *Xunzi* cites an ode of the *Shijing*. Both the *Zhuangzi* and the *Liezi* appear more concerned with the appropriation of Lao Dan's prestige than the faithful interpretation of the text attributed to him. This is merely one example of a gesture of affiliation; another more interesting gesture is the use of the term *wu* 無 or Nonbeing, a term that in its employment suggests an intentional signal of alignment with the thought expressed in what has been deemed *xuanxue* 玄學 – this point will be taken up in Chapters Three and Four.

Finally, the *Liezi* must possess a “deep structure” that unites the different intellectual claims it makes. As discussed above, a program of employing anecdotes to distance oneself from controversial claims is one deep structure that runs through the *Hanfeizi*; as I have argued, the “trope of seeking authenticity” permeates the text of the *Wuxing*. Denecke also identifies a “trope of interiority” in the

58 Denecke (2010), 90-91.

59 One example of this style is *Liezi* 1.2, which is a description of the process of cosmogony without any explicit master figures mentioned.

Mengzi, which is meant to bolster his claims of affiliation with Kongzi.⁶⁰ This deep structure is unstated, and links together seemingly unrelated arguments and concerns. In my investigation of the major themes of the *Liezi*, I believe we may point to a “trope of non-existence” or “absence” which is manifest in the *Liezi*'s frequent emphasis on the priority of Nonbeing, Lie Yukou's valuing of “emptiness” (*xu* 虛), and the acceptance of the death of all things as inevitable and even desirable. These concepts are explored more fully in Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

1.2 Masters Texts in the Warring States Period

We now turn to our survey of Masters Texts at the point of their inception in the early Warring States period; the subsequent part of this chapter will carry on this survey into the Han and early medieval China. The accounts of texts provided below will be brief, as only the elements of the work that relate to Masters Text in general and the *Liezi* in particular will be emphasized. For most of the Warring States works I will again draw on the observations and terminology used by Denecke in her *Dynamics of Masters Literature*; in discussing subsequent works I will draw upon other sources, but with the intention of extending the understanding of the category to periods later than the end of the Warring States. The evaluations of relevant texts will focus only on the characteristics pertinent to their status as Masters Texts and their relationship to the *Liezi*; more nuanced and comprehensive discussions of the arguments and worldviews of these texts are not in short supply, and interested readers are encouraged to seek this manner of analysis in works appropriate to that aim.⁶¹

Any work intending to deal with thought in early China must in some way address the person of Kongzi, especially as he has been recorded in the variety of texts that are attributed to him or the disciples that encountered his teachings first hand. These attributions need not be verifiable in order to

⁶⁰ Denecke (2010), 328.

⁶¹ Some important classic works that deal with these texts in a comprehensive way include Fung Yu-lan's *History of Chinese Philosophy* (1937), Benjamin Schwartz's *World of Thought in Ancient China* (1985), and A.C. Graham's *Disputers of the Tao* (1989). An excellent more recent contribution to the large list of survey works on early Chinese thought is Bryan van Norden's *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy* (2011).

be valuable; it matters as much what subsequent generations believe Kongzi taught as does it what the historical Kongzi may have said. The created persona of Kongzi as teacher and transmitter forms for all subsequent Masters Texts, without exception, a common point of reference when promoting their own ideals. Whether Kongzi is taken as an exemplar upon which one models oneself, an ultimate authority to which one adopts as master, an intellectual opponent against which one must inveigh, or a puppet invoked in parody, his presence, either explicit or implicit, is found in all Masters Texts. Every master must deal with, in some way, the original master.

Denecke acknowledges that the *Lunyu*, as we have it, probably did not take shape until the middle of the second century B.C.E., many centuries after the words it purports to record were spoken, though she suggests it preserves part of an older collection of “Confucius lore”.⁶² Of the variety of aspects of Masters Text that Denecke traces to the *Lunyu* the most relevant to a reading of the *Liezi* is the creation of the “scene of instruction” – according to Denecke, these are not accurate renderings of the master's words and deeds, but likely fictionalized accounts of Kongzi's teaching designed to project a particular image.⁶³ Regardless of their historicity, these “scenes of instruction” become the prototype for later Masters Texts, which will either adopt and adapt the trope or reject it in favour of an alternative means of asserting authority and conveying claims. The “scene of instruction”, we will see, is the primary rhetorical strategy found in much of the *Liezi*.

The next major example in Masters Texts that Denecke examines is the *Mozi*. Any reader familiar with the *Mozi* knows that the primary target of work are the *ru* generally and Kongzi specifically, criticizing core *ru* values such as the large scale state funded production of music and the expression of grief through elaborate, costly, and prolonged funerals for one's parents. In the *Mozi*, itself a composite text, entwining together writings from competing Mohist lineages dating from after

62 Denecke (2010), p. 90. For a thorough account of the *Lunyu* in the Han, see “Confucius and the *Analects* in the Han”, Csikszentmihalyi (2002).

63 Denecke (2010), pp. 96-98.

the death of the movement's founder, we find a shift away from what Denecke has described as the “charismatic” master's interaction with disciples and intellectual opponents to a more “depersonalized” form of writing, resembling an essay more than an account of instruction.⁶⁴ She calls this mode of discourse the “scene of construction”, a kind of “predictable discursive machine”⁶⁵ that eliminates the need for a charismatic teacher by using repetition and formal arguments to make assertions.

Kongzi's detractors certainly were not limited only to the Mohists, and moreover the thinkers subsequent to Kongzi were not exclusively antagonistic towards him and his teaching. Indeed, it would be surprising if a single thinker could provoke such sustained animosity as we find in the *Mozi* – that is to say, attacks on Kongzi were not merely directed toward a dead philosopher, but were also attacks on the body of followers of Kongzi – both those that presumably knew him in life and those that adopted his teachings after his death. In the thinker Meng Ke 孟軻 (372-289 BCE) we find the latter – an itinerant scholar, much in the style of Kongzi, that would take up the *ru* mantle in the promotion of social values and the defence of the deceased master against the spreading philosophical diseases of Mohist and Yangist⁶⁶ thought. Mengzi – the honorific by which Meng Ke would come to be hailed – became the subject of the Masters Text of the same name. This text is similar to the *Lunyu*, in that it records in narrative form Mengzi's travels and travails, in which he sets out to educate state leaders, warning them against their misguided efforts and intentions, or engages in sophisticated philosophical debate with his likewise intellectual peers.

Where the *Mengzi* differs significantly from both the *Lunyu* and the *Liezi* is in its more

64 Denecke (2010), pp. 131, 136.

65 Denecke (2010), p. 135.

66 “Yangist” here refers to the thought of Yang Zhu 楊朱 (4th century BCE?), a thinker of whom we have no real surviving text; his impact on the intellectual climate of the Warring States is known primarily through his detractors, such as Mengzi. According to A. C. Graham, some “Yangist” texts exist, written by the latter day followers of Yang Zhu – examples appear in the *Zhuangzi* and the *Lüshi Chuqiu* (see Graham's *Disputers of the Tao*, p. 55). Those familiar with the *Liezi* will be aware that the seventh chapter of that text is named for Yang Zhu, and many anecdotes contained within make explicit reference to him. The *Liezi*'s relationship to the figure of Yang Zhu will be addressed in detail in Chapter Three of the present work.

sustained nature, either as a result of its composition or redaction. In claiming this I mean to say that the episodes⁶⁷ of the *Mengzi*, at least internal to their respective chapters, seem to follow a somewhat chronological plan, most episodes building on those that prefigure them; both the *Lunyu* and *Liezi* are composed primarily of isolated episodes, perhaps related thematically, but most regularly involving drastic changes in scene, time, and persons.

While the *Mengzi* may have in time become acknowledged as the successor text to the *Lunyu*, during the Warring States (and indeed during the subsequent Han period) it shared that status. In a survey of Masters Texts it shared that status most notably with the *Xunzi*, a collection of essays attributed to the Warring States thinker Xun Kuang 荀况 (313-238 BCE). Xunzi, like Mengzi, took himself as purveyor of Kongzi's teachings, advocating his own interpretation of the Master's way and defending Kongzi not only from the intellectual attacks of his detractors but also his wayward and ineffectual supposed followers – among which he explicitly named Meng Ke. Stylistically, we see in the *Xunzi* a return to a kind of “first person” account of thought even stronger than the *Mozi*. Gone, with few exceptions, are the narrative elements of the *Lunyu* or the *Mengzi*, replaced with what Denecke calls the “expository essay”,⁶⁸ trading the “discursive capital”⁶⁹ found in potentially (or likely) fictionalized records of instruction with a direct argument, resting on the strength of rhetorical persuasion and logic rather than the credibility bundled with “scenes of instruction”. This style of Masters Text is consistent with many writings that can be traced to the Han period, including the *Lunheng* 論衡 of Wang Chong 王充 (27-97 CE) or the *Qianfu lun* 潛夫論 of Wang Fu 王符 (85-162 CE). The *Liezi*, however, contains little of this expository style.

Dropping for now the thread that begins with Kongzi, we may pick up that which begins with

67 By “episodes” here I mean to suggest the textual unit known in Classical Chinese as *zhang* 章.

68 Denecke (2010), p. 180.

69 Denecke (2010), p. 181.

Laozi – that is to say, we may turn our attention to the trajectory of Masters Texts that are to find their alleged⁷⁰ point of origin in the apophatic and nebulous sayings of the *Laozi* or *Daodejing*.⁷¹ While the recent archeological findings at Mawangdui, Guodian and the strips of the Beida collection cast doubt on the historicity of the *Laozi* as a complete text recorded by Lao Dan, especially taken together with the paucity of reliable bibliographic information from the pre-Han period, what cannot be questioned is the importance of that collection of material, even when its contents expand or shift. This is not to stress only the importance of the intellectual claims made by the *Laozi* (in any of its forms) and their impact on thought in this or subsequent periods, but is also meant to raise the point that the very idea of Laozi and the work he authored is equally critical in understanding the *Laozi*'s place in the scope of Masters Texts. For, as discussed above, Denecke points out here that *Laozi* offers no explicit scenes of instruction. The text is “depopulated”,⁷² and what remains are terse statements relating to normative programs for the self or society. Without the explicit described presence of a master, as in the *Lunyu* or the *Mengzi*, the text grounds its authority in the implicit master-author – though, unlike the *Mozi* or *Xunzi*, the *Laozi* does not rest on a foundation of logical persuasion. One may suppose that the *Laozi* presupposes a community, and this in part may explain its creation and popularity – one wonders how the text would fare unattached to a particular master figure. By tying the text to the figure of Lao Dan the promoters of the text can appropriate that prestige and combine it with the compelling, but often baffling, language of the text.⁷³

70 The question of dating these texts – specifically, the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* – is important, but significantly complicated by their composite nature. For our purposes here, it is sufficient to note that the later (i.e., Han and post-Han) bibliographic and hagiographic traditions place the *Laozi*, and its purported author Lao Dan, at the head of the tradition. In the investigation of Masters Texts, what is believed to be true of the texts is of equal importance with what is verifiable of the texts.

71 For general scholarship, I find both titles to be adequate, though tend to prefer the title *Daodejing* in order to clearly distinguish the work from the person of Lao Dan; however, for the sake of consistency in a discussion of Masters Texts (*zishu* 子書), the designation *Laozi* will be preferred here.

72 Denecke (2010), p. 213. What Denecke means here is that there are virtually no named interlocutors in the text, aside from an occasional first person (expressed as *wo* 我 or *wu* 吾), or reference to a generic *shengren* 聖人.

73 For more on the history of the idea of Lao Dan, the person, and how he may have come to be associated with the *Laozi* text, readers are referred to A. C. Graham's “The Origins of the Legend of Lao Tan” in *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (1990), p. 111.

This is not to suggest that the language of the *Laozi* is devoid of meaning. However, because the writing is couched in jargon and often opaque, the text is often bent to suit the interpretations of those who read it. As it is used in the *Hanfeizi*, it becomes a manual for gaining political control; in the *Heshang gong* commentary we find a program of physical self cultivation; in the hands of the Three Kingdoms period scholastic prodigy Wang Bi the reader is given an interpretation that focuses on cosmogony, cosmology, and ontology; and a catechism that elevates Laozi to the status of Lord Lao and takes Heaven as anthropomorphic deity interested in human affairs comprises the *Xiang'er* 想而 commentary.⁷⁴ This is to say nothing of the glut of modern, sometimes hackneyed, translations. The *Mozi* and the *Xunzi* draw their authority from their lucid arguments, and the *Lunyu* and the *Mengzi* draw their authority from the charisma of their protagonists, as captured in writing; the *Laozi* lacks these elements, but instead offers powerful language that can be adapted to suit a commentator's agenda – as has been demonstrated above, this is often done with great success. As I will argue in Chapter Two, as similar appropriation of a master's authority is apparent in the creation of the *Liezi*.

Of all the Masters Texts to be reviewed here, none matches the *Liezi* more closely in style and format than the *Zhuangzi*, the purported writings and records of Zhuang Zhou 莊周 (369-286 BCE). Attribution of the text to one source is exceedingly dubious, as has been demonstrated by Graham, Liu, and others,⁷⁵ yet most scholars do find a degree of coherency between chapters – for example, it is generally agreed that the first seven chapters of the work, known as the Inner Chapters (*nei pian* 內篇), can be attributed to one remarkable intellectual of the Warring States period. This author, and those who have had their essays appended to his, blend the format of scenes of instruction with a peculiar mutation of the expository essay.⁷⁶ The *Zhuangzi*'s scenes of instruction are a burlesque: the

74 For a translation of the *Hanfeizi* commentaries, see Liao (1959); for the *Heshang gong* commentary, see Erkes (1958); for the Wang Bi version, see Wagner (2003); for the *Xiang'er* commentary, see Bokenkamp (1997).

75 See Graham (1981), Liu (1984), and Roth (1991).

76 See discussion in Denecke (2010), especially pp. 238, 261 ff.

protagonists are now ostensible degenerates, and if Kongzi is permitted to teach, his lessons would be unrecognizable to the sage of the *Lunyu*. The expository essays are likewise parodies: the “Qi wu lun” 齊物論 chapter mixes humour with argument in its assessment of language, in which the author lampoons his own thesis and method – “Now I have said something, but I do not know whether what I have said really has a meaning or does not really have a meaning!”⁷⁷

A third stylistic form that is employed by the *Zhuangzi* authors is the use of anecdote or parable, taking the narrative format of the scene of instruction but eliminating the explicit master figure.⁷⁸ Consider for example the story that opens the *Zhuangzi*, the account of the transformations of the creature known as either the *kun* 鯤 fish or the *peng* 鵬 bird; though this tale is used for instruction that is delivered to us through a narrator, it replaces the emphasis on premises and definitions found in earlier expository formats with rich and colourful imagery. The master is still present, but he now comes to us as a story teller, not as an element of the narrative. This use of parable is also a crucial element of the style and strategy employed in the *Liezi*.

The final Masters Text that Denecke discusses at length is the treatise purported to be from the brush of a member of the aristocracy of the state of Han 韓, Hanfeizi. The *Hanshu yiwenzhi* bibliography lists the work as *Hanzi* 韓子 in fifty-five *juan* among the *fajia* or “Law Experts” category. While the designation of *fajia* is anachronistic – in the text the author at no point expresses any scholastic association, or knowledge of the idea of *fajia* – the collection of thinkers under this rubric is not entirely without logic. Not all of the works listed here survive, but those that do remain in the received record – albeit often in a fragmentary form – share a commonality in that the *Hanfeizi* adapts major themes. From the *Shangjun (shu)* 商君(書) the *Hanfeizi* author adopts Shang Yang's 商鞅 (390-338 BCE) emphasis on *fa* 法, or “laws”; the *Hanfeizi*'s emphasis on *shu* 術 (“techniques”) has

77 今我則已有謂矣，而未知吾所謂之其果有謂乎，其果无謂乎？(Guo (2004), vol. 1, p. 79)

78 See discussion in Denecke (2010), pp. 268 ff.

antecedents in what remains of Shen Buhai's 申不害 (385-337 BCE) writing the *Shenzi* 申子; the focus on *shi* 勢 or “power” can be traced to the *Shenzi* 慎子 of Shen Dao 慎到 (395-315 BCE).⁷⁹ There is no evidence that any of these thinkers were intent on forming or participating in a scholastic lineage, *fajia* or otherwise, but in the light of their common connection to the *Hanfeizi* their collection into an anachronistic category is not altogether surprising.

It is not only these thinkers that the author of the *Hanfeizi* – perhaps Han Fei himself – found intriguing. As indicated previously, the *Hanfeizi* makes extensive use of the *Laozi*,⁸⁰ which is the central subject of two *Hanfeizi* chapters: the *jielao* 解老 or “Explaining *Laozi*” chapter and the *yulao* 喻老 or “Understanding *Laozi*” chapter.⁸¹ These chapters are presented in a commentary style, with most sections making a philosophical claim that is then buttressed with a quotation from the *Laozi* text. This is hardly the only style of the work, however; we find again expository essays, much in the style of the *Xunzi*, grounded in a systematic explication of premises and definitions. As well, the *Hanfeizi* also makes use of parable-like narratives, often used as historical example or precedent – this usage is especially relevant to the study of the *Liezi*, for many of these anecdotes are found in the *Liezi* text, particularly the eighth chapter “Shuo fu” 說符.

An important text that Denecke does not include in her survey of Warring States Masters Texts is the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋; neither should its relatively late date of composition (in Warring States terms) nor its title lacking the *zi* 子 suffix disqualify it from a survey of Masters Texts. On the latter point, it is salient that the *Lüshi Chunqiu* does indeed appear alongside all the Masters Texts discussed above in the *Hanshu yiwenzhi* bibliography “Masters” (*zi* 子) section, as a member of the *zajia* or

79 This list adapted from Denecke (2010), p. 281.

80 See discussion in Denecke (2010), pp. 288 ff.

81 Here I italicize “*Laozi*” in order to indicate the text rather than the person; it is apparent to me that the author of the *Hanfeizi* was making use of a version of the *Laozi* text in writing these chapters. This version, as it is quoted, shows a high degree of textual congruence with the received and archeological versions of the text.

“Miscellaneous Experts” classification. Furthermore, its style and content exhibit many similarities to the aforementioned works. The *Lüshi Chunqiu* possesses many of the stylistic features of the *Hanfeizi* – that is, extended rhetorical passages undergirded by anecdote. Differences include the *Lüshi Chunqiu*'s seasonal manual, which comprises the *ji* 紀 or “Records” section of the text,⁸² as well as the addition of an explanatory post-script (*xuyi* 序意), an innovation in the category of Masters Texts. Finally, the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, like the *Hanfeizi*, is a rich repository of parallels for the *Liezi* text.

One feature of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* that distinguishes it from the other Masters Texts is its composition – the *Lüshi Chunqiu* was a project explicitly mandated for and undertaken by a group of thinkers, rather than an individual master. This is not to say that other Masters Texts are not the product of many hands and minds; indeed, all the texts discussed by Denecke are in some way composite, if not in authorship then at least in the sense of their collation and being edited in the course of their transmission. However, the *Lüshi Chunqiu* was from its inception was consciously meant to be a collaborative work, and this sense of collaboration was meant to ensure authority. Information about its creation and subsequent promulgation is available in the biography of Lü Buwei, the patron of the project, in the *Shiji*:

當是時，魏有信陵君，楚有春申君，趙有平原君，齊有孟嘗君，皆下士喜賓客以相傾。呂不韋以秦之彊，羞不如，亦招致士，厚遇之，至食客三千人。是時諸侯多辯士，如荀卿之徒，著書布天下。呂不韋乃使其客人人著所聞，集論以為八覽、六論、十二紀，二十餘萬言。以為備天地萬物古今之事，號曰呂氏春秋。布咸陽市門，懸千金其上，延諸侯游士賓客有能增損一字者予千金。⁸³

At this time the state of Wei had Lord Xin Ling,⁸⁴ the state of Chu had Lord Chun Shen, the state of Zhao had Lord Ping Yuan, and the state of Qi had Lord

82 This section of the work is, to a significant extent, parallel to material found in the “Yue ling” 月令 (or “Monthly Commands”) chapter of the *Liji* 禮記 or *Record of Ritual*. Perhaps not incidentally, much of this material is also reproduced later in the *Huainanzi* chapter “Shi ze xun” 時則訓 (“Seasonal Models”).

83 *Shiji* (1973), vol. 8, p. 2510.

84 This and the subsequent three cases are all eminent leaders, comparable in station to Lü Buwei, in states outside Lü's home state of Qin.

Meng Chang. In all cases they had subordinate to themselves scholars⁸⁵ that enjoyed acting as guests and outsmarting each other. Lü Buwei, because of the strength of [his home state of] Qin, was ashamed that it was not like [the other states], [so he] also summoned scholars to come [to Qin], and entertaining them generously he brought in retainers numbering three thousand people. At this time the feudal lords were increasing the amount of disputing scholars, such as the disciples of Xun Qing,⁸⁶ and their written works spreading out under Heaven. So Lü Buwei had his retainers write what they heard, collecting their discussions to make eight “Views”, six “Discussions”, and twelve “Records”,⁸⁷ these were in excess of two hundred thousand words. He took them as complete in the matters of Heaven and Earth, the myriad things, and the past and present. He instructed that [the text] be called *Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*. He displayed it above the market gate in Xianyang,⁸⁸ and suspended above it were a thousand pieces of gold. He invited the feudal lords, roaming scholars, and guests – those among them able to add or subtract a single character, [to them he would] give the thousand gold pieces.

We are meant to infer that no thinker was able to add or subtract a character – at least to the liking of Lü Buwei. Mark Edward Lewis sees the production of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* as subverting the authority of the earlier Masters Texts, which grounded their authority in a single charismatic figure – the comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* generates an alternative source of authority.⁸⁹ In what Lewis has called the “Encyclopedic Epoch”,⁹⁰ the charisma of the lone master is traded for the supremacy of the educated think-tank. Yet I would characterize this not as the subverting of the category of Masters Texts, but instead evolving it; in subverting the authority of the texts which preceded the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, the patron and his committee may surpass them in prestige yet remain within the bounds of the Masters Text style. This is to say that while Masters Texts that appeared prior to the *Lüshi Chunqiu* may be deemed inferior to it, our category of Masters Text, as defined by Denecke, remains important and essentially unchallenged. The success of this venture, grounded in group authorship, is mixed: echoes of this attitude are found resounding in the Han period with the creation of

85 The term *shi* 士 is variously translated in English, and here I chosen “scholar”.

86 Xun Qing here is Xun Kuang, or Xunzi.

87 These three types of documents comprise the three divisions of the *Lüshi Chunqiu*.

88 Capital of the Qin state.

89 Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (1999), p. 308. Michael Puett makes a similarly persuasive argument in Puett (2007), p. 29ff.

90 Mark Edward Lewis (1999), p. 287.

the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, yet we still find texts attributed to lone master-like figures, dutifully read and added to subsequent bibliographic treatises under the rubric of “Masters Text”.

1.3 Masters Texts After the Fall of Qin

The texts counted as members of the Masters Text classification find their stylistic origin in the Warring States period, though their designation and classification as Masters Texts is, as best can be deduced from the received tradition, rooted in the Han period (206 BCE-220 CE) as can be found in the work of Sima Qian, Liu Xiang, and Ban Gu, discussed above. However, it would be remiss to imply that, following the consolidation of empire under the Qin and the subsequent rise of the Han, the production of works in the Masters Text category abruptly ended. Whether one adopts the simple criteria of inclusion in bibliographic enumerations of Masters Texts, with or without the *zi* 子 designation in the title, or the more nuanced and critical approach of identifying and describing features of the category, as Denecke undertakes in *Dynamics*, one cannot but admit that thinkers in the Han and subsequent periods laboured as their Warring States counterparts did in contributing to the growing corpus of Masters Texts. Below I intend to explore only some selected instances of this labour, as has been preserved in the received tradition, taking both those specimens that exhibit typical features of the category as well as those that demonstrate innovation in and transformation of the style of Masters Texts. The review here is not exhaustive, but is absolutely necessary if we are to connect the inception of the category of Masters Texts during the Warring States period to its state in the early medieval period when the *Liezi* was compiled. By examining some examples of Masters Text in and following the Han we can more fully understand why the *Liezi* was compiled. Embedded in these instances of the Masters Text category are deliberate reflections on the notion of “Masters Text” itself, which furthermore contribute to our understanding of the evolution of this category.

Like the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, the *Huainanzi* is ostensibly the product of a wealthy patron with

intellectual inclinations – in this case, Liu An 劉安 (179-122 BCE), King (*wang* 王) of the Huainan region. And like the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, the *Huainanzi* is listed among the “Miscellaneous Experts” as a Masters Text in the *Hanshu yiwenzhi* bibliography.⁹¹ The *Shiji* account of Lü Buwei's production of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* evokes a sense of competitiveness; the patron vies against his counterparts in other states for the prestige associated with intellectual endeavour, and upon the text's completion he displays it with a public challenge to all that would find it lacking. Liu An's production of the *Huainanzi* may not have been motivated by public competition as much as it was a personal message – specifically, to his nephew and ruler of the Han empire, Wudi (r. 141 – 87 BCE). Liu An would eventually lose his life as a result of accusations of intrigue against Wudi, though in reality it remains unclear whether the *Huainanzi* was a sincere attempt at guidance for the emperor or intended as a statement of intellectual and moral superiority on the part of Liu An.

Like the *Lüshi Chunqiu* before it, the *Huainanzi* bears the marks of a work that from its beginning was formulated to maximize its authority through comprehensiveness and careful design. There is a clear and regular method in the assigning of titles to chapters and a conspicuous attention to consistency among the claims and arguments made in the text, encapsulated again in the forms of expository essay and anecdote we have seen throughout Warring States. This deftness in literary production is captured best in the closing “Yao Lüe” chapter of the work, which summarizes the goal and content of the *Huainanzi*. The chapter begins thus:

夫作為書論者，所以紀綱道德，經緯人事，上考之天，下揆之地，中通諸理。雖未能抽引玄妙之中才，繁然足以觀終始矣。總要舉凡，而語不剖判純樸，靡散大宗，懼為人之惛惛然弗能知也，故多為之辭，博為之說。又恐人之離本就末也，故言道而不言事，則無以與世浮沉；言事而不言道，則無以與化遊息。⁹²

91 It must be noted that both a *Huainanzi Inner Chapters* (*Huainanzi nei* 淮南子內) and a *Huainanzi Outer Chapters* (*Huainanzi wai* 淮南子外) are listed in the *yiwenzhi*. It is the former that was preserved and serves as the topic here.

92 He (2006), vol. 3, p. 1437.

As for the creation of this book and discussion: It is a means to give organizational structure⁹³ to the Way and Virtue,⁹⁴ serves as warp and weft for human affairs, verifying them above with Heaven, measuring them below with Earth, and in the centre making them consistent with the principle. Although [these writings are] not yet able to pull or draw out the core endowment of Dark Mystery,⁹⁵ they are amply sufficient to observe its ends and beginnings. If [this book] assembles the essentials and raises up the ordinary, and [its] words do not cut and discriminate the simple unhewn wood, and do not depart from the Great Ancestor⁹⁶ - I⁹⁷ fear this will make people dimly unable to know them. And therefore for them I have made many words, and for them I have spoken broadly; yet I still fear people will reject the roots to go to the branches. So if I speak of the Way but do not speak of affairs, then they lack the means to float and sink with the world; if I speak of affairs but do not speak of the Way, then they lack the means to wander and rest in transformations.

Liu An's purpose in gathering scholars for the creation of a text to instruct the ruler is made clear not only in the opening of the “Yao lüe” chapter, but is expressed consistently throughout this chapter and the text as a whole. It is indicative of an emerging trend in period following the Warring States – a self-conscious emulation of those masters and Masters Texts of a bygone era. The six part classification of *jia* found in the *Shiji* had not become current by the time Liu An had finished the *Huainanzi*, but even in the early Han period we find texts that emulate the style and methods of certain Masters Texts

93 “Organizational structure” translates *jigang* 紀綱, extrapolating from the definition given in Kroll (2015), p. 189: “strands and mainstays, skeins and cables, > network, nexus, organization.”

94 “Way and Virtue” here translates *dao* 道 and *de* 德. These two terms are of course most closely associated with the *Laozi*, or *Daodejing*, literally the *Classic of the Way and Virtue*. The *Huainanzi* as a whole, and especially the initial chapter “Yuan dao” 原道, draw extensively from the *Laozi*, and it is the only Masters Text quoted in the *Huainanzi* with attribution.

95 The “Dark Mystery” or *xuanmiao* 玄妙 is particularly evocative of the close of the first chapter of the received version of the *Laozi*: 玄之又玄，衆妙之門：“Darker and darker still, it is the gate of abundant mystery.” (Lou (2009), p. 2).

96 “Simple unhewn wood” is again a tacit reference to the *Laozi*, where the idea of *pu* 樸 or “unhewn wood” stands in metaphorically for a person innocent of cultural learning and untrammelled by superfluous desires. See chapters 15, 19, 28, 32, 37, and 57 of that text. The “Great Ancestor” (*dazong* 大宗) reminds one most readily of the *Zhuangzi* chapter “Da zong shi” 大宗師, translated into English by Burton Watson as “The Great and Venerable Teacher” and by A. C. Graham as “The Teacher Who is the Ultimate Ancestor”. The expression *dazong* itself does not occur in the *Zhuangzi Inner Chapters*, and only once in the *Outer Chapters* – 夫明白於天地之德者，此之謂大本大宗，與天和者也：“The Virtue of brightly illuminating Heaven and Earth, this is called the ‘Great Root’ and the ‘Great Ancestor’ - it harmonizes with Heaven”. (Guo (2004), vol. 2, p. 458). The *Zhuangzi* is often quoted by the *Huainanzi*, though without attribution; while much of the former predates the latter, the date of the compilation of the *Zhuangzi* is still disputed, and may even be connected with the compilation of the *Huainanzi*. See Roth (1991).

97 I have chosen to translate the subject in the first person here. This final chapter of the *Huainanzi* seems to capture the intentions of Liu An in presenting this work to the throne, and though he did assemble a group of intellectuals to assist in producing the document, it was his intention that brought about the *Huainanzi* when it otherwise would not have been created. For more on the unique style of the “Yao lüe” chapter in relation to the *Huainanzi*, as well as its possible oral recitation, see Queen, Murray, and Meyer in Major et al. (2010), p. 841, 846.

without explicitly stating an intention to do so.⁹⁸

In explicitly drawing upon the works of Lao Dan, the composers of the *Huainanzi* drew on the prestige and cultural capital invested in the *Laozi*. Yet Lao Dan was not the only master to be emulated in the early decades of the Han period – the original master, Kongzi, also receives that distinction, especially in the work of Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE-18 CE). While the idea that Yang's philosophic treatise the *Fayan* 法言 can be said to be *purely* an imitation of the *Lunyu* and collected Kongzi lore can be rightly challenged,⁹⁹ it is indisputable that this work makes use of the scenes of instruction trope that is characteristic of important Masters Texts in general and the *Lunyu* in particular. Furthermore, it is relevant to our discussion of Masters Texts that Yang Xiong's *Fayan* is included in the *Suishu jingji* 隋書經籍 Masters Text (*zi* 子) bibliography,¹⁰⁰ compiled in 636 CE, where it is listed as *Yangzi Fayan* 揚子法言, or *Master Yang's Model Words*.¹⁰¹

Yang Xiong's *Fayan* is not only salient to our discussion because of its unequivocal membership in the Masters Text class, serving as it does as another signpost on the long road of Masters Texts

98 It needs to be emphasized here that it is quite unlikely that texts like the *Huainanzi* are in imitation of the category of Masters Texts as a whole, but likely merely only in imitation of particular members of the category. In the case of the *Huainanzi*, likely models are found in the *Zhuangzi*, *Hanfeizi*, and *Lüshi Chunqiu*, though the *Laozi* is also greatly important as a source text. It is the elements of the category of Masters Texts (as defined by Denecke) present in these documents that serve as the most readily visible template for the *Huainanzi*, and not the characteristics of the *jing* category of text, for example. It is in this way that the *Huainanzi*, like other texts discussed below, can be found within the trajectory of the Masters Texts category.

99 See Nylan (trans.) *Exemplary Figures* (2013), p. xii. Nylan notes that while the majority of the *Fayan* does resemble the *Lunyu* in style and content, Yang Xiong does innovate on the model. This is true, and seems to be a function of the difference of authorship between the *Lunyu* and the *Fayan*: the former is composite text compiled over time, likely representing different (and perhaps competing) factions of Kongzi's disciples, while the latter came from the brush of a single writer. Moreover, Yang Xiong originally came to the capital from his native home in present-day Sichuan on the strength of his prowess in *fu* 賦 composition – hence, it is unsurprising that his work would be distinguished by a more sophisticated sense of literary style.

100 See *Suishu* (1973), vol. 13, p. 998. Yang Xiong is listed as somewhat important in the *Hanshu yiwenzhi*, including reference to his philological work, his poetry, and an entry under the *rujia* 儒家 Masters section in thirty-eight *pian*; yet I cannot locate an unambiguous reference to the *Fayan* in this bibliography, though it was extant at the time of the compilation of the *Hanshu*.

101 I note here as well that while the title *Fayan* is Yang Xiong's own, the designation of “Yangzi” is not an honour Yang would give himself – at least, not explicitly. This is true also of his *Taixuan jing* 太玄經, which he entitled simply *Taixuan*, or *Great Mystery*; the addition of *jing* to the title was a later appellation, appended after Yang Xiong's death, granted in order to show the reverence with which the text was read.

originating in the Warring States period and leading into the Six Dynasties, but also because it is in the text of the *Fayan* that we find some of the earliest conscious deliberation on the question of masters and Masters Texts. This signals a maturing interest in the questions around the nature and role of masters and the writings that are associated with them, deeper than the simple refutation or classification of others existing in the Masters Text category. Yang goes beyond the terse criticisms Xunzi offers of opposing masters at the end of the Warring States period, and instead grants praise or blame more in the style of the *Lunyu*, in response to unnamed interlocutors. His acclaim of luminaries in the *ru* tradition, known to him through their transmitted texts, is decisive:

或問「孟子知言之要，知德之奧」。曰：「非苟知之，亦允蹈之。」或曰：「子小諸子，孟子非諸子乎？」曰：「諸子者，以其知異於孔子也。孟子異乎？不異。」或曰：「孫卿非數家之書，悅也；至於子思、孟軻，詭哉！」曰：「吾於孫卿與，¹⁰²見同門而異戶也，惟聖人為不異。」¹⁰³

Someone asked, “[Did] Mengzi understand the essentials of doctrine, and understand the profundities of Virtue?” I [Yang Xiong] replied, “Not only did he understand them – indeed, he truly put them into practice (literally: walked that path).” Someone said, “You belittle the various masters – was Mengzi not [one of] the various masters?” I replied, “As for the various masters – one takes their understanding in how they differ from Kongzi: did Mengzi differ? He did not differ.” Someone said, “Sun Qing¹⁰⁴ was against the writings of the numerous lineages, and this was appropriate; [but] in coming to Zi Si and Meng Ke, he was wrong!” I replied, “My attitude towards Sun Qing: I see him as being of the same gate¹⁰⁵ but a different door; only the *shengren* does not diverge.”

Of course not every master receives praise from Yang Xiong. Others, known to him through their own Masters texts, undergo measured criticism:

102 Here I punctuate the passage differently than both the Wang (1987) edition, p. 499, and Michael Nylan (2013), p. 208, both of which read “吾於孫卿，與見. . .”. I do so in harmony with another passage in the *Fayan*, from the “Wen dao” 問道 chapter (Wang (1987), vol. 1, p. 114): 曰：「吾於天與，見無為之為矣！」： “[I] say: As for my attitude toward Heaven, I see it as the acting of *wuwei*”.

103 Wang (1987), vol. 2, p. 498.

104 That is, Xun Kuang or Xunzi. The unnamed interlocutor here likely has in mind the criticism of Zi Si and Mengzi found in the “Fei shi'er zi” 非十二子 chapter of the *Xunzi*. Yang seems to suggest that both Mengzi and Xunzi have some legitimate claim to adherence to the lineage of Kongzi; the text here does not resolve the conflict inherent in the antagonism we find in the *Xunzi* towards Mengzi.

105 That is, Xunzi was also a disciple of Kongzi.

或曰：「莊周有取乎？」曰：「少欲。」「鄒衍有取乎？」曰：「自持。至周罔君臣之義，衍無知於天地之間，雖鄰不覲也。」¹⁰⁶

Someone said, “Does Zhuang Zhou have that which can be taken [as worthwhile]?” I replied, “Reducing desire”.¹⁰⁷ “Does Zou Yan¹⁰⁸ have that which can be taken [as instruction]?” I replied, “Self control. [Yet] coming to [the subject of Zhuang] Zhou, he is wrong on the question of duty between lords and subjects; and [Zou] Yan lacks knowledge about the space between Heaven and Earth. [So] even if they were next door, I would not visit them.”

Yang Xiong's discussions of the various pre-Qin masters also includes Laozi, Hanfeizi, Shen Buhai, Yang Zhu, Mozi, Lü Buwei, and Yanzi, as well as important Han era thinkers such as Lu Jia, Dong Zhongshu, Liu An, and Sima Qian. There are few intellectuals in the ages before Yang Xiong wrote that escape his notice, whether it be for praise or blame. In the *Fayan* we have a calculated and purposeful survey of the various masters, and by extension, their texts.¹⁰⁹

Yang's highly comprehensive and critical model is reflected in the Latter Han period in the writings of Wang Chong, the *Lunheng* 論衡, or “Balanced Discussions”.¹¹⁰ This expansive collection of essays far exceeds the size of Yang Xiong's relatively compact *Fayan*, and in style is much more reminiscent of the essay format of the *Xunzi* than the *Lunyu*, though the question and answer format is adopted through out. While not bearing the honourific title *zi* in its title, the *Lunheng*, like the *Fayan*, is included in the *Suishu jingji* bibliography as a Masters Text, in the Miscellaneous Experts category.

Like Yang Xiong in the *Fayan*, Wang Chong evaluates the full gamut of thinkers up to his time,

106 Wang (1987), vol. 1, p. 134.

107 Zhuang Zhou is Zhuangzi. The injunction to reduce desire is perhaps more immediately redolent of the *Laozi*; for example, we find at the close of Chapter 19: 見素抱樸，少私寡欲：“Appearing undyed and embracing an unhewn state, one reduces self-interest and makes few their desires”. (Lou (2009), p. 45)

108 Zou Yan (305-240 BCE) is another master of the Warring States period, associated with what in the *Shiji* would be known as the Yinyang Experts (*yinyangjia* 陰陽家); he is also associated with the Jixia Academy. A text attributed to him, listed in the *Hanshu yiwenzhi* as the *Zouzi* 鄒子, is lost. Fragments attributed to Zou Yan, or biographical information about him contained in works such as the *Shiji*, suggest his theories were concerned with and influential in cosmological thought related to *yinyang* and *wuxing* 五行.

109 Other noteworthy and similar projects include the “Tian xia” chapter of the *Zhuangzi* and the “Fei shi'er zi” chapter of the *Xunzi*.

110 Denecke also offers a reflection on Wang Chong's perspective on “Classics” and “Masters”; see Denecke (2010), pp. 78 ff.

including the various masters of the Warring States and Former Han, including even Yang Xiong in his evaluations of their merits and deficiencies. Modern interpreters of the *Lunheng* have picked up on two important features characteristic of the text that are pertinent in an evaluation of Masters Texts and their reception leading into the Three Kingdoms Period and beyond: that of Wang Chong's rhetorical methods, and that of his precise classification of texts. Many of the masters that precede Wang Chong are subjected to his methods and classifications, revealing an even more systematic approach to discussions of written works in general – and Masters Texts in particular – than in earlier writings such as the *Shiji* or *Fayan*.

The content of the *Lunheng* is relentlessly polemical. Wang Chong takes on not only the sophisticated arguments of the Masters Texts discussed so far – he in fact devotes whole chapters to Kongzi, Hanfeizi, and Mengzi¹¹¹ – but he also critically investigates popular belief as held by the populace at large and preserved in the classics. It is best not to conflate Wang Chong's argumentativeness with a Western, post-Enlightenment style rationalism, however; as modern critics have pointed out, the *Lunheng* never explicitly lays out a rationalist agenda, but rather uses all manner of arguments to combat what Wang sees as the ills of his era.¹¹² In his marshaling of premises his writing resembles the *Xunzi* and the *Hanfeizi*, and in this way he carries on that tradition of Masters Texts.

Equally germane to the subject at hand is Wang Chong's classification of texts into the categories. In the “Dui zuo” 對作 chapter of the *Lunheng*, he makes the following assertions in defence of his decision to write:

111 See the chapters “Wen Kong” 問孔, “Fei Han” 非韓, and “Ci Meng” 刺孟, respectively.

112 Mark Csikszentmihalyi, for example, accurately describes Wang Chong's belief system as a “materialistic application of the correspondence systems existing in the late Han” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2006, p. 93). Michael Puett astutely notes Wang Chong's uncritical use of arguments in his criticism of other views; see Puett (2005), p. 273, 280. Despite a lack of clearly stated criterion of evaluation, the *Lunheng* does at times display a consistent use of some techniques of enquiry that suggest an implicitly applied gauge of veracity in the thought of Wang Chong; for a valuable evaluation of Wang Chong's use of the terms *wen* 問 and *nan* 難 as critical method in the *Lunheng*, see McLeod (2007).

或曰：聖人作，賢者述，以賢而作者，非也。論衡、政務，可謂作者。曰：非作也，亦非述也，論也。論者、述之次也。五經之興，可謂作矣。太史公書、劉子政序、班叔皮傳，可謂述矣。桓山君新論，鄒伯奇檢論，可謂論矣。今觀論衡、政務，桓、鄒之二論也，非所謂作也。¹¹³

Someone said, “The *shengren* creates, the worthies transmit, [but] to have worthies create – this is wrong. The *Lunheng* and the *Zhengwu*¹¹⁴ can be called creations.” I say they are not creations, and they are also not transmissions – they are discussions. Discussions are inferior to transmissions. The establishment of the Five Classics¹¹⁵ can be called a creation. The *Book of the Grand Scribe*, Liu Zizheng's *Xu*, Ban Shupi's *Records*,¹¹⁶ these can be called transmissions. Huan Shanjun's *Xinlun*, Zou Boqi's *Jianlun*,¹¹⁷ these can be called discussions. Now, looking at the *Lunheng* and the *Zhengwu*, [they are like] Huan and Zou's two discussions; they are not what are called creations.

Wang Chong is setting up new textual distinctions that build upon those laid out by Liu Xiang and Ban Gu in their respective works. Not only are *jing* distinguished as the highest form of writing – associated with the *shengren* – but the textual space inferior to *jing* is further subdivided and made hierarchical with “transmissions” and “discussions”. Masters texts are not specifically categorized, but we can infer that their subordinate status in relation to *jing* is congruent with that which we find in the *yiwenzhi*; thus, they are consigned to the classifications of “transmissions” or “discussions”. By calling his work a mere “discussion” Wang Chong hopes to defend himself against critics;¹¹⁸ in doing so he adds further nuance to the increasingly populated category of Masters Texts. That is to say that while Wang Chong, acting in intellectual self-defense, characterizes his work the *Lunheng* as a “discussion”, I believe it is quite correct to suggest that this text shares in the same “discursive space” as other Masters Texts that have preceded it.¹¹⁹

113 Huang (2006), vol. 4, p. 1180.

114 Another work attributed to Wang Chong, now lost.

115 Wang Chong presumably has in mind here the *Shangshu*, *Shijing*, *Yijing*, *Chunqiu*, and *Liji*.

116 The *Book of the Grand Scribe* is Sima Qian's *Shiji*. *Xu* here likely refers to Liu Xiang's *Xinxu* 新序. Ban Shuqi is Ban Biao (3-54 CE), who began the compilation of the *Hanshu*.

117 Huan Shanjun is Huan Tan 桓譚 (20 BCE-56 CE), a thinker very much admired by Wang Chong. A translation and study of the surviving fragments of his *Xinlun* are available in Pokora (1975). I can find no reference to Zou Boqi beyond this comment in the *Lunheng*.

118 Michael Puett convincingly argues this is in fact Wang Chong participating in the tradition of denying sagehood in order to claim legitimacy, as seen in the *Lunyu*, *Mengzi*, and *Shiji*; see Puett (2007), p. 39.

119 As in my discussion of the *Huainanzi* above, I emphasize that the *Lunheng* participates in the category of Masters Text

Moving from the Han to the period of disunity, we enter the period in which the *Liezi* was likely compiled. As was true in the Han, writers in this period are disinclined to explicitly suggest that compositions in their own name bear the gravitas of the Masters Texts attributed to the Warring States, though the assumption that their works ought to be read as such was often implied. Yang Xiong was content to name his work the *Fayan*, and Wang Chong created a new humble category in which to ensconce his writings. This was a function of the continued – and perhaps in some cases growing – appreciation of Masters Texts, alongside the well regarded *jing*. Important works such as the *Lunyu*, *Mengzi*, *Laozi*, and *Zhuangzi* were being meticulously elaborated upon by the work of commentators intent on clarifying the meanings of these works rather than producing new Masters Texts outright. The category of Masters Texts continued to carry a great deal of intellectual weight, but it was progressively more problematic to claim the authority of a master in one's original work. It was in this intellectual climate that texts with suspect textual histories and dubious authenticity emerge, seemingly in answer to a new unstated question: How does one appropriate the intellectual power of a Masters Text without composing one? The response seems to be the creation of new Masters Texts with an ascribed ancient heritage. This is not to say that any of these texts are fully fabricated – the more plausible suggestion is that existing material was adapted and revised to address the concerns of the compiler. I will present the case for the *Liezi* being one of these texts in the subsequent chapter; here, I will review the case for a similar attribution of the texts *Kongcongzi* 孔叢子 and *Kongzi jiyu* 孔子家語 to the early medieval thinker Wang Su 王肅 (195-256 CE).

The preliminary move in this case is establishing the appropriateness of classifying the *Kongcongzi* and *Kongzi jiyu* as Masters Texts. In content this is unproblematic; because the works share so many instructional narratives in common with other Masters Texts, such as the *Lunyu*, it is

not by its adhering to the parameters of the category, but by its imitation of particular works in the category that preceded it – especially those adopting the style of what Denecke calls the “expository essay”.

permissible to categorize them among the masters on that point alone. Furthermore, the remaining content that is not parallel to Masters Texts – that which is either parallel to material in a source of a different style, or lacking in clear parallels at all – often fits the criteria laid out by Denecke in *Dynamics*.¹²⁰ In both texts the reader is presented with many scenes of instruction of the variety we have come to know from Masters Texts of the Warring States period. The bibliographic evidence is minimal, but available: though the *Kongcongzi* does not appear in the *Hanshu yiwenzhi*, the *Kongzi jiayu* is listed in the table headed by the quintessential Masters Text, the *Lunyu*.

Prior to the period of Wang Su's scholarly activity, which was the first half of the third century CE, the dominant school of interpretation for the *jing* and related writings was that of Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200 CE).¹²¹ Though the two scholars never met, Wang mounted strong and prolonged efforts in displacing Zheng's school as the authoritative word on scholarship of the classics. A record of these efforts have been partially preserved in the document *Shengzheng lun* 聖證論 (*Discourse on Evidence of the Sage*), known to us now only through fragments preserved in encyclopedias and commentaries.¹²² The surviving fragments generally follow a similar format, which in style resembles a debate: a quotation from a text is introduced, and is followed (usually) by Zheng Xuan's interpretation; Wang Su's rebuttal follows this, which is subsequently followed by commentary in support of either Zheng Xuan or Wang Su; ultimately the matter is decided by a *boshi* 博士.¹²³ Below is a relatively brief but

120 The qualifier here is “often” - the *Kongcongzi*, for example, has its eleventh chapter an etymological work called the *Xiao erya* 小爾雅, which resembles the *Erya* 爾雅 more than any Masters Text.

121 I note here that Zheng Xuan is generally declared to be an “Old Text” (*guwen* 古文) scholar. For the sake of brevity and in consideration of space restrictions, I will not go into any detail about the complex nature of the Old Text and New Text debate. Interested readers are encouraged to seek out important work on this question, such as Nylan, “Chin Wen/Ku Wen' Controversy in Han Times” (1994) and van Ess, “The Apocryphal Texts of the Han Dynasty and the Old Text/New Text Controversy” (1999). The question is important, but not immediately relevant to the discussion at hand.

122 A useful collection of fragments from the *Shengzheng lun* is found in Ma Guohan's *Yuhan shanfang ji yishu* 玉函山房輯佚書.

123 Hucker gives the translation “erudite” for *boshi* (entry 4647), as well as a detailed explanation of the meaning of the title over successive centuries. Here the meaning is probably related to the director of an academy with special training in the Classics.

representative example of the Zheng Xuan and Wang Su portions of the exchange:

禮運。其居人也曰養。鄭元¹²⁴曰：養當為義字之誤也，下之則為教令居人身為義，孝經說曰：養由人出。王肅曰：下云獲而弗食，食而弗肥。字宜曰養家語曰其居人曰養。¹²⁵

[From the *Liji*] “Li yun” chapter: “In their¹²⁶ dwelling in a person, they are called *yang*”.¹²⁷ Zheng Xuan said, “*Yang* should be *yi*; the character is a mistake. In the text below it says that when what is taught and instructed is embodied in a person, this is *yi*.”¹²⁸ The *Xiaojing* says ‘*yang* comes from people’.¹²⁹ Wang Su said, “In the text below it says ‘to reap but not eat’ and ‘to eat but not become fat’.¹³⁰ The character is properly read as *yang*; the [*Kongzi*] *jiayu* says, ‘dwelling in a person it is called *yang*’”.

The precise details of this debate are not immediately relevant; what is crucial here is Wang Su's use of the *Kongzi jiayu* as an authoritative source to be employed against Zheng Xuan's interpretation of the *Liji*. Indeed, for much of the *Shengzheng lun* Wang Su cites the *Kongzi jiayu* as the final word against the majority of Zheng Xuan's assertions. Though the *Kongcongzi* is never explicitly quoted, there exist parallels between that text and Wang Su's arguments in the *Shengzheng lun* as well.¹³¹

Wang Su, as he is represented in the *Shengzheng lun*, expects the reader to accept these

124 Zheng Yuan is a variation of Zheng Xuan's name.

125 The source text here is adapted from an unpunctuated facsimile of a printed edition of the *Yuhan shanfang ji yishu* 玉函山房輯佚書 (n.d.) from the Beijing University Library (北京大學圖書館), vol. 72, p. 108, available digitally from <https://archive.org/details/02097638.cn>.

126 The context has dropped out of the quotation; “their” here refers to the rites, *li* 禮.

127 Cf. *Liji Liyun* in Chen Jinsheng (1996) vol. 3. p. 430.

128 Zheng Xuan probably has in mind something like the following, found below in the same chapter: 故禮義也者，人之大端也，所以講信修睦而固人之肌膚之會，筋骸之束也：“Therefore, as for *li* and *yi*, they are the greatest extent of people; they are the means by which speech is made trustworthy and cultivation is made harmonious; and it makes solid the meeting points of a person's flesh and skin, the binding of muscle and bone.” (*Liji Liyun* in Chen Jinsheng (1996), vol. 3, p. 430).

129 While this particular phrase does not appear in the *Xiaojing*, I suspect Zheng Xuan has in mind something like the following: 用天之道，分地之利，謹身節用以養父母，此庶人之孝也：“Using the Way of Heaven and dividing up the bounties of Earth, they are cautious of themselves and are restrained in their expenses; by this they nourish (*yang*) their father and mother. This is the filial piety of the common person.” (孝經鄭注校證, p. 65). The point Zheng seems to be making here is that *yang* is an action that a person does, not a property that dwells (*ju* 居) in a person; however, because of the fragmentary nature of the *Shengzheng lun*, it is difficult to be conclusively certain.

130 Cf. *Liji Liyun*, in Chen JinSheng (1996), vol. 3. p. 432.

131 These parallels have been documented. Kramers (1950) lists all instances in the *Shengzheng lun* where Wang Su takes the *Kongzi jiayu* as an authoritative text (pp. 138 – 154), and Ariel (1989) lists two examples from the *Shengzheng lun* of parallels with the *Kongcongzi* (p. 64).

references as authoritative; it is crucial to note, however, that both the *Kongzi jiayu* and the *Kongcongzi* were transmitted by Wang Su. In his preface to the *Kongzi jiayu* Wang Su belittles Zheng Xuan and laments that his own sincere attempts to promote the Way of Kongzi were not taken seriously. He then explains that it was his good fortune that a former student of his, a member of the Kong family line, brought to Wang Su the present manuscript of Kong family teachings. Wang then explains that the document resolves important debates – as it happens, the victor in these debates being Wang himself.¹³² It is unsurprising that for many centuries scholars suspected Wang Su of producing the *Kongzi jiayu* as a means of gaining the upper hand in intellectual disputes. The *Kongcongzi* is likewise unknown to scholars before its dissemination by Wang Su, and is first recorded in a bibliography in the *Suishu*.¹³³

In his study of the text, Kramers ultimately takes the *Kongzi jiayu* to be authentic, in the sense that it preserves a great deal of legitimately old material, with occasional interpolations by Wang Su.¹³⁴ This conclusion is challenged by Ariel in his study of the *Kongcongzi*, on the basis of textual anachronisms, in addition to the highly suspicious congruency of the text and Wang Su's own exegetical stance.¹³⁵ Ariel suggests the hypothesis that Wang Su created the *Kongcongzi* first, drawing on many extant texts but adding his own material, for the purpose of challenging the dominant positions of Zheng Xuan; this effort was insufficient to meet his goals, so Wang Su subsequently produced in a similar manner the *Kongzi jiayu*, of which he emphasized a strong connection to the Kong family line.¹³⁶

Whether it is Kramers' occasional interpolation hypothesis or Ariel's more radical editing hypothesis that is closer to the truth, it is noteworthy that both take Wang Su's relationship with the

132 For a complete translation of this preface, see Kramers (1950), pp. 91-95.

133 On this point, see Ariel (1989), p. 12.

134 Kramers (1950), p. 193 ff. Kramers' opinion remains the same in his summary of the work in Loewe (1993), p. 258.

135 Ariel (1989), p. 68-69. I note, as Ariel does, that while the document is certainly suspect and likely edited during Wang Su's lifetime, there is no conclusive evidence that Wang Su himself was the compiler – only strong circumstantial evidence.

136 Ibid., 69.

Kongcongzi and the *Kongzi jiyu* to be one of an at least partially dubious nature. In either scenario, Wang Su is suspected of altering materials in order to bolster his own scholarly position, by creating a source with a greater claim to authority than either he or his opponent possesses. In the subsequent chapters of the present work I propose that the *Liezi* is a similar case.¹³⁷

1.4 Conclusion

Writing in the early half of the fourth century, Ge Hong 葛洪 (281-341 CE) offers the following description of Masters Texts in his *Baopuzi waipian* 抱樸子外篇 chapter “Bai jia” 百家 (“the Hundred Schools”):

子書披引玄曠，眇邈泓窈。總不測之源，揚無遺之流。變化不繫於規矩之方圓，旁通不淪於違正之邪徑。風格高嚴，重仞難盡。¹³⁸

Masters Texts unfurl and draw out the profound and vast, the minute and distant, the deep and hidden; they bind together sources that cannot be fathomed, they raise up all¹³⁹ streams. Changing and transforming, they are not bound by the square or round of the compass or the square; boundless and penetrating, they are not submerged under unorthodox heretical paths. Their style and qualities are high and majestic, their weight and measure are difficult to exhaust.

Unlike like the *Wenxin diaolong* quotation used to open this chapter, we find in Ge Hong's writing a deep appreciation for the profundity and sublime nature of Masters Texts. Where Liu Xie derided the writings of the various masters as “contrary and contradictory”, the *Baopuzi* celebrates their freedom from such labels.

In writing about the Hundred Schools, Ge Hong makes little mention of specific masters, instead choosing to celebrate them all. In my survey of Masters Texts, I have been selective for the sake of brevity, and recognize the many relevant works that have been excluded from the discussion here:

137 It is also worth mentioning, if only in passing, that Masters Texts were not the only source of textual authority spuriously created in this period. Indeed, discoveries of new versions of the classics or the presentation of apocryphal texts in the Han perhaps betoken a similar phenomenon, though it cannot be pursued in detail here.

138 Yang (1991), vol. 2, p. 442.

139 “All” translates *wuyi* 無遺, literally “without omitting [any]”.

Ge Hong's *Baopuzi*, for instance, but also works like *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋, *Sunzi bingfa* 孫子兵法, *Guanzi* 管子, *Xinyu* 新語, *Qianfu lun* 潛夫論, and many others, both extant or lost. I have instead selected representative examples that demonstrate both the breadth of the category and its transformation over time. Applying the dual lenses of Denecke's descriptive category and the extant bibliographic records, a written form emerges that encompasses multiple rhetorical techniques and literary styles. Their goal is always the same: the authors of these works intend to influence and persuade their audience, whether that audience is of the ruling class or of a more scholastic orientation.

We have seen the genesis of the style in the recorded dialogues of Kongzi in the *Lunyu*, and find this model elaborated on in the *Mengzi* and parodied in the *Zhuangzi*. The *Mozi*, in responding to the claims of the *ru*, offers us a role as disciple rather than spectator, and this format is echoed in the *Xunzi* and the *Hanfeizi*. In the *Laozi* we are asked to ponder succinct and cryptic aphorisms, often through the guidance of a later commentary. The *Lüshi chunqiu* and the *Huainanzi* reject the single master model in favour of a collection of thinkers, suggesting that theirs is a more comprehensive record of what is and what should be. Yang Xiong's *Fayan* here gives us the first inklings that the Masters Text model should be emulated in the Han, after the age of the Hundred Schools, but it should be done so only in style. As well, we see a trend of critical reflection on the category of Masters Texts itself, which will develop over time. The *Lunheng* of Wang Chong demonstrates a growing self consciousness of how writers in the Han thought of and justified their own writing in the Latter Han period. Finally, in the *Kongcongzi* and *Kongzi jiayu*, as they are offered to us by Wang Su, provide a model of how one may circumvent the obstacles to Masters Text production we see hinted at in the *Fayan* and *Lunheng*. These are the templates of the Masters Texts that have come down to us, and the brevity of this summary does not do justice to the variety of their forms and the profundity of their arguments.

In this unfolding of style and rhetoric we can find a place for the *Liezi*. By the time of the Wei-

Jin period, Masters Texts had an undeniable authority among intellectuals. Their style and their contents were well known, though their interpretations were contested. To ground one's claims in the authority of a Masters Text was to ground one's claims in an esteemed source of recognized legitimacy. If one could not find such a source, it would be necessary to create one.

CHAPTER TWO: DETERMINING THE DATE OF THE *LIEZI*

世俗之人，多尊古而賤今，故為道者，必託之于神農、黃帝而後能入說。¹

The common people of this time greatly respect the ancient and consider lowly the contemporary; and so one working towards the *Dao* must base [their teachings on that] of Shen Nong or Huangdi, and only then can they enter into the discussion.

In 1960 Angus C. Graham published an article on the authenticity of the *Liezi* that would serve as a complement to his influential complete English translation of the text. Ultimately, he concluded that the text as we now have it was not purely a product of the Warring States period, as it is purported to be by its first commentator Zhang Zhan. Instead, he suggests it was more likely compiled in the third or fourth century CE.² In claiming this, he was consciously rejecting the prevailing Western scholarship on the question,³ and he instead adds his voice to those in the long standing tradition of Chinese scholarship that reject the authenticity of the *Liezi* as a Warring States document. In the five and a half decades since Angus C. Graham first published his “Date and Composition of the *Liezi*”⁴ the situation has changed significantly – now Western scholarship on the *Liezi* takes its production to be in the early medieval period, as established by Graham, as a matter of fact without dispute.⁵ The movement to redeem the *Liezi* as a product of the Warring States, the golden age for Masters Texts, now lives on predominately in the Chinese language scholarship. The half century since A. C. Graham combined the best scholarship in both traditions has not seen his manner of balanced approach from either side of the question.

1 He (2006), vol. 3 p. 1355.

2 Graham (1990b), pp. 281-282.

3 Graham does note that opinions on the *Liezi* among his contemporaries were changing at the time of his writing, though it is his essay that ultimately transformed the dominant opinion in Western scholarship. See his brief outline of the positions of Bernard Karlgren, Derk Bodde, Erik Zürcher, and Herrlee Creel in Graham (1990b), pp. 217-218.

4 Though Graham's work was originally published in 1960 in *Asia Major*, I will generally be citing his republished edition in a collection of his essays, *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature*. In preparing this survey I have consulted both the 1960 version and the 1990 (listed as Graham 1990b) reprint.

5 As a representative yet important example, see Roger Ames' justification for a complete adoption of Graham's conclusions in his introduction to Littlejohn & Dippmann's *Riding the Wind with Liezi* (2011), pp. 2-3. While I agree with the points Graham makes and Ames' adoption of them, part of the purpose of the present chapter is to challenge those claims in light of the important scholarship that has transpired since the publication of Graham's conclusions, if only to again demonstrate their value.

The present chapter aims to begin to remedy this problem. Here, I hope to build on the groundbreaking work of A. C. Graham in addressing the question of the nature of the *Liezi*, by weaving together the earnest and thoughtful work of the many scholars that have taken on the challenge of understanding this text and its origins. This approach will blend the most insightful arguments both before and after Graham's publication, and will serve as a comprehensive and contemporary guide to the problem of the composition of the *Liezi*. Ultimately, in reviewing the evidence, it appears no truly satisfactory challenge to Graham's late dating of the *Liezi* has appeared;⁶ however, the scholarship that has intervened between his publication and the present does give us a richer and more useful picture of the *Liezi*'s origins, and consequently, the dynamic thought it contains.

Arriving at an approximate date of composition for the *Liezi* – and indeed, until further evidence comes to light, only an approximate date can be offered – is not a trivial contribution to the study of the text in particular, or to the intellectual history of China in general. For the cultural context in which a text is compiled serves as one lens the reader may use in developing their understanding of the intellectual underpinnings of the work. A reconstruction of the style and content of the Mohist Canons gave us insight into the technical language that was lampooned in the *Zhuangzi*'s “Qi wu lun” chapter,⁷ and the unearthing of the Guodian and Mawangdui *Wuxing* texts sharpens our insight into the criticisms Xunzi lays out against Zisi and Mengzi in the “Fei shi'er zi” chapter. In this way, knowing the norms and debates that were driving discourse in the time the *Liezi* entered the intellectual arena lets us know more clearly what its compiler hoped to achieve.

Building on the previous chapter, I intend to demonstrate that the *Liezi* was created several centuries after it was purported to have been recorded, much in the same way Wang Su (or someone in

6 In his summary of the textual history of the *Liezi*, Barrett notes that Graham's work appears either unknown to or ignored by Japanese and Chinese scholars working after its publication. See Barrett in Loewe (1993), p. 301. My research on the topic confirms that this remains generally the case even twenty years later after Barrett's summary; for one important exception, see Zheng Liangshu's 郑良樹 work examined in this chapter.

7 Incidentally, we have A. C. Graham to thank for this pioneering work as well. See his *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics, and Science*.

his intellectual circle) likely created the *Kongcongzi* and the *Kongzi jiyu*. The motive was, I believe, the same: the *Liezi* was compiled in order to appropriate the prestige and intellectual authority of a Masters Text. The content of the *Liezi*, its cultural context, and the debates in which it was used are the subjects of subsequent chapters; first, we will get clear about the evidence for the *Liezi*'s date of composition.

Before laying out the evidence on the composition of the *Liezi*, it is prudent to be precisely clear about certain terms and their assumed meanings; specifically, one must be exact in their understanding of the words “forgery”, “compile”, and “parallels” in the context of an investigation of authenticity. In the scope of the current project, “forgery” means *only* that the document that we now call the *Liezi* – that is, the one that generally bears Zhang Zhan's commentary – must have significant discrepancies with the document listed in the *Hanshu Yiwenzhi* as *Liezi* in eight *juan*, and with the document for which Liu Xiang wrote a preface.⁸ In light of all the evidence that will be presented below, what can be said for certain is that material in the received *Liezi* is consequentially different from that that could have existed in the Warring States period. While we can identify much of this material with certainty, there remains as well much material that we can merely speculate upon. Finally, I note that I generally choose to not use the terms “forgery” or “fake” in referring to the *Liezi*; aside from the unfortunate pejorative connotations, I believe these negative terms obscure the goal of understanding the *Liezi* in its context, whatever that context may be.

We must now more fully address the problem of the terms “compile” and “compiler”, which until now I have been using cautiously and without elaboration. To say that the *Liezi* was “compiled” is very much a calculated suggestion; even in light of the evidence that suggests the *Liezi* reached

⁸ It is not trivial to note here as well that these two documents – the one listed in the *Hanshu Yiwenzhi* and the one for which Liu Xiang wrote a preface – may not be the same either. The question remains open until further evidence surfaces.

something closely resembling the received version in the early medieval period, there is also much evidence that a great deal of the material in the *Liezi* could be traced legitimately to the Warring States period. Whether this material could be traced to a Warring States version of the *Liezi* is unknown, and will likely remain so unless archaeological discoveries offer new insights. The term “compiler” here refers to an individual (or perhaps individuals) labouring in the early medieval period, and is used because it is more neutral than “author” or “editor”. “Author” in this context seems to suggest a greater creative role than I believe should be ascribed to the production of the *Liezi*. Though there is a great deal of creativity to be found in the work, especially when viewed in contrast with other relevant works, the compiler clearly draws on a vast number of existing sources. In contrast, “editor” suggests to my mind a too passive role in the production of the *Liezi*. The evidence suggests a compiler that did more than just collate older material, but indeed injected into the text his own thought. I believe that “compiler” here captures both the collative and creative aspects we can see in the composition of the *Liezi*.

Finally, we must be explicit about what it means to find “parallels to” or “sources for” the *Liezi*. Much of the authentication research to which the *Liezi* has been subjected turns on the textual and conceptual similarities between the text and other works. The texts with which the *Liezi* shares most material are the *Zhuangzi*, the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, and the *Huainanzi*; however, texts originating in the Indian subcontinent may also possess similarities to the *Liezi*, and these non-trivial similarities significantly impact our understanding of the work. In an investigation of the evidence, however, it is crucial to not begin with the assumption that the *Liezi* is a late document that draws upon earlier ones – for example, it is misguided to assume simply that because the *Liezi* and the *Zhuangzi* share important textual similarities (“parallels”) the *Liezi* can be traced to a later period chronologically later than that in which the *Zhuangzi* was compiled. This kind of assertion *only* makes sense if supported by other complementary evidence. We must also always keep in mind that parallels never betray a direct line of

textual appropriation, and may instead be indicative of a common, now lost, source for both documents – a source that may be written or (perhaps) oral. Indeed, the many instances in which the *Liezi* contains parallels with multiple sources suggest that this is often more likely the case. Ultimately, it is not the presence of a single textual parallel that makes the case for the compilation of the *Liezi* in the medieval period – even the striking ones that draw on reliably later sources, such as those that appear to be of Indian origin – but instead the sum total of the many textual and conceptual parallels in the text.

It is furthermore crucial to note here that this project is not an attempt to uncover a *Liezi* urtext. The *Liezi* is best described as what Paul Fischer has called a “polymorphous text”;⁹ there is no assumption of a “pure” version of the *Liezi* from the brush of Lie Yukou himself. The assumption is rather that the text is a collection of textual pericopes from a variety of authors and eras, and the textual unit known as the *Liezi* is one possible instance of the text. This one instance, however, bears the marks of having been constituted by a compiler (or compilers)¹⁰ with an intellectual agenda and a discernible historical context. Authentication, in the sense of determining whether or not the *Liezi* is what it is purported to be, is not the ultimate goal; identification of the historical period in which it reached the state in which we now have it is the primary aim. While this identification may necessarily entail the disputation of the text's authenticity, it is undertaken only in order to better understand the content.

9 For an excellent survey of the history of “Authentication Studies” (*bianwei xue* 辨偽學), see Fischer's “Authentication Studies Methodology and the Polymorphous Text Paradigm” in *Early China*, volume 31, 2008-2009, pp. 1 – 43. Many of his useful typologies established in that article will provide a framework for the discussions below. In the case of the *Liezi*, the idea of exhibiting a “polymorphous” nature is still tempered by the likelihood of a single compiler, though comparisons of extant editions do suggest editorial revisions.

10 Throughout the following text, the idea that the compiler of the *Liezi* could in fact be multiple compilers working together should not be neglected, even in cases when “compiler” is used in the singular.

2.1 A Brief Textual History of the *Liezi*

As best can be discerned, the content *Liezi* as we now have it enters history with Zhang Zhan sometime in the mid to late fourth century CE.¹¹ This sudden emergence onto the intellectual scene is made all the more striking by the fact that no documents prior to its emergence explicitly quote the *Liezi*.¹² This is an example of what Fischer has called the “sudden appearance” argument, suggesting that one means of doubting a text's authenticity is to note the paucity of mention it receives in the centuries it was purported to have existed.¹³

There is mention of the title of the *Liezi* prior to the commentary of Zhang Zhan, as well as a brief description of its contents.¹⁴ Aside from the brief mention in the *Hanshu Yiwenzhi*, there does exist a report on the *Liezi* attributed to Liu Xiang, which had originally been preserved as part of his *Bielü* 別錄, most of which is now lost. Liu's report survives, and is the oldest for the *Liezi* that has come down to our present time. It is as follows:¹⁵

所校中書列子五篇，臣向謹與長社尉臣參校讎太常書三篇，太史書四篇，臣向書六篇，臣參書二篇，內外書凡二十篇，以校除復重十二篇，定著八篇。中書多，外書少。章亂布在諸篇中。或字誤，以盡為進，以賢為形，如此者眾。及在新書有棧。校讎從中書已定，皆以殺青，書可繕寫。¹⁶

In collating the five *juan* *Liezi* from the Palace Library I, your servant Xiang, have with the Elder Sacrificial Officer Can carefully collated the *Taichang* [version of the] book in three *pian*, the Grand Scribe's [version of the] book in four *pian*, my [version of the] book in six *pian*, Minister Can's [version of the] book in two *pian*. The [versions of the] book from both inside and outside [the Palace Library] in all were twenty *pian*, and by collation we removed the redundant twelve *pian*, fixing and settling on eight *pian*. From inside [the Palace Library] the books were many, from

11 Unfortunately, no firm dates for the life of Zhang Zhan are known.

12 This does not mean that the *Liezi* does not share common material with many sources – it certainly does, and much of the authenticity argument rests on this fact. But no sources prior to the writing of Zhang Zhan's commentary attribute quotations to a document called the *Liezi*.

13 Fischer, 2010, p. 4.

14 Lie Yukou, the person, makes several appearances in early documents, but a text bearing his name is unknown before the examples given above.

15 For the sake of brevity, I have omitted the document and chapter titles that Liu includes, as well as standard preliminaries and closing remarks.

16 Yang (2007) pp. 277-278.

outside [the Palace Library] the books were few. The *zhang* were disordered and spread among the various *pian*. Some characters were wrong, taking 'jin' (盡) to be 'jin' (進), or taking 'xian' (賢) to be 'xing' (形) – instances like this were plentiful. In the new text they have been¹⁷ removed. Upon fixing the collated book from the internal edition, in all cases they were written on fresh bamboo,¹⁸ so that the text could be copied and written.¹⁹

Even in Liu Xiang's time the text of the *Liezi* was in a degraded state, and needed to be reconstituted. After giving the account of how his text was prepared, Liu Xiang gives his take on the nature of the contents of the *Liezi*:

列子者，鄭人也，與鄭繆公同時，蓋有道者也。其學本於黃帝老子，號曰道家。道家者，秉要執本，清虛無為，及其治身接物，務崇不競，合於六經。而穆王、湯問二篇，迂誕恢詭，非君子之言也。至於力命篇，一推分命；楊子之篇，唯貴放逸，二義乖背，不似一家之書。然各有所明，亦有可觀者。孝景皇帝時貴黃老術，此書頗行於世。及後遺落，散在民間，未有傳者。且多寓言，與莊周相類，故太史公司馬遷不為列傳。²⁰

Liezi was a man of Zheng, and was contemporary with Duke Mou of Zheng. He could be said to be one who possessed the Way. His studies were grounded in Huangdi and Laozi, and he was called a “Dao Expert”. As for Dao Experts: They grasp the essential and hold the root, they are clear, empty, and are *wuwei*; in coming to governing the self or interacting with things, they work at esteeming non contention, and harmonize with the Six Classics. But as for the two “King Mu” and “Questions of Tang” *pian*, they are absurd and grandiose, and are not the words of a *junzi*. Arriving at the “Li ming” *pian*, it solely projects the allotment of fate; the “Yang Zhu” *pian* only honours freedom and leisure; the two principles are opposed to each other, and do not seem to be the text of a single school.²¹ But each has that which it illuminates, and so there is something worth seeing [in them]. In the time of Filial Emperor Jing,²² when the techniques of Huang[di] and Lao[zi] were honoured, this text circulated widely. Later it was rejected and left behind, scattered among the people, and and there were none that transmitted it. Moreover there is much allegorical language, in the same category as [that of] Zhuang Zhou; therefore the Grand Scribe Sima Qian did not create a biography [in the *Shiji*].

Liu Xiang's verdict on the text already implies the heterogeneous nature of the writing, and suggests that four of the eight chapters are suspect in authorship and content. Liu's explanation of why no

17 My reading here is influenced by Graham (1990b), p. 224. He notes, however, that his reading is far from certain.

18 That is, the green skin of the bamboo had been removed. See Yang (2007), p. 278.

19 My translation here benefits a great deal from Seo's work on this report. See Seo (2000), pp. 18-19.

20 Yang (2007) p. 278.

21 Translating *jia* as “school” rather than “expert” in this case.

22 Reign dates 157 to 141 BCE.

biography for Lie Yukou exists in the *Shiji* is unsatisfying, however – though he correctly notes the similarity of the language of the *Liezi* with that of the *Zhuangzi*, it is unclear in what way that precludes having biographies for both Lie Yukou and Zhuang Zhou.

The next, and more important, preface that has come down to us is that of the *Liezi*'s primary commentator, Zhang Zhan. It is as follows:

湛聞之先父曰：吾先君與劉正輿、傅穎根，皆王氏之甥也，並少游外家。舅始週，始週從兄正宗、輔嗣皆好集文籍，先並得仲宣家書，幾將萬卷。傅氏亦世為學門。三君總角競錄奇書。及長，遭永嘉之亂，與穎根同避難南行，車重各稱力，竝有所載。而寇虜彌盛，前途尚遠。張謂傅曰：「今將不能盡全所載，且共料簡世所希有者，各各保錄，令無遺棄。」穎根於是唯齋其祖玄、父咸子集。先君所錄書中有列子八篇。及至江南，僅有存者。列子唯餘楊朱、說符、目錄三卷。比亂，正輿為揚州刺史，先來過江，復在其家得四卷。尋從輔嗣女婿趙季子家得六卷。參校有無，始得全備。²³

I heard my late father say: “My late father, along with Liu Zhengyu and Fu Yinggen, were all nephews of the Wang clan, and while small they played with the family on their grandmother's side. Their maternal uncle was [Wang] Shizhou, and Shizhou's cousins Zhengliu and Fusi²⁴ all enjoyed gathering written works; previously they had together obtained Zhongxuan's family texts, totaling nearly ten thousand *juan*. The Fu clan was also taken by that generation to be scholars. The three of them had since childhood competed to copy unusual texts; having grown, they encountered the disorder of the Yongjia²⁵ period, and along with Yinggen [they] escaped disaster and went south. Their carts were heavy and each was filled to the maximum of which it could be loaded. Moreover, robbers were everywhere, and the road before them was long. Zhang [my father] told Fu: 'Now we will not be able to save everything we have carried, so together let us assess which writings are rare in our times, and each of us keep a record of them to ensure they are not lost.' Yinggen then contributed only his grandfather Xuan and father Xianzi's collections. Among what my late father recorded was the *Liezi* in eight *pian*. Upon reaching the southern side of the Yangzi river there was barely anything that survived. Of the *Liezi* there only remained three *juan*: the “Yang Zhu”, “Shuo fu”, and the table of contents in three *juan*. At the time of this chaos, [Liu] Zhengyu was made *cezhou*²⁶ of Yangzhou, and before coming across the river returned to his home and [my father] obtained four *juan*. Seeking out Fusi's son-in-law Zhao Jizi's home [my father] obtained six *juan*. Consulting and collating what was there and what was not, he for the first time had a complete

23 Yang (2007), pp. 278-279.

24 Wang Fusi, better known as Wang Bi 王弼 (226 – 249 CE).

25 Referring most likely to the attack on Luoyang and capture of Jin Emperor Huai in 311 CE by the Wuhu 五胡.

26 The term is not present in Hucker's dictionary as it is written here, but I suspect it is closely related to entry 7567, *ceshi* 刺史, “regional inspector”.

[version].”

After attempting to establish the authenticity and history of the text, Zhang Zhan gives his estimation of the contents of the *Liezi*:

其書大略明羣有以至虛為宗，萬品以終滅為驗；神惠以凝寂常全，想念以著物自喪；生覺與化夢等情，巨細不限一域；窮達無假智力，治身貴於肆任；順性則所之皆適，水火可蹈；忘壞則無幽不照。此其旨也。然所明往往與佛經相參，大歸同於老莊。屬辭引類特與莊子相似。莊子、慎到、韓非、尸子、淮南子、玄示、旨歸多稱其言，遂注之云爾。²⁷

The general outline of what this text clarifies is: all phenomena²⁸ take perfect emptiness²⁹ to be the ancestor, and the myriad kinds take final extinction to be the verification [of this]; spirit-like kindness is by concentrated quietude [made] enduringly complete, and thought and reflection are by contact with things self-destroying; both living in wakefulness and transformation in dreams are equivalent situations, and great and small are not limited to one domain; failure and success lack the false [origins] of wisdom and power, and in governing the self there is value in being unrestrained by responsibility;³⁰ if one follows one's nature, then wherever one goes will be appropriate, and water and fire can be tread upon; if one forgets corruptions, then there is no mystery that will not be illuminated. This is the purpose [of the text]. Thus that which it clarifies is often similar to Buddhist sūtras, [but] it largely accords with [the thought of] Lao[zi] and Zhuang[zi]. The style and terms used are especially similar to the *Zhuangzi*. Zhuangzi, Shen Dao, Hanfei, Shizi, Huainanzi, the *Xuanshi*, and the *Zhigui*³¹ often approvingly cite its statements, and

27 Yang (2007), pp. 279-280.

28 The term *qunyou* 羣有 here is translated in accordance with its meaning in Buddhist texts. That Zhang would use this term suggests he, like the compiler of the *Liezi*, may have had exposure to the ideas of Buddhism.

29 Zhang's description here may be influenced by a description of Lie Yukou's thought in the *Shizi*, which also associates *Liezi* with the idea of “emptiness” or *xu* 虛 (see Paul Fischer's translation in Fischer (2012), p. 101.).

30 The two concepts suggested here – the capricious natures of success and failure and the ideal of unrestrained indulgence – clearly indicate the “Li ming” and “Yang Zhu” chapters of the *Liezi*, without explicitly stating so.

31 In his annotation of Zhang's preface, Yang Bojun (Yang (2007), p. 280) suggests that the *Xuanshi* may be either the *Yugui taozhong xuanshijing* 玉龜胎中玄示經 or simply a text known as *Xuanshi*; he explains that the *Zhigui* is the Han dynasty *Laozi* commentary attributed to Yan Zun 嚴遵 (also known as Yan Junping). Regrettably the *Xuanshi* is now lost, though it may be the same as the *Xuanshijing* in ten *juan* mentioned as a text of the Dao Experts in the *Neipian* of the *Baopuzi* (Wang (2002), p. 334), and the same document appears to have been quoted in the *Taiping yulan* in the 'Nourishing Life' (*yangsheng* 養生) section. It reads, in part:

夫形體者，特生之具也，非所以生生也。生生乃以素樸為體，以氣為元，以神為形，此乃生之宮庭也。以無為育其神，舒釋玄妙之門，往來無形之間，休息於無鄰，此所謂得玄明之生源。

As for the form of the body, it is only an instrument of life; it is not the means by which life is generated. Life being generated then takes the simple and unhewn as the body, takes *qi* to be the origin, takes spirit to be the form; this then is the generation of the 'palace'. Using *wuwei* to nourish the spirit, [one is] unhurried and easy at the gate of profound mystery; [one] comes and goes in the space that lacks form; [one is] at rest and repose in that without a counterpart – this is what is called “obtaining the source of the generating of dark and bright”. (Source text from the Hebei Jiaoyu Chubanshe 河北教育出版社 edition of the *Taiping yulan* vol. 6, p. 236).

therefore [I made] annotations.

There are, in terms of the question of the authenticity of the text, two major points worth consideration. The first is the transmission and reconstitution account offered by Zhang, for which there is no corroborating evidence or reports. A modicum of authority is present in the inclusion of Wang Bi as part of the community involved in the preservation of the *Liezi* text, though I am unaware of any instances in which Wang explicitly mentions or quotes the text. The tracing of the transmission of the text through Zhang Zhan's paternal lineage suggests to Graham that the true compiler may have been Zhang's father or grandfather.³² Zhang himself seems to acknowledge that the text was not known in his time outside the transmission within the family, and his preface may be an attempt to explain the relatively sudden emergence of a complete *Liezi*.

The second significant point to address is Zhang's acknowledgment of textual parallels between the *Liezi* and many other better known and more widely disseminated documents. Though he does not indicate any particular Buddhist documents by title, he does recognize a conceptual overlap that exists between the *Liezi* and Buddhist thought. While this latter overlap is interesting enough to suggest to interested readers in the latter part of the fourth century CE, when Zhang Zhan was writing his preface and commentary, textual parallels with Warring States texts ought not to be of significant note. Readers were surely aware of this phenomenon as it existed among texts like the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Hanfeizi*, to give only a few examples. Zhang's point here seems to be a desire to make the argument that these texts were instead quoting from and drawing upon the thought of the *Liezi* rather than being drawn upon by it, as Lie Yukou was assumed to have lived and taught earlier than the authors enumerated. This appears to me to be a self-conscious and preemptive attempt to defend the

It is clear from the use of concepts like *supu* and *wuwei* that this work likely bore the marks of what Denecke has called “gestures of affiliation”, particularly in common with the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*. The discussion of “generating life” (*shengsheng* 生生) may have much in common with *Liezi* 1:1 and 1:3, though without more a more complete context it is difficult to be certain on this point.

32 Graham (1990b), p. 282.

authenticity of the text to anticipated sceptics, though I admit that this interpretation is speculative.³³

Zhang's commentary, which complements his preface, has been transmitted with the text of the *Liezi* almost without exception since its appearance on the intellectual stage in the late fourth century.³⁴ Though critics like A. C. Graham have noted that Zhang's comprehension of the source text is less than perfect,³⁵ his rather philosophical interpretation demonstrates a highly sophisticated literary sense and enviable access to both ancient and contemporary documents of historical, intellectual, and philological significance.³⁶ A more robust investigation of Zhang Zhan's commentary, as it relates to the philosophical dimensions of the *Liezi* text, must be delayed until a later time. For the remainder of this investigation of authenticity, Zhang Zhan's commentary will be referenced in the context of verification of the text as we have it.

The second major commentary available for the *Liezi* text is that of Lu Chongxuan 盧重玄 (fl. mid 8th century), which is included in the Zhonghua Shuju edition of Yang Bojun as the *jie* 解 or sub-commentary. Barrett dates the work to the period of approximately 739-742 CE, and suggests that Lu's greater degree of philosophical interpretation of the *Liezi* content devalues this document's use as an interpretative tool.³⁷ Lu's commentary likewise does more to emphasize the presence of Buddhist elements in the text than Zhang's, which, according to Barrett, served to make the document more

33 My opinion here is certainly influenced by a similar suspicion held by Graham: "It is therefore likely that the book was written inside Zhang Zhan's family, perhaps by his grandfather Yi (fl. 307)...or by his father Kuang, on whose authority Zhan presents his very questionable account of the book's transmission...Moreover, [Zhang Zhan] calls our attention to the very points which an accomplice in forgery would wish us to notice." (Graham, 1990, p. 282).

34 See Barrett in Littlejohn & Dippmann (2011), p. 15. Barrett has written two excellent and concise textual histories of the *Liezi*, both of which were indispensable in my investigation of the text and its commentaries. His account in Loewe (1993) offers a cogent summary of the best scholarship on the *Liezi*, as well as a good account of the major commentaries and editions. The article cited here from Littlejohn & Dippman's *Riding the Wind with Liezi: New Perspectives on the Daoist Classic* is less encyclopedic in nature, but presents a fuller account of the "life" of the text in its first millennium. Readers concerned with the details of the transmission and reception of the *Liezi* before the modern period, especially on the question of extant editions, are encouraged to consult these works.

35 Graham (1990b), p. 282.

36 On Zhang's erudition, see Barrett in Littlejohn & Dippmann (2011), p. 16.

37 Barrett in Loewe (1993), p. 302.

palatable to Tang religious sensibilities.³⁸

If Barrett's estimation for the date of composition for Lu Chongxuan's commentary is accurate, then this second major commentary only slightly precedes the first major extant work to cast doubt on the authenticity of the *Liezi* – the *Bian Liezi* 辨列子 of Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773 – 819 CE).³⁹ It is this work that most scholars engaging in the debate on the *Liezi*'s authenticity first address. Liu's major criticism is grounded in the assertion found in Liu Xiang's preface that Lie Yukou is a contemporary of Duke Mou of Zheng.⁴⁰ This historical claim is suspicious to Liu, as it contains an historical confusion: the *Liezi* records a discussion between Zi Chan 子產 (fl. mid 5th century BCE) and Deng Xi 鄧析 (fl. mid 5th century BCE),⁴¹ two thinkers that were alive and active after the life of Duke Mou of Zheng, the supposed chronological contemporary of Lie Yukou. The implication is that it is unreasonable to expect Lie Yukou to have recorded a conversation between two philosophers of a later age.

While this argument lacks the textual and philological rigour of subsequent investigations on the *Liezi*, it serves as a point of departure for the subsequent discussions of the question. Chen Guangzhong 陳廣忠 dismisses the notion that there is a textual conflict at all, surmising that this very question had been resolved one hundred and fifty years earlier than Liu had posed it, by Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 (fl. mid 7th century CE) in his commentary to the *Zhuangzi*.⁴² Cheng lists Lie Yukou's contemporary in a similar way as Liu Xiang, but substitutes the character *xu* 孺 for Liu's *mou* 繆.⁴³ Chen surmises the problem is a copying error rather than a historical one.⁴⁴ Furthermore, I suggest that comparing the *Liezi* text to external documents such as Liu Xiang's preface is ultimately inferior to

38 Barrett in Littlejohn & Dippmann, p. 18.

39 The text for this document is available in Yang (2007), p. 287ff.

40 See the translation of Liu Xiang's preface above.

41 *Liezi* 6:4.

42 Chen, “*Liezi sanbian – Liezi fei weishu kao zhi er*” 列子三辨 – 列子非偽書考之二 in *Daojiao wenhua yanjiu* 道教文化研究, vol. 10 (1996), pp. 279-281.

43 Guo (2004), p. 19 (note 9).

44 Chen (1996), p. 281.

examining the text itself.⁴⁵

2.2 The Language and Grammar of the *Liezi*

A fruitful method of investigating the *Liezi* with the intention of determining its date of compilation is the close scrutiny of the language used. This method has been applied with great success by Yang Bojun and A. C. Graham, and below I will summarize their findings. Both arrive at the conclusion that the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the *Liezi* was compiled in the Wei-Jin period.

Yang Bojun makes a concise summary of his five major grammatical features that serve as evidence that the *Liezi* is a text other than what Zhang's preface purports it to be.⁴⁶ His first point is the construction of a phrase in *Liezi* 3:7: *shushi nian lai* 數十年來 is a way of expressing time unknown in the pre-Han period, and Yang offers several examples from before the Qin (including the *Mengzi*, *Zuo Zhuan*, and *Mozi*) of the preferred construction of that time.⁴⁷

Second, Yang addresses the use of the word *wu* 舞 as it appears in the *Liezi*. He cites specifically an incident recorded in *Liezi* 4:12: 鄧析顧其徒而笑曰：為若舞，彼來者奚若？ “Dengxi looked back at his disciples and said, laughing, 'How would you like it if [I] had the person that is coming act like a fool?’”⁴⁸ Yang states that in his research he is not able to find an occurrence of *wu* in this sense before the Han period, suggesting that this particular pericope is of a relatively later date.⁴⁹

45 It ought to be noted that Seo considers Liu Xiang's preface itself to be a forgery, which, if true, renders it completely useless in understanding the textual history of the *Liezi*. See Seo (2000), p. 34 and Seo (2015), pp. 450-451, which rejects the authenticity of the report as a forgery based on stylistic reasons.

46 This list is found in Yang (2007), pp. 346-347.

47 Yang (2007), pp. 327-328. The edition of Yang's work used here erroneously cites the “Tian rui” chapter as the source for this phrase; it is properly found in the “Zhou Mu wang” chapter.

48 I have translated here in accordance with Yang's observation. Graham translates *wu* as “dance” in his rendering. See Graham (1990a), p. 84.

49 Yang (2007), p. 331.

In his third point Yang addresses the use of *dou* 都 as an adverb in the *Liezi* text, of which he lists four occurrences: *Liezi* 2:3, *Liezi* 3:7,⁵⁰ *Liezi* 6:8, and *Liezi* 7:9. According to Yang, it is unknown for *dou* to be used this way before the Qin, and it is somewhat rare during the Han.⁵¹ This usage is common in the Wei-Jin and following periods, however, and Yang lists many examples from the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, a text of that period.⁵²

Next, in his fourth point, Yang turns his attention to a particular use of the expression *suoyi* 所以 as found in *Liezi* 8:25. The owner of a lost sheep explains giving up his search: 吾不知所之，所以反也 “I did not know where it went, therefore I went back”. As Yang notes, the usage here is suspiciously similar to the modern usage of the phrase *suoyi*, and he lists more likely pre-Qin alternatives, such as *shiyi* 是以, *shigu* 是故, or *gu* 故.⁵³ His many examples of the usual pre-Qin usage of *suoyi* serve to illustrate the anachronism of its usage here in the *Liezi*. It ought to be noted, however, that many instances of the pre-Qin usage of *suoyi* do occur in the *Liezi* text, and this is most likely an anachronism that slipped into the text rather than a characteristic feature of the document.

Finally, for his fifth point Yang investigates the curious usage of the expression *buru* 不如 in *Liezi* 8:30:

田氏視之，乃歎曰：「天之於民厚矣！殖五穀，生魚鳥以為之用。」衆客和之如響。鮑氏之子年十二，預於次，進曰：「不如君言。天地萬物與我並生，類也。」⁵⁴

Mr. Tian looked up and giving a sigh he said, “How generous is Heaven toward the people; it causes the five grains to propagate and generates fish and birds in order for [the people] to use.” The group of guests that were with him echoed [his statement]. [But] Mr. Bao's twelve-year-old son, seated on the farthest rank, came forward to say,

50 Yang leaves out a passage from *Liezi* 4:6, presumably because it is nearly identical to this one, including its usage of *dou*.

51 Yang (2007), p. 332.

52 Yang (2007), pp. 333-335.

53 Yang (2007), p. 336.

54 Yang (2007), p. 269.

“It is not as you say. Heaven and Earth, the myriad things, and us are generated together, and [all] are of a single type.”

Yang explains that *ru* has two usages in ancient Chinese: without a negative such as *bu* 不, *ru* has a meaning something like *xiang* 像 (“to resemble”); with a negative, *ru* has a meaning similar to *ji* 及 (“to come”).⁵⁵ He supplements this claim with copious examples from early documents. It is only in the Han period, according to Yang, that *buru* takes on the new meaning as found in the *Liezi* text – rendering 不如君言 as 不像您所說的 (“It is not as you have said”).⁵⁶ These five linguistic points, taken together, are fundamental to Yang's view of the *Liezi* as a later document.

Graham builds on Yang's linguistic observations, but notes that aside from the usage of *dou* 都 they rely on examples found infrequently in the text.⁵⁷ His own research offers ten types of word usage that are indicative of a later date for the *Liezi*; most cases are drawn from portions of the text that lack parallels known in other documents. Despite suggesting that Yang's examples often draw on a limited range of examples, some of Graham's insights are equally dependent on a narrow sample set. However, the majority of Graham's examples are supplemented with a great deal of textual evidence. Below I offer a concise summary of his grammatical conclusions; all are examples of word usage that differs from the pre-Han usage a reader would expect if the *Liezi* were in fact a Warring States document.

(1) *wu* 吾, *wo* 我, and post-pronoun *zhi* 之 – Graham notes that in pre-Han language *wu* is never the object of a sentence, only a subject or marker of the possessive. In the *Liezi*, he counts as many as ten instances of a later usage in which *wu* is indeed the object of a verb. Moreover, he notes that *zhi* rarely follows pronouns before the Qin period, yet he sees forty-three instances of this usage in the *Liezi*.⁵⁸ He helpfully offers a textual example that captures both usages from *Liezi* 4:8:

55 Yang (2007), p. 342.

56 Yang (2007), p. 346.

57 Graham (1990b), p. 248.

58 Graham (1990b), pp. 249-250.

視人如豕，視吾如人。處吾之家，如逆旅之舍；觀吾之鄉，如戎蠻之國。⁵⁹

I see others as though they were pigs, and I see myself as another person. Dwelling in my home, it is as though I am lodging in an inn; observing my village, it is as though I am in a barbaric land.⁶⁰

In the example above, the phrase *shi wu ru ren* 視吾如人 places *wu* in the object position.⁶¹ The phrase *chu wu zhi jia* 處吾之家 includes the particle *zhi*, normally redundant if *wu* is understood as a possessive.

(2) *ke* 可 – Graham tells us that the usage of *ke* in pre-Han times indicated the verb following it was passive, with only rare exceptions; it is a later linguistic development that allows the dropping of the *yi* 以 in *keyi* 可以 with active verbs.⁶² From *Liezi* 7:15 Graham offers the following:

雖全生身⁶³，不可有其身；雖不去物，不可有其物。⁶⁴

Even if one is complete in giving life to the body, they cannot possess their body; even if they do not send things away, they cannot possess their things.

(3) *fu* 弗 – In the *Liezi*, *fu* is often substituted for *bu* 不, ignoring its more specific pre-Han meaning. It is described by Graham as being true of sections of text both with and without parallels in the received record.⁶⁵ He considers the following from *Liezi* 5:2:

離朱子羽方晝拭背揚眉而望之，弗見其形⁶⁶

[As for] Li Zhu and Zi Yu, during the day they wiped their eyes and raised their brows to look for them, [but] did not see their form.

Graham astutely notes that sections with parallels occasionally substitute *fu* in place of *bu*, as it

59 Yang (2007), p. 129.

60 My own translation, though it is influenced by and does not differ substantially from that offered by Graham in Graham (1990b), p. 250, or Graham (1990a), p. 82.

61 While this particular instance may be forced to preserve parallelism, it is only one of many examples in the *Liezi*.

62 Graham (1990b), pp. 251-252.

63 Inserting *shen* 身 in accordance with Yang Bojun's note (Yang (2007), p. 235). The Dunhuang (S.0777) version of the text omits this character.

64 Yang (2007), p. 235.

65 Graham (1990b), pp. 252-253.

66 Yang (2007), p. 157.

exists in other texts such as the *Zhuangzi*.

(4) *wang* 亡 – here Graham offers a particularly detailed history of the usage of *wang* in reference to its usage with *wu* 無. The noteworthy point is that in pre-Han usage *wang* rarely takes an object, and in the *Liezi* *wang* is often found where one would find *wu* more natural.⁶⁷ Consider the following example, supplied by Graham from *Liezi* 6:8:

信命者，亡壽夭；信理者，亡是非；信心者，亡逆順；信性者，亡安危。⁶⁸

[As for] one that trusts fate, there is no long life or early death; for one that trusts principle, there is no is or not is; for one that trusts the heart-mind, there is no perversity or conformity; for one that trusts their nature, there is no security or danger.

(5) *dou* 都 – Graham's discussion of *dou* does not differ in any appreciable way from that of Yang, but rather confirms those findings.

(6) *yan* 焉 – The fusion particle *yan* experienced a “decay” in its meaning in later centuries, according to Graham.⁶⁹ Originally substituted for *yuzhi* 於之, though perhaps not exactly equivalent to it, and Graham finds that in most of its usage in the *Liezi* one is in a difficult position if they desire to argue for that usage. He cites multiple examples from *Liezi* 3:1, of which I will provide only one:

意迷精喪，請化人求還。化人移之，王若殞虛焉。⁷⁰

[King Mu's] thoughts were perplexed and his refined essence was lost, [so] he asked the magician to find [a means to] return [home]. The magician moved him, and the King felt as though he were falling through the void.

(7) *xiang* 相 – Graham notes the shift in the meaning of *xiang* from an indicator of reciprocity to a “pronomial adverb”.⁷¹ He suggests that reading reciprocity into its usage in as many as fourteen

67 Graham (1990b), pp. 254-256.

68 Yang (2007), p. 207.

69 Graham (1990b), p. 258.

70 Yang (2007), p. 93.

71 Graham (1990b), p. 259-260.

cases in the *Liezi* is problematic, offering two examples. One of which, from *Liezi* 5:3, contains the phrase 雜然相許 “[They] all agreed to it”, and neatly makes this case.⁷²

(8) *qie* 且 – Graham suggests that in the Han period *qie* has a change in meaning, being transformed from merely a particle that indicated futurity to taking on a mildly imperative flavour – he contrasts the meaning of “about to” with the later “let us for the moment”.⁷³ This is clearly demonstrated in Graham's example from the close of *Liezi* 7:3: 且趣當生奚遑死後 “For now hurry to your current life – why be concerned with what happens after you die?”.⁷⁴

(9) *zhu* 著 – This verb takes on a verbal suffix meaning during the Han, as described by Graham.⁷⁵ It is used in this capacity only a few times in the *Liezi*, but in striking and unambiguous way. Graham cites *Liezi* 5:2:

而五山之根無所連著⁷⁶，常隨潮波上下往還，不得暫峙焉。⁷⁷

But the roots of the mountains lack that to which they are connected to – they are always following the rising, falling, moving to and fro of the tides and waves, and cannot for a moment be stable.

(10) pronoun inversion – Graham notes that pronouns precede verbs in negative sentences in which they are the object, and that an exception to this regularity, coming into vogue during the latter part of the Han, had it so that this was occasionally true for affirmative sentences.⁷⁸ He offers many excellent examples beginning with Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-139 CE), but cites only one passage of the *Liezi* that adopts this stylistic feature, albeit with frequency.⁷⁹ This is *Liezi* 6:2, which adopts the pattern

72 Yang (2007), p. 159.

73 Graham (1990b), p. 260-261.

74 My reading here, especially in terms of the character *huang* 遑, is strongly influenced by Graham. See Graham (1990a), p. 141.

75 Graham (1990b), p. 262.

76 Note that here the *Liezi* is using the graphic variant *zhu* 著 for *zhu* 著; the meaning is the same.

77 Yang (2007), p. 152.

78 Graham (1990b), p. 263.

79 Graham (1990b), p. 263-264.

朕與子並世也而人子達 “You and I are of the same generation, yet others have you succeed”.⁸⁰ In a pre-Han text, one would expect *ren da zi* 人達子 rather than *ren zi da* 人子達. This particular grammatical feature is not common in the *Liezi*, but its conspicuous presence is noteworthy.

2.3 Parallels between the *Liezi* and the *Zhuangzi*

A separate but equally important means of investigating the *Liezi*'s content is to examine the ways in which material contained therein parallels that of other texts, and the ways in which it is modified. As Zhang Zhan points out in his preface, the *Liezi* in many instances relates tales or makes arguments very much redolent of other texts such as the *Zhuangzi*, *Huainanzi*, and *Hanfeizi*, to enumerate only a few. While Zhang suggests that these texts are quoting the *Liezi*, others, such as A. C. Graham, are convinced it is indeed the *Liezi* compiler that is making use of these texts, long after their completion. Below, I shall examine the most striking examples of this phenomenon.

It must be furthermore noted that all parallels in the *Liezi* are not equal. Zheng Liangshu, in his essay *Cong chongwen de guanxi lun Liezi Huangdi de liuchuan* 從重文的關係論列子皇帝的流傳, offers three types of parallel that exist: (1) “Complete repetitions” (*wanquan chongfu* 完全重複), which are nearly identical across instances; (2) “Revised extracts” (*zhailu gaixie* 摘錄改寫), which are clearly the same passages but with details changed, added, or removed; and (3) “Minimal similarities” (*jixiao bufen xiangtong* 極小部分相同), which are textually quite different, but point to the same notion.⁸¹ Zheng uses these typologies strictly in reference to the *Liezi* and the *Zhuangzi*, but I believe they can be applied broadly without modification. It is worth noting that he reads all instances as the *Zhuangzi* deriving its text from the *Liezi*, a position that I will investigate below.

As Liu Xiang explains in his preface to the text, the *Liezi* has much in common with the

⁸⁰ This pattern is repeated multiple times without grammatical variation, and thus subsequent iterations are not included here.

⁸¹ Zheng (2001), pp. 90ff.

Zhuangzi in terms of content and style. This is especially true of the second chapter “Huangdi”, in which about half of the pericopes can be found in the *Zhuangzi*.⁸² Ronnie Littlejohn, building on the grammatical work undertaken by A. C. Graham, has suggested that many of the pericopes that exist in this chapter without clear parallels in the *Zhuangzi* or other known texts may in fact be remnants of the “lost” *Zhuangzi* chapters, sections of the fifty-two chapter *Zhuangzi* that were excised by Guo Xiang in his redaction of the text.⁸³ The idea here is intriguing, and with some caveats the theory seems entirely plausible.

There are several pericopes of the “Huangdi” chapter that are unambiguously similar to the *Zhuangzi* – these are *Liezi* 2:4, 2:5, 2:8, 2:9, 2:10, 2:13, 2:14, 2:15, 2:16, 2:19⁸⁴, 2:20.⁸⁵ While the content here is never identical between the two versions as found in the *Liezi* and the *Zhuangzi*, a reasonable reader will recognize the similarities. This leaves approximately half the chapter as possible sources for insight into the “lost” *Zhuangzi* chapters. As Littlejohn notes, Graham connects *Liezi* 2:11 and 2:12 to the “lost” *Zhuangzi* based on the evidence of early commentaries⁸⁶ and linguistic evidence.⁸⁷ The evidence for these thirteen (of twenty-one)⁸⁸ pericopes suggests that at least half of the second chapter of the *Liezi* is drawn from an early version of the *Zhuangzi*, or shares a common source with it.

The evidence for the remaining pericopes is somewhat more circumstantial. Littlejohn does

82 Or, as Zheng Liangshu has it, the *Zhuangzi* borrows about 70% of the material from the *Liezi* “Huangdi” chapter. See Zheng (2001), p. 111.

83 Littlejohn in Littlejohn and Dippmann (2011), pp. 31-48.

84 While Littlejohn only marks this pericope as “reminiscent” of the *Zhuangzi*, and suggests that it may in fact be another version of the “Qi wu lun” monkey-trainer story found in the “lost” *Zhuangzi*, I see no reason not to list it as parallel to the “Qi wu lun” version, even with a significantly different conclusion. See Littlejohn (2011), p. 38. Zheng Liangshu reads it as a “revised extract”, although he believes it is the *Zhuangzi* quoting the original *Liezi*. Zheng (2001), p. 101.

85 A list of parallels in the *Zhuangzi* can be found in the Littlejohn (2011), p. 37-38.

86 For example, Liu Xiaobiao's commentary to the *Shishuo xinyu* cites this passage as coming from the *Zhuangzi*, not the *Liezi*. See Mather (2002), p. 54 and Xu (1984), pp. 58-59.

87 Littlejohn (2011), p. 38.

88 Littlejohn actually divides the chapter into twenty-two pericopes, seeing *Liezi* 2:21 as two distinct pericopes, but I will take a different approach below.

offer a plausible suggestion in reference to *Liezi* 2:6 and 2:7, noting that their use of “skill stories” are reminiscent of similar tales in the *Zhuangzi*.⁸⁹ I believe the case for 2:7 is even stronger than Littlejohn suggests; though the narrative itself is somewhat unique in the received corpus, at least one line is clearly shared with the *Zhuangzi*. Below is the relevant portion of *Liezi* 2:7:

夫食虎者，不敢以生物與之，為其殺之之怒也；不敢以全物與之，為其碎之之怒也。時其飢飽，達其怒心。虎之與人異類，而媚養己者，順也；故其殺之，逆也。⁹⁰

As for one who feeds tigers, he does not dare to do it by means of giving them a live animal, because of their anger in killing it; he does not dare to do it by means of giving them a whole animal, because of their anger in tearing it apart. [He is] timely in their hunger and fullness, successful in [knowing] their angry heart-mind. Tigers are a different species than humans, but they love those that raise them, because [those that raise them] accord [with the tigers' heart-minds]; so [if] they kill them, [it is because] they have gone against [the tiger's heart-minds].

Though set in a different context, consider the following excerpt from the *Zhuangzi* “Ren jian shi” chapter, nearly identical in language and meaning to that of the *Liezi*:

汝不知夫養虎者乎？不敢以生物與之，為其殺之之怒也；不敢以全物與之，為其決之之怒也。時其飢飽，達其怒心。虎之與人異類而媚養己者，順也；故其殺者，逆也。⁹¹

Do you not know of one who raises tigers? He does not dare to do it by means of giving them a live animal, because of their anger in killing it; he does not dare to do it by means of giving them a whole animal, because of their anger in opening it up. [He is] timely in their hunger and fullness, successful in [knowing] their angry heart-mind. Tigers are a different sort than humans, but they love those that raise them, because [those that raise them] accord [with the tigers' heart-minds]; and so those who are killed are the ones that go against it.

While the immediate context of the two quotations is different, their content and usage are clearly related. Zheng Liangshu also reads these passages as related, though suggesting that the

89 Littlejohn (2011), p. 37. The quintessential *Inner Chapters* skill story is that of Butcher Ding, as found in the “Yang sheng zhu” chapter.

90 Yang (2007), p. 58.

91 Guo (2004), p. 167.

Zhuangzi version is a “revised extract” of the *Liezi* passage.⁹² If the passage is indeed derived from the “lost” *Zhuangzi*, then perhaps this passage existed in multiple forms in the fifty-two chapter version of the text.

For Littlejohn, in the face of this mounting evidence for the passages mentioned above as extracts from the fifty-two chapter *Zhuangzi*, the remaining pericopes are swept up in the momentum of the argument as circumstantially likely remnants of the “lost” *Zhuangzi* found in the *Liezi*.⁹³ I believe this is a tenable position, barring explicitly conflicting evidence. However, there do exist other avenues in the received corpus through which some of these pericopes may have been transmitted; that is to say, while we lack direct evidence that these passages were taken from the “lost” *Zhuangzi*, they do exhibit parallels with other received texts. Below I will consider two cases.

As explained above, on the strength of Graham's evidence Littlejohn has conjectured that *Liezi* 2:11 may in fact be derived from the “lost” *Zhuangzi*. What his review of the evidence does not include is that this pericope exhibits non-trivial parallels with content found both in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* and the extant *Zhuangzi* “Zhi bei you” chapter. Below I have translated *Liezi* 2:11 in its entirety.

海上之人有好漚鳥者，每旦之海上，從漚鳥游，漚鳥之至者百住而不止。其父曰，「吾聞漚鳥皆從汝游，汝取來，吾玩之。」明日之海上，漚鳥舞而不下也。故曰，至言去言，至為無為。齊智之所知，則淺矣。⁹⁴

There was a man by the sea that loved seagulls. Everyday he went to the sea they followed him where he wandered, and the seagulls that came to him were hundreds without end. His father said, “I hear that all the seagulls follow you wandering – bring them so that I can play with them.” The next day at the seaside, the seagulls flitted [above] but would not descend. So it is said: Perfect speech does without speech, perfect action is *wuwei*,⁹⁵ if it is ordinary wisdom that one knows, then it is shallow.

While this may be adapted from a “lost” *Zhuangzi* passage, consider the *Lüshi Chunqiu* passage

92 Zheng (2001), p. 103.

93 Littlejohn (2011), pp. 39-40.

94 Yang (2007), p. 67-68.

95 Literally, “perfect action is lacking action”. Presumably the seagull lover enjoyed his time amongst the seagulls in a *wuwei* manner before being consciously tasked with the objective of bringing one for his father.

below, from the opening of the “Jing yu” chapter:

海上之人有好蜻者，每居海上，從蜻游，蜻之至者百數而不止，前後左右盡蜻也，終日玩之而不去。其父告之曰：「聞蜻皆從女居，取而來，吾將玩之。」明日之海上，而蜻無至者矣。⁹⁶

Among the people by the sea there was one that loved dragonflies. Every time that he dwelt by the sea they followed him where he wandered, and the dragonflies that came to him were hundreds without end. On all sides he was completely surrounded by dragonflies, and he would play with them to the end of the day without leaving. His father told him, “I hear the dragonflies all follow you where you dwell, take one and bring it to me – I want to play with it.” The next day he was at the seaside but there were no dragonflies that would come to him.

Apart from the most obvious difference – the switch from seagulls to dragonflies – the *Lüshi Chunqiu* narrative is remarkably similar to that of the *Liezi*. The *Liezi* tale ends with a comment that summarizes for the reader the meaning of the passage; this comment is notable in that it is similar to an aphorism found among pre-Han and Han texts, including the *Zhuangzi*, *Huainanzi*, and the *Lüshi Chunqiu*,⁹⁷ where in the latter it serves as a comment to a different narrative in the same “Jing yu” chapter. Below I offer the *Zhuangzi* parallel, which serves to bring the “Zhi bei you” chapter to a close, as it is the most directly parallel to the *Liezi* version.

至言去言，至為去為。齊知之所知，則淺矣。⁹⁸

Perfect speech does without speech, perfect action does without action. If ordinary knowing is what one knows, then it is shallow.

Aside from the conspicuous change of *qu wei* (“banishing action”) to the more familiar “gesture of affiliation” of *wuwei* in the *Liezi* version, this comment is nearly identical. While *Liezi* 2:11 may be traceable to the fifty-two chapter *Zhuangzi*, it is equally plausible that it is a composite pericope crafted from selective quotation of the *Lüshi Chunqiu* and the extant *Zhuangzi*.

96 Xu (2009), p. 481-482.

97 It is worth noting the *Liezi* chapter “Shuo fu” also contains a similar line, which is virtually identical to the *Huainanzi* or *Lüshi Chunqiu*. See *Liezi* 8:12.

98 Guo (2004), p. 765.

Liezi 2:17 lacks any obvious content parallels to the *Zhuangzi*, and although Littlejohn describes it as potentially derived from the “lost” *Zhuangzi*, the evidence is hardly more than circumstantial.⁹⁹ While the first half of the section lacks any clear antecedents or parallels in the received corpus, and thus may very well be from an older version of the *Zhuangzi*, the second half of the pericope bears an undeniable resemblance to the *Huainanzi* “Yuan dao” chapter.¹⁰⁰ Both are notable for their quotation of the *Laozi*, which is characteristic of the “Yuan dao” chapter of the *Huainanzi*. First, the *Liezi* version:

粥子曰：「欲剛，必以柔守之；欲彊，必以弱保之。積於柔必剛，積於弱必彊。觀其所積，以知禍福之鄉。彊勝不若己，至於若己者剛；柔勝出於己者，其力不可量。」老聃曰：「兵彊則滅，木彊則折。柔弱生之徒，堅彊者死之徒。」¹⁰¹

Yuzi¹⁰² said, “Desiring to be firm, you must use softness to guard it; desiring to be strong, you must use weakness to protect it. The piling up of softness will become firm, the piling up of weakness will become strong. Observe their accumulation, and by that know the places of good and bad fortune. The strong overcome those which are not equal to them, [but] when arriving at one equal to them they are [matched in] firmness;¹⁰³ the weak overcome what surpasses them, and their strength cannot be measured.” Lao Dan said, “If a weapon is strong, then it will be destroyed. If a tree is strong, then it will break. The soft and weak are the servants of life, the hard and strong are the servants of death.”¹⁰⁴

Compare this to the *Huainanzi* version:

是故欲剛者必以柔守之，欲強者必以弱保之。積於柔則剛，積於弱則強，觀其所積，以知禍福之鄉。強勝不若己者，至於若己者而同；柔勝出於己者，其力不可量。故兵強則滅，木強則折，革固則裂，齒堅於舌而先之敝。是故柔弱者生之榦也，而堅強者死之徒也。¹⁰⁵

Therefore desiring to be firm, one must use softness to guard it; desiring to be

99 See his chart of *Liezi* “Huangdi” pericopes in Littlejohn (2011) pp. 37-38; on page 40 he argues they are likely of the same origin as nearby pericopes, though he is also cautious in this claim.

100 This parallel also exists in the *Wenzi* “Dao yuan” 文子道原 chapter; however, due to the difficulties surrounding that text, I will focus on the more reliably datable *Huainanzi*.

101 Yang (2007), pp. 82-83.

102 That is, Yu Xiong 鬻熊 (11th century BCE?). No such attribution is made in the *Huainanzi* version.

103 As Zhang Zhan comments: 必有折者 “There must be one that breaks”. See Yang (2007), p. 83.

104 See *Laozi* 76. The contents here are certainly not identical, but bear a strong resemblance.

105 He (2006), p. 49-50.

strong,¹⁰⁶ one must use weakness to protect it. The piling up of softness will become firm, the piling up of weakness will become strong. Observe their accumulation, and by that know the places of good and bad fortune. The strong overcome those which are not equal to them, [but] coming to their equal they are then the same; the soft overcome those which surpasses them, and their strength cannot be measured. Therefore weapons that are strong are destroyed, trees that are strong are broken, leather that is solid will tear; teeth are harder than the tongue and will be worn out first. Therefore the soft and weak are the main part¹⁰⁷ of life, and the hard and strong are the servants of death.¹⁰⁸

Littlejohn makes much of the notion that the close of the “Huangdi” chapter is not derived from the fifty-two chapter *Zhuangzi*.¹⁰⁹ He is quite adamant in this conclusion, but regrettably offers nothing in the way of concrete evidence, only the assertion that “[t]here really can be little doubt that the addition of the final text bead in this chapter is from the editor and not from the source he copied throughout the rest of the chapter”.¹¹⁰ I note here that neither Yang Bojun nor A. C. Graham divide the text in this manner – both, in fact, make it plainly obvious that they view this as a continuation of the passage.¹¹¹ Furthermore, I cannot identify any element of style that marks it as different from the pericopes that precede it. One may only speculate as to Littlejohn's reasons here. Below I have translated the passage in question, which follows Hui Ang's assertion that he knows a way (*dao* 道) that is greater than that of courage (*yong* 勇) or strength (*li* 力):

惠盎對曰：「孔墨是已。孔丘墨翟無地而為君，無官而為長；天下丈夫女子莫不延頸舉踵而願安利之。今大王，萬乘之主也；誠有其志，則四竟¹¹²之內，皆得其利矣。其賢於孔墨也遠矣。」宋王無以應。惠盎趨而出。宋王謂左右曰：「辯矣，客之以說服寡人也！」¹¹³

106 I note here that I have rendered both *qiang* 彊 and *qiang* 強 as “strong” in the English translation. Though the meanings are similar enough that I do not feel compelled to differentiate them in translation, it is worthwhile to indicate that the passages differ in this respect.

107 Literally, “trunk”. Compare to *gan* 幹 in Kroll (2015), p. 128.

108 While this also contains material parallel to *Laozi* 76, it is not explicitly attributed to the *Laozi* or Lao Dan in the *Huainanzi*. This is noteworthy, as the *Laozi* is the one pre-Qin text that the *Huainanzi* compilers frequently do attribute quotations. Quotation without attribution of this sort in the *Huainanzi* is expected of the *Zhuangzi*.

109 Littlejohn (2011) p. 40. As he indicates, this is the text portion that begins 惠盎對曰孔墨是已... See Yang (2007), p. 88.

110 Littlejohn (2011) p. 48, note 4.

111 Yang (2007), p. 88; Graham (1990a), p. 57.

112 Reading *jing* 境 for *jing* 竟, following Yang Bojun's suggestion (Yang (2007), p. 89).

113 Yang (2007), pp. 88-89.

Hui Ang responded, “Kong[zi] and Mo[zi] are like this. Kong Qiu and Mo Di lacked territory and yet acted as lords, lacked office and yet acted as leaders. Among all the men and women of the world, none did not crane their necks and lift up their heels, wishing to give them peace and benefit. Now as for the great king [i.e., you],¹¹⁴ you are the lord of ten thousand chariots. If you sincerely had this will, then those within the four boundaries [of your state] would all obtain benefit. The worthiness of Kong[zi] and Mo[zi] – [yours would be] beyond that.” The king of Song could not respond. Hui Ang hastened to leave. The king of Song said to those around him, “Such eloquence of disputation¹¹⁵ – he used speech to subdue me!”

Perhaps it is the apparent praise for Kongzi and Mozi that serve to distinguish this passage from the rest of the “Huangdi” chapter or *Zhuangzi* material in general; however, a close inspection suggests it is not the content of their philosophies that is praised, but rather that despite their lack of political or military power they were able to earn the veneration of the masses through their application of intellectual or moral prowess. Without an articulated argument on the matter one may only speculate what element of *Liezi* 2:21 seems to distinguish it from the rest of the chapter. Unless that argument is forthcoming I am not aware of any reason to set that passage apart.

Littlejohn makes the assertion that examining *Liezi* material that resembles that which we find in the *Zhuangzi* in terms of “strata” is a misguided approach.¹¹⁶ He is clear in indicating that “strata” here indicates the various lineages of *Zhuangzi* material identified by Graham – specifically, “Zhuang Zhou”, the “School of Zhuangzi”, the “Primitivists”, the “Syncretists”, and the “Yangists”, interspersed with various “mutilated” passages.¹¹⁷ Littlejohn's research suggests that the *Zhuangzi* material in the *Liezi* follows no discernible pattern, borrowing indiscriminately. If one hopes to find only one textual lineage represented in the “Huangdi” chapter they will be disappointed, for as Littlejohn accurately demonstrates both the “Zhuang Zhou” material (i.e., the *Inner Chapters*) and the “School of Zhuangzi” (or “Zhuangzi Disciples”) are found therein.¹¹⁸

114 Here Hui Ang is addressing Kang of Song, as the first half of this pericope explains.

115 I recognize “eloquence of disputation” may be overtranslating *bian* 辯 somewhat; however, I believe it best captures the essence of the king's remark.

116 Littlejohn (2011), p. 41.

117 Graham (1981), pp. 27-33.

118 Littlejohn (2011), pp. 41-42.

Despite this fact, I believe there is indeed an interesting pattern that emerges from the *Liezi's* selective use of the *Zhuangzi* material. To see it we must expand our perspective in two important ways. First, it is useful to make use of not only Graham's classification of the *Zhuangzi* chapters, but to also utilize Liu Xiaogan's excellent and independent study of the same material, which reaches somewhat similar conclusions in categorizing the chapters, at least in terms of defining the bounds of the various strata of the text. That these two detailed studies arrive at such similar results gives us greater confidence in identifying lineages or “strata” in the *Zhuangzi* text, which in turn enhances our ability to identify these lineages in the *Liezi* text. The second important step in understanding the *Liezi's* selective use of the *Zhuangzi* entails expanding our scope beyond the “Huangdi” chapter to include the entirety of the *Liezi* text. In doing so we find that the *Liezi* uses the “Zhuang Zhou” and “School of Zhuangzi” material exclusively, with only two important exceptions addressed below.

First, I note that *Liezi* 4:16 begins with an explicit quotation of Guan Yin which is, aside from minor differences, identical to a similar quotation of the same attribution found in the “Tian xia” chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. Both Graham and Liu identify this chapter as markedly distinct from either the “Zhuang Zhou” or “School of Zhuangzi” material, respectively labeling it “Syncretist”¹¹⁹ or “Huang-Lao”¹²⁰. However, as the parallel in this case is merely a short quotation attributed to Guan Yin, I submit that it is likely both documents are quoting a common source attributed to Guan Yin, and that in this case there is no reason to believe the *Liezi* is using the “Tian xia” material as a source.

The second instance of the *Liezi* quoting outside the “Zhuang Zhou” or “School of Zhuangzi” lineage is *Liezi* 8:7, which relates a narrative about Lie Yukou paralleled in the *Zhuangzi* “Rang wang” chapter. Graham identifies “Rang wang” as “Yangist”¹²¹ and Liu identifies it as “Anarchist”¹²².

119 Graham (1981), pp. 257-258; 274-285 (translation).

120 Liu (1994), pp. 121-134.

121 Graham (1981), pp. 221-223, 224ff.

122 Liu (1994), pp. 134-147.

However, there exist two good reasons to believe that the parallel here does not complicate the notion that the *Liezi* uses *Zhuangzi* material selectively. First, as Seo notes, the *Liezi* compiler seems to have taken pains to include every known mention of Lie Yukou in the written record in the composition of the *Liezi*.¹²³ The usage of the “Rang wang” material here may simply be an example of inclusion based on the topic (i.e., Lie Yukou) rather than the content. However, we need not rely solely on that conjecture. It is furthermore prudent to demonstrate that *Liezi* 8:7 is paralleled in many sources aside from the *Zhuangzi* “Rang wang” chapter, which include the *Lüshi Chunqiu* and the *Xinxu* 新序 of Liu Xiang.¹²⁴ Thus, it is probable that either of these sources (or another, now unknown source) may have served as the origin for this particular passage. I propose that *Liezi* 8:7, as with *Liezi* 4:16, offers no serious challenge to the proposition that the *Liezi* text borrows selectively from the *Zhuangzi*, utilizing material from the “Zhuang Zhou” and “School of Zhuangzi” chapters.¹²⁵

Having made a digression to address these two exceptions, I return now to my contention that the *Liezi* otherwise draws exclusively on “Zhuang Zhou” and “School of Zhuangzi” material. If true, it may offer insight into the process of the composition of the *Liezi* text. If one concludes that the compiler had access to either Guo Xiang's thirty-three chapter redaction of the *Zhuangzi*, or, as is implied by the notion that the *Liezi* uses content from the “lost” *Zhuangzi*, an earlier fifty-two chapter version of that work, then it appears that the compiler is demonstrating a preference for the “Zhuang Zhou” and “School of Zhuangzi” lineages of thought in relation to the “Yangist”, “Primitivist”, or

123 Seo (2000), pp. 38ff.

124 This particular episode is also recorded in the *Gaoshi zhuan* of Huangfu Mi (215-282 CE), but as this document's textual history is complicated I have not considered it as a potential source for the *Liezi* here.

125 It is to be noted that this is strictly true for Liu Xiaogan's classification of the *Zhuangzi* material; however, while some material in the *Liezi* borrows from what Graham has called the “mutilated” chapters, none of it is classified by him as belonging to any other specific lineage. These pericopes are *Liezi* 2:14 (matched to *Zhuangzi* “Lie Yukou”), 2:15 (matched to *Zhuangzi* “Yu yan”), and 6:3 (matched only in part to *Zhuangzi* “Xunwu Gui”). As Graham does not include any of these three narratives in his translation of the *Zhuangzi*, and therefore does not explicitly classify them, it is difficult to determine exactly how he would have understood them in relation to the other *Zhuangzi* material. He does however note that these three chapters contain elements that often intersect with material in the *Inner Chapters*.

“Syncretist” lineages.¹²⁶ This is significant, for if we now know something about the characteristics of the lineages with which the *Liezi* compiler found commonality we gain further insight into the compiler's general worldview.

Finally, a challenge to the theory that the *Liezi* quotes *Zhuangzi* material and is therefore later is offered by Zheng Liangshu. His work on the question, cited above in reference to his typologies of parallels, gives twenty examples of textual convergences. In all cases, he asserts that it is the *Zhuangzi* that quotes the *Liezi*, most frequently the “Huangdi” chapter. He suggests, for example, that in cases where overlap occurs, the *Liezi* generally employs more obscure characters than does the *Zhuangzi* – such a phenomenon indicates to Zheng that the author of the *Zhuangzi* is in his redaction of the text simplifying the language.¹²⁷ This argument ignores the complex textual history of the *Zhuangzi*, as well as turns on the assumption that in copying from the *Zhuangzi* the compiler of the *Liezi* could not have introduced character variants (which could certainly be done in compiling the document, especially if the compiler was interested in having the document appear older than it was). Furthermore, Zheng suggests that both the addition of detail in the *Zhuangzi* version of the story of the “spirit man” that lives on Mount Gushe (cf. *Liezi* 2.2)¹²⁸ and the removal of detail from the *Zhuangzi* monkey trainer story (for example, his being a native of Song – cf. *Liezi* 2.19)¹²⁹ attest to the ingenuity displayed by the author of the *Zhuangzi* in his appropriation of *Liezi* material. I am unconvinced that the addition or removal of information in this manner demonstrates the chronological priority of either the *Zhuangzi* or the *Liezi*, and thus reject this particular line of reasoning.

126 I must also suggest the admittedly speculative possibility that the *Liezi* compiler had access to a version of the *Zhuangzi* that *only* contained “Zhuang Zhou”, “School of Zhuangzi”, and “lost” Zhuangzi material. While this would render the question of the compiler's attitude toward other *Zhuangzi* lineages open and perhaps unanswerable, it would grant a fascinating perspective on the reception history of the *Zhuangzi*.

127 Zheng (2001), p. 91, 93.

128 Zheng (2001), p. 99.

129 Zheng (2001), p. 101.

2.4 Parallels between the *Liezi* and other Works

There are other works that exhibit significant parallels to the *Liezi* which by virtue of entering the written record at a time demonstrably subsequent to the pre-Qin period suggest it to be most likely a post-Han document. Below I will address the most commonly discussed instances of this phenomenon.

As has been demonstrated by Ma Xulun 馬敘倫 (1885-1970), Chen Wenbo 陳文波, A.C. Graham, and Junwon Seo, the *Liezi* “Zhou Mu wang” chapter (specifically *Liezi* 3:1) has significant parallels to the *Mutianzi zhuan*.¹³⁰ The text was recovered from a tomb around 281 CE; the tomb itself is thought to be from roughly 350 BCE.¹³¹ The parallels are less substantial than those found in the *Zhuangzi*, in the sense that only fragments are mirrored in the *Liezi*, not the majority or entirety of pericopes. Despite this, the parallels are striking, and are often integral parts of the debate over the *Liezi*. Aside from pure textual parallels, Rémi Mathieu has also catalogued many of the thematic parallels that are evident in both the *Liezi* and *Mutianzi zhuan* accounts of King Mu, which include but are not limited to: the meeting with Xiwangmu 西王母, the voyage to Kunlun 崑崙, and the visitation to Huangdi's Palace.¹³² Given that these are themes common to tales of King Mu, it is suggestive that the *Liezi* compiler seems to have opted for making use of the *Mutianzi zhuan* material directly.

Mathieu further demonstrates that it is perhaps only the first four of the six *juan* of the *Mutianzi zhuan* that ought to be accepted as authentic, and that the latter two are likely interpolations;¹³³ this is significant to the present investigation, as the *Liezi* appears to only draw from the first four *juan*. Below I will compare examples from both texts as found in the summary prepared by Chen Wenbo:¹³⁴

130 Ma is reprinted in Yang (2007), p. 301; see especially his point five (p. 302). Chen is also reprinted in Yang (2007), p. 318; see his helpful chart of comparisons on p. 320. For A. C. Graham see Graham (1990) pp. 242-245, and for Seo see Seo (2000), pp. 73-76.

131 Mathieu in Loewe (1993), p. 342.

132 See a complete list of parallels between the *Mutianzi zhuan* and many other texts, including the *Liezi*, as found in Mathieu (1978), pp. 194-196.

133 Mathieu in Loewe (1993), p. 343.

134 Yang (2007), p. 320.

王乃歎曰：於乎！予一人不盈于德，而諧於樂，後世其追數吾過乎！¹³⁵

The king then sighed, “Alas! I, the king, have not delighted in virtue but [instead] given in to pleasure – later generations will remember this as my error!”

Compare the *Mutianzi zhuan* version, as found in the first *juan*:

天子曰：於乎！予一人不盈于德，而辨於樂，後世亦追數吾過乎！

The Son of Heaven said, “Alas! I, the king, have not delighted in virtue but [instead] been discriminating in favour of pleasure – later generations will indeed often remember this as my error!”¹³⁶

Such a parallel is demonstrative of the pattern as a whole. Defenders of the authenticity of the *Liezi* acknowledge the similarities between it and the *Mutianzi zhuan*, but insist that these similarities are not proof of the later compilation of the text. The issue is addressed directly by Chen Guangzhong in his widely cited tripartite proof for the authenticity of the *Liezi*.¹³⁷ Chen Guangzhong first acknowledges the points of similarity made by Ma Xulun and Chen Wenbo in their respective works, but is quick to add that literature relating to the westward journeys of King Mu were not unknown before the unearthing of the *Mutianzi zhuan*.¹³⁸ Other known sources, such as the *Shiji*, offer similar insights. He goes on to enumerate reasons to suppose that the *Liezi* compiler did not borrow from the *Mutianzi zhuan*, all of which are unconvincing, and do not address the grammatical and stylistic elements that are virtually identical between the two texts.¹³⁹ Chen Guangzhong does point out the important fact that significant parts of *Liezi* 3:1 have no parallel in any part of the *Mutianzi zhuan*,¹⁴⁰ but this is not the claim of the critics cited: the claim is simply that fragments seem to be borrowed, not the entirety of the text. Chen's argument deteriorates further when he cites many examples external to

135 Both this and the following quotations follow Chen in Yang (2007), p. 320.

136 This is merely one of the four major examples of parallels; space considerations preclude examining more here in depth. The interested reader is referred to the more comprehensive work by Graham (1990b), pp. 242-245 and Seo (2000), pp. 73-76.

137 Chen in *Daojiao wenhua yanjiu* 道教文化研究, vol. 10, pp. 267-299.

138 Chen (1996b), pp. 284-285.

139 I note here that Ma Da's critique of Chen Wenbo's work on the *Mutianzi zhuan* as it relates to the *Liezi* makes similar assertions about the priority of the *Liezi* with no evidence. See Ma (2000), pp. 134-135.

140 Chen (1996b), p. 286.

Liezi 3:1, or even external to the “Zhou Mu wang” chapter (e.g., from the “Tang wen” chapter).¹⁴¹ This sidesteps the issue at hand – no critic, to my knowledge, has ever claimed that other portions of the *Liezi* text derive from the *Mutianzi zhuan* outside of *Liezi* 3:1. On the whole, Chen's argument on this point is weak, and it does appear that the parallels in the *Mutianzi zhuan* remain some of the best evidence for a later date for the *Liezi*. If asked to speculate as for the reasons for its inclusion, I would suggest that the compiler was perhaps creating a new version of the King Mu narrative, and included some material known to be from the Warring States period as a gambit for authenticity.

The final pericope of the “Tang wen” chapter has also often served as a point of contention for those debating the authenticity of the *Liezi*. Below is a complete translation of *Liezi* 5:17.

周穆王大征西戎，西戎獻鍔鍔之劍，火浣之布。其劍長尺有咫，練鋼赤刃，用之切玉如切泥焉。火浣之布，浣之必投於火；布則火色，垢則布色；出火而振之，皓然疑乎雪。皇子以為無此物，傳之者妄。蕭叔曰：「皇子果於自信，果於誣理哉！」¹⁴²

King Mu of Zhou undertook a great expedition against the Western Rong,¹⁴³ and the Western Rong offered him the *Kunwu* sword and cloth that was washed in fire. The sword had a length of a *chi* and a *zhi*,¹⁴⁴ [and was made of] refined steel with a red blade. Using it to cut jade was like cutting mud. As for the fire-washed cloth, one could only wash it by tossing it in fire; the cloth was coloured like fire, the dirt was coloured like the cloth. [After] taking it out of the fire and shaking it, it was so white as to be mistaken for [the colour of] snow. The prince¹⁴⁵ believes that these things did not exist, that those that transmitted [these ideas] were reckless. Xiaoshu¹⁴⁶ said, “The prince trusted himself as expected, and as expected his understanding was mistaken!”

This particular passage is noteworthy because it is mirrored very closely in the *Kongcongzi*, which as discussed in Chapter One of the present work, was likely compiled by Wang Su (or someone in his

141 Chen (1996b), p. 287.

142 Yang (2007), pp. 189-190.

143 Non-Han peoples living in the North-West. The presence of King Mu and his westward journey again makes an appearance in the *Liezi*; it should be noted, however, that there are no significant links to the *Mutianzi zhuan* in this passage.

144 About forty centimetres.

145 A. C. Graham suggests that *huangzi* 皇子 could also be interpreted as a personal name. See Graham (1990), p. 117, as well as the discussion below. The term does not seem to have been used in this way before the Han dynasty.

146 No commentary offers a clue to who Xiaoshu is, and his comment is not present in any parallel accounts. Perhaps this is a reference to Xiaoshu Daxin 蕭叔大心, of the *Zuo zhuan*; however, it is unclear as to why he is quoted here.

circle) at the close of the Han period.¹⁴⁷ The material is also paralleled less closely in Zhang Hua's 張華 (232-300 CE) *Bowuzhi* 博物志.¹⁴⁸ This is critical, for if the particular formulation of this narrative cannot be found earlier than Wang Su or Zhang Hua version, it lends credence to the supposition that material in the *Liezi* must be post-Han.

Most critics operate under the assumption that the *Liezi* compiler here had Cao Pi 曹丕 (reigned as Emperor Wen of Wei 魏文帝, r. 220-226) in mind as the misguided prince (*huangzi*).¹⁴⁹ According to sources such as the *Baopuzi*, Cao Pi had suggested that such items as the jade-cutting sword and the cloth washed in fire could not exist, but was disgraced and ashamed when such items were presented to him.¹⁵⁰ While this speculation does rest on the assumption that the *Liezi* is a post-Han work, if accurate it is a potentially intriguing insight into the worldview of the *Liezi*'s compiler.

As with the *Mutianzi zhuan* parallels discussed above, Chen Guangzhong has offered a counter explanation for this material in the *Liezi*. He makes much of the fact that the *Bowuzhi* account of the fire-washed cloth attributes the record of this to the *Zhoushu* 周書, though no such record exists in the received version.¹⁵¹ Chen offers many other examples of a fire-washed cloth in the received record, but all of them certainly post-date that which we find the *Kongcongzi*.¹⁵² Ultimately he concluded that the “prince” referred to is the son of King Mu of Zhou, and not Cao Pi.¹⁵³ This argument is weak when we compare it with the evidence from the other sources Chen cites.¹⁵⁴ For example, he offers the following account from the *Inner Chapters* of the *Baopuzi*, as is mentioned above:¹⁵⁵

147 For this story, see the translation in Ariel (1996), pp. 31-32.

148 Fan (1980), p. 26.

149 See Graham (1990), p. 117, and Seo (2000), p. 71.

150 Seo (2000), p. 71.

151 Chen (1996b), p. 282.

152 Chen (1996b), pp. 282-283.

153 Chen (1996b), p. 284.

154 Ma Da also addresses the parallels between the *Liezi* and the *Bowuzhi*, listing ten with varying levels of divergence.

Though he does address most of these cases, albeit unconvincingly, he does not offer evidence specific to the story of the blade and cloth offered above. See Ma (2000), pp. 295, 298-299.

155 Chen (1996b), p. 283.

魏文帝窮覽洽聞，自呼於物無所不經，謂天下無切玉之刀，火浣之布，及著典論，嘗據言此事。其間未期，二物畢至。帝乃歎息，遽毀斯論。¹⁵⁶

Emperor Wen of Wei read exhaustively and was widely informed, and boasted of himself that among things there were none that he had not surveyed. He said that under Heaven there was no blade that cut jade or cloth washed in fire. The *Dianlun*¹⁵⁷ was written and it relied on his word on this matter. [But] before a short time had passed the two things were brought [to him]. The emperor sighed, and subsequently denigrated the *Dianlun*.

The *Baopuzi* was composed in the mid fourth century CE, roughly the same time many critics of the *Liezi*'s authenticity suppose that the *Liezi* text was compiled. A textual tradition explicitly linking Cao Pi to a public doubt as to the veracity of claims of a fire-washed cloth was present in the *Baopuzi* and other works,¹⁵⁸ while the competing hypothesis ascribing this doubt to King Mu's son lacks corroborating evidence. What textual sources do exist strongly suggest that the *Liezi* account was influenced by other accounts found in the fourth century CE.

One textual parallel that exists in the *Liezi* that has received virtually no discussion in the many debates that have taken place is that which exists between *Liezi* 8:28 and a passage from the mostly lost *Chang yan* 昌言 of Zhongchang Tong 仲長統 (180-220 CE). The passage is preserved in the “Zhi li” 至理 chapter of the *Inner Chapters* of the *Baopuzi*.¹⁵⁹ The *Liezi* version is as follows:

昔人言有知不死之道者，燕君使人受之，不捷，而言者死。燕君甚怒，其使者將加誅焉。幸臣諫曰：「人所憂者莫急乎死，己所重者莫過乎生。彼自喪其生，安能令君不死也？」乃不誅。¹⁶⁰

Formerly, there was a man that said he knew the way to never die. The Lord of Yan ordered someone to get it, [but] he was not swift and the one who said it died. The Lord of Yan was very angry at the one he had ordered [to get the method], and planned to have him executed. A favourite minister remonstrated, “Among the things people worry about, there is nothing more worrisome than death; among the things they take as important, there is nothing that exceeds [in importance] than their own

156 Wang (2002), pp. 15-16.

157 A now mostly lost literary treatise attributed to Cao Pi.

158 A similar version of events is presented in the *Soushenji* 搜神記, for example. See Wang (1979), pp. 165-166.

159 Wang (2002), p. 115.

160 Yang (2007), p. 268.

lives. He [that claimed to know how not to die] himself lost his life – how could he be able to have you not die?” And so [the man Lord Yan had sent] was not executed.

The rest of the *Liezi* 8:28 offers two comments on this particular narrative, one of which also closely mirrors content from the *Kongcongzi*. But the above passage is found in nearly the same form with an identical meaning in the *Baopuzi*, attributed to Zhongchang Tong and his *Chang yan*. Incidentally, though the two passages diverge in the style and wording of their conclusions, both also offer the suggestion that the practitioner of immortality that died did not necessarily pass away due to his technique being wrong – it was just that he could not perform the technique correctly. If this narrative does belong to the writings of Zhongchang Tong as Ge Hong suggests, then it is another instance of post-Warring States material to be found in the *Liezi*.¹⁶¹

Finally, it is valuable to dedicate some space to a brief evaluation of the work of Ma Da on the question of textual parallels between the *Liezi* and the received corpus. Ma offers an extensive and erudite selection of parallels between the *Liezi* and texts from the Warring States up into the Jin period, and in every case suggests that it is the *Liezi* that has priority. His estimation mirrors that of Zhang Zhan, in that he asserts that in all cases of textual parallels the *Liezi* serves as the original. Despite the undeniable breadth of scholarship offered, I ultimately believe that Ma's reasoning is faulty. That is to say, while his work is exceptional and exhaustive in its presentation of parallels the arguments intended to convince the reader of the *Liezi*'s authenticity regularly lack merit when compared to those offered by Yang or Graham. A citation by citation discussion of Ma's book would be an enormous undertaking, and so I hope to offer some representative examples in place of such a project. Because the thought of Ruan Ji makes up a significant portion of Chapter Four of this dissertation, I elect to focus on Ma's

161 Arthur Frederick Wright, in a note to his translation of Etienne Balazs' essays, has also suggested a link between the writings of Bao Jingyan 鮑敬言 (early third century?) preserved in the *Baopuzi waipian* and *Liezi* 7.8 in the “Yang Zhu” chapter, which both praise the virtues of a state without the “Way of Lord and Minsiter” (*junchen zhi dao* 君臣之道). While this characterization is accurate, the Bao Jingyan passage is descriptive of a utopian ideal in the past, while the *Liezi* passage is more prescriptive in nature. See Wright's note in Balazs (1964), p. 244n22.

appraisal of these works in relation to the *Liezi*.¹⁶²

Ma offers three examples of parallels between the works of Ruan Ji and the *Liezi*.¹⁶³ His first notes that the Ruan Ji uses the expression *dahe* 大壑 (meaning “great ocean”) in his *Dongping Fu* 東平賦; *Liezi* 5.2 also makes use of the expression *dahe* with the same meaning, and thus Ma concludes that Ruan Ji has found this expression in the *Liezi*.¹⁶⁴ The claim is spurious on at least two counts: no evidence is offered that the compiler of the *Liezi* could not have been influenced by the writings of Ruan Ji, and more importantly, Ma does not recognize that expression is also accessible to Ruan Ji through its presence in the *Zhuangzi*, the *Chuci*, and the *Shanhaijing*.

Ma's second example quotes from Ruan Ji's *Zouji yi Cao Shuang* 奏記詣曹爽, which states that: 昔榮期帶素，仲尼不易其三樂。 “Formerly there was Rong [Qi]qi dressed plainly – Zhong Ni [Kongzi] did not change [his mind about] his three joys.”¹⁶⁵ I offer a translation of the *Liezi* pericope in Chapter Four – here, it is sufficient to recount that the story is that Kongzi happens upon a shabbily dressed and destitute Rong Qiqi who nonetheless assures his interlocuter that he has three joys (being human, being male, and being old). Ma acknowledges that a very similar text appears in the *Huainanzi*, *Xinxu*, and *Shuoyuan*, but all neglect the important details included in both the *Liezi* and Ruan Ji's work – namely, the plainness of Rong Qiqi's attire, his three joys, and Kongzi's praise. Such discrepancies, according to Ma, rule out these documents as a source for Ruan Ji, leaving only the *Liezi*. He ignores the fact that the same account, with all these elements and very little variation, is available in the *Kongzi jiayu*, which is at least contemporary with Ruan Ji. Certainly an authentic *Liezi* could serve as a common source for both the *Kongzi jiayu* and Ruan Ji, but Ma's evidence here is at best circumstantial and suffers by not accounting for alternate hypotheses.

162 Jean Lévi offers a review of Ma Da's material on Xi Kang. See Lévi (2014), pp. 171-172.

163 Ma (2000), pp. 289-290.

164 Ma (2000), p. 289.

165 Source text from Ma (2000), p. 289.

Finally, in his third point, Ma makes reference to a story in *Liezi* 8.25 in which Yang Zhu helps a neighbour recover a lost sheep, only to be confounded by too many forks in the road.¹⁶⁶ He links this to the twentieth¹⁶⁷ poem of Ruan Ji's *Yonghuai shi* 詠懷詩 collection, which does appear to reference the event: 楊朱泣歧路 “Yang Zhu wept at the fork in the path”. This is then taken as evidence that the Yang Zhu story from the *Liezi* serves as the basis for Ruan Ji's poem. Were the *Liezi*'s textual history an uncomplicated one this conclusion would be much more plausible; as it is, the assertion is unconvincing in light of abundant evidence to the contrary. Based on the example offered by Ma in this instance we cannot draw a positive or negative conclusion, and as such the evidence is again lacking.

The textual examples provided in Ma Da's volume are of this style. If we follow his reasoning, it appears that the *Liezi* text serves as the basis for many later works. But he offers no concrete evidence that this must be the direction of influence, and his many examples serve equally well in supporting the alternative hypothesis – that the *Liezi* likely draws on many pre and post Han sources. Balanced against other forms of evidence, the argument for an early-date *Liezi* falls apart.

2.5 Traces of South Asian Thought in the *Liezi*

Staunch defenders of the legitimacy of the *Liezi* as a Warring States text are able to explain the presence of seemingly borrowed content by suggesting that these texts had quoted the *Liezi*, much as Zhang Zhan had suggested in his introduction. This is on its face entirely plausible – the parallels that exist between the *Liezi* and the *Zhuangzi*, *Lüshi Chunqiu*, *Hanfeizi*, *Mutianzi zhuan*, *Kongcongzi*, and *Chang yan* could have originally been content derived from an eight *juan* *Liezi*. This is only merely plausible, however; that it is to say, it is not probable when considered in light of other evidence. It is possible, perhaps likely, that these anecdotes and aphorisms were in the intellectual ether, not clearly belonging to the *Liezi* or another text, but moving fluidly between texts and speakers. Content external

¹⁶⁶ Ma (2000), p. 290.

¹⁶⁷ Or twenty-third, by Ma's reckoning. I have followed the order as laid out in Holzman (1976) and Chen (1987).

to the *Liezi* but available in received sources makes up approximately one quarter of the text, according to Graham,¹⁶⁸ and yet because of the generally polymorphous nature of texts in the period under consideration the evidence found in the textual parallels discussed thus far only strongly suggests the late compilation of the text, rather than conclusively proves it. However, the *Liezi* clearly also makes use of content found in documents that can be traced back to the Indian subcontinent. This evidence, in conjunction with the grammatical evidence and parallels discussed above, should settle the matter.

Zhang Zhan notes in his preface the influence of Buddhist thought, though he neglects to mention any specific texts with which a reader could compare the *Liezi*, leaving us only to speculate as to how knowledgeable he was on this subject, or exactly which facets of Buddhist thought he had in mind. In the final section of this chapter I will discuss only a few clear textual parallels that have been documented in the course of debates as to the authenticity of the *Liezi*, with a view to discuss the possible intellectual impact of Buddhist thought on this text in Chapter Five of the present work. That is to say, the material presented here is done so to contribute to the identification question; readers should expect a more thorough conceptual analysis of this and other Buddhist material in the fifth chapter. Like Zhang Zhan's somewhat vague and perhaps circumspect indication of Buddhist thought in the *Liezi*, I have found that (to my dismay) many writers addressing the content of the *Liezi* do not give the important question of Buddhist thought in the *Liezi* adequate consideration, but merely mention it in passing as an afterthought or curiosity.¹⁶⁹

With the above source of consternation in mind, I choose to begin with the most commonly cited example of a Buddhist interpolation into the *Liezi*: the story of the automaton as found in the “Tang wen” chapter (*Liezi* 5:13). Almost invariably this is the pericope that is cited when the question

168 Graham (1990b), p. 225.

169 A. C. Graham's 1960 translation of the *Liezi* is perhaps the most frustrating example, if only because it is outstanding in nearly every other way. This otherwise masterful examination of the text makes only occasional reference to Buddhism and Buddhist thought, all the more perplexing as Graham was undoubtedly aware of the important work done on the question, such as that of Chen Dan examined below.

of Buddhist thought in the *Liezi* is addressed, and perhaps with good reason – the conceptual parallels are undeniable. Here I will relate both the *Liezi* version as well as that as found in the *Shengjing* 生經. In both cases I will highlight only the most relevant aspects, in the interest of brevity. First, a selection from the *Liezi* 5:13. My translation below begins *in media res*, as King Mu of Zhou has just had the artisan Master Yan show him his greatest creation:

王薦之，曰：「若與偕來者何人邪？」對曰：「臣之所造能倡者。」穆王驚視之，趣步俯仰，信人也。巧夫鎮其頤，則歌合律；捧其手，則舞應節。千變萬化，惟意所適。王以為實人也，與盛姬內御並觀之。技將終，倡者瞬其目而招王之左右侍妾。王大怒，立欲誅偃師。偃師大懼，立剖散倡者以示王，皆傅會革、木、膠、漆、白、黑、丹、青之所為。王諦料之，內則肝、膽、心、肺、脾、腎、腸、胃，外則筋骨、支節、皮毛、齒髮，皆假物也，而無不畢具者。合會復如初見。王試廢其心，則口不能言；廢其肝，則目不能視；廢其腎，則足不能步。穆王始悅而歎曰：「人之巧乃可與造化者同功乎？」¹⁷⁰

The King gave him a straw mat and said, “Who is this other person that has come with you?” He replied, “This is what I have made that can entertain.” King Mu looked at it in shock, hastily stepping to look at it from bottom to top, believing it was human. The craftsman nodded¹⁷¹ the chin [of the artificial man], and it sang a harmony; he held the hand, and it danced responding in time. A thousand transformations and ten thousand changes – [one need] only have the idea and it would do it. The King took it to be a real person, and he observed it riding in the chariot alongside Sheng Ji.¹⁷² The show was about to end and the entertainer winked its eye and beckoned to the concubines surrounding the King. The King was greatly angered, and on the spot he desired to punish Master Yan. Master Yan was greatly afraid, and immediately opened and took apart the entertainer to show the King; it was completely made of leather, wood, glue, lacquer, and coloured white, black, red, and blue. The King closely examined it: on the inside there was a liver, gall bladder, heart, lungs, spleen, kidney, intestines, and stomach; on the outside there was muscle and bone, fingers and joints, skin and hair, teeth and hair on the head. They were all false things, but none among them were not whole and complete. He had it brought back together again, as he had seen it before. The King tried to take out its heart-mind, and its mouth was not able to speak; he took out his liver, and his eyes could not see; he took out his kidneys, and his feet could not walk. King Mu was finally

170 Yang (2007), pp. 179-180.

171 The character *qin* 鎮 here means something like “nod” or “bow”, and is probably used in the causative sense. Yang Bojun helpfully notes variants among the *Liezi* editions (see Yang (2007), p. 179). Possible substitutions are *han* 頷 or *zhen* 鎮; the former offers little change in meaning, while the latter means “press”, and seems to be the choice Graham makes in his translation (see Graham (1990a), p. 110). I follow Yang, but note that the choice does not impact the overall meaning or usefulness of the passage.

172 A concubine of King Mu of Zhou.

relaxed and sighed, saying, “The skill of humans – can it in fact accomplish the same things as that which makes and transforms [i.e., the “Creator” or *zaohuazhe* 造化者]?”¹⁷³

The King packs up the artificial person and the remainder of the section is a comment comparing the skill of others to the skill of creating this automaton. Let us compare this story with that which we find in the *Shengjing*, which was translated by Dunhuang 敦煌 born translator Dharmarakṣa (Zhu Fahu 竺法護, ~230-316 CE) in the Western Jin period, around 285 CE. The relevant portion follows:

應時國王，喜諸技術，即以材木，作機關木人，形貌端正，生人無異，衣服顏色，點慧無比，能工歌舞，舉動如人，辭言：『我子生若干年，國中恭敬，多所餽遺。』國王聞之，命使作伎，王及夫人，升閣而觀。作伎歌舞若干方便，跪拜進止，勝於生人。王及夫人，歡喜無量。便角瞞¹⁷⁴眼，色視夫人。王遙見之，心懷忿怒，促敕侍者：『斬其頭來。何以瞞眼視吾夫人？謂有惡意，色視不疑。』其父啼泣，淚出五行，長跪請命：『吾有一子，甚重愛之，坐起進退，以解憂思，愚意不及，有是失耳。假使殺者，我共當死，唯以加哀，原其罪豐。』時王恚甚，不肯聽之。復白王言：『若不活者，願自手殺，勿使餘人。』王便可之。則拔一肩梃*，機關解落，碎散在地。王乃驚愕：『吾身云何瞞於材木？此人工巧，天下無雙，作此機關，三百六十節，勝於生人！』¹⁷⁵

In response to the current King, who rejoiced in technique and skill, he [“Prince of Skill”] then made a mechanical wooden person from timber, [with] its form and appearance correct and from a living person lacking any differences; it was clothed and coloured [correctly], [and] its shrewd intelligence was without comparison. It was able to sing and dance, and move like a person. [The maker] said, “My son has lived for several years, within the state he is respected and has received many gifts and honours.” The King heard this, and ordered him to demonstrate his talent. The King and Queen ascended a tower to watch. He demonstrated his talent by singing and dancing in several ways, kneeling and bowing, advancing and stopping, better than a living person. The King and Queen watched and enjoyed without limit. Then he looked back and winked his eye,¹⁷⁶ lustfully looking at the Queen. The King saw this from afar, and in his heart-mind he felt anger, he urged and ordered those serving him, “Cut off his head! Why do you wink looking at my Queen? I say there is a

173 “That which makes and transforms” (*zaohuazhe* 造化者) is perhaps a gesture of affiliation, and is found with frequency in the *Huainanzi*. Its *locus classicus* appears to be the *Zhuangzi* “Da zong shi” chapter.

174 CBETA has this as [目*翕]; I have made the change to 瞞 both here and in its one subsequent appearance.

175 From CBETA T03no154, with only very minor changes as noted above.

176 The exact translation here is tentative, but captures the basic gist of the passage.

wicked intention here, and do not doubt that glance was lustful.” His father howled and cried, the tears coming out in five streams. He knelt and implored, “I have a single son, and many greatly love him; sitting and rising, advancing or withdrawing, by this I resolve sorrowful thoughts – simply by ignorantly thinking this would not happen there was this mistake. If you kill him I am to be killed along with him. Only by your pity could he be forgiven of this crime.” At this time the King's rage increased and he was not willing to listen to him. Again explaining to the king he said, “If he cannot live, I request he die by my own hand, and that you not command another [to do it].” The King agreed. Then he pulled out a single wedge¹⁷⁷ from the shoulder, and the machine fell apart, going to pieces upon the ground. The King was then alarmed: “How can I speak of being angry at bits of wood? This artisan – under Heaven he has no match. In making this machine, the three hundred and sixty joints are better than a living person!”

Though the parallels here are not as grammatically striking as those between the *Liezi* and the *Zhuangzi* examples cited above, the basic narrative is certainly the same. In both versions an artisan demonstrates for a ruler his mechanical person, and in both versions this mechanical person makes an unwanted advance towards the ruler's consort, provoking his anger. In each case the exchange ends with the ruler's anger being abated by his realization that the mechanical person is not legitimately threatening, and instead he praises the artisan as being without equal. The resemblances are much greater than the differences, though some exist. For example, in the *Liezi* version King Mu intends to have Master Yan punished, while the *Sheng jing* version suggests that the mechanical person will bear the brunt of the punishment. One may only speculate as to how the compiler of the *Liezi* was exposed to this story, but in light of the other evidence it is plausible that he had either read or heard recited this tale, and adapted it for his own purposes.

In his *Liezi Yang Zhu pian weishu xinzheng* 列子楊朱篇偽書新證¹⁷⁸ Chen Dan 陳旦 argues that material found in the “Yang Zhu” chapter of the *Liezi* resembles Buddhist material closely enough that it is reasonable to suppose that it may have served as a source for that document. A close reading of material suggests that the evidence is not as conclusive as that found in the *Sheng jing* narrative, but is

177 Reading *xie* 楔 for *xie* 楯.

178 Included in Yang (2007), pp. 311-318.

perhaps further corroborating evidence to the idea that the *Liezi* was compiled at least in part from Buddhist materials.

Chen Dan quotes from *Liezi* 7:1, 7:2, and 7:3. Below I translate 7:3, the most relevant of the passages quoted, in its entirety.

楊朱曰：「萬物所異者生也，所同者死也。生則有賢愚、貴賤，是所異也；死則有臭腐、消滅，是所同也。雖然，賢愚、貴賤非所能也，臭腐、消滅亦非所能也。故生非所生，死非所死；賢非所賢，愚非所愚，貴非所貴，賤非所賤。然而萬物齊生齊死，齊賢齊愚，齊貴齊賤。十年亦死，百年亦死。仁聖亦死，凶愚亦死。生則堯舜，死則腐骨；生則桀紂，死則腐骨。腐骨一矣，孰知其異？且趣當生，奚遑死後？」¹⁷⁹

Yang Zhu said, “As for the myriad things what they differ in is their life, and what they are the same in is their death. In life they are talented or stupid, honoured or lowly, and this is how they differ; in death they are stinking and rotting, decaying and decomposing, and this is how they are the same. However, [as for] talent and stupidity, honour and lowliness, it is not of their own capabilities; [as for] stinking and rotting, decaying and decomposing, is also not of their own capabilities. So: life is not what generates, dying is not what kills, talent is not what grants talent, stupidity is not what grants stupidity, honour is not what grants honour, lowliness is not what grants lowliness. However, the myriad things are equally alive and equally dead, equally talented and equally stupid, equally honoured and equally lowly.¹⁸⁰ [To live] ten years and then die or a hundred years and then die – the benevolent and sagely surely die, [and] the unlucky and stupid surely die. If alive one is Yao or Shun, then when dead they are rotting bones; if alive one is Jie or Zhou, then when dead they are rotting bones. Rotting bones are as one, who knows of their differences? For now enjoy your current life – why be concerned with what happens after you die?”

Chen Dan sees in this passage conceptual parallels to material found in the *Chang ahan jing* 長阿含經, (*Dīrgha Āgama* or *Long Discourses*), specifically the *Shamen guo jing* 沙門果經.¹⁸¹ The text is attested in Pāli as the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* and Sanskrit as the *Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra*. The entirety of the *Dīrgha Āgama* was translated into Classical Chinese in 412 CE by Buddhayaśas 佛陀耶舍 (fl. early 5th century CE) and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念 (fl. early 5th century CE). A date even in the early fifth century

179 Yang (2007), p. 221.

180 Graham reads these three sentences as a “Daoist” interpolation similar to the content of the “Li ming” chapter. See Graham (1990a), p. 141.

181 Chen in Yang (2007), p. 315-316.

seems to put it too late to have an influence on the *Liezi's* composition; however, Chen Dan also makes reference to an earlier translation by Zhu Tanwulan 竺曇無蘭 (fl. late 4th century CE), transmitted as *Jizhi guo jing* 寂志果經,¹⁸² which could have translated between 381 and 395 CE.¹⁸³ One further translation not mentioned by Chen is the unofficially titled *Wugen xin* 無根信, perhaps from as early as 384 CE.¹⁸⁴ Even these earlier dates are rather late if the conventional *Liezi* sceptic's chronology is accepted, conceiving its compilation as having taken place in the mid to late 4th century. Chen's hypothesis would seem much more tenable if one were to suppose an even earlier translation of this document, perhaps now lost to us.¹⁸⁵ Given the number of received translations, this is not implausible. In either case, it is worthwhile to assess the conceptual parallels with a version that does exist in the received record.

In his analysis, Chen Dan draws on the English translations made by T. W. Rhys Davids,¹⁸⁶ though Rhys Davids' translation is of the Pāli text, not Classical Chinese. The *Shamen guo jing* itself is a record of King Ajātaśatru (*Ashishi wang* 阿闍世王) questioning various non-Buddhist philosophers about the rewards inherent in the life of renunciation, ultimately arriving at a satisfactory answer in his conversation with the Buddha. In the course of his investigation, he rejects the advice of the other various philosophers, who teach forms of materialism or fatalism. Because it is the words of these heterodox teachers that Chen views as influential to the *Liezi*, it is perhaps important to note that in this case it seems that the *Liezi* bears the influence of “Buddhist texts” rather than “Buddhist thought”.

The following translation is of the *Shamen guo jing* response of Ajita Keśakambalin (*Ayituo*

182 Chen in Yang (2007), p. 312.

183 MacQueen (1988), p. 17.

184 This document is found in T.124. See MacQueen (1988), pp. 17-18.

185 For example, the important translator of Buddhist works Lokakṣema (Zhi Loujiachen 支婁迦讖, 2nd century CE) was known to have translated a text with the same subject, King Ajātaśatru, and similar (but not identical) content. This text, the *Ashishewang jing* 阿闍世王經, was translated in the late Han dynasty. Regrettably, there is insufficient space here to pursue the matter further.

186 Chen mistakenly takes Max Müller as the translator of this volume; rather, he was the editor of the *Sacred Books of the East* series to which Rhys Davids' translation belongs. See Chen in Yang (2007), p. 313.

Chisheqinpoluo 阿夷陀翅舍欽婆羅, ~6th century BCE)¹⁸⁷ to the King's question. Ajita Keśakambalin is generally characterized as a proponent of materialism and non-existence after death.¹⁸⁸ Chen Dan has argued that his presentation of death here may contain some roots for the words of Yang Zhu translated above.

『受四大人取命終者，地大還歸地，水還歸水，火還歸火，風還歸風，皆悉壞敗，諸根歸空。若人死時，床輿舉身置於塚間，火燒其骨如鴿色，或變為灰土，若愚、若智取命終者，皆悉壞敗，為斷滅法。』¹⁸⁹

When a person that has received the Four Great Elements¹⁹⁰ obtains the end of their life, the Earth element returns to earth, the Water [element] returns to water, the Fire [element] returns to fire, the Wind [element] returns to wind. Everything is destroyed, the sense faculties¹⁹¹ return to the void.¹⁹² If someone has come to their hour of death, a cart¹⁹³ carries the body as it is put in the graveyard, fire scorches their bones [until] they are the colour of a pigeon¹⁹⁴ or they have changed into ash. Whether stupid or wise [one] obtains the end of their life, and everything is destroyed, eradicating all things.¹⁹⁵

Particularly relevant to the discussion of the *Liezi* passage is the emphasis on the impartiality of the dying process – as in Yang Zhu's declaration, both those possessing superior mental faculties (*xian* 賢 in the *Liezi* and *zhi* 智 in the *Shamen guo jing*) and those with defective mental faculties (*yu* 愚 in both texts) are fated to the same end. This answer is unsatisfactory to the King, who ultimately finds

187 This is the transliteration used in the present *Shamen guo jing* text. Another common transliteration is *Aqiduo Chisheqinpoluo* 阿耆多翅舍欽婆羅.

188 MacQueen (1988), pp. 152-153, makes clear that the configuration of Ajita Keśakambalin's views are consistent in the Pāli version of the text, as well as the *Shamen guo jing* version; in other Classical Chinese translations, this view is variously attributed to other philosophers, greatly complicating the question. Because Chen Dan has used the *Shamen guo jing* version in his analysis I have done so as well.

189 CBETA T01no1, *juan* 17.

190 *Si da* 四大 is a technical term, and comprises the four elements (earth, water, fire, and wind) described below.

191 “Sense faculties” here translates *zhugen* 諸根. Commonly they include the five basic sense organs/sensations of the ears (hearing), eyes (seeing), nose (smell), mouth (taste), and the skin (touch).

192 “Void” here translates *kong* 空. I have avoided the more standard “emptiness” for *kong*, as that term is laden with meaning in Buddhist thought, much of which likely does not apply to the teachings of Ajita Keśakambalin here - “void” is intended to be more philosophically neutral, with the intention of leaning towards the materialistic implications of the argument.

193 Literally “bed-cart”, presumably some manner of cart on which a corpse lay in a reclined position.

194 That is, white or pale in colour, bleached by their exposure after death.

195 “All things” here translates *fa* 法, another crucially important technical term in Buddhist thought (see note the note on *kong* above).

the Buddha's teachings to be superior. Yang Zhu's teachings on the question are not challenged directly in the above passage from the *Liezi*, but as both Liu Xiang and Zhang Zhan suggest in their prefaces, the entire “Yang Zhu” chapter appears to be heterodox in nature. While the argument made by Chen Dan is not as conclusive as that made in reference to the *Sheng jing* material, it still may be indicative of the *Fojing* 佛經 material Zhang Zhan mentions in his preface to the *Liezi*.

In addition to the sources discussed above, there is the suggestion that some material originating from the Indian subcontinent found in the *Liezi* is not derived from explicitly Buddhist texts.¹⁹⁶ Lorenzan and Maeth have suggested that at least one section of *Liezi* 7.2 may in fact be a stanza of the *Śatakatraya* of poet Bharṭhari.¹⁹⁷ Below is the relevant portion of *Liezi* 7.2, a typical passage of the “Yang Zhu” chapter.

楊朱曰：「百年，壽之大齊。得百年者千無一焉。設有一者，孩抱以逮昏老，幾居其半矣。夜眠之所弭，晝覺之所遺，又幾居其半矣。痛疾哀苦，亡失憂懼，又幾居其半矣。量十數年之中，適然而自得亡介焉之慮者，亦亡一時之中爾。則人之生也奚為哉？奚樂哉？」¹⁹⁸

Yang Zhu said, “One hundred years is the extent of a life, [but] those who obtain one hundred years are not one in a thousand. If there is one [who does live this long], they spend almost of this time in childhood or old age. Nights extinguished in sleep, [and] days lost while awake – [in this they] spend almost a further half [of their life]. Pain, illness, grief, suffering, loss, failure, worry, and fear – [in this they] spend almost a further half [of their life]. Of the dozen years in the middle, [those] that are free and at ease, lacking even a small¹⁹⁹ worry – indeed there is not even an hour among them. Then as for a person's life – what are they to do? Where is joy?”

Lorenzen and Maeth describe their fortuitous discovery of a very similar sentiment in the work of Bharṭhari:

The span of man's life is a measured hundred years; / Yet half is lost to night / And of

196 Whether a text was “Buddhist” likely mattered very little to the early medieval compiler of the *Liezi*, but would perhaps be relevant to medieval Buddhists in China.

197 See Lorenzen and Maeth (1979). Bharṭhari may also be romanized “Bhartrihari”.

198 Yang (2007), p. 219.

199 Reading *jie* 介 as *wei* 微, in accordance with the *shiwén* 釋文 commentary of Yin Jingshun 殷敬順 and Chen Jingyuan 陳景元. See Yang (2007) p. 219.

his waking time, / A portion each claim callow youth and hoary age; / His prime is spent in servitude, suffering / The anguish of estrangement and disease. / Where do men find happiness / In life less certain and more transient than the waves?²⁰⁰

The parallels here are even more striking than those noted by Chen Dan above, though not as impressive as those found between the *Liezi* and the *Shengjing*. Most of the core components are present, though arranged and expressed differently. Lorenzen and Maeth note, however, that their thesis – that the *Liezi* compiler adapted this material from the work of Bharṭṛhari – is complicated by the fact that Bharṭṛhari is commonly believed to have worked in the mid-seventh century.²⁰¹ They offer a number of solutions to this problem. One is that the earliest report of Bharṭṛhari, by the travelling monk Yi Jing 義淨 (635-713 CE) is in error, either conflating this poet with a grammarian of the same name, or simply wrong about the dates of his life.²⁰² They suggest a date of approximately 450 CE for the death of Bharṭṛhari, which does not resolve the chronology problem.²⁰³ A more plausible solution is that the poems of Bharṭṛhari are not the compositions of a single individual, but instead are a compilation of works from various poets on similar themes.²⁰⁴ If this were the case, then the poem in question may have found its way to the *Liezi* compiler before even Bharṭṛhari. This is entirely speculative, and considering the absence of the *Śatakatraya* in Classical Chinese,²⁰⁵ the question of the similarity apparent here is difficult to resolve.

Moreover, there may exist in the Chinese tradition plausible antecedents to the notions expressed in the “Yang Zhu” chapter above. While they do not match the account found in the *Śatakatraya* as closely, they do reflect musings on this notion indigenous to China. In the *Baopuzi neipian* we read this reflection on the brevity of life:

200 Translation from *Bhartrihari: Poems* by Barbara Stoler Miller (1967), p. 147, which includes the romanized Sanskrit. For a more recent translation, see *Satakāvya of Bhartrihari* by Rabindra Kumar Panda (2006), pp. 72-73, which includes the Sanskrit in the original Devanagari script.

201 Lorenzen and Maeth (1979), p. 699.

202 Lorenzen and Maeth (1979), p. 699.

203 Lorenzen and Maeth (1979), p. 705.

204 Lorenzen and Maeth (1979), p. 699.

205 Lorenzen and Maeth (1979), p. 705.

幼弱則未有所知，衰邁則歡樂並廢，童蒙昏耄，除數十年，而險隘憂病，相尋代有，居世之年，略消其半，計定得百年者，喜笑平和，則不過五六十年，咄嗟滅盡，哀憂昏耄，六七千日耳，顧眄已盡矣，況於全百年者，萬未有一乎？²⁰⁶

When young one does not yet know [things], [and] with gradual decline happiness and joy both disappear. [So] ignorant youth and the darkening of age do away with several decades, and peril, danger, grief and disease take turns succeeding one another. Of [one's] years dwelling in the world, [these] take about half. One that anticipates living a hundred years is happy and peaceful, yet in not [succeeding in living] more than fifty or sixty years they are, alas, extinguished. In mourning, grief, and the darkening of age they have merely six or seven thousand days – with but a glance they are gone. How much more so the case, since those that have a full hundred years are not one in ten thousand?

We also read in the “*Dao zhi*” chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, in which the eponymous bandit chastises

Kongzi:

人上壽百歲，中壽八十，下壽六十，除病瘦死喪憂患，其中開口而笑者，一月之中不過四五日而已矣。²⁰⁷

For people, the uppermost limit is a hundred years of age. Those in the middle have eighty years, and at the least they have sixty years. Excluding [time] spent with malady, death, and anxiety, instances of opening one's mouth and laughing simply do not exceed more than four or five times in a month.

Though we may not take these two examples as textual sources for the “*Yang Zhu*” chapter of the *Liezi*, they may serve alongside the work attributed to Bhartṛhari as a textual antecedent. I believe an elaboration on these themes in China, taking place alongside similar developments in India, is the most plausible standpoint in this case.

2.6 Conclusion

Because of the polymorphous nature of the *Liezi*, the authenticity question may never be entirely resolved. Even when we can reliably trace a passage to a source demonstrably post-Qin, that evidence is only conclusive for that particular pericope. Much material can be traced to earlier sources,

²⁰⁶ Wang (2002), p. 253.

²⁰⁷ Guo (2004), p. 1000.

and these lend some credibility to the claim that a great deal of the *Liezi* narratives and arguments date from the early Warring States, as Zhang Zhan would have readers of his preface believe.

But although the varied components of the text cannot all be reliably traced, I believe that the *Liezi's* compilation, as we now find it in the received record, can be discerned with a good degree of confidence. Taking the various lines of evidence, be they grammatical or otherwise linguistic, as presented by Yang Bojun and A. C. Graham, or be they in the analysis of parallel passages, as they exist between the *Liezi* and the *Zhuangzi*, *Mutianzi zhuan*, or texts of Indian origin (to suggest only a few of the many sources of parallels), we must conclude, as A. C. Graham did in his 1960 article, that the *Liezi* was compiled around the middle of the fourth century.

It may not be possible to discover who compiled the *Liezi*, a fact regrettable in that such knowledge may offer a great deal of insight into the meaning and aims of the text. Graham doubts that the *Liezi* was compiled by Zhang Zhan, due largely to his occasional misunderstandings of the text.²⁰⁸ Chen Guangzhong points out that Zhang Zhan often offers alternate renderings for characters and phrases in his commentary, a practice that would be bizarre had he been the author of the text.²⁰⁹ I believe that in this Graham and Chen are correct – despite disagreeing on the provenance of the text, they both argue that it seems unlikely that Zhang Zhan is the compiler. Graham and Seo both suggest that an accusation of the text's being inauthentic loomed large in the mind of Zhang Zhan when he wrote his commentary, and his preface was authored with the aim of protecting his grandfather or father from such an allegation.²¹⁰ Despite his efforts, these *Liezi* sceptics now suspect one of these two men to be the likely compilers of the text. We now move forward in our study of the *Liezi*, having

208 Graham (1990b), p. 282. Seo (2000) p. 80 seems to suggest that Graham suspected Zhang Zhan of having committed the forgery, but this is not borne out in Graham's conclusion cited here, or in the original 1960 print of the article (see Graham (1960), p. 198).

209 Chen (1996), p. 268ff.

210 Graham (1990b), p. 282; Seo (2000), p. 88; Seo also suggests that Zhang Zhan may have been the forger – see Seo (2000), p. 278ff.

established that the compilation of the document is most plausibly took place in the 4th century on the basis of abundant linguistic and textual evidence.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CORE TEACHINGS OF THE *LIEZI*

Having established the motivations that exist for compiling a new Masters Text and demonstrating that the *Liezi* most plausibly is a Masters Text produced in the Wei-Jin period, the present chapter turns from the context of the compilation of the *Liezi* to the content of the document. This discussion will be a chapter summary of the eight *pian* of the *Liezi*, detailing the insights particular to those sections as well as larger themes that permeate the text. These will sketch the position of the *Liezi* on major questions of ontology, epistemology, and normative ethics. My intention is to summarize the intellectual claims of the *Liezi* in a comprehensive manner, producing an account secondary in detail and scope only to a careful reading of the entirety *Liezi* itself. A number of considerations come into play in such an attempt, outlined below.

An important step in establishing the major intellectual claims of a document is to be aware of the pitfall of selective quotation. In an age of digital scholarship it is perhaps too easy to seek out all instances of a term in a text and consider the task of understanding that term in the context of that document complete. The *Liezi*, like other documents, does not lend itself to that method of investigation. First, the reader must understand that the majority of the pericopes of the *Liezi* are in the form of dialogue or instruction – often the statements made about the nature of reality or the best course of action are introduced in order to be refuted by the compiler of the text, either through a protagonist mouthpiece or an appended auto-commentary. Reading these statements out of context can lead to misunderstandings of the text. Furthermore, though “gestures of affiliation” occur with frequency in the text, many assertions about reality, knowledge, or proper action are made obliquely without use of the kind of jargon for which scholars may be searching. Finally, Graham astutely notes that the characters and events of the *Liezi* often stand in contradiction to its core intellectual precepts.¹

It is imperative that an interpreter of the *Liezi* separate the didactic intent of the text from the narrative

¹ Graham (1960b), p. 16.

elements, and understand that including these narrative elements are not necessarily tantamount to an endorsement of existence. For example, the discussion in *Liezi* 2:19² of a man capable of mind to mind communication with monkeys is not merely a claim that such skills are real – such a character is included as part of a parable making a point about the misapprehension of the equivalence of things (though the reality of the situation is implied).

3.1 The Eight *Pian* of the *Liezi*

3.1.1 “Tian rui” 天瑞 - “The Portents of Heaven”

The first chapter of the *Liezi* is the most important in setting the baseline for the subsequent discussions of the text. It establishes the major ontological arguments of the document, in a manner that strongly suggests the claims made are meant to undergird the important assertions that make up the remaining chapters of the document. Two themes are introduced: (1) the nature of the transient and transcendent realms and (2) the characteristics of death. Elaboration on these important concepts are not confined to the “Tian rui” chapter, and indeed both are recurrent throughout the subsequent *pian* of the *Liezi*. However, the claims made in the “Tian rui” chapter are the foundation upon which later chapters build.

Seo has made understanding the basic ontological claims of the *Liezi* the central concern of his analysis of the text.³ Here I intend to outline the basic claims of the text (with reference to Seo's interpretation) so as to give context to other chapters examined below. Seo sees in the first six pericopes of the *Liezi* (*Liezi* 1:1 to *Liezi* 1:6)⁴ an internally consistent and coherent picture of reality made up of a hierarchical duality comprised of a transcendent being (most simply, though by no means

2 Readers of the *Zhuangzi* will recognize this basic premise from the “Qi wu lun” chapter.

3 Seo (2000), “The *Liezi* – the Vision of the World Interpreted by a Forged Text”. See especially the third chapter of the second part, “The Metaphysical Design of the *Liezi*”.

4 For Seo, it is the first five pericopes: *Liezi* 1:5 and 1:6 here comprise Seo's *Liezi* 1:5. Thomas Michael makes a very similar observation, and as he does not cite Seo's work, I must presume that they arrived at this conclusion independently. See Michael in Littlejohn & Dippmann (2011), p. 109.

exclusively, denoted as *wu* 無) and a realm of transient beings (indicated by the term *you* 有 at the most basic level, though other terms are used).⁵ The relationship between these two states is one of production; *wu*, by a variety of names, is always indicated to be the source of, controller of, and eventual point of return for all elements of *you*, without exception. *Wu* is constant, unchanging, and undifferentiated, while *you* is characterized by impermanence, flux, and division. Below I will offer textual sources for these claims.

The *Liezi* opens with the titular master being pressed by his disciples for a teaching before his departure from them. He offers wisdom overheard from his master Huzi 壺子:⁶

有生不生，有化不化。不生者能生生，不化者能化化。生者不能不生，化者不能不化。故常生常化。常生常化者，無時不生，無時不化。⁷

There is the Born and the Unborn; there is the Changing and the Unchanging. The Unborn is able to generate the Born and the Unchanging is able to change the Changing; the Born is not able to not be generated, and the Changing is not able to not be changed, and so they are constantly being generated and constantly changing. Constantly being generated and constantly changing, there is no time they are not generated, and no time they are not changing.

He furthermore states: 故生物者不生，化物者不化。⁸ “Therefore that which generates things is not generated and that which changes things does not change”. The Unborn and Unchanging share the same referent, which is later in the text identified as Nonbeing (*wu* 無).⁹ All transient beings will in time end, but in doing so they do not take on the characteristics of the transcendent being. In *Liezi* 1:5

5 Seo establishes as his basic terms Transcendent Being and Present Beings. These terms are serviceable, and while I chose to adopt “transcendent” for the referent *wu*, I prefer “transient” for *you*, as I believe it better emphasizes the ephemeral nature of existence as described in the *Liezi*.

6 This is the same master that Lie Yukou follows in the account of the shaman in both the *Zhuangzi* “Ying di wang” chapter and the *Liezi* “Huangdi” chapter. His name could perhaps be rendered in English as “Master Gourd”.

7 Yang (2007), p. 2.

8 Yang (2007), p. 4.

9 See especially the second section of Chapter Four of this dissertation. It is prudent to note that Thomas Michael, in his essay in Littlejohn & Dippmann, does not see the “Unborn” and “Unchanging” as sharing a referent (see Michael in Littlejohn & Dippmann (2011), pp. 110, 114-155). He makes this assertion on the claim that *Liezi* is overwriting the “Unborn” onto the *wu* 無 and the “Unchanging” onto the *you* 有 of *Laozi* 1. I follow Seo in his understanding that the “Unborn” and “Unchanging” share a referent in *wu*; see Seo (2000), pp. 110 ff, 180 ff.

we read:

有生則復於不生，有形則復於無形。不生者，非本不生者也；無形者，非本無形者也。生者，理之必終者也。終者不得不終，亦如生者之不得不生。¹⁰

The Born then returns to being ungenerated, the Shaped then returns to lacking a shape. But “being ungenerated” is not the Original Unborn, and “lacking a shape” is not the Original Lacking a Shape. For the Born there is a principle of inevitably coming to an end. That which ends must end, just as that which is born must be born.

The inescapable end of all transient things is the second important theme developed in the “Tian rui” chapter, as identified by Graham: “[A]ll things follow a course of growth and decline between birth and death; nothing can escape from change except the Dao, from which they come and to which they return”.¹¹ Implicit in the assertions made of transient beings is that we, the readers of the text, are members of that group, undeniably in possession of all benefits and constraints shared by them. Once making us aware of this the *Liezi* moves to provide intellectual grounds for reconciling with the inevitability of death, rooted in the same cosmology that describes that inevitability.

Liezi 1:6 offers the assurance, without immediate evidence, that death is respite and a return to one's previous state: 其在死亡也，則之於息焉，反其極矣。¹² “In one's destruction one then goes to rest in it, returning to the highest point.” The same theme is drawn up again in *Liezi* 1:9:

子貢倦於學，告仲尼曰：「願有所息。」仲尼曰：「生無所息。」子貢曰：「然則賜息無所乎？」仲尼曰：「有焉耳。望其壙，畢如也，宰如也，墳如也，鬲如也，則知所息矣。」子貢曰：「大哉死乎！君子息焉，小人伏焉。」仲尼曰：「賜！汝知之矣。人胥知生之樂，未知生之苦；知老之憊，未知老之佚；知死之惡，未知死之息也。」¹³

Zi Gong¹⁴ was weary of learning. He said to Zhong Ni,¹⁵ “I want to rest”. Zhong Ni said, “The living have no rest.” Zi Gong said, “If it is this way, then is there no means

10 Yang (2007), p. 19.

11 Graham (1990a), p. 14.

12 Yang (2007), p. 21.

13 Yang (2007), pp. 26-27.

14 An important disciple of Kongzi.

15 I.e., Confucius or Kongzi. As explained in this chapter, Kongzi is generally a sympathetic protagonist character in the *Liezi*, usually serving as a proxy for the thought of the compiler.

for me to get rest?” Zhong Ni said, “There is one way: gaze upon the grave pit – how high it is,¹⁶ how stately it is,¹⁷ like a high bank, [or] like a tripod – then you will know where rest.” Zi Gong said, “How great is death! The *junzi* rests in it, and the petty man lays down before it.”¹⁸ Zhong Ni said, “Ci!¹⁹ Now you understand it. People all know of the joy of life, but do not yet know the bitterness of life; they know the exhaustion of old age, but do not yet know the ease of old age; they know the hatefulness of death, but do not yet know the rest of death.”

Death in the “Tian rui” chapter is presented as merely the normal (and thus normative) course of things: all transient beings are fated to die, and one's proper course of action is to accept such a destiny. *Liezi*

1:5 suggests:

精神者，天之分；骨骸者，地之分。屬天清而散，屬地濁而聚。精神離形，各歸其真，故謂之鬼。鬼，歸也，歸其真宅。²⁰

As for the refined spirit,²¹ it is the portion of Heaven. As for the bones, they are the portion of Earth. That belonging to Heaven is pure and disperses; that belonging to Earth is turbid and collects. [When] the refined spirit departs from form, each returns (“*gui*”) to its true [state] and so it is called *gui* (“ghost”). *Gui* means “returned home”²² – they are returning to their true dwelling.²³

The “Tian rui” chapter and the *Liezi* as a whole are consistent in their embrace of the inevitability of death, suggesting it is better than life. As *Liezi* 1:10, utilizing similar wordplay as found above, suggests to us:

16 Yang Bojun points out that the *Xunzi* in a parallel passage (see note below) has *gao* 皋 for *yi* 巽; he furthermore points out that Wang Su suggests the gloss of *gaomao* 高貌 for a parallel passage in the *Kongzi jiyu*. See Yang (2007) p. 26.

17 The translation here is highly tentative; Graham seems to have ignored this descriptor in his translation (p. 26). The *shiwén* commentary suggests *zhongzai* 冢宰 for *zai* 宰 (Yang (2007) p. 26), indicating a government official. For more information, see Hucker entry 1632.

18 This exclamation by Zi Gong, as well as his question about the means to find rest and Kongzi's response, are also found in both the “Da lüe” chapter of the *Xunzi* and the “Kun shi” chapter of the *Kongzi jiyu*, virtually unchanged. The initial question, and Kongzi's final response, however, appear to be unique to the *Liezi*.

19 I.e., Zi Gong. Ci is his personal name.

20 Yang (2007), p. 20.

21 *Jingshen* 精神 here is clearly a two-character technical term. It can be found in the *Outer and Miscellaneous Chapters* of the *Zhuangzi*, where its use serves to distinguish that content from the *Inner Chapters*, as well as serving to distinguish late Warring States material from earlier material more generally – see Liu (1994), pp. 7-14. It is described by Andrew Meyer (in Major, et al. (2010), p. 878) as “the intensely potent energy that constitutes the mind and gives rise to consciousness and illumination”.

22 This bit of folk etymology is perhaps speculative, but it echoes a similar formulation found in the *Shuowen jiezi*: 人所歸為鬼。 “Of a person, that which returns is *gui*”. *Shuowen jiezi* in Xu (1996), vol. 1, p. 524.

23 This entire quotation is paralleled in the *Shuoyuan* “Fan zhi” chapter, with a great deal of variation. A similar set of claims are attributed to Yang Wangsun 楊王孫 (second century BCE) in the *Hanshu*; he makes these claims in support of his desire to be buried naked. See Csikszentmihalyi (2006), p. 149.

夫言死人為歸人，則生人為行人矣。行而不知歸，失家者也。²⁴

This is saying that dead people are the people who have returned home, [and so] then living people are traveling people. To travel and not know to return home is to lose one's home.

3.1.2 “Huangdi” 黃帝 - “The Yellow Emperor”

The *Liezi*'s second chapter builds on the themes introduced in “Tian rui”. If we are convinced of the hierarchical duality and inevitability of death, how are we to react? The “Huangdi” chapter suggests practical and cognitive solutions to this question. The titular hero of this *pian* is the subject of the first pericope, *Liezi* 2:1. Though Huangdi is mentioned many times in the *Liezi* as a sympathetic character, this is the only sustained narrative in which he is an actor. It begins:

黃帝即位十有五年，喜天下戴己，養正命，娛耳目，供鼻口，焦然肌色黧，昏然五情爽惑。又十有五年，憂天下之不治，竭聰明，進智力，營百姓，焦然肌色黧，昏然五情爽惑。黃帝乃喟然讚曰：「朕之過淫矣。養一己其患如此，治萬物其患如此。」²⁵

Huangdi, having already been enthroned for fifteen years, enjoyed all under Heaven bearing him up. He cared for his life,²⁶ pleased his ears and eyes, and provided for his nose and mouth; he burned²⁷ his flesh and his face darkened, dulling his five emotions and setting astray his understanding. [After] another fifteen years, he worried about all under Heaven's not being ordered, so he exhausted his auditory and ocular powers and employed his wisdom and strength in planning for the [people of] hundred surnames; [and again] he burned his flesh and his face darkened, dulling his five emotions and setting astray his understanding. Huangdi thereupon breathed a deep sigh²⁸ and said, “My error lay in being excessive! This is the disaster of nourishing oneself, and this is the disaster of governing the myriad things.”

Huangdi has realized that both courses of action – hedonism and assiduousness – are deleterious

24 Yang (2007), p. 27.

25 Yang (2007), pp. 39-40.

26 Following here A. C. Graham's interpretation of the passage (Graham (1990a), p. 33). One would expect the better attested *yangsheng* 養生的 of *Liezi* 7:7, which Graham references in his note. I suspect this formulation was adopted to preserve parallelism with the subsequent six characters.

27 The *shiwén* commentary suggests the alternative *jiao* 焦 for *qiao* 焦, but this does not radically change the meaning here (see Yang (2007) p. 39). The context is suggestive of Huangdi damaging his body and mind through either excess of indulgence or diligence; his flesh being “burned” or “scorched” should probably be understood as indicating an appearance of poor health. See also entry three for *jiao* 焦 in *Guhanyu changyongzi zidian*, p. 183, (*qiaocui* 憔悴).

28 Following Zhang Zhan's commentary, which suggests *tan* 歎 for *zan* 讚. Yang (2007) p. 40.

to his self. He abandons his palace and his role as leader, electing to fast and discipline himself in solitude. He dreams, and in his dream travels to the “state of Hua Xu”.²⁹ The trope of fictive societies is common in the *Liezi*; they generally serve not as geography lessons, but as didactic parables. Huangdi learns of a better course of action, superior to both his self gratification and his devotion to government affairs.

其國無師長，自然而已。其民無嗜慾，自然而已。不知樂生，不知惡死，故無夭殤；不知親己，不知疏物，故無愛憎；不知背逆，不知向順，故無利害：都無所愛惜，都無所畏忌。³⁰

This state lacks teachers and elders – it is so-of-itself, and that is all. The people lack cravings and desires – they are so-of-themselves, and that is all. They know not to enjoy life, they know not to hate death, and so they lack premature death; they know not to keep close their selves, they know not to neglect things, and so they lack love and hate; they know not to turn back or disobey, they know not to turn towards or follow, and so they lack [regard for] profit and harm; they all lack love or regret, they all lack fear or envy.

The description concludes with the typical powers and benefits associated with superior people – entering into fire or water without danger, or traveling without obstruction. The characteristics that define their actions are their spontaneity (*ziran* 自然) and their ignorance (*buzhi* 不知); Huangdi, inspired by his dream, comes to embody these characteristics and consequently comes to order the realm and ascend as immortal. This parable sets the tone for the remainder of the “Huangdi” chapter.

Liezi 2:6 relates the tale of Shangqiu Kai 商丘開, an impoverished man inspired to seek out the favour of Zi Hua 子華, a wealthy patron. He is abused and mocked by Zi Hua's retinue but remains completely oblivious to their ill intent. Challenged to leap from a high place, he acquiesces and miraculously survives; misled into believing a dangerous river bend contains a valuable pearl, he plunges in and indeed retrieves the valuable item; implored to rush into a burning building, he agrees

29 Hua Xu was the mother of mythological emperor Fu Xi 伏羲.

30 Yang (2007), p. 41.

and suffers no injury. Zi Hua and his entourage think he is in possession of some supernatural power, but Shangqiu Kai claims that he does not understand his abilities:

吾誠之無二心，故不遠而來。及來，以子黨之言皆實也，唯恐誠之之不至，行之之不及，³¹不知形體之所措，利害之所存也。心一而已。物亡迕者，如斯而已。今昉知子黨之誑我，我內藏猜慮，外矜觀聽，追幸昔日之不焦溺也，怛然內熱，惕然震悸矣。水火豈復可近哉？³²

“I really lacked two heart-minds [in believing that Zi Hua could enrich me], so I did not consider it far [to travel] and came [to meet him]. Upon arriving, I took all that you and your group said to be true, and only feared [my] sincerity's not being perfect, [and my] acting's not being complete. I did not know the way in which my form and limbs were arranged, or that which profit and harm preserved. My heart-mind was simply one. Things did not go against me – it was like this and that is all. Just now I realize your group has been deceiving me – inside I conceal speculation and worry, but externally I am reserved in watching and listening. Chasing after fortune these past days and not being burned or drowned – [I am] surprised to have been in a fire, worried so that I quake and tremble. How can I again go near water or fire?”

Shangqiu Kai, in having his ignorance erased, loses his ability to navigate dangers unselfconsciously. The same idea is echoed in *Liezi* 2:4, which like much of the “Huangdi” chapter mirrors the *Zhuangzi* – in this case, the “Da sheng” chapter specifically.

夫醉者之墜於車也，雖疾不死。骨節與人同，而犯害與人異，其神全也。乘亦弗知也，墜亦弗知也。死生驚懼不入乎其胸，是故還物而不懼。彼得全於酒而猶若是，而況得全於天乎？聖人藏於天，故物莫之能傷也。³³

When a drunk man falls from a cart and although it is [moving] quick he does not die. The bones and flesh are the same as that of another, yet the harm he incurs is different than that of another – it is because his spirit is whole. In riding he is unaware, and in falling he is unaware. Death and life, alarm and fear, do not enter into his bosom, and so he comes across things unexpected, but does not fear. He obtains wholeness in wine, and if it is like this [by means of wine], then how much more so to obtain wholeness from Heaven? The *shengren* conceals himself in Heaven, and so among things none are able to harm him.

Part of this celebration of ignorance is an ignorance of the distinction between the transient

31 Yang Bojun includes Lu Wenchao's 盧文弢 (1717-1795) note that the *Tai ping yulan* appropriation of this tale lacks the reduplication of *zhi* 之, though Yang himself includes the reduplicated version in his main text (Yang (2007), p. 57). I am indebted to Bruce Rusk for clarifying for me the grammatical usage here.

32 Yang (2007), p. 57.

33 Yang (2007), p. 51.

beings discussed in the “Tian rui” chapter. These distinctions give rise to misguided preferences, which in turn lead to improper action and the consternation of human beings. A fundamentally unique section of the “Huangdi” chapter describes the mistaken preference of the common person in contradistinction to that of the *shengren*. *Liezi* 2:18 begins:

狀不必童而智童，智不必童而狀童。聖人取童智而遺童狀，衆人近童狀而疏童智。狀與我童者，近而愛之；狀與我異者，疏而畏之。有七尺之骸，手足之異，戴髮含齒，倚而趣者，謂之人；而人未必无獸心。雖有獸心，以狀而見親矣。傅翼戴角，分牙布爪，仰飛伏走，謂之禽獸；而禽獸未必无人心。雖有人心，以狀而見疏矣。³⁴

[As for things in which] the form is not necessarily the same³⁵ but the wisdom is the same, [as well as things in which] the wisdom is not necessarily the same but the form is the same: the *shengren* takes [that with] same wisdom and abandons [that with] the same form, [while] the common people stay close to [that with] the same form and sets aside [that with] the same wisdom. One whose form is the same as their own, they keep close to and prefer; one whose form is different to their own, they set aside and fear. [That thing] having a seven *chi* skeleton,³⁶ a difference between its hands and feet, hair on its head and teeth in its mouth, leaning as it hurries, is called a person. But being a person does not necessarily mean one lacks a beast's heart-mind – and even if one may have a beast's heart-mind, by means of its form [another may] see it as close to oneself. [That thing] having attached wings and horns on the head, divided up teeth and spread out claws, looking up to fly or laying down to walk, [these] are called birds and beasts. But birds and beasts do not necessarily lack a human's heart-mind – although they have a human heart-mind, taking its form [another may] see it as something distant from oneself.

The point of the text here is not that the transient beings are not differentiated – indeed they are, and vary in form and intelligence. Differentiation is characteristic of transient existence. But only a properly cognisant *shengren* recognizes the proper categories of transient beings, while the bewildered common person mistakenly aligns only with the outwardly similar while rejecting that which is inwardly alike.

Liezi 2:19, another *Zhuangzi* parallel mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, tells us of a

34 Yang (2007), p. 83.

35 Following Zhang Zhan, reading *tong* 同 for *tong* 童 in the entirety of this passage. Yang (2007), p. 83.

36 Approximately 160 centimetres, roughly average human height.

monkey trainer who takes advantage of others' misapprehensions of reality in order to benefit himself. Facing financial straits, he approaches the animals in his care (it is asserted without comment that the trainer is capable of linguistic communication with monkeys):

先誑之曰：「與若茅，朝三而暮四，足乎？」衆狙皆起而怒。俄而曰：「與若茅，朝四而暮三，足乎？」衆狙皆伏而喜。物之以能鄙相籠，皆猶此也。聖人以智籠羣愚，亦猶狙公之以智籠衆狙也。名實不虧，使其喜怒哉！³⁷

“In giving you chestnuts, [I will give you] three in the morning and four in the evening – is that enough?” The group of monkeys all rose up and became angry. Soon he said, “In giving you chestnuts, [I will give you] four in the morning and three in the evening – is that enough?” The crowd of monkeys all lay down and were happy. A thing's ability to be able to put a lower [thing] in a cage is always like this. The *shengren* uses wisdom to cage the throngs of fools, just as the monkey trainer used wisdom to cage a pack of monkeys. Name and substance are not diminished, yet he commands their happiness or anger.³⁸

The “Huangdi” chapter builds on the ontology of the “Tian rui” chapter; having explained the nature of reality, the *Liezi* compiler describes the gradations of transient existence and one's appropriate response in light of that knowledge. Knowledge, or the lack thereof, will become the predominant theme of the next three chapters of the *Liezi*, building upon the foundation laid in the first two *pian*.³⁹

3.1.3 “Zhou Mu wang” 周穆王 - “King Mu of Zhou”

In terms of content, the “Zhou Mu wang” chapter differs significantly from the first two, in that it appears to be nearly entirely original material – that is to say, no significant parallels exist between it

37 Yang (2007), p. 86.

38 The conclusion of the *Liezi* passage differs from that found in the *Zhuangzi* in non-trivial ways. The conclusion of the *Zhuangzi* version has this comment:

名實未虧，而喜怒為用，亦因是也。是以聖人知之，而以是非，而休乎天鈞，是之謂兩行。

Name and substance are not yet diminished, but happiness and anger were used – this is 'adaptive understanding'. By this the *shengren* harmonizes his use of 'is' and 'is not', and rests upon the Wheel of Heaven; this is called Two Roads. See Guo (2004), p. 70.

“Adaptive understanding” is following A. C. Graham's gloss of *yinshi* as “the 'That's it' which goes by circumstance” (Graham (1981), p. 54). The conclusion of the *Zhuangzi* suggests a *shengren* using superior awareness to respond suitably to situations; the comment that follows the account in the *Liezi* suggests that the *shengren* is superior to and rightly in possession of power over less aware beings.

39 That these three chapters are alike in their prioritization of the problem of knowledge is also suggested by Barrett (2003), p. 398.

and surviving writings. Every section of this chapter addresses the problem of misperceptions of reality, adopting in most sections the trope of dreaming. Other parables make use of themes of forgetting and ignorance to remark upon the misunderstandings common to unenlightened transient beings.

Most chapters of the *Liezi* begin with a comparatively longer section, usually laying out the main points and framework for the remainder of the chapter; “Tian rui” begins with Lie Yukou's cosmological ontology, and “Huangdi” relates the parable of Huangdi's struggle for insight. This chapter opens with a tale of King Mu of Zhou welcoming a magician (*huaren* 化人) from the West.⁴⁰ He does his utmost to entertain his guest, but has little success. The magician takes King Mu on a journey to his kingdom in the sky, which surpasses that of the Zhou ruler in every manner. After a lengthy stay, the King is sent back to earth, and is alerted he had been dreaming. The dream ignites his fascination with journeys, and he subsequently makes his way to Kunlun 崑崙 and meets the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu 西王母). Yet in the end he realizes that his journeys have not brought him what he sought. The tale ends with this comment:

穆王幾神人哉！能窮當身之樂，猶百年乃徂，世以為登假焉。⁴¹

King Mu was almost a spirit person!⁴² Able to exhaust the pleasures of the body, yet after a hundred years he passed away; the world took him to have ascended [up to heaven as an immortal].⁴³

As Graham notes: “Unlike the Yellow Emperor [Huangdi], who did become an immortal...the pleasure-loving King Mu never profited by his dream”.⁴⁴ We learn that the compiler's attitude toward dreaming

40 The exact identity of this magician is unknown. During the compilation of the *Liezi* many intellectuals and spiritual teachers were arriving from the West, bringing the instructions of the Buddha. The text, however, makes no assertions. *Liezi* 4:3 mentions a sage from the West, but it is unclear if this is connected to *Liezi* 3:1.

41 Yang (2007), p. 99.

42 That is, “almost (but not quite)”. Zhang Zhan's commentary on this line states: 言非神也 “[This] means he was not a spirit [person]” (Yang (2007), p. 99).

43 The question here is how to interpret *dengjia* 登假. Zhang Zhan offers this commentary on the statement: 假字當作遐，明其實死也 “The character *jia* ought to be rendered *xia* ('distant'), illuminating that [King Mu of Zhou] had actually died.” (Yang (2007), p. 99) Zhang takes the import of this comment to be that King Mu of Zhou did not achieve immortality.

44 Graham (1990a), p. 65. Graham here is making reference to the tale in *Liezi* 2:1, discussed above.

is ambiguous – for Huangdi, it was a boon, but for King Mu nothing of great consequence came of dreaming, though its impact on him in his lifetime was significant.

The *Liezi* also offers what may be thought of as physiological explanations for dreams. *Liezi* 3:3 offers an explanation of why we dream and from where the contents of those dreams come. It appears to be a kind of method for dream interpretation:

故陰氣壯，則夢涉大水而恐懼；陽氣壯，則夢涉大火而燔灼；陰陽俱壯，則夢生殺。甚飽則夢與，甚饑則夢取。是以以浮虛為疾者，則夢揚；以沈實為疾者，則夢溺。藉帶而寢則夢蛇，飛鳥銜髮則夢飛。將陰夢火，將疾夢食。飲酒者憂，歌儻者哭。⁴⁵

Therefore if the *yin qi* is strong, then one dreams of wading through great waters and is fearful and afraid; if *yang qi* is strong, then one dreams of walking through great fires and is burned and scorched; if *yin* and *yang [qi]* are both strong, then one dreams of generating or killing.⁴⁶ If you are very full from eating then you dream of giving, if you are very hungry then you dream of taking. Accordingly, if one takes floating in the void to be worrisome, then one dreams of being raised up high; if one takes being fully submerged to be bad, then one dreams of drowning. When sleeping while laying on a belt, one will dream of snakes; if a flying bird holds your hair in its beak, you will dream of flying. When darkness nears, one will dream of fire, when illness nears one will dream of food. One who drinks wine is worried, and one who sings and dances will cry.⁴⁷

Yin and *yang* forces and their harmonious interaction is also discussed in *Liezi* 3:4, where dreaming is linked to the relative strength of *qi* in the environment. This is in contrast to another land in the far southwest, where *yin* and *yang* are not so precisely balanced. Below is a description of what would consider the standard approach to dreams:

四海之齊謂中央之國，跨河南北，越岱東西，萬有餘里。其陰陽之審度，故一寒一暑；昏明之分察，故一晝一夜。...一覺一寐，以為覺之所為者實，夢之所

45 Yang (2007), pp. 102-103.

46 The meaning here is somewhat opaque. Zhang Zhan comments: 陰陽以和為用者也。抗則自相利害，故或生或殺也。“*Yin* and *yang* are employed by being harmonious; if excessive, then they will benefit or harm one another - and so some generate and some kill.” Here, I am reading *kang* 抗 as *kang* 亢, in accordance with the *shiwén* commentary. (Yang (2007), p. 103).

47 Much of this material is mirrored closely in the *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經 chapter “*Maiyao jingwei lun*” 脈要精微論; this is one of the very few textual parallels in this chapter, and it does not account for this entire pericope.

見者妄。⁴⁸

[The places] equally [distant from] the Four Seas are called the Central States – they straddle the Yellow River south and north, and cross over Mount Tai east and west. They are more than ten thousand *li* [in size]. [There] the *yin* and *yang* are well measured, and so there are clearly delineated winters and summers. The division between darkness and brightness is discernible, and so there are clearly delineated days and nights... Sometimes awake and sometimes asleep, [the people here] take that which happens when awake to be real, and that which they see in dreams to be fantastic.

On the other hand, those in the far southwest,⁴⁹ where there is no contact between *yin* and *yang*, spend most of their time in dreams, and take waking life to be unreal. The *Liezi* suggests here that understanding the waking state as more real than dreaming to be only one mode of understanding. The attitude towards dreams in the *Liezi* described thus far seems to suggest their unreality – they can affect one's choices, as one did for King Mu of Zhou, but do not guarantee the correct choice; moreover, their causes can be traced to environmental or circumstantial factors. However, the argument is more complex than that. Consider *Liezi* 3:6, which tells of a man who kills a deer and hides the body, but forgets where he has hidden it. Thinking he dreamed the encounter, he leaves, but in mulling the matter over out loud he leads another man to find the carcass. The subsequent night the first man dreams of the second finding his deer, and on waking takes the case before the Chief Judge (*shishi* 士師)⁵⁰, who comments on the matter. He decides to split the deer between the two men. Commenting on the entire affair, and perhaps the idea of dreaming in general,⁵¹ the Prime Minister⁵² gives this evaluation:

夢與不夢，臣所不能辨也。欲辨覺夢，唯黃帝孔丘。今亡黃帝孔丘，孰辨之哉？
且恂士師之言可也。⁵³

48 Yang (2007), pp. 104-105.

49 This does not seem to be a description of a real place, but is instead another 'fictive society' created or used by the compiler of the *Liezi* for the purpose of making a point.

50 Following Hucker, entry 5299.

51 Though not the last pericope of this chapter, this is the last pericope that deals with the theme of dreaming in this chapter.

52 This is Graham's translation of *guoxiang* 國相 (Graham (1990a) p. 70). Hucker (entry 3514) offers "counselor-delegate", but this seems to be a post-Qin designation. If one goes by Hucker (entry 2303), we may say "state minister", which is largely inline with Graham's "prime minister".

53 Yang (2007), p. 108.

As for dreaming and not dreaming – I am not able to distinguish them. If one desires to distinguish waking and dreaming, the only [ones able to do so are] Huangdi and Kongzi. Now without Huangdi and Kongzi who can distinguish [waking and dreaming]? For now, let us trust the Chief Judge's words as appropriate.

We are left with the impression that there is a distinction between dreaming and waking, unreality and reality, but that the ability to make this distinction has been lost in the present age. It is not a denial of reality, but instead an uncertainty of whether we can know it.

This uncertainty has repercussions. The “Zhou Mu wang” chapter ends with a somewhat sombre story of the potential impact of our ignorance. Below is the entirety of *Liezi* 3:9.

燕人生於燕，長於楚，及老而還本國。過晉國，同行者誑之，指城曰：「此燕國之城。」其人愀然變容。指社曰：「此若里之社。」乃喟然而歎。指舍曰：「此若先人之廬。」乃涓然而泣。指壠曰：「此若先人之冢。」其人哭不自禁。同行者啞然大笑，曰：「予昔給若，此晉國耳。」其人大慙。及至燕，真見燕國之城社，真見先人之廬冢，悲心更微。⁵⁴

[There was] a man of Yan that was born in Yan but grew up in Chu, and when he was old he [set out] to return to his state of origin. Passing through the state of Jin, those on the same path as him deceived him, pointing to a city and saying, “This is the capital of the state of Yan”. The man discreetly changed his expression. They pointed to an altar and said, “This is the altar of your village.” Then he breathed deep and sighed. They pointed to a house and said, “This is your father's cottage.” Then he wept. They pointed to a grave mound and said, “This is your father's grave.” He wailed without restraining himself. Those going with him hoarsely gave a loud laugh, saying, “Just now we have tricked you, this is just the state of Jin.” The man was very ashamed. When he arrived at Yan, and he really saw the city and altar of the state of Yan, and really saw his father's cottage and grave, the sorrow in his heart-mind was less.

In being deceived, the man from Yan had a diminished experience of reality when he truly encountered it. The main message of the “Zhou Mu wang” seems to be an epistemological one – there is a fundamental reality, but we ought to recognize our potential ignorance of it.

54 Yang (2007), p. 113.

3.1.4 “Zhong ni” 仲尼 - “Confucius”⁵⁵

The fourth chapter of the *Liezi* contains the most references to Kongzi, though by no means are references to the original master only found here. Other masters, such as Dengxi and Gongsunlongzi 公孫龍子 (~325-250 BCE) also appear, as does the text's titular master, Lie Yukou. The basic theme of the chapter is the idea of the *shengren* 聖人 and the kind of special knowledge and demeanour peculiar to that type of person. We learn in the first three *pian* of the *Liezi* of ontological truths hidden in epistemological uncertainty – how does one learn these truths? By what means can one be certain they have grasped reality? For it is not the claim of the *Liezi* that there is no truth, only that most have not accessed it. The “Zhong Ni” chapter tells us of the *shengren* – often translated in English as “sage” – and explains their way of being in the world. The compiler of the text views Kongzi unambiguously as a *shengren*;⁵⁶ this is not to say, however, that the *Ru* are seen as exemplars.⁵⁷

Liezi 4:2 begins with a discussion of *shengren* and their abilities. Compared here are the capabilities of Kongzi and a disciple of Laozi named Kangcangzi 亢倉子 (6th century BCE?). Kongzi is suggested to have the ability to “cast aside his heart-mind and use his form”,⁵⁸ while Kangcangzi is suggested to have the ability to “use his ears to see and his eyes to hear”.⁵⁹ The latter is summoned and explains that he makes use of no sense organs in his seeing and hearing, explaining:

我體合於心，心合於氣，氣合於神，神合於無。其有介然之有，唯然之音，雖遠在八荒之外，近在眉睫之內，來干我者，我必知之。乃不知是我七孔四支之

55 “Zhong Ni” and “Confucius” are both names for Kongzi. In this chapter I will continue to use the designation “Kongzi” for the person, while adopting “Zhong Ni” as the chapter title.

56 One candidate that may be suggested as an exception would be *Liezi* 5:7, in which two squabbling children mock Kongzi for being unable to settle their dispute. However, I submit that the opinion of children arguing over mundane matters was not intended to be taken as the opinion of the compiler – that is to say that if this pericope has an object of satire it is petty bickering, not Kongzi.

57 Barrett suggests that chapter is in fact critical of Kongzi, and praises only the “Daoist sage” (Barrett (2003), p. 398). However, on my reading it is only the *Ru* in general that are criticized, often in their failure to properly emulate Kongzi.

58 廢心而用形 (Yang (2007), p. 117).

59 耳視而目聽 (Yang (2007), p. 118).

所覺，心腹六藏之所知，其自知而已矣。⁶⁰

My body is in accordance with my heart-mind, my heart-mind is in accordance with my *qi*, my *qi* is in accordance with my spirit, my spirit is in accordance with Nonbeing.⁶¹ The existence of a sole form⁶² or a single sound – whether they are far beyond the eight wildernesses⁶³ or near inside my eyebrow or eyelash – whatever comes and contacts me, I necessarily know it. Yet I know not if this is my seven holes⁶⁴ or four limbs becoming aware of it, [or if] my heart-mind and belly and six organs know it; it is simply spontaneously known.⁶⁵

Though the greater part of this exchange deals with the abilities of Kangcangzi, the parable ends with Kongzi learning of his powers, and responding only with a wordless smile.⁶⁶ This is redolent of the beginning of *Laozi* chapter fifty-six: 知者不言，言者不知。“Those knowing do not speak, those speaking do not know”.⁶⁷ This is in keeping with what would be the contemporary views of Kongzi held by the *xuanxue* thinkers writing before the compilation of the *Liezi* – an important point that will

60 Yang (2007), pp. 118-119.

61 Yang Bojun (Yang (2007) p. 119) suggests that the meaning here is probably of similar meaning to a passage found in the *Zhuangzi* “Ren jian shi” chapter: Kongzi's description of the “fasting of the mind” (*xin zhai* 心齋).

若一志，无聽之以耳而聽之以心，无聽之以心而聽之以氣！聽止於耳，心止於符。氣也者，虛而待物者也。唯道集虛。虛者，心齋也。

You unify your will. Do not listen with your ears but listen with your mind. Do not listen with your mind but listen with your *qi*. Hearing stops at the ear. The mind stops at tallies. It is the *qi* that is empty and awaits things. Only the Way gathers in emptiness. Emptiness is fasting of the mind. (Guo (2004), p. 147).

While the content is roughly similar in its discussion of the heart-mind and *qi* as being positioned as an interrelated set of faculties – body, heart-mind, *qi*, and spirit for the *Liezi* and ears, heart-mind, and *qi* for the *Zhuangzi* – they are not explicitly linked. The *Liezi* passage, for example, makes no mention of the principle of emptiness (*xu* 虛) in this context, even though we learn from Zhang Zhan's preface that this is (presumably) the central concern of the *Liezi*. In a similar manner the *Zhuangzi* text ignores the entity *wu* 無 (Nonbeing). Perhaps an argument can be made for identifying the principle of emptiness with the ontological category of Nonbeing, but this would be highly speculative. The *Zhuangzi* text appears to be establishing a hierarchy of “listening”, with the *qi* installed at the top; the *Liezi* text suggests a harmonious interlinking of faculties, without an implied superior position for the *qi*. For more on the use of Nonbeing in the *Liezi*, see the discussion on Wang Bi, Guo Xiang, and the *Liezi* in Chapter Four of the present work.

62 Following here the suggestion of Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (1848-1908): 此文以「有」與「音」相儷，「有」疑當作「形」。“This phrase is taking “being” and “sound” as a matched pair, it is suspected that “being” ought to be rendered “form”.” (Yang (2007), p. 119) Given the awkwardness of a double use of *you* in the expression, I am inclined to agree.

63 That is, the remote areas beyond the civilized world.

64 These are the sense apertures – two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and the mouth. More accurately, we should call these “orifices”.

65 This translation is in line with the usage of *zi* in the *Liezi*. Graham translates it more conventionally: “It is simply self-knowledge” (Graham (1990), p. 78). Being that external things are known, but Kangcangzi knows not the means he knows them, “spontaneously known” seems more apt.

66 Those familiar with the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* will see a similarity to Vimalakīrti's famous silence when asked about the notion of emptiness. That sūtra had been translated into Chinese by the time of the composition of the *Liezi*, but most likely without Vimalakīrti's silent response. I explore this in greater detail in Chapter Five.

67 Lou (2009), p. 147.

be explored in the subsequent chapter of this work.

Kongzi is pressed into speaking on the qualities of the *shengren* in *Liezi* 4:3, where he predictably denies this designation to himself, and admits ignorance as to the applicability of the characteristics of the *shengren* to famous rulers of the past. When asked who could be described as a *shengren*, Kongzi suspects only one person exists that may claim this title:

西方之人有聖者焉，不治而不亂，不言而自信，不化而自行，蕩蕩乎民無能名焉。丘疑其為聖。弗知真為聖歟？真不聖歟？⁶⁸

Among the people of the Western regions,⁶⁹ there is a *sheng[ren]*: he does not order, yet there is no disorder; he does not speak, yet is trusted spontaneously; he does not transform, yet things proceed spontaneously; his immensity is such that among the people none are able to name him. I suspect he is a *sheng[ren]*. I do not know if he is truly a *sheng[ren]*, [or] is he truly not a *sheng[ren]*.

As is true of *Liezi* 4:2, the description of the sage here again calls to mind descriptions found in the *Laozi*. Consider an abbreviated *Laozi* seventeen in reference to the people not “able to name him” of the *Liezi*: 太上，下知有之 ... 功成事遂，百姓皆謂我自然。“The greatest superior is one that those below do not know the existence of...with work complete and affairs carried out, the common people all say, 'We are just naturally this way'.”⁷⁰ Much of the *shengren*'s ability to achieve through inaction reminds one of a description in *Laozi* seventy-three:

天之道，不爭而善勝，不言而善應，不召而自來，繹然而善謀。天網恢恢，疏而不失。⁷¹

As for the Way of Heaven: it does not contend but is good at gaining victory; it does not speak but is good at responding; it does not summon but [things] of their own accord come [to it]; it is calm and is good at planning. Heaven's net is vast – it is wide and does not lose [anything].

68 Yang (2007), p. 121.

69 Graham notes that the mention of “Western regions” has led to speculation about this *shengren* being either Laozi, the Buddha, or (most recently) Jesus of the Christian tradition. See Graham (1990a), p. 79. I suspect, given the content of the passage, that the most likely candidate would be Laozi, but the identity of this *shengren* is ultimately unknown.

70 Lou (2009), p. 40.

71 Lou (2009), pp. 181-182.

When silent, Kongzi bears the image of *shengren* as found in the *Laozi*; and when forced to speak, he describes a *Laozi*-ian *shengren* while denying being one. The “gestures of affiliation” here are undeniable: for the compiler of the *Liezi*, Kongzi is a *shengren* as we may find in the *Laozi* – a claim that echoes those found in *xuanxue* writings of the Wei-Jin period.⁷²

The compiler of the *Liezi* recognizes that the misguided multitude rarely see a *shengren*'s incisive knowledge for what it is – even if they by happenstance manage to possess it. *Liezi* 4:8 offers the narrative of Long Shu 龍叔 and his consultation with the famous physician Wen Zhi 文摯. The former describes his illness:

吾鄉譽不以為榮，國毀不以為辱；得而不喜，失而弗憂；視生如死；視富如貧；視人如豕；視吾如人。處吾之家，如逆旅之舍；觀吾之鄉，如戎蠻之國。凡此衆疾，爵賞不能勸，刑罰不能威，盛衰、利害不能易，哀樂不能移。固不可事國君，交親友，御妻子，制僕隸。⁷³

My village praises [me] but I do not take it as honour; the state defames me but I do not take it as disgrace. In gaining I am not happy and in losing I am not grieved. I see life as though it were death; I see riches as though they were poverty; I see other people as though they were pigs; I see myself as another person. Dwelling in my home it is as though I am lodging in an inn; observing my village it is as though I am in a barbaric land. So with these many illnesses: titles and rewards are not able to encourage me, laws and punishments are not able to overawe me, increase and decrease, profit and harm are not able to change me, grief and joy are not able to move me. Certainly I am unable to serve the lord of the state, interact with intimate friends, govern over my wife and children, or order my servants and subordinates!

Long Shu has implored Wei Zhi to heal him, but after making his examination the physician admits his inability to do so:

嘻！吾見子之心矣：方寸之地虛矣。幾聖人也！子心六孔流通，一孔不達。今以聖智為疾者，或由此乎！非吾淺術所能已也。⁷⁴

Ah! I see your heart-mind – a place one *cun* square is empty;⁷⁵ you are nearly a

72 This point is discussed further in Chapter Four. I believe that the argument here is meant more to establish Kongzi as a sage than to promote the ideology of the *Laozi*, similar to some presentations of Kongzi in the *Zhuangzi neipian*.

73 Yang (2007), p. 129.

74 Yang (2007), p. 130.

75 About 2.25 cm².

shengren! Your heart-mind has six holes that are flowing open, [but] one hole is not cleared of blockage.⁷⁶ Now, you take sage wisdom⁷⁷ to be an illness – perhaps it comes from this! It is not my shallow technique that can bring an end to it.

Leaving aside the intriguing physiological claims made regarding the body of the *shengren*, the relevant argument made here is that those goals that are conventionally lauded as correct exist in antithesis to the goals of the *shengren* – aims such as reputation and reward. Having cast aside these false goals Long Shu takes pains to resolve his affliction, not recognizing it for the great state it is. How much more rare is the *shengren* when one on verge of attaining such a position resolves to undo it!

3.1.5 “Tang wen” 湯問 - “The Questions of Tang”

The fifth chapter of the *Liezi* veers away from explicitly didactic material and shifts focus to what may be considered fantastic tales, perhaps somewhat in the style of the popular emerging genre of the Wei-Jin period known as *zhiguai* 志怪.⁷⁸ Examples roughly contemporary with the compilation of the *Liezi* include the *Bowuzhi* 博物志 and *Soushenji* 搜神記. The most common known source for the “Tang wen” material is the *Shanhaijing* 山海經, itself the best existing source for what can be thought of as early “mythological” material. Robert Ford Company, in his exhaustive study of the *zhiguai* genre, has identified five characteristics of the literary type:⁷⁹ (1) a brief, narrative form; (2) a “non-metrical” and “non-parallel, non-rhyming, classical prose”;⁸⁰ (3) content of an “anomalous” nature; (4) a non-canonical status (i.e., exclusion from official Confucian, Daoist, or Buddhist canons); and (5) the

76 The reference here to seven apertures is not the same as the seven sense apertures in *Liezi* 4:2 above. Zhang Zhan offers only a short and vague comment: 舊說聖人心有七孔也。 “In ancient times it was said that the *shengren*'s heart-mind had seven holes” (Yang (2007), p. 130). Perhaps he had in mind the *Shiji* narrative in the *Yinbenji* 殷本紀, which tells of Bi Gan 比干 remonstrating with the wicked ruler Zhou 紂, who responds in a manner befitting a tyrant: 紂怒曰: 「吾聞聖人心有七竅。」剖比干, 觀其心。 “Zhou angrily said, 'I hear the *shengren*'s heart-mind has seven openings.' He cut open Bi Gan and observed his heart-mind [i.e., the actual organ].” (*Shiji* (1973Guo (2004)), p. 108) The same act is attributed to Zhou's concubine Daji 妲己 in the *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳. The event is also referenced in the second chapter of the *Huainanzi*; see Major et al. (2010), p. 106.

77 Literally, “*sheng* 聖 wisdom”.

78 “Genre” here follows Company's use of the word; see his discussion in Company (1996), pp. 21 ff.

79 Company (1996), pp. 24-32.

80 Company (1996), p. 25.

presence of a variety of “intertextual markers”, including titles and vocabularies particular to the genre. The *Liezi* “Tang wen” chapter mostly conforms to the first three criteria of *zhiguai* laid out by Campany, in that it largely offers a selection of brief, self-contained prose narratives describing strange events. Though the *Liezi* is now a part of the Daoist Canon, it is not treated as hagiographical or cosmographical material, and as such it most likely fulfills Campany's fourth criterion. As a single *pian* in a text that otherwise diverges from the *zhiguai* genre, the “Tang wen” chapter does not fully comply with the fifth criteria. It is worth noting that the medieval text the *Jinlouzi* 金樓子 also contains a chapter very much in the style of *zhiguai*, which is fact entitled “Zhi guai”.

It is difficult to uncover a unifying philosophical theme in the material presented in this chapter. Graham suggests that the unlikely tales of supernatural beings, superhuman feats, and fictive communities are used to make an indirect epistemological point – that our scepticism of outlandish tales ought to be tempered by an admission that our view of reality is at best fragmentary and not comprehensive.⁸¹ The chapter ends with *Liezi* 5:17, discussed in Chapter Two of the present work, in which a misguided ruler wrongly jeers at the idea of a fire-washed cloth and jade-cutting blade. Zhang Zhan comments at the end of this pericope, which closes the chapter:

此一章斷後，而說切玉刀火浣布者，明上之所戴皆事實之言，因此二物無虛妄者。⁸²

As for the ending of this particular *zhang* and its discussion of the jade-cutting blade and the fire-washed cloth, it illuminates that all of the matters recorded above are true, based on the fact that these two things [i.e., the blade and cloth] are not untrue [i.e., these two things are real].

The reasoning here, though convoluted, is at least helpful in discovering why this chapter was composed at all. Many of the narratives are devoid of explicit didactic content, at least in a rigorous intellectual sense; instead, they offer incredible stories that explain geographic or cultural features of

81 Graham (1990b), p. 92. Barrett, likely following Graham, reiterates the point in Barrett (2003), p. 398.

82 Yang (2007), p. 190.

the contemporary world.

One such tale, as a representative example, comprises half of *Liezi* 5:11:

昔韓娥東之齊，匱糧，過雍門，鬻歌假食。既去而餘音繞梁欂，三日不絕，左右以其人弗去。過逆旅，逆旅人辱之。韓娥因曼聲哀哭，一里老幼悲愁，垂涕相對，三日不食。遽而追之。娥還，復為曼聲長歌，一里長幼喜躍抃舞，弗能自禁，忘向之悲也。乃厚賂發之。故雍門之人至今善歌哭，效娥之遺聲。⁸³

Formerly Han E was heading east to Qi but was low on provisions. Going past Yong Gate⁸⁴ she relied on her singing to get rice gruel to eat. After she left the remaining sounds coiled around the roof beams, and for three days they did not stop – everyone thought that she had not left. Passing by an inn an inn keeper insulted her. Han E then gave a long song of mourning and lamentation [to the] old and young of the whole village; they were sad and grieved, and their tears flowed down in response. For three days they did not eat. They quickly followed her. E came back again to sing a long tune with drawn out notes, [to the] old and young of that village; they were happy and leaping about, clapping and dancing. They were not able to stop themselves, and forgot their previous sadness. Thereupon they generously sent her off with gifts. And so the people of Yong Gate up until now are good at singing and wailing, imitating the sounds left behind by E.

There is no hint here of normative guidance; even the rude inn keeper serves only as a prop to propel the story forward. The story ends on an explanatory note, simply elucidating why the people in the vicinity of Yong Gate excel in their vocal training.

It is in concert with other fantastic tales, and perhaps with Zhang Zhan's brief comment that summarizes the chapter, we can understand this story's role in the *Liezi*. It is one of epistemological humility; not a unique one, as we have seen in the *Liezi* chapters already discussed, but here presented in a more oblique manner. In the first chapter of the present work I quoted Liu Xie's *Wenxin Diaolong*, in which he decries the absurd and fanciful assertions made in texts like the *Liezi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi*. I turn now to one of those tales – an excerpt from *Liezi* 5:2:

江浦之間生麼蟲，其名曰焦螟，羣飛而集於蚊睫，弗相觸也。栖宿去來，蚊弗覺也。離朱子羽方晝拭背揚眉而望之，弗見其形；魴俞師曠方夜擗耳俛首而聽

83 Yang (2007), pp. 177-178.

84 This probably refers to a city gate of the capital of Qi during the Spring and Autumn Period.

之，弗聞其聲。唯黃帝與容成子居空峒之上，同齋三月，心死形廢；徐以神視，塊然見之，若嵩山之阿；徐以氣聽，砰然聞之，若電霆之聲。⁸⁵

In the space between the banks of the Yangzi live small insects called by the name 'jiaoming'. They fly in a swarm and gather on the eyelash of mosquitoes, [yet] they do not knock against one another. They perch long and then leave, and the mosquitoes do not realize it. Li Zhu and Zi Yu⁸⁶ during the day wiped their eyes and raised their brows to look for them, [but] did not see their form. Zhi Yu and Master Kuang⁸⁷ during the night scratched their ears and lowered their heads to listen for them, [but] did not hear their sounds. Only Huangdi and Rongchengzi⁸⁸ dwelling upon Mount Kongtong, fasting together for three months, [with] their heart-minds dead and their forms abolished – they gently used their spirits to observe [them], and like a clod⁸⁹ they saw them, as though [they were as large as] the slopes of Mount Song. They gently used their *qi* to listen [to them], and rumbling they heard them as though they were [as loud as] the sounds of a thunderclap.

This is precisely what Liu Xie denounced as nonsense and what Zhang Zhan assures us is proven by the factual nature of the fantastic objects discussed in the final pericope of the “Tang wen” chapter. The parable, presented here only in part, speaks to the larger concern of epistemology. The “Tang wen” chapter illustrates for its readers an incredible world, one which none of them have likely experienced, but does so in an effort to explain that simply because a reality is not readily perceived one ought not think it unreal. Many experts tried to discern the *jiaomiao* insects, but failed; only a few, who have excelled beyond conventional means, are able to know of their existence. A parallel and more general assertion is being made: the ontological reality the *Liezi* presents is not readily accessible to untrained minds relying on mundane sense experience, but that does not undermine its being real, as can be attested by the testimony of the text. The argument is not really about minuscule insects, but is a didactic ploy to have the reader consider ontological possibilities not readily apparent.

There are some philosophical insights to be gleaned from the “Tang wen” chapter, however.

85 Yang (2007), pp. 157-158.

86 Men renowned for their keenness of sight.

87 Both were known for their ability to discern sound.

88 Huangdi is the same mythological emperor found above. The event described is probably the same as in the *Zhuangzi* “Zai you” chapter, which has Huangdi's teacher's name as Guangchengzi 廣成子 (Guo (2004), p. 379).

89 “Clod-like” is perhaps a reference to a story about Liezi in the *Zhuangzi*, where it describes a particular state of obliviousness.

One tale, relating to the skill of Zhan He in *Liezi* 5:8, is reminiscent of “skill stories” found in the *Zhuangzi*:

詹何以獨繭絲為綸，芒鍼為鈎，荊篠為竿，剖粒為餌，引盈車之魚於百仞之淵、汨流之中；綸不絕，鈎不伸，竿不撓。楚王聞而異之，召問其故。詹何曰：「臣聞先大夫之言，蒲且子之弋也，弱弓纖繳，乘風振之，連雙鶴於青雲之際。用心專，動手均也。臣因其事，放而學釣。五年始盡其道。當臣之臨河持竿，心無雜慮，唯魚之念；投綸沈鈎，手無輕重，物莫能亂。魚見臣之釣餌，猶沈埃聚沫，吞之不疑。所以能以弱制彊，以輕致重也。大王治國誠能若此，則天下可運於一握，將亦奚事哉？」楚王曰：「善。」⁹⁰

Zhan He used only a silk filament from a cocoon as a fishing line, a punctured grain of rice as a hook, a piece of bamboo from Chu as a pole, a split granule of rice as bait. [Yet] he would draw up fish bigger than a cart from an abyss a hundred *ren* deep,⁹¹ in the middle of a choppy current. The line would not break, the hook would not stretch out, and the pole would not twist. The king of Chu heard of this and thought it unusual, and summoned him to ask the reason [for this ability]. Zhan He said, “I heard my father's words [related to this]: When Puqiezi shot an arrow with a string, [his] bow was weak and [his] line was fine, and it rode on the wind [when he] shook it; [yet the arrow] connected with a pair of cranes on the edge of a blue cloud. He used a heart-mind that was concentrated, and in moving his hands he was harmonious.⁹² Because I followed this example, imitated and studied it in fishing, in five years I began to fully realize this Way. When I am overlooking the river and holding my fishing pole, my heart-mind lacks disparate concerns, only thinking of the fish; I cast the line and sink the hook, my hands are neither light nor heavy, and among things there are none that can disturb them. The fish sees my hook and bait as though it were submerged dust or collected foam, and gulps it without suspicion. This is the means by which I am able to control strength by means of weakness and command heaviness by means of lightness. If you, a great king, are able to truly do likewise in ordering your state, then all under Heaven can be rolled about in one hand: indeed, what problems could there be?” The King of Chu said, “Good.”

Though this pericope may have been included more for its fantastic content than its didactic qualities, the source may have indeed been more philosophical in nature. One wonders if it may have belonged to the “Lost” *Zhuangzi* chapters. Erin Cline has made the thoughtful insight that this passage, thought superficially similar to the *Zhuangzi* in its portrayal of what might be called *wuwei*, seems

90 Yang (2007), pp. 172-173.

91 Perhaps around 150 meters.

92 “Harmonious” here translates *jun* 均. The first part of this pericope, which I have omitted, is a reflection on the merits of being harmonious (or “equalising”, as Graham has it in Graham (1990), p. 105). I am grateful to Bruce Rusk for pointing out the graphic pun here between *jun* 均 and *gou* 鈎.

more ideologically concerned with the application of this state to political governance (as evidenced in Zhan He's final statement). In this way, this portion of the *Liezi* text demonstrates an ideological and practical alignment with the *Laozi*.⁹³

3.1.6 “Li ming” 力命 - “Effort and Fate”

Unlike the previous chapters of the *Liezi*, the basic message of the “Li ming” chapter is not difficult to ascertain: it is the perennial question of the utility of effort against the inevitability of fate. This chapter, along with the “Yang Zhu” chapter, were explicitly singled out by the Liu Xiang in his *Liezi* preface as being contradictory and problematic.⁹⁴ The “Li ming” chapter itself reads more as a survey of competing interpretations of a worldview that takes effort to be ineffective as a means to work against one's own fate. All pericopes of the text are consistent on this point; they vary, however, on the details. The origin of one's fate, and whether it is a function of spontaneity, are questions that are not answered in a uniform manner. I suspect that the compiler of the *Liezi* was somewhat constrained in the production of the text: because Liu Xiang's preface explicitly describes the content of this and the “Yang Zhu” chapter, the compiler may have had to sacrifice intellectual coherence for the sake of textual consistency. That said, there is little in the “Li ming” chapter that explicitly contradicts the preceding chapters. The matter of compilation constraints will be explored further in the review of the subsequent “Yang Zhu” section.

Most chapters of the *Liezi* are titled with the name of a figure of intellectual or historical importance: Huangdi, King Mu of Zhou, Zhong Ni (i.e., Kongzi), and Yang Zhu are the obvious examples, and the emperor Tang is mentioned in the title of the fifth chapter. The first and final chapters, “Tian rui” and “Shuo fu”, are immediately recognizable as exceptions to this convention.⁹⁵

93 Cline in Littlejohn & Dippmann (2011), pp. 230-235.

94 See p. 59 of Chapter Two of this work.

95 Barrett notes that both the *rui* of “Tian rui” and the *fu* of “Shuo fu” were words used in the Han for omens and portents. See Barrett (2003), pp. 397, 399.

The title “Li ming” also appears to break with this rule, as it is in reference to a concept rather than person; however, the first section of the “Li ming” chapter presents to us a dialogue between a personified “Effort” and “Fate”. Though this rhetorical strategy is dropped after the first section the characterization of the principles of “Effort” and “Fate” is striking in its creativity. Their discussion in *Liezi* 6:1 sets the tone for the remainder of the chapter:

力謂命曰：「若之功奚若我哉？」命曰：「汝奚功於物而欲比朕？」力曰：「壽夭、窮達，貴賤、貧富，我力之所能也。」命曰：「彭祖之智不出堯舜之上，而壽八百；顏淵之才不出衆人之下，而壽十八。仲尼之德不出諸侯之下，而困於陳蔡；殷紂之行不出三仁之上，而居君位。季札無爵於吳，田恆專有齊國。夷齊餓於首陽，季氏富於展禽。若是汝力之所能，柰何壽彼而夭此，窮聖而達逆，賤賢而貴愚，貧善而富惡邪？」⁹⁶

Effort said to Fate, “How could it be that your achievements are like mine?” Fate said, “What are your achievements in [affecting] things that you desire to compare [yourself] with me?” Effort said, “Long life or dying young, failing or succeeding, being noble or lowly, being poor or rich; this is what my strength is capable of.” Fate said, “Peng Zu's wisdom did not exceed that of Yao or Shun,⁹⁷ and he lived eight hundred years; Yan Yuan's talent was not less than that of the average person, and he lived eighteen years.⁹⁸ As for Zhong Ni's virtue: it was not less than the feudal lords, yet he was blocked at Chen and Cai.⁹⁹ As for the actions of Zhou of Yin: they were not better than the three benevolent [ones],¹⁰⁰ yet he occupied the station of ruler. Ji Zha lacked a title in Wu, [and] Tian Heng alone had the state of Qi.¹⁰¹ [Bo] Yi and [Shu] Qi starved on [Mount] Shou Yang, and the Ji clan was richer than Zhan Qin.¹⁰² If this is what your strength is capable of, why give long life to one and early death to another, have the sagely¹⁰³ fail and have the perverse succeed, make the worthy lowly and make the stupid honoured, make good impoverished and make the bad wealthy?”

Fate has demonstrated for Effort that despite all their moral qualities, many good people have suffered

96 Yang (2007), pp. 192-193.

97 Peng Zu was known to be exceptionally long lived; Yao and Shun were morally upright rulers of antiquity.

98 Yan Yuan, also known as Yan Hui, a favourite and exceptional student of Kongzi, unexpectedly died young.

99 This is in reference to a well known episode of Kongzi lore, in which Kongzi and his disciples found themselves destitute and persecuted. It has undergone many iterations with varying degrees of detail in many other texts; it is not elaborated upon here.

100 Yang Bojun points out this as a reference to *Lunyu* 18:1 (Cheng (2008) p. 193) – 微子去之，箕子為之奴，比干諫而死。孔子曰：「殷有三仁焉。」“The Viscount of Wei banished himself. The Viscount of Ji made himself a slave. Bi Gan remonstrated and died. Kongzi said, 'Yin had three benevolent [ones] in it.'” (Cheng (2008), p. 1247).

101 Ji Zha was a worthy royal that declined the throne. Tian Heng was a corrupt minister that killed his sovereign.

102 Bo Yi and Shu Qi were virtuous brothers that starved themselves for their ideals. The Ji clan were the illegitimate ruling family of the state of Lu, while Zhan Qin was a statesman of Lu known for his incorruptible nature.

103 “Sagely” here translates *sheng*, the same character as used in *shengren* 聖人.

while the wicked prospered. After dispelling Effort's misguided understanding of the situation, Fate goes on to deny its own responsibility in the matters discussed above:

力曰：「若如若言，我固無功於物，而物若此邪，此則若之所制邪？」命曰：「既謂之命，柰何有制之者邪？朕直而推之，曲而任之。自壽自夭，自窮自達，自貴自賤，自富自貧，朕豈能識之哉？朕豈能識之哉？」¹⁰⁴

Effort said, “If it is as you say, I certainly lack an effect on things. Yet things are like this. If it is so, then do you control them?” Fate said: “Having said it is fate – how then could there be a controller? When straight I push them, when bent [I] release them. Spontaneous long life and spontaneous early death, spontaneous failure and spontaneous success, spontaneous honour and spontaneous lowliness, spontaneous wealth and spontaneous poverty: how could I be able to know them? How could I be able to know them?”

The meaning here is clear: the vicissitudes of transient existence, including all benefit and harm, occur naturally, so-of-themselves, and are not controlled or planned by an external agent. This is somewhat difficult to reconcile with the didactic point of *Liezi* 6:2. The section begins with the shaming of Beigongzi 北宮子 by Ximenzi 西門子¹⁰⁵ when the former asks the latter why, when they are ostensibly equal in every way, does one succeed and the other fail. Ximenzi answers:

汝造事而窮，予造事而達，此厚薄之驗歟？而皆謂與予並，汝之顏厚矣。¹⁰⁶

You come upon a matter and fail; I come upon a matter and succeed. Can this be the verification of [our] strengths and weaknesses? And in all cases you say that you are the same as me: you are shameless.

Crestfallen, Beigongzi leaves. He comes upon Master Dongguo 東郭先生, who aims to set Ximenzi straight on the matter. The three meet and Master Dongguo explains the truth:

夫北宮子厚於德，薄於命，汝厚於命，薄於德。汝之達，非智得也；北宮子之窮，非愚失也。皆天也，非人也。而汝以命厚自矜，北宮子以德厚自愧。皆不識夫固然之理矣。¹⁰⁷

104 Yang (2007), p. 193.

105 The *Liezi*, like the *Zhuangzi*, will on occasion use rather creative names for its interlocutors. Here, Beigongzi means something like “Master North Palace”, and Ximenzi could be translated as “Master West Gate”.

106 Yang (2007), p. 195.

107 Yang (2007), p. 195.

Beigongzi is abundant in virtue but lacking in fate; you are abundant in fate but lacking in virtue. Your success is not obtained by wisdom and Beigongzi's failure is not a loss by way of stupidity. In all cases it is Heaven – not human. Yet you take fate being abundant to boast of yourself, and Beigongzi takes virtue being abundant to shame himself; in both cases you do not recognize the spontaneous principle.¹⁰⁸

Master Dongguo's rebuttal to Ximenzi, like that of the character Fate in *Liezi* 6:1, does not attribute any impact on one's circumstances to human effort. The source of one's fate, however, seems on the surface to differ between passages. The text itself seems to suggest Heaven (*tian* 天) as the active source, ascribing results to that external agent. Zhang Zhan seems to have picked up on this, and comments on the phrase “In all cases it is Heaven – not human,” as follows: 此自然而然，非由人事巧拙也。“This is spontaneously so; it is not from people engaging in affairs with either skill or clumsiness.”¹⁰⁹ He is equating here the concept of Heaven with that of spontaneity. The move appears to be one of promoting an idea of consistency within the text, and in light of the association of Heaven and spontaneity in the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* it is plausible. However, a further complication arises when one reads *Liezi* 6:10:

死生自命也，貧窮自時也。怨夭折者，不知命者也；怨貧窮者，不知時者也。當死不懼，在窮不戚，知命安時也。¹¹⁰

Death and life are from fate; poverty and failure are from the times.¹¹¹ Those that resent an early death or being destroyed are those that do not understand fate; those that resent poverty or failure are those that do not understand the times. Facing death and not being afraid and being in hardship without grief – [it is] knowing fate and being at peace with the times.

108 “Spontaneous principle” translates *guran zhi li* 固然之理, understanding *guran* as *ziran* 自然 in accordance with Yang Bojun's commentary: 「固然」疑當作「自然」。“*Guran*’ should probably be written '*ziran*’” (Yang (2007), p. 195). The language here is strikingly similar to a famous passage from the “Yang sheng zhu” chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, in which Butcher Ding discusses his methods of preparing an ox: 依乎天理，批大郤，導大窾，因其固然 “[I] rely on the Heavenly Principle: striking [my blade] into the large gaps and conducting it through the big openings, relying on spontaneity.” (Guo (2004), p. 119).

109 Yang (2007), p. 195

110 Yang (2007), p. 212. This phrase is also found in the *Dengxizi* 鄧析子 with minor variation.

111 It is clear from Zhang Zhan's commentary that this was probably originally “poverty and wealth” (*pinfu* 貧富), as Tao Hongqing's 陶鴻慶 (1859-1918) note suggests (Yang (2007), p. 212). I have used and translated Yang Bojun's version, understanding that the overall point is not significantly different.

In *Liezi* 6:1 the character Fate explicitly denies being the source of long life and early death. Now in *Liezi* 6:10 the point seems to be that these things do come from (a now impersonal) fate, and that they are not spontaneously occurring. Perhaps this could again be further explained away – the spontaneous principle that governs life and death may be easily referred to as “fate”. A close reading of the “Li ming” forces us to acknowledge the assertion that circumstances are not governed by human endeavour. Yet whether or not realities such as death or reward can be thought of as arising in a purely spontaneous manner or having as their source from an external agent (such as “Heaven”) is in the final analysis unclear.¹¹² On the whole, the spontaneous nature of fate is characteristic of the chapter; however, arriving at a robust formulation of this doctrine is thwarted by ambiguous language or contradictory claims.

3.1.7 “Yang Zhu” 楊朱 - “Yang Zhu”

There are currently no reliably authentic writings of the historical intellectual Yang Zhu. His thought comes to us largely through the criticisms made by his and his school's detractors, such as those that we find in the *Mengzi*. As well, some “Yangist” works may have found their way into the *Mixed Chapters* of the *Zhuangzi* and the *Lüshi Chunqiu*. The “Yang Zhu” chapter of the *Liezi* is also very much unlikely to be an authentic record of the teachings of Yang Zhu or members of his intellectual lineage. What is more likely is that the compiler of the *Liezi*, perhaps constrained by Liu Xiang's report,¹¹³ was compelled to create a miscellany of hedonistic or pseudo-hedonistic musings related often only tangentially to the remainder of the *Liezi*.¹¹⁴ Unlike the “Li ming” chapter that precedes it, the “Yang Zhu” material is frequently at odds with claims made in other chapters of the

112 In a sense this discrepancy mirrors aspects of the differences in the ontological understandings of Wang Bi and Guo Xiang, in that both debates turn on the question of either an externally guided or internally spontaneous unfolding of events. While Wang Bi sees the generation of all things as contingent on the operations of Nonbeing (*wu* 無), Guo Xiang locates the generation of the myriad things in their own spontaneous activity. See Chapter Four for a further discussion.

113 Or at least the document purported to be Liu Xiang's report.

114 Graham offers a similar suggestion in Graham (1990b), p. 274.

Liezi text; however, even this generalization is not universally true. Yet even if the “Yang Zhu” chapter fits rather awkwardly with the other *Liezi* chapters, it remains a fascinating document in its own right, characterized by bold and illuminating philosophical assertions.

In his introduction to the chapter, A. C. Graham has suggested that “[t]he 'Yang Zhu' chapter is so unlike the rest of the *Liezi* that it must be the work of another hand, although probably of the same period”.¹¹⁵ A careful scrutiny of the document bears the claim of difference out. He notes by way of italicized passages those he believes to be “Daoist” interpolations, inconsistent with the hedonist thought that makes up the majority of the *pian*. These include part of *Liezi* 7:3, all of *Liezi* 7:13, and parts of *Liezi* 7:16 and 7:17.¹¹⁶ He suggests that *Liezi* 7:11 is a corrupted Mohist account of Yang Zhu's thought,¹¹⁷ and he suggests that *Liezi* 7:15 cannot be reliably ascribed to a hedonist or “Daoist” author.¹¹⁸ We have furthermore noted in Chapter Two of the present work some examples within the “Yang Zhu” chapter (in *Liezi* 7:1, 7:2, 7:3) that may suggest an influence, if not origin, from India.¹¹⁹

Taking these content clues as a guide, I believe it is likely that the compiler of the *Liezi* took the task of assembling the various sections of the “Yang Zhu” chapter to be one with a primary aim of satisfying the expectations of readers familiar with the historical person Yang Zhu. More specifically: I believe that the compiler of the *Liezi* gathered and collated material primarily concerned with the philosophical notion of hedonism at the expense of intellectual consistency with the remainder of the text, motivated by a desire to create an impression of authenticity. This move is similar to the manner in which the compiler of the *Liezi* seems to have incorporated nearly every available mention of Lie Yukou into the *Liezi* text as a whole.¹²⁰ While the latter strategy does little to dilute the message of the

115 Graham (1990a), p. 135.

116 Graham (1990a), pp. 140, 152, 155-156.

117 Graham (1990a), p. 148-149.

118 Graham (1990a), p. 153-154.

119 See pages 93-96 of this dissertation. This particular evidence of material from India is speculative.

120 Seo (2000), pp. 37-39.

text, the incorporation of hedonist material sets the “Yang Zhu” chapter apart from the rest of the document. Graham has taken these differences to suggest that the chapter is the work of another thinker, though he notes that there are no obvious stylistic differences to verify this claim;¹²¹ I suggest it is more likely that there was one compiler aware of what would be expected from a “Yang Zhu” chapter and acted in accordance with these expectations.

Like the “Li ming” chapter that precedes it, the “Yang Zhu” chapter is somewhat internally consistent in its basic message when compared to other chapters of the text. It is congruent with what one would expect from the brush of Yang Zhu: indulge in the delights of earthly existence, because conventional rewards like a good reputation are fleeting in life and meaningless in death. Below is the entirety of *Liezi* 7:5, which serves well to sum up the basic point of the chapter:

楊朱曰：「原憲窶於魯，子貢殖於衛。原憲之窶損生，子貢之殖累身。」「然則窶亦不可，殖亦不可，其可焉在？」曰：「可在樂生，可在逸身。故善樂生者不窶，善逸身者不殖。」¹²²

Yang Zhu said, “Yuan Xian was in need in Lu, [and] Zi Gong flourished in Wei.¹²³ Yuan Xian's poverty diminished his life, Zi Gong's flourishing burdened his self. This being so, then being in need is not acceptable, and flourishing is not acceptable – then where does what is acceptable lie? [I] say: What is acceptable lies in enjoying life, what is acceptable lies in escaping the self. So those that enjoy life are not in need, and those that escape the self do not flourish.”

Yang Zhu's first exhortation is simple enough: being able to take pleasure in one's existence, one will not feel burdened by the pains of poverty. As is true for the rest of the “Yang Zhu” chapter, the compiler here gives no consideration to practical limitations – it is perhaps difficult to enjoy life in poverty if one's basic needs are not met. The second point – that of “escaping the self” – requires some elaboration. “Escaping the self” here likely conveys a meaning similar to “escaping the self with its

121 Graham (1990b), p. 277.

122 Yang (2007), p. 222.

123 Though there are no grammatical or stylistic parallels, this seems to be a reference to an account in the “Rang wang” chapter of the *Zhuangzi Mixed Chapters*. It is notable that this *Zhuangzi* chapter has been classified by Graham as having a “Yangist” influence. See the translation in Graham (1981), p. 228-229. The passage describes the relative wealth disparity between the two, though it does not elaborate on all the hardships hinted at in this *Liezi* selection.

concomitant concerns”. Zhang Zhan's commentary on the idea is helpful: 不勞心以營貨財也。 “Do not vex the heart-mind by working for property and wealth”.¹²⁴ Busily toiling after basically ephemeral goals like social esteem or luxury is not what Yang Zhu recommends. Again, this advice seems somewhat naive: we are implored to enjoy transient existence but also reject the social conventions by which we normally do so. This is a tension in the work that is never satisfactorily addressed.

3.1.8 “Shuo fu” 說符 - “Explaining Connections”¹²⁵

This final chapter of the *Liezi* is notably different from the preceding ones in a number of ways. Most obviously, it is made up of many more pericopes – thirty-six, by my count – the majority of which are significantly shorter than those found in the rest of the text. It is also exceptional in its more zealous use of parables from other texts – approximately two thirds of the document can be found paralleled in other sources, usually with minimal alteration, as compared to other parallels in the *Liezi* text. The most common texts that the “Shuo fu” chapter mirrors are the *Huainanzi* and the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, though material from the *Kongzi jiyu*, *Xinxu*, and *Shuoyuan*, among others, is represented as well. The chapter reads more like a repository of miscellaneous wisdom than a set of parables sustaining a coherent argument. In this sense, it reads very much like the documents it reflects: it comes to us as a compendium of varied insights, gathered from disparate sources. However, unlike the edited volumes listed above, such as the *Huainanzi*, *Lüshi Chunqiu*, *Xinxu*, or *Shuoyuan*, it gives only the vaguest sense of theme.

In his assessment of the chapter Graham sees the theme of “the effect of chance conjunctions of events”.¹²⁶ This is true for a handful of narratives in the chapter – see, for example, *Liezi* 8:8, 8:15, or

124 Yang (2007), p. 222.

125 “Connections” is an admittedly vague translation of *fu* 符. Graham has translated the chapter title as “Explaining Conjunctions”, which is more eloquent, but is in my opinion overly influenced by his assessment of the decidedly varied material. A *fu* was originally an item used in contractual record keeping, in which two parts are joined to make a whole, demonstrating the authenticity of both. The term expanded to mean “agreement” or “accordance”, and in the Han could refer to portents (Barrett (2003), p. 399). I explore the possible meaning for this chapter title below.

126 Graham (1990a), p. 158.

8:21 – but this principle only serves to partially describe the material in this *pian*. In the case of the “Shuo fu” chapter, however, even a partial description is a commendable achievement – for as Graham himself has noted, the chapter is decidedly variegated in content.¹²⁷ His understanding of the unifying theme seems to be influenced by Zhang Zhan's brief preface to the *pian*, though Graham does not explicitly indicate this:

夫事故無方，倚伏相推，言而驗之者，攝乎變通之會。¹²⁸

In general events and causes are boundless,¹²⁹ [they] rely and lie upon¹³⁰ and move each other;¹³¹ those that would speak about and examine these must grasp the encounters of alternation and interaction.¹³²

Zhang Zhan is indicating here, by way of language borrowed from the *Zhuangzi*, the *Laozi*, and the *Zhouyi*, that “encounters of alteration and interaction” may serve to explain the various phenomena one comes upon. Beyond this he does not explicitly outline the principles involved here. Zhang Zhan is asserting that the average reader is ignorant of the principles that unite the many short narratives of this *pian*, but he is certain such principles do exist. In my estimation Zhang is, like Graham, struggling to hit upon a unifying theme in such a collection of disparate material.

Though I find Zhang Zhan's explanation to not be borne out in a reading of the chapter, I am also at a loss to plausibly connect the title of the *pian* to its content. The puzzle remains: if the title

127 Graham (1990a), p. 158.

128 Yang (2007), p. 239.

129 Zhang Zhan's language in this short introduction is evocative of other works he would have recognized as belonging to the *daojia* or “Dao Experts” category, or the “Three Mysterious [Texts]” (*Sanxuan* 三玄) of the *xuanxue* movement (see the discussion in Chapter Four). This particular phrase, *wufang* 無方, means literally “without direction” or “without scope”, and this binome appears in the *Zhuangzi* no less than six times.

130 Again Zhang Zhan appears to be making an oblique reference to a “Dao Expert” text, in this case *Laozi* 58: 禍兮福之所倚，福兮禍之所伏。“Disaster - that upon which fortune relies; fortune - that upon which disaster lies.” (Lou (2009), p. 151).

131 This may be an allusion to the *Xici zhuan* 繫辭傳, which would be in line with Zhang Zhan's *xuanxue* sensibilities: 日往則月來，月往則日來，日月相推而明生焉。“The sun goes and the moon comes; the moon goes and the sun comes. The sun and moon move one another and light is generated by this.” *Zhouyi zhengyi* in Chen Jinsheng (1996), vol. 1, p. 182.

132 This is again redolent of the *Xici zhuan*: 變通配四時 “[The Changes] in their alternating and interacting match the four seasons...” *Zhouyi zhengyi* in Chen Jinsheng (1996) vol. 1, p. 163; 變通莫大乎四時 “Of things that alternate and interact none are greater than the four seasons...” *Zhouyi zhengyi* in Chen Jinsheng (1996), vol. 1, p. 172.

“Shuo fu” is rightly understood as “Explaining Connections”, then what are the connections in question, and in exactly what way have they been explained? In my final analysis, all I am able to confidently suggest is that the basic meaning indicated here is that this chapter is designed to communicate, however mysteriously, the patterns that undergird the claims made in the text.

Another characteristic that is descriptive of the text and worth noting is its sequential grouping of narratives around certain important figures important to other sections of the *Liezi*. The first seven pericopes of the “Shuo fu” chapter are stories about or sayings attributed to Lie Yukou (usually designated *zi Liezi* 子列子, less commonly *Liezi* 列子),¹³³ four of which are unique to the *Liezi* within the bounds of the received tradition.¹³⁴ Kongzi, for whom the fourth chapter of the *Liezi* is named, is an important actor in four “Shuo fu” sections: *Liezi* 8:11, 8:12, 8:13, and 8:14. His presence is the only readily apparent commonality between these passages. Yang Zhu, the principle figure of the *Liezi*'s seventh chapter, is the central figure of *Liezi* 8:24, 8:25, 8:26, and 8:27. As the archetype of hedonistic philosophy it is notable that only *Liezi* 8:27 is even indirectly related to that particular doctrine. These strings of narratives again expose the traces of a compiler's hand.¹³⁵

Like the “Li ming” and “Yang Zhu” chapters before it, I find the “Shuo fu” chapter largely unrelated to the first five chapters of the *Liezi*. In this, my view is completely congruent with that of Seo, who states, “The last chapter...does not seem to have been designed to contribute to the main philosophical arguments...the chapter contains a number of miscellaneous stories that are not necessarily relevant; these may have been favorites of the compiler of the forgery – thus they are

133 The former name could awkwardly and redundantly be translated into English as “Master Liezi” - redundant in the sense that *zi* 子 here means “master” in both usages. This formulation, however, is not unusual in Classical Chinese.

134 These unique passages are *Liezi* 8:1, 8:2, 8:3, and 8:5.

135 I note further two pericopes – *Liezi* 8:19 and 8:20 – dealing with the figure Sunshu Ao 孫叔敖 (mid 7th century BCE – late 6th century BCE). Material about or attributed to Sunshu Ao does not figure elsewhere in the *Liezi*, and so mention of him here is not as noteworthy as those listed above. However, the proximity of the passages to one another maintains the pattern described here.

included, but bear no close association to the work's ontological theory.”¹³⁶ Unlike the “Li ming” and “Yang Zhu” chapters, I do not feel that the compiler was constrained by existing expectations about the content of the *Liezi*, but used this final *pian* as an opportunity to collect and collate short pieces of text to which they may have been partial.

3.2 Conclusion

The *Liezi* appears to be divisible into two basic sections: the first five chapters of the text, which include the “Tian rui”, “Huangdi”, “Zhou Mu wang”, “Zhong Ni”, and “Tang wen” chapters, and the latter three chapters of the text, comprised of the “Li ming”, “Yang Zhu”, and “Shuo fu” chapters. The first five chapters form a somewhat cohesive set of teachings, each elaborating upon the one that precedes it. The latter three chapters are notably more heterogeneous, and the content found therein is not always immediately relevant to the intellectual program found in the first five chapters. For the purpose of the discussion that follows, I will refer to the first five *pian* of the *Liezi* as the “Core Chapters” and the latter three *pian* of the *Liezi* as the “Appended Chapters”.

The *Liezi* Core Chapters put forward a largely coherent system of ontology, epistemology, and normative guidance. The ontology is established in the “Tian rui” chapter to be one of transcendence and transience. The transcendent reality is the source of all transient reality – it is the Unborn and Unchanging found in *Liezi* 1:1. It is fundamentally chaotic and characterized by a lack of distinctions. The Born and Changing that it produces, however, have as their intrinsic and defining qualities distinctions that set them apart from one another. The real distinctions among things is the primary focus of the “Huangdi” chapter. Though the *Liezi* stresses the distinctions among things, it also stresses their equality in their status as transient beings. Their origin and final destination are in all cases and without exception the same. The *Liezi* takes the major epistemological concern to be an ignorance of

136 Seo (2015), p.455.

this true reality, and the fallacious hierarchies constructed based on this ignorance. Demonstrations of this misunderstanding of reality are found in the “Zhou Mu wang” chapter of the text. Furthermore, the image of the *shengren* is held up in the “Zhong Ni” chapter as an exemplar. The *shengren* is not an intrinsically better member of the class of transient beings, but merely an individual that knows the reality of the distinctions of the transient beings and their source in the transcendent, and demonstrates patterns of cognition and behaviour for the reader to emulate. Finally, the “Tang wen” chapter is almost exclusively comprised of tales of miraculous feats and extraordinary people. These narratives do not undermine the worldview present in the other Core Chapters, and generally resonate with their instructions without offering explicitly didactic material. This is a general summary of the *Liezi*'s Core Chapters.

The remaining Appended Chapters do not participate as fully in the formulation of a coherent worldview, though that is not to say that their content does not intersect (at times) with that of the Core Chapters in illuminating ways. The “Li ming” chapter focuses exclusively on the question of fate and effort, and is unequivocal in its declaration that human efforts are wasted when they are operating against destiny. The “Yang Zhu” chapter is equally narrow in its vision, focused entirely on presenting a philosophical defence of hedonism. The final chapter, “Shuo fu”, contains a multitude of short narratives, some of which reflect themes found in other chapters, though several make apparently isolated intellectual points.

One concern permeates the entirety of the *Liezi*, from the cosmology presented in “Tian rui” to the philosophical miscellany of the “Shuo fu” – the notion of death. Death in the *Liezi* is true of all the various transient beings, and as such is not meant to be avoided or dreaded. In the *Liezi* death is the operation of the *dao* 道, and to work against it is to work against what is right and true. The *shengren* knows this, and responds to it appropriately. A short narrative from the “Li ming” (*Liezi* 6:12), though

not of the Core Chapters, still summarizes this thought succinctly:

魏人有東門吳者，其子死而不憂。其相室曰：「公之愛子，天下無有。今子死不憂，何也？」東門吳曰：「吾常無子，無子之時不憂。今子死，乃與嚮無子同，臣奚憂焉？」¹³⁷

Among the people of Wei was Dongmen Wu; his son died but he did not grieve. His wife said, “As for your love for your son, under Heaven none was like it. Now your son is dead and you do not grieve – why?” Dongmen Wu said, “I had long been without a son, and in the time I was without a son I did not grieve. Now my son is dead, so it is the same as in the past when I did not have a son – why should I grieve?”¹³⁸

The notion, not unique to the *Liezi* but certainly standing as a central tenet of the text, is that death is not to be taken as an object of fear or regret. Dongmen Wu's love for his son is not negated by his lack of grief, for this lack of grief is merely a sign that understands a truth of phenomenal existence: death is a necessary part of life. His son's ontological status is now, in the vocabulary of *Liezi* 1.5, that of being “ungenerated” (*busheng* 不生). As that pericope states: “For the Born there is a principle of inevitably coming to an end. That which ends must end, just as that which is born must be born.”¹³⁹ Dongmen Wu's reaction demonstrates an understanding of this.

We now see the *Liezi* as a compilation in two parts: the Core Chapters, that develop a largely coherent and internally consistent worldview; and the Appended Chapters, which often include material that seems to be less relevant to the intellectual program of the compiler of the *Liezi*. This claim is in partial agreement with Graham's assessment of the “Li ming” and “Yang Zhu” chapters as heterogeneous when read against the rest of the text,¹⁴⁰ but is in contradiction to Seo's account of the text, which reads it in its entirety as fully coherent.¹⁴¹ In the next two chapters we will compare the claims of the text (primarily the Core Chapters) with those made by the compiler's contemporaries,

137 Yang (2007), p. 214.

138 This entire section is likely a replication of a pericope found in the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策.

139 生者，理之必終者也。終者不得不終，亦如生者之不得不生。 See p. 104 for a discussion.

140 Graham (1990b), pp. 273-274.

141 Seo (2015), pp. 453-454.

reading the *Liezi* as a foil to major intellectual and spiritual movements of the 3rd and 4th centuries CE.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE *LIEZI* AND EARLY MEDIEVAL *XUANXUE* THOUGHT

子曰：書不盡言，言不盡意。然則聖人之意，其不可見乎？¹

The Master said, “The written word does not fully realize the spoken word, and the spoken word does not fully realize the intention. This being so, then as for the intention of the Sage – can it be seen?”

荃者所以在魚，得魚而忘荃；蹄者所以在兔，得兔而忘蹄；言者所以在意，得意而忘言。吾安得夫忘言之人而與之言哉！²

A fish trap³ is the means one relies on for fish – one gets the fish and then forgets the fish trap. A rabbit trap is the means one relies on for rabbits – one gets the rabbit and then forgets the rabbit trap. The spoken word is the means one relies on for intention – one gets the intention and forgets the spoken word. Where can I find a person who has forgotten the spoken word, and with them have a word?

4.1 Contextualizing *Xuanxue*

In the translation of his influential chronology and exposition of Chinese intellectual history, Fung Yu-Lan 馮友蘭 (1895-1990) had his selections from the *Liezi* placed in the fifth chapter of the second volume, entitled “Neo-Daoism during the Period of Disunity (Part 1)”.⁴ In doing so, he was not only clearly distinguishing the work from those created during the so-called Period of the Hundred Schools of Thought (*zhuzi baijia* 諸子百家), but also associated it with “Neo-Daoist” texts. Wing-tsit Chan 陳榮捷 (1901-1994) follows a similar path in his *Source Book of Chinese Philosophy*, offering selections from the *Liezi* following after those from the *Huainanzi* and prior to the “Neo-Daoist” writings of Wang Bi, He Yan, and Guo Xiang.⁵ That this is more than an artifact of mid-twentieth century thinking is evidenced by Alan K. L. Chan's brief but noteworthy mention of the *Liezi* in his

1 *Zhouyi*, in Chen Jinsheng (1996), vol. 1, p. 173. This particular section is from the *Xici zhuan*.

2 Guo (2004), p. 944.

3 Reading *quan* 荃 for *quan* 荃.

4 Fung (1953), vol. 2, pp. 195-204; translated by Derk Bodde. I have changed Bodde's Wade-Giles romanization here to *pinyin* for the sake of consistency. Bodde, in his translation, has followed Fung's organization of the chapters.

5 Chan (1963), pp. 309-313.

recent overview of Wei-Jin “Neo-Daoism”.⁶ The relationship between the *Liezi* and “Neo-Daoist” thought is generally accepted as a matter of fact, though very rarely expounded upon.⁷ The present chapter aims to begin the process of systematically comparing the claims of the *Liezi* text with those of the luminaries of the Wei-Jin “Neo-Daoist” movement. In Part Two I will argue that the *Liezi* makes ontological claims that align well with the philosophical system proposed by Wang Bi against that proposed by Guo Xiang. In Part Three I will compare the position of the *Liezi* on the topic of physical longevity and existence of immortals (*xian* 仙) to the positions espoused by Ruan Ji and Xi Kang.

As suggested in the introduction to the present work, “Neo-Daoism” is a common but loose and problematic translation of the term *xuanxue* 玄學. I call this translation “loose” because neither the affix “neo” nor the tradition of “Daoism” are represented in the two characters that make up the binome *xuanxue*. Furthermore, I call this translation “problematic” because of the assumptions that are bound up in this designation – assumptions that the *xuanxue* movement can easily be classified as “Daoist” (as opposed to “Confucian” or “Ruist”), that the movement shares a unproblematic continuity in terms of interpretation with earlier “Dao Expert” (*daojia* 道家) texts, or that the movement is merely a renewal of an existing set of claims and practices.⁸ This insight is certainly not mine alone. Scholars have long been struggling with an apt English translation of the term: Michael Nylan has offered “Mystery Learning”;⁹ Bent Nielsen suggests “Dark” or “Mysterious Learning”;¹⁰ Charles Holcombe and Brook

6 Chan (2014), section 6. See my caveat for this mention below.

7 The major exception to this is Seo's (2000) work on the *Liezi*, which discusses in detail the relationship of the *Liezi*'s primary commentator Zhang Zhan and the thought of Wang Bi and Guo Xiang. Ultimately, I reach a slightly different conclusion than Seo, but must acknowledge the groundbreaking work found in his dissertation.

8 I note here Alan K. L. Chan's use of the term (mentioned above) in particular – in fairness, his usage is likely due to the constraints of “Neo-Daoism” having become the conventional translation of *xuanxue*. His entry is encyclopedic, and in this context the conventional term is probably the most appropriate, regardless of accuracy. In this entry (Chan (2014)) he specifically problematizes the term in much the same way I do; furthermore, he has offered better translations both in that work and in more specialized work on the matter (see for example Chan (2010), p. 23).

9 Nylan (2001), p. 312.

10 Nielsen (2003), p. 281.

Ziporyn adopt “Abstruse Learning”;¹¹ Rudolf Wagner subtitled his work on Wang Bi a “Scholarly Exploration of the Dark”.¹² Victor Mair has put forward the somewhat diplomatic translation “Dark/Abstruse/Mysterious/Metaphysical Learning”,¹³ and Robert Ashmore has partially abandoned translation for perhaps the most historically accurate term for the movement, “*xuan*-inflected classicism” or “*xuan*-school classic[ism]”.¹⁴ I intend to circumvent the challenge by leaving the term *xuanxue* untranslated, and instead offering an in-depth summary of the historical context of the usage of the word as it applies to the thinkers examined in this chapter. In doing so, I hope that readers will have a clear conception of exactly to whom and what I refer when I invoke the term “*xuanxue*”. In my review of existing definitions I ultimately find none completely satisfactory, and thus necessarily conclude that for the purposes of the current work *xuanxue* refers principally to a group of people and the texts attributed to them, and not to a method or style of philosophy, mysticism, or exegesis.

First, I aim to address the term directly by examining it in its component parts. Of the two characters, “*xue*” 學 is the less problematic. Our translations above generally accept “learning” as the English correlate, although “study” is also possible. “*Xuan*” 玄 is more difficult, as demonstrated in the multiplicity of translations cited above. The term *xuan* is an autological word – in the context of *xuanxue* it is multivalent and has been translated as “profound”, “mysterious”, “dark”, or “hidden” – and so the meaning of *xuan* itself is somewhat *xuan*.

Much like the designations *rujia* 儒家 and *daoja* 道家 of the *Shiji* discussed in Chapter One, those that were in later centuries ascribed the rubric *xuanxue* were likely unaware of such a designation. It was, in fact, a later appellation. This is not to suggest that they would have not

11 Holcombe (1994), p. 87; Ziporyn (2003), p. 17.

12 Wagner (2003).

13 Mair (2010), p. 243.

14 Ashmore (2010), pp. 21, 22. I note that while Ashmore does initially use “Dark’ or ‘Mysterious’ studies” (p. 16), his subsequent references to *xuanxue* make generally consistent use of the above terms.

understood it, or even necessarily rejected it. Wang Bi, perhaps one of the earliest and certainly the most influential *xuanxue* thinkers, was deeply conscious of the term *xuan*. In his *Laozi zhilue* 老子指略 he addresses the definition the term: 「玄」也者，取乎幽冥之所出也 “[The meaning of] *xuan* is derived from [its] emerging from the secluded and obscure”.¹⁵ However, despite a fascination with the notion of *xuan* (and related terms), it would be anachronistic to suggest any of the thinkers treated below would have self identified as belonging to a *xuanxue* school or sect. Indeed, as will be demonstrated, *xuanxue* thinkers were often at odds over their interpretations of texts and their epistemological, ontological, and normative claims.

What then were the contents of *xuanxue* writings? There is no single unifying religious or philosophical theme: the extant writings touch on matters of language, cosmogony, society, aesthetics, and longevity, to only begin to suggest their diverse range of topics. Moreover, there was little agreement on any of these matters. Neither were the writings uniform in their presentation. Documents that have come down to us appear as expository essays or discussions (*lun* 論), poetry (*shi* 詩), or commentary (*zhu* 注), demonstrating the diversity of communication available to thinkers of the Wei-Jin period.¹⁶ There is one thread that seems to be common to most thinkers labeled *xuanxue*: a predilection towards the texts of the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Zhouyi* 周易 (or *Yijing* 易經, commonly translated as *The Book of Changes*).¹⁷ Writing in the 6th century CE, Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531-591) explicitly grouped the three texts together as a single category: 莊、老、周易，總謂三玄 “*Zhuang*[*zi*], *Lao*[*zi*], and the *Zhouyi* together are called the Three *Xuan*”.¹⁸

15 Lou (1980), p. 196.

16 If the argument that the *Liezi* is indeed both a document from the Wei-Jin period (as argued in Chapter Two) and a text dealing directly with the debates among *xuanxue* thinkers (as I will argue in the present chapter), then we may include a fourth variety of *xuanxue* text: the (falsified) Masters Text (*zishu* 子書).

17 Seo (2015), p. 449.

18 *Yanshi jiaxun* in Zhu (1996), vol. 2, p. 1854.

While there is no clear genealogy for *xuanxue* laid out in the historical record, there are several clues that can offer one an idea of events and intellectual movements that lead up to the emergence of the *xuanxue* debates. Previous reconstructions of the various cultural inputs for *xuanxue* include the thought of Yan Junping 嚴君平 (~86 BCE – 10 CE)¹⁹ and his connection to the Jingzhou 荊州 Academy, the character appraisal methods as found in the *Renwuzhi* 人物志, and the literati pursuits of *qingtan* 清談 (“Pure Conversation”). I will briefly sample the literature on each of these factors below.

The extant *Laozi zhigui* 老子指歸 is generally attributed to Yan Junping,²⁰ a Sichuan 四川 native who was known as an accomplished diviner and exegete of the *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Zhouyi* during the Han period.²¹ As noted in Chapter Two, the *Liezi* commentator Zhang Zhan suggests that textual parallels between the *Liezi* and the *Laozi zhigui* are in fact Yan Junping's borrowings from the works of Lie Yukou.²² Though this assertion is most likely incorrect, it does at the very least confirm that Zhang Zhan (himself included under the rubric of *xuanxue*) was familiar with the text. Moreover, Yan Junping was Yang Xiong's teacher, and the latter in turn exerted great intellectual influence on Song Zhong 宋衷 (d. 219 CE) and the curriculum of the Jingzhou Academy.²³ After the disbanding of the Jingzhou Academy, Wang Bi would inherit both items from its library as well as its scholarly orientation.²⁴ This is demonstrated not only in terms of lineage – Wang Bi's uncle Wang Can 王粲 (177-217) was a “master” at Jingzhou Academy,²⁵ and one of the Seven Masters of Jian'an (*jian'an qizi* 建安

19 Also known as Yan Zun 嚴遵 and Zhuang Zun 莊遵.

20 Alan K. L. Chan has offered what I believe to be very good evidence that this attribution is, in the main, correct. See Chan (1998), pp. 109-117. What does remain extant is obviously incomplete and not representative of the text as it would have existed in its entirety.

21 Nylan (2001), p. 314; Chan (1998), p. 107.

22 See page 61 of this dissertation.

23 Nylan (2001), pp. 315-316; Chan (1998), p. 114, note 35.

24 Nylan (2001), p. 315, and also note 43 on the same page; Chan (1998), p. 114, note 35.

25 Nylan (2001), p. 315 note 43.

七子)²⁶ – but also in terms of thought. In terms of its political application, Yan Junping's work on the *Laozi* is reflected in some degree by Wang Bi's interpretation.²⁷ Finally, it is worth noting that Zhang Zhan, in his preface to the *Liezi*, also claims that much of the material used in his reconstituting the *Liezi* was derived from the libraries of the Wang family. This claim, regardless of veracity, may have been an attempt to assert the legitimacy of the *Liezi* text in a scholarly tradition that was of note to *xuanxue* thinkers. To Yan Junping we may trace the interest in what was much later called the *Sanxuan*, the three main texts of *xuanxue*.

Part of what Nanxiu Qian has referred to as the “Wei-Jin spirit” is the aesthetic dimension of character appraisal.²⁸ She suggests that this is characteristic of what would later be called *xuanxue*, and was influenced by the earlier period identified by Qian as characterized by a dominant interest in ability.²⁹ A major work of the period is the *Renwuzhi* of Liu Shao 劉劭 (fl. mid 3rd century CE), a handbook used in the assessment of qualities of individuals. Written on the eve of the fall of the Wei dynasty, the *Renwuzhi* had been intended to serve the Cao 曹 family in their selection officials for government service.³⁰ The document was grounded in an early form of psychology that both explained why people behaved the way they did, and how to best understand their inborn qualities. An ontological explanation for the emotions and capacities of human beings was an important question for both *xuanxue* thinkers and the compiler of the *Liezi*, and this framework for a nascent psychology in medieval China was doubtlessly familiar to them.³¹

Charles Holcombe links the metaphysical developments of *xuanxue* to the literati practice of

26 It is furthermore prudent to note that another of the Seven Masters, Ruan Yu 阮瑀 (d. 212 CE), was father to *xuanxue* thinker Ruan Ji, an important subject in the latter part of this chapter.

27 Chan (1998), p. 117ff.

28 Qian (2001), pp. 36-42.

29 Qian (2001), pp. 32-36.

30 There is a translation of this text – see Shryock, John Knight. *The study of human abilities; the Jen wu chih*. New Haven, American Oriental Society, 1937; reprinted by Kraus Reprint Corp., New York, 1966.

31 For more on the *Renwuzhi* and *xuanxue*, see Chan (2010), pp. 32-34, and Tang Yongtong 湯用彤 (2001), pp. 15-22.

“Pure Conversation”, itself an outgrowth of the Later Han *qingyi* 清議 or “Pure Criticism” movement.³² Pure Criticism itself was a response to the instability of the Han government in its later stage. The educated elite, fearing that the eunuch factions in government had become too powerful, withdrew from official service but continued to criticize the activities of government from a distance. This too became a risky venture, and thus the movement, in its transformation to Pure Conversation, shifted focus to matters of a metaphysical (and thus less politically volatile) nature. As Holcombe points out, the extant documents of the age that are best suited for a metaphysical interpretation are the familiar *Sanxuan* of the *xuanxue* movement. Thus Pure Conversation is the verbal antecedent and often reflection of the *xuanxue* documents we find in the written record. As can be surmised, many of the *xuanxue* thinkers discussed below were also renowned for their skills in the art of Pure Conversation.

Having established the basic contours of the *xuanxue* movement, I again emphasize that this taxonomic effort is at best a *post hoc* heuristic for thinking about the category of *xuanxue*. That is to say that while many of the thinkers outlined below were engaged with one another in debate, it would be incorrect to imply that they viewed these debates as participating in an activity called *xuanxue*. What has preceded is only the broad features of these debates as we can recognize them in the textual record. We can connect these thinkers largely by their “gestures of affiliation”, to borrow from Denecke's characteristics of Masters Texts, in their use of the *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Zhouyi*. What follows below is an outline of only some of the major individuals labeled as *xuanxue* thinkers. This list is by no means comprehensive, but should serve as a helpful guide to the reader in understanding exactly to whom I refer when I write of *xuanxue* – it should be stressed as well that for the large part these thinkers are known to us only through their writings and writings about them.

Accounts of *xuanxue* generally point to the *Zhengshi* 正始 era (240-249) as the initial phase of

³² See Holcombe (1994), pp. 91-92 for this argument, as well as for the remainder of the information discussed in this paragraph.

the movement. This is the era of commentators He Yan and Wang Bi, regarded as both the initiators of the movement and (especially in the case of Wang) the pinnacle of the trend.³³ In the present discussion of *xuanxue* He Yan will largely be disregarded in favour of the work of Wang Bi.³⁴ Wang's extant works include a commentary to the *Laozi* (*Laozi zhu* 老子注), an essay on the *Laozi* (*Laozi zhilue* 老子指略), a commentary to the sixty-four hexagrams of the *Zhouyi* (*Zhouyi zhu* 周易注), and an essay on the *Zhouyi* (*Zhouyi lueli* 周易略例), as well as fragments of his *Lunyu* commentary.³⁵

Contemporary with the *Zhengshi xuanxue* thinkers were the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove (*zhulin qixian* 竹林七賢). As the name implies, their number was seven – below, I primarily discuss their two most noteworthy members, Xi Kang and Ruan Ji.³⁶ Both were renowned for their literary talent, their open disregard for social and ritual conventions, and (at least Ruan Ji) the copious consumption of alcohol. In their extant writings they show a high regard for the *Sanxuan*, in both allusions and direct quotation. Of Xi Kang's extant work, the most philosophically significant are perhaps the *Yangsheng lun* 養生論 (“Discussion on Nourishing Life”) and *Sheng Wu Aiyue lun* 聲無哀樂論 (“Discussion on Music Lacking Grief and Joy”). For Ruan Ji, the most relevant to the current project are his eighty-two poems, *Yonghuai shi* 詠懷詩 (“Poems Singing my Heart”). There are also

33 This dissertation will for the most part ignore biographical detail, except in cases where such detail is immediately relevant to the documents investigated. Instead, readers will be directed to the excellent existing sources dealing with the biographies of these thinkers. For He Yan, see Makeham (2003), especially Chapter One; see also Chan (2010). For Wang Bi, see Lynn (1994) and Lynn (1999), as well as Wagner (2000).

34 The thought of He Yan is without doubt crucial to the formation of *xuanxue* thinking, as demonstrated by the historical record. It is with much regret, however, that I recognize that very little of He Yan's actual writing has come down to us in the modern period. The one major extant document – the *Lunyu jijie* 論語集解 – is a valuable collection of commentaries on the *Analec*s of Kongzi. However, as John Makeham has convincingly demonstrated (Makeham (2003), pp. 30-47), this work neither bears the signs of *xuanxue* thinking nor is reliably read as a record of He Yan's thought (the *Lunyu jijie* was assembled by committee, of which He Yan was perhaps only the senior member). Other minor fragments of He Yan's thought are preserved, incidentally, in the *Liezi* commentary by Zhang Zhan (see Yang (2007), pp. 10-11, 121). There have been some notable attempts to reconstruct the thought of He Yan; see entries in Fung (1953) and Chan (1963). For a recent attempt that explicitly links He Yan's thought to Liu Shao's *Renwuzhi*, see Chan (2010).

35 All of these documents have been collected in Lou (1980).

36 Xi Kang's name is sometimes pronounced according to the modern pronunciation, Ji Kang. For biographical information related to Xi Kang, see Henricks (1988); for Ruan Ji, see Holzman (1976).

some extant discursive essays.

We will add one further scholar to the list assembled thus far: that is Guo Xiang.³⁷ Guo Xiang may be thought of as a member of the second generation of the *xuanxue* movement, coming after the members of the *Zhengshi* period and Bamboo Grove. His major extant writing is the *Zhuangzi zhu* 莊子注,³⁸ he is considered the primary redactor, compiler, and commentator on the *Zhuangzi* text. Guo Xiang's thought is most interesting because it is conventionally paired with that of Wang Bi. The second part of this chapter will discuss in detail where their ontologies diverge, and how the *Liezi* casts new light on this debate.

It will be beneficial to clarify and summarize the discussion of *xuanxue* before delving into the particulars of the philosophical systems thereby indicated. Above, I have outlined what have traditionally been viewed as the distinguishing characteristics of the movement: an interest in the *Sanxuan* (the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Zhouyi*), often combined with a recognition of the thought of Yan Junping, the activities of character appraisal, or metaphysical “pure conversation” as primary intellectual antecedents. I have also introduced the people and texts most commonly associated with the *xuanxue* rubric, while noting that there is no evidence that they themselves self-identified as *xuanxue* thinkers or considered their activities to be partaking in any kind of *xuanxue* movement. While the traditional categorization is basically accurate in its description of the thinkers discussed above, it is also true of many thinkers of this period not commonly associated with *xuanxue*. In light of the problems with these traditional characterizations, my references to *xuanxue* are meant to indicate only those major thinkers discussed above – specifically, He Yan, Wang Bi, Xi Kang, Ruan Ji, and Guo Xiang. Though I recognize that this is a somewhat artificial, *post hoc* classification, I also submit that

37 Very little is known of the life of Guo Xiang, aside from accusations of his plagiarizing the *Zhuangzi* commentary of Bamboo Grove member Xiang Xiu 向秀 (mid 3rd century CE). For a recent attempt at a biographical sketch, defence from accusations of plagiarism, and summary of his thought, see Ziporyn (2003).

38 Guo Xiang's commentary is available in Guo (2004).

all definitions of *xuanxue* are.

4.2 Wang Bi, Guo Xiang, and the *Liezi*

It is something of a truism in discussions of *xuanxue* thought that Wang Bi's ontology rests on the notion of the singularity and primacy of the 'Nonbeing' (*wu* 無), while Guo Xiang's response, delivered through his commentary to the *Zhuangzi*, stresses the autonomy of the myriad things through the principle of *ziran* 自然.³⁹ In the first and second chapters of this dissertation I have asserted that the *Liezi* was created in order to address intellectual concerns of the age. I believe that the compiler of the *Liezi* appropriated or manufactured the contents found therein (especially in the “Tian rui” chapter) to offer a resolution to the debate grounded in an authoritative Masters Text. Below I offer a sketch of the positions of Wang and Guo on ontology,⁴⁰ and contrast them with that as found in the *Liezi*.

I will outline three components in the thought of Wang Bi as contained in his commentaries and expository essays on the *Laozi* and *Zhouyi*. These are (1) the “One-many” dualistic ontology that characterizes Wang's thought; (2) the intrinsic hierarchy embedded in his ontology, which favours the “One”; (3) the origin of the “One” in the notion of Nonbeing. Selections will be used from many of Wang's extant works in an attempt to not only give evidence of the textual basis for a description of this ontology, but to furthermore demonstrate that Wang's ontological system pervaded all of his writings. This ontological system is not entirely coherent, as will be demonstrated, but the three items listed above are certainly present.

The two basic categories for Wang are the “One” (*yi* 一) and the many (usually *zhong* 衆). They

39 Recently, Brook Ziporyn (2010) has offered a counter-argument to what he calls the “standard textbook doxa” (p. 97), suggesting that Wang Bi's emphasis was on a multiplicity of principles (*li* 理) and Guo Xiang's response was the primacy of the universal notion of *ziran* 自然. While this is a novel and plausible re-framing of the debate, it does not contradict the prevailing interpretation.

40 This is of course only one of the many debates in the Wei-Jin period. It has been increasingly argued, for example, that Wang Bi had not only a sophisticated theory of ontology, but also political philosophy. See Wagner (2003) and Hon (2010).

are distinct in that the One is responsible for the generation and harmonious functioning of the many – a task to which the capabilities of the many are insufficient. Early in his *Zhouyi lueli* Wang states:

夫衆不能治衆，治衆者，至寡者也。夫動不能制動，制天下之動者，貞夫一者也。故衆之所以得咸存者，主必致一也；動之所以得咸運者，原必无二也。⁴¹

Generally, the many are not able to order the many – what orders the many is the perfectly solitary. Generally, movement is not able to regulate movement – what regulates movements under Heaven is truly singular.⁴² So the means by which the many obtain existence everywhere is [their] controller necessarily arriving at the One; the means by which movements obtain motion everywhere is [their] source necessarily lacking in duality.

Wang here is establishing both the duality of the One and the many as well as the primacy of the One in conducting the many – the many are neither capable of conducting themselves nor do they guide the One. The use of “controller” (*zhu* 主) and “source” (*yuan* 原) here are indicative of this unidirectional influence. The *Zhouyi lueli* continues:

物无妄然，必由其理。統之有宗，會之有元，故繁而不亂，衆而不惑。⁴³

Among things there are none that are arbitrary – they necessarily follow their principle. To unite them there is an ancestor and to collect them there is an origin. So they are abundant but not chaotic; they are many but not confused.

Wang Bi is asserting here that not only are the many controlled by the One, but that they are indeed controlled purposefully – there is a fundamental order to the constituents of existence. We will see that this scheme is part of the ontology that Wang Bi professes throughout his writing; however, in the *Zhouyi lueli* it also serves to ground his hermeneutic in interpreting the lines of the hexagrams (*gua* 卦). With the knowledge that the six lines that compose a hexagram each possess either a *yin* 陰 or *yang* 陽 modality, he explains:

41 Lou (1980), p. 591.

42 This is a reference to a similar statement in *Xici zhuan*: 日月之道，貞明者也；天下之動，貞夫一者也。“The way of the sun and moon is truly bright; the movements under Heaven are truly singular” (Lou (1980), p. 557).

43 Lou (1980), p. 591.

夫少者，多之所貴也；寡者，衆之所宗也。一卦五陽而一陰，則一陰為之主矣；五陰而一陽，則一陽為之主矣！夫陰之所求者陽也，陽之所求者陰也。陽苟一焉，五陰何得不同而歸之？⁴⁴

Generally, it is the few which the many value; it is the solitary that the many have as ancestor. If a single hexagram has five *yang* lines and one *yin* line then the single *yin* line serves as controller; if [a hexagram] has five *yin* lines and one *yang* line then the single *yang* line serves as controller. Generally, what the *yin* seeks is the *yang* and what the *yang* seeks is the *yin*. If *yang* is a single line [in the hexagram] how could the five *yin* lines manage to not be the same [as the previously stated principle] and return to it?

While this passage illustrates the general principle of the primacy of the solitary, it should be noted that in this system of hexagram interpretation the “solitary” is fluid, being either *yin* or *yang*, or not present in cases of hexagrams without a line ratio of one to five. This is *not* true of the general case of the One and the many – the One in that case is the “truly solitary” (*zhenfu yi zhe* 貞夫一者). For the One, it is perpetually the controller of the many because of its intrinsic solitary nature.

Turning to Wang's *Laozi zhilue*, we find a more complex presentation of the nature of the One.

As the generator and controller of all things it is described in this way:

夫物之所以生，功之所以成，必生乎無形，由乎無名。無形無名者，萬物之宗也。⁴⁵

Generally, things have the means by which they are generated and effects have the means by which they are completed; they must be generated from what lacks a form and originate in that which lacks a name. That which lacks form and lacks name is the ancestor of the myriad things.

Thus “that which lacks form and lacks name”⁴⁶ is identified as the ancestor – as we have seen above, the many (*zhong*) take the solitary (*gua*) as ancestor (*zong*). This ancestor, lacking in shape and name, exercises creative force over things, which by their nature possess shape and name. Wang Bi is mindful

44 Lou (1980), p. 591.

45 Lou (1980), p. 195.

46 “Lacking a form” is redolent of the features of the True Master (*zhen jun* 真君) of the *Zhuangzi* “Qi wu lun” chapter (see Guo (2004), pp. 55-56). I am indebted to Edward Slingerland for bringing this observation to my attention. “Lacking a name” obviously calls to mind the nameless serving as the beginning of Heaven and Earth in *Laozi* 1. It would not be surprising if Wang Bi was consciously drawing on both of these sources in his work.

of the inadequacy of naming and language, often echoing sentiments similar to the *Xici zhuan* quotation that opens this chapter. Therefore he addresses the One in terms of its negative characteristics and relationships to the many; simply defining or describing One is impossible. But he can use language to guide his reader to the nameless. In the *Laozi zhilue* he offers a summary of the *Laozi*:

老子之書，其幾乎可一言而蔽之。噫！崇本息末而已矣。觀其所由，尋其所歸，言不遠宗，事不失主。⁴⁷

As for the text of the *Laozi* it can be encapsulated in almost a single expression. Oh! It is simply exalting the root to have the branches flourish. Observe from where they originate, seek to where they return. In word do not be far from the ancestor and in deed do not lose the controller.

Wang introduces more aspects of the One: it is the root of the branches, a source of and point of return for the many, and again their ancestor and controller. In his commentary to the *Laozi*, Wang now has concrete images provided by that text on which he can begin to assign negative qualities and describe relationships. These assignments and descriptions again offer a fuller picture of his ontology. In his commentary to the phrase “Those in antiquity that obtained the One”⁴⁸ that opens *Laozi* 39, he explains:

一，數之始而物之極也。各是一物之生，所以為主也。物皆各得此一以成，既成而舍（一）以居成，居成則失其母，故皆裂、發、歇、竭、滅、蹶也。⁴⁹

One is the beginning of numbers and the extremity of things. [For] every[thing] this One is the producer of things. This is the means by which it is taken as controller. Things in all cases each obtain this One in order to be complete, and becoming complete they abandon the One⁵⁰ in order to dwell in completion. If they dwell in completion then they lose their mother, and so in all cases they crack, become exposed, cease, become exhausted, become extinguished, and fall.

Wang's ontology is not without its problems. The above references establish the categories of

47 Lou (1980), p. 198.

48 昔之得一者

49 Lou (1980), pp. 105-106. I follow this edition in inserting *yi* 一 in the text (see note 3 on p. 107).

50 “Abandoning the One” here is following the textual amendment in Lou (1980), noted above. Both the Lynn (1999) and Rump & Chan (1979) translations follow this convention as well.

his ontology and the relationships between those categories, but the identity of the One has not yet been revealed explicitly. In his commentary to *Laozi* 40, which states that “the myriad things under Heaven are born from Being, [and] Being is born from Nonbeing”,⁵¹ he says:

天下之物，皆以有為生。有之所始，以無為本。將欲全有，必反於無也。⁵²

Among the things under Heaven all take Being as their generator. As for where Being begins – it takes Nonbeing as the root. Desiring to complete Being, one must return to Nonbeing.

The generative faculties pertaining to existential things here lays with Being (*you* 有), but even before Being in the chain of generation is Nonbeing (*wu* 無). It is here described as the 'root' (*ben* 本) of Being, calling to mind the 'root' of Wang's single phrase to sum up the message of the *Laozi*. Wang further explains the relationship between the myriad things, the One, and Nonbeing in his commentary to *Laozi* 42. The *Laozi* text here is important, in that it has become a standard reference for a “Laozian” (and perhaps “Daoist”) cosmogony, and so both the relevant portion of the base text and the commentary will be translated below.

道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。萬物負陰而抱陽，沖氣以為和。人之所惡，唯孤、寡、不穀，而王公以為稱。⁵³

The *Dao* produces the One; the One produces the two; the two produce the three; the three produce the myriad things. The myriad things bear the *yin* and embrace the *yang*, and are made harmonious by their blended *qi*. What people hate is being alone, solitary, and unhappy – but kings and princes take these as their appellations.

We can use Wang's commentary on this somewhat opaque passage to tie together much of the specialized terminology used in the previously translated passages. He explains:

萬物萬形，其歸一也。何由致一？由於無也。由無乃一，一可謂無，已謂之一，豈得無言乎？有言有一，非二如何？有一有二，遂生乎三，從無之有，數盡乎斯，過此以往，非道之流。故萬物之生，吾知其主，雖有萬形，沖氣一焉。百

51 天下萬物生於有有生於無

52 Lou (1980), p. 110.

53 Lou (2009), p. 117.

姓有心，異國殊風，而王侯（得一者）主焉。以一為主，一何可舍？⁵⁴

For the myriad things and the myriad forms the point to which they return is the One. Why do they arrive at the One? It is because of Nonbeing. What comes from Nonbeing is the One, [so] the One can be referred to as Nonbeing; having already referred to it as the One, how could there be no words? There is a word and there is the One – how is that not two? There is the One and there is two - thereupon they generate three.⁵⁵ From Nonbeing to Being their numbers are exhausted in this. To go beyond this is not the flow of the *Dao*. Therefore, in the generation of the myriad things, I know their controller. Although they have myriad forms, the blended *qi* is singular in them. Common people have their heart-minds and different states have unique customs, yet kings and lords that obtain the One control them. Using the One to become the controller – how could the One be abandoned?

The One is identified as being the product of Nonbeing (“What comes from Nonbeing is the One”) and as being identified with Nonbeing (“the One can be referred to as Nonbeing”). This is consistent with Wang’s commentary on *Laozi* 40 (“As for where Being begins – it takes Nonbeing as the root”). Because the base text suggests that the One is born from the *Dao*, we may assume that (at least for Wang Bi) the *Dao* then shares a referent with Nonbeing. What emerges is a complex picture: something called the *Dao*/Nonbeing is both the source for and coterminous with something called the One/Being, which is in turn the source and controller for all transient phenomena. Even if a completely coherent system does not emerge, elements of Wang’s ontology are made apparent: (1) there is an uniquely singular entity known as the One, distinct from all other phenomena (“the many”); (2) this One is in unidirectional relationship of creation and influence with all other phenomena; (3) this One exists in a complex relationship of creation and co-identification with Nonbeing that defies conventional description. These are foundational claims made by Wang Bi that will be elaborated upon or challenged in the subsequent generation of *xuanxue* thinkers.

Guo Xiang, in his commentary to the *Zhuangzi*, responds to Wang Bi’s ontology described

54 Lou (1980), p. 117, following the textual re-arrangement as indicated.

55 Wang Bi’s account of the cosmology here is difficult to grasp. In my understanding, the One is separate from the word “one” - this separation makes two entities (“two”). But this creates a third word, “two” – the relationship that describes the categories (being two in number) creates another category, as the “two” cannot be described as the One or “one”. It is a convoluted explanation of the *Laozi* text, and Wang may have been preemptively dismissing criticism when he suggests anything beyond this is “not the flow of the *Dao*”.

above.⁵⁶ He rejects the three characteristics I have described: (1) his understanding of ontology requires no need for the dual categories of the One and the many; (2) he rejects outright the idea that there is an external controller to things, but instead believes things generate and transform themselves; (3) he dismisses the notion that Nonbeing has any kind of active role amongst the elements of Being. Below I offer textual evidence for these characterizations of Guo's thought.

In the elucidation of his ontology, Guo Xiang makes use of specialized terminology – most of all the concept of *ziran* 自然, or being “so-of-itself”, a gesture of affiliation with “Dao expert” texts such as the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*. In commenting on the opening pericope to the “Qi wu lun” chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, he says:

無既無矣，則不能生有；有之未生，又不能為生。然則生生者誰哉？塊然而自生耳。自生耳，非我生也。我既不能生物，物亦不能生我，則我自然矣。自己而然，則謂之天然。⁵⁷

If Nonbeing is non-existent then it cannot generate Being. Being [in a state of] not yet having been generated also cannot generate [anything]. If it is this way then what it is that generates the generated? Clod-like⁵⁸ they simply generated themselves. They simply generate themselves – it is not I that generates them. If I then am not able to generate things and things also are not able to generate me, then I am *ziran*. [Things'] being generated of themselves is called “[in the] manner of Heaven”.

In this passage Guo dismisses the idea of Nonbeing as an active generative force: by definition, something that is not existent is not in possession of the faculties of creation or transformation. But he also recognizes that without an original starting point we have a problem of infinite regression. He resolves this by stating that all things (Wang Bi's “the Many”) create and transform themselves. Guo

56 Few dedicated studies to the thought of Guo Xiang exist. I have benefited greatly from Fung Yu-lan's concise description (Fung (1953), pp. 205-236). My general understanding of Guo Xiang has been strongly influenced by both the work of Tang Yijie 汤一介 (*Guoxiang yu Weijin xuanxue* 郭象与魏晋玄学, 2000) and Brook Ziporyn (*The Penumbra Unbound*, 2003).

57 Guo (2004), p. 50.

58 Guo Xiang frequently references other parts of the *Zhuangzi* text in his commentary. Here, “clod-like” is reference to a story about Lie Yukou in the “Ying di wang” chapter: 為其妻爨，食豕如食人。於事无與親，彫琢復朴，塊然獨以其形立。“He acted as wife at the stove, and fed pigs as though they were human. Among affairs there were none in which he was involved, and his engraved and carved nature returned to simplicity. His form stood clod-like and solitary” (Guo (2004), p. 306).

reiterates in a comment on the “Zhi bei you” chapter:

誰得先物者乎哉？吾以陰陽為先物，而陰陽者既所謂物耳。誰又先陰陽者乎？吾以自然為先之，而自然既物之自爾耳。吾以至道為先之矣，而至道者乃至無也。既以無矣，又奚為先？然則先物者誰乎哉？而猶有物，無已，明物之自然，非有使然也。⁵⁹

What obtains the position prior to things? I [might] take *yin* and *yang* to be prior to things – but *yin* and *yang* are already called things. What then is prior to *yin* and *yang*? I [might] take *ziran* to be prior to things – but *ziran* is just things being so-of-themselves. I take the ultimate *Dao* to be prior to things – but the ultimate *Dao* is ultimate Nonbeing. Taking it to be Nonbeing, how indeed could it be prior to [something]? If it is this way, then what is it that prior to things? Yet even still: there are things without end. [In] illuminating the *ziran* of things, [we see that] there is nothing in existence that causes them to be thus.

As in the previous passage, Guo takes Nonbeing quite literally and describes it as being devoid of any characteristics. This includes not only its lack of generative qualities, but also its lack of any temporal position in relation to things. He is acknowledging the infinite regression problem in recognizing that there are indeed things in existence, but we cannot point to anything that preceded (and consequently caused) them. Guo resolves the regression question by suggesting that it does not exist, and that existence is without a beginning:

非唯無不得化而為有也，有亦不得化而為無矣。是以夫⁶⁰有之為物，雖千變萬化，而不得一為無也。不得一為無，故自古無未有之時而常存也。⁶¹

Not only is Nonbeing not able transform and become Being, Being is also unable transform and become Nonbeing. Thus Being's acting as a thing, although it may undergo a thousand changes and ten thousand transformations, it does not once become Nonbeing. [Considering the fact] that it [i.e., Being] does not once become Nonbeing, [one concludes that] it therefore from ancient times has no time in which it was not yet Being – it has perpetually existed.

Guo Xiang closes this passage by suggesting that Being has always existed, and thus no impetus of creation is necessary. He also stresses that at no time does Being become Nonbeing – or, as Wang Bi

59 Guo (2004), p. 764.

60 Following the emendation to the text in Guo (2004).

61 Guo (2004), p. 763.

would have it, revert to Nonbeing. Where Wang Bi's concepts of Being and Nonbeing are not clearly defined, in that they have a causal relationship but indicate the same entity, Guo Xiang keeps them strictly separate in relationship and identity. This is not a One and many ontology, in that Nonbeing for Guo Xiang is not singular, but devoid of any characteristics – numerical or otherwise.

Finally, Guo addresses Wang's ontology of external control by continuing to claim that things are ultimately self creating and self transforming. In a comment to the Shadow and Penumbra conversation in the “Qi wu lun” chapter, he states:

世或謂罔兩待景，景待形，形待造物者。請問：夫造物者，有耶無耶？無也？則胡能造物哉？有也？則不足以物衆形。故明衆形之自物而後始可與言造物耳。是以涉有物之域，雖復罔兩，未有不獨化於玄冥者也。故造物者無主，而物各自造，物各自造而無所待焉，此天地之正也。⁶²

In our times some say that the penumbra relies on the shadow, the shadow relies on the form, and the form relies on That Which Creates Things. I would like to ask: As for That Which Creates Things – is it Being or Nonbeing? If Nonbeing – then how is it able to create things? If Being – then it is not sufficient to give things their various forms. Therefore: [when one] illuminates that the various forms are from things [themselves], only then one can begin to be able to talk about the creation of things. Crossing into the realm in which there are things, even in the case of the penumbra, there has not yet been something that did not transform alone in dark obscurity.⁶³ Therefore: That Which Creates Things lacks a controller and things each create themselves. Things each creating themselves and having nothing that they rely on – this is the correct order of Heaven and Earth.⁶⁴

In stressing that things are alone in their transformation (*duhua* 獨化) Guo is describing an ontology without an external controller (*zhu* 主). For Guo, “That Which Creates Things” is in each case the thing itself. Guo Xiang's understanding of reality differs from Wang Bi in that it: (1) posits no singular entity

62 Guo (2004), p. 111.

63 “Dark obscurity” here translates *xuanming* 玄冥, which Brook Ziporyn translates as “realm of dark vanishing” (Ziporyn (2003), p. 101).

64 Guo is again making a reference to the text of the *Zhuangzi*, in this case the “Xiao yao you” chapter. Here the text offers a criticism of Lie Yukou's riding upon the winds: 若夫乘天地之正，而御六氣之辯，以遊无窮者，彼且惡乎待哉！ “If however he had ascended upon the correct order of Heaven and Earth and ridden the six types of *qi*, he could use them to wander without exhaustion – then what could he have to rely on?” (Guo (2004), p. 17). That this and the previous reference to being “clod-like” both make reference to Lie Yukou, putative author of the *Liezi*, is merely coincidental.

that stands in distinction from all other things; (2) grants no one entity amongst the multitude of things any primacy or agency over any other thing; (3) accords no special status to Nonbeing – indeed, Guo Xiang accords no status to Nonbeing at all.

Wang Bi's ontology, while extremely influential, had a critic in Guo Xiang. Let us now turn to the cosmogony and ontology of the *Liezi*, already described in Chapter Three of the present work. It is my contention that the compiler of the *Liezi*, working roughly contemporaneously with Guo Xiang, had intended that that text would enter into the debate on the side of Wang Bi and against his critics. Indeed, such a suggestion was offered by Ma Xulun, though as only speculation without argument. In closing his brief essay on the *Liezi* he wonders if the text could have been prepared by a disciple of Wang Bi.⁶⁵ While Ma Xulun does not explore this idea, instead focusing on the authenticity question, I believe the evidence points towards an association with Wang Bi's philosophy.

In his discussion of the ontology of the *Liezi*, Seo suggests the text is a syncretism of the positions of Wang Bi and Guo Xiang.⁶⁶ I believe that his conclusion is somewhat constrained by his belief that the compiler of the *Liezi* text was indeed Zhang Zhan,⁶⁷ and thus he reads Zhang Zhan's commentary to the *Liezi* less as a commentary and more as an extension of the work. In his conclusion that Zhang Zhan was the compiler, Seo is at odds with both sides of the modern authenticity debate: both defenders of the *Liezi*'s authenticity as well as sceptics (such as Yang Bojun and A. C. Graham) doubt that Zhang Zhan had a hand in the creation of the *Liezi* text.⁶⁸ If we read Zhang's work as a commentary only, and let the *Liezi* text stand on its own, it becomes clear that the compiler of the *Liezi* text was strictly aligned with Wang Bi's understanding of ontology.⁶⁹

65 Yang (2007), p. 305. Ma Da reviews this question in Ma (2000), pp. 86ff.

66 Seo (2000), pp. 180ff.

67 Seo (2000), pp. 84-85.

68 This question has already been addressed in Chapter Two of the present work (p. 100).

69 It ought to be noted, however, that Seo presents a plausible analysis for Zhang Zhan's interpretation of the *Liezi* as a Wang/Guo synthesis.

The *Liezi* text agrees with the Wang interpretation and disagrees with the Guo interpretation⁷⁰ in four significant ways: (1) a controller external to things is established (as in Wang's ontology); (2) this controller is in possession of negative qualities (also as in Wang's ontology); (3) the transient beings will eventually return to this negatively-defined controller (unlike Guo's ontology, in which there is no transformation between Being and Nonbeing); (4) transient beings are not capable of self-generation or self-transformation (against Guo's ontology). Two important passages from Chapter Three of the present work have already been discussed and will begin to make clearer the *Liezi's* position on the question of ontology.⁷¹ From *Liezi* 1:1:

有生不生，有化不化。不生者能生生，不化者能化化。生者不能不生，化者不能不化。故常生常化。常生常化者，無時不生，無時不化。

There is the Born and the Unborn; there is the Changing and the Unchanging. The Unborn is able to generate the Born and the Unchanging is able to change the Changing; the Born is not able to not be generated, and the Changing is not able to not be changed, and so they are constantly being generated and constantly changing. Constantly being generated and constantly changing, there is no time they are not generated, and no time they are not changing.

This selection from *Liezi* 1:1 establishes a dualistic ontology very similar to Wang's "One and many" system, here the "Unborn/Unchanging" and the "Born/Changing" filling these roles. It also, like Wang's ontology, has established in it a strict unidirectionality of influence; and, as in Wang's system, the influenced (here the "Born/Changing") is not capable of influence on either their source or their selves. The controlling agent ("the Unborn/Unchanging") is described with negative qualities. As we have seen, *Liezi* 1:5 states:

有生則復於不生，有形則復於無形。不生者，非本不生者也；無形者，非本無形者也。生者，理之必終者也。終者不得不終，亦如生者之不得不生。

70 Because of the questions that cloud the origin of the text, it is not certain whether the compiler of the *Liezi* is addressing Guo Xiang directly, or merely thinkers that arrive at similar conclusions as Guo Xiang (such as Xiang Xiu). Zhang Zhan's commentary makes many references to both Xiang Xiu and Guo Xiang's commentaries. See the person index (*jinmei sakuin* 人名索引) in Kitahara (1988) for an exhaustive listing.

71 For the source text and notes for these two passages, see Chapter Three pp. 103-104.

The Born then returns to being ungenerated, the Shaped then returns to lacking a shape. But “being ungenerated” is not the Original Unborn, and “lacking a shape” is not the Original Lacking a Shape. For the Born there is a principle of inevitably coming to an end. That which ends must end, just as that which is born must be born.⁷²

The text here again stresses the dependent nature of the transient beings (here, the “Born/Shaped”), as well as their lack of both perpetuity and control. This category of transient being is described in contrast to transcendent being (“the Original Unborn/Original Lacking a Shape”). The passage also illuminates the principle of reversion, which was crucial for Wang but condemned by Guo. The *Liezi* text, however, is cautious to indicate that the reverted state of transient beings is *not* the same as the originally unborn transcendent agent of creation.

The opening of *Liezi* 1:5 is likewise in support of the basic premises offered by Wang Bi:

黃帝書曰：「形動不生形而生影，聲動不生聲而生響，無動不生無而生有。」形，必終者也；天地終乎？與我偕終。終進乎？不知也。道終乎？本無始；進乎？本不久。⁷³

*The Book of the Yellow Emperor*⁷⁴ says, “Form moving does not generate form, but generates a shadow; sound moving does not generate sound but generates an echo; Nonbeing moving does not generate Nonbeing but generates Being.” Form is what necessarily finds its end. Do Heaven and Earth find an end? Like me, they are that which find an end.⁷⁵ Does this ending carry on? No one knows. Does the *Dao* end? It originally had no beginning. Does it carry on? It originally did not persist in time.

Here the relationship of Nonbeing and Being is made explicit, and it largely accords with Wang Bi's formulation in that a unidirectional relationship of generator and generated exists. It also noteworthy

72 See p. 104.

73 Yang (2007), pp. 18-19. I have changed slightly the punctuation of the last line; Yang's version reads 道終乎本無始，進乎本不久。

74 As far as I can discern, this quotation and book are unknown in the received record. *Liezi* 1:1 purports to quote the same text, but the quotation provided is instead from *Laozi* 6 (see Yang (2007), p. 3). *Liezi* 6:8 also cites a *Book of Huangdi* (*Huangdi zhi shu* 皇帝之書), although this quotation too lacks a received equivalent. Yang Bojun suggests that the *Book of Huangdi* may be one of the texts attributed to Huangdi in the *Hanshu Yiwenzhi* (ibid.).

75 Graham translates “They [heaven and earth] will end together with me” (Graham (1990a), p. 22), but I think the point here is not that the end of Heaven and Earth will be at the same time as the speaker, but that their quality of having an inevitable end is the same as the speaker's. However, if we take the meaning of the passage to be that the speaker perpetually exists in some form, participating in the realm of Heaven and Earth, then perhaps Graham's interpretation is valid.

that the role of generator in this formulation is filled by Nonbeing (*wu* 無), just as it is in Wang Bi's system. While Guo Xiang insists that Nonbeing, as “non-existent”, cannot be responsible for the generation of Being, the *Liezi* appears to be in agreement with Wang Bi in claiming that it is indeed responsible for the creation of transient things. *Dao* is likewise identified with Nonbeing.

The basic principles of Wang's ontology discussed above find their place in the “Tian rui” chapter of the *Liezi*: (1) an ontology with two exclusive categories; (2) a unidirectional flow of influence between those categories; (3) Nonbeing identified with the influencing category. Moreover, *Liezi* 1:1 seems to end with a direct condemnation of Guo Xiang's principle of self-generation (*zisheng* 自生) and self-transformation (*zihua* 自化):

故生物者不生，化物者不化。自生自化，自形自色，自智自力，自消自息。謂之生化形色智力消息者，非也。⁷⁶

So: The Generator of Things is not generated and the Transformer of Things does not transform. [As for] self-generation and self-transformation, self-formation and self-colouration, self-granting wisdom and self-strengthening, and self-dissolution and self-growth: to call these “generation”, “transformation”, “formation”, “colouration”, “granting wisdom”, “strengthening”, “dissolution” and “growth” is wrong.

This short passage is somewhat opaque and requires some elaboration.⁷⁷ First, there is a claim that the Generator/Transformer of Things has no controller which stands outside it – this claim is relatively uncontroversial given what we have already discussed. The list of “self-actions” (verbs preceded by the character *zi* 自) also appears uncomplicated, in that it is merely an enumeration of qualities. The key to interpreting the passage is in the third sentence. The pronoun *zhi* 之 is used, and determining the referent to which it refers clarifies the meaning of the passage, as we are told that this referent cannot

⁷⁶ Yang (2007), p. 4-5.

⁷⁷ Graham italicizes and places in parentheses this passage, save for the first sentence, and suggests that if his translation is correct the material presented here has been inserted by another writer, implying that it does not accord with the remainder of the *Liezi*. I think his translation is partly mistaken, and that the passage does indeed accord with the *Liezi* text as a whole. See Graham (1990b), p. 18.

be doing what is called “generation”, etc. Graham and Seo⁷⁸ both take the referent to be the Generator/Transformer of things, and in so doing interpret the text as saying that this entity does not generate or transform, but that these activities occur spontaneously. This interpretation, of course, is contradictory to the statement that begins the passage, as well as the general claims of the *Liezi* text. On my reading, the initial claim regarding the Generator/Transformer of Things stands, and it is the *concepts* of “self-generation”, “self-transformation”, etc., that are the referent of the pronoun *zhi* 之. That is to say, saying “self-generation” is “generation” is incorrect, because true generation comes from the Generator of Things. Understanding the anaphoric pronoun *zhi* in this way, the meaning of the text is quite clearly in contention with the claims of Guo Xiang.

It seems clear that the compiler of the *Liezi* wished to use the authority of the text to lend support to the Wang Bi ontology against that of Guo Xiang. There may have been more than just simple intellectual reasoning at play here: as seen in Zhang Zhan's preface, the Zhang family had close ties to the Wang family, including Wang Bi.⁷⁹ It is curious that if it is as Seo suggests – that Zhang Zhan's commentary was a synthesis of Wang Bi and Guo Xiang – that he should, in commenting on the phrase “The Generator of Things is not generated and the Transformer of Things does not transform”, claim that this same passage occurs also in the *Zhuangzi* (though he does not indicate which chapter). This is curious because the phrase is *not* found in our extant *Zhuangzi*, which was redacted by Guo Xiang.⁸⁰ If this phrase did exist in the “Lost” *Zhuangzi*, it may be that Guo Xiang removed it because it did not accord with his greater program of promoting the notions of “self-generation” and “self-transformation”. Zhang does not quote Guo Xiang's commentary on the phrase (there may have never

78 Graham (1990b), p. 18; Seo (2000), p. 184-185.

79 I furthermore note that of Zhang Zhan's few extant writings, one is found in the *Jinshu* biography of Fan Ning 范甯 (339-401), a prominent critic of He Yan and Wang Bi. The work is titled “Ridiculing Fan Ning” (嘲范甯), perhaps demonstrating again a predilection for the works of Wang within the Zhang family. See *Quan shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* in Wang (1996), vol. 2, p. 2361.

80 However, similar phrases are found in both the *Wenzi* “Shou zhen” chapter and *Huainanzi* “Chu zhen” chapter.

been one), but he does cite Xiang Xiu, lending credibility to his claim that it was once mirrored in the *Zhuangzi*. It may very well be that the material in the *Liezi* used to refute the claims of Guo Xiang were derived from the work he himself had redacted.

4.3 The Worthies of the Bamboo Grove and the *Liezi*

In the “Tian rui” chapter of the *Liezi* we find the following exchange between Kongzi and the celebrated recluse Rong Qiqi 榮啟期 (6th or 5th century BCE⁸¹):

孔子遊於太山，見榮啟期行乎郕之野，鹿裘帶索，鼓琴而歌。孔子問曰：「先生所以樂，何也？」對曰：「吾樂甚多：天生萬物，唯人為貴。而吾得為人，是一樂也。男女之別，男尊女卑，故以男為貴；吾既得為男矣，是二樂也。人生有不見日月、不免襁褓者，吾既已行年九十矣，是三樂也。貧者士之常也，死者人之終也，處常得終，當何憂哉？」孔子曰：「善乎！能自寬者也。」⁸²

Kongzi was roaming at Mount Tai, and saw Rong Qiqi passing through the outskirts of Cheng⁸³ in a deer fur coat and simple belt, strumming a *qin* and singing. Kongzi asked, “The means by which you are happy – what is it?” He responded, “My joys are very many. Heaven has generated the myriad things, and people alone are the most noble. I am a person: this is one joy. Men and women are different – men are honoured and women are humble, and therefore by this men are made noble. I am a male: this is a second joy. Among the people that are born there are those that have not seen the sun or moon, and have not gotten out of their baby clothes.⁸⁴ I have already gone along ninety years: this is a third joy. Poverty is the constancy of the lower elite,⁸⁵ death is the end of all people; dwelling in constancy, obtaining an end – what ought I to worry about?” Kongzi said, “Good! He is able to comfort himself.”⁸⁶

The figure of Rong Qiqi is linked to the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove in several ways. In terms of material culture, he has often been placed alongside those seven as an eighth member. Audrey

81 There are no known dates for Rong Qiqi, but if this story is to make any sense he must have lived roughly contemporary with Kongzi – assuming he is more than a fictional creation.

82 Yang (2007), pp. 22-23.

83 Yang Bojun places this in modern day Shandong 山東 province, near Tai'an 泰安. See Yang (2007), p. 22.

84 That is, they died very early.

85 The translation of *shi* 士 here is difficult. Graham (1990a) p. 24 ignores it entirely, perhaps based on the *Taiping yulan* variant discussed in Yang (2007), p. 23. As this anecdote cannot be traced back further than the Han dynasty, I have opted for “lower elite” in accordance with the basic definition in Hucker. For more information on the various meanings of the character at various points in history, see Hucker entry number 5200.

86 This same anecdote is found with very minor variation in both the *Shuoyuan* and *Kongzi Jiayu*. The final statement could possibly be read as praise in the second person, though I follow others that render it in the third person. See Graham (1990b), p. 24, Zhuang (1979), p. 62, and Lafitte (1997), p. 22.

Spiro offers an account of three different tombs that have been unearthed in which the wall carvings offer portraits of the Seven Worthies with Rong Qiqi.⁸⁷ Moreover, reference to Rong Qiqi and his three joys is made by both Xi Kang and Ruan Ji.⁸⁸ It is certainly the case that this one anecdote reproduced in the *Liezi* is also reflected in the thought of the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove.

Are there, however, any interesting religious or philosophical claims that unite the *Liezi* with the extant work of Xi Kang or Ruan Ji? In this section I will explore one commonality that is found in these works: the question of the existence of *xian* 仙 (or “immortals”) and the legitimacy of the search for physical longevity. Unlike the previous section discussing the thought of Wang Bi and Guo Xiang, I do not intend to argue that the *Liezi* was a response to these specific thinkers – here I am attempting a comparative project, demonstrating that the compiler of the *Liezi* was engaging with the same important themes as Ruan Ji and Xi Kang, without necessarily being directly influenced by them.⁸⁹ Below I will outline the positions of Ruan Ji and Xi Kang, the approaches to the notions of immortals and immortality in their times, and the perspective offered in the *Liezi*.

Of the two thinkers, Ruan Ji seems to have been more sceptical regarding the questions of immortals and immortality.⁹⁰ Regardless, in both his own writing and writing about him he is connected to these phenomena. A popular tale about him is recounted in the *Shishuo xinyu*, in which he engages in conversation with a “true person” (*zhenren* 真人) in the mountains, impressing this recluse not with

87 See *Contemplating the Ancients*, Spiro (1990). These sites are Xishanqiao 西善橋 near Nanjing 南京, and two sites in Danyang county 丹陽縣.

88 As mentioned in Chapter Two of the present work, Ma Da finds many *Liezi* “references” in the Wei-Jin period. As outlined earlier, these references are anything but legitimate. In all cases (Ma (2000), pp. 289, 291) he claims Ruan Ji and Xi Kang are quoting the *Liezi*; he does not mention that the same story is available in other earlier sources, such as the *Shuoyuan*. In his discussion of the *Shuoyuan* passage (ibid., pp. 273-274) he likewise suggests that the work is simply quoting the *Liezi*.

89 Influence is still possible, but considering the extant evidence I feel the case is not as strong as is with the work of Wang Bi. This is also true of the commentary by Zhang Zhan. While Zhang quotes occasionally from He Yan (twice), Wang Bi (4 times), and a great deal from Xiang Xiu (23 times), and Guo Xiang (21 times), he never references Xi Kang or Ruan Ji. For a complete listing and index, see Kitahara (1988).

90 A good biography and summary of Ruan Ji's thought is available in Holzman (1976); for a very thorough examination of the life of Xi Kang, see Henricks (1976).

cosmological knowledge or philosophical acuity, but his skill in whistling. We are to gather from the recluse's supernatural nature that he is indeed a practitioner of magic arts.⁹¹ Though much of his writing touches on the theme, below we will be discussing his poems as found in the eighty-four poem collection *Yonghuai shi* 詠懷詩.⁹²

Ruan Ji's attitude towards immortals and immortality is best outlined by Donald Holzman. The poems discussed below come, according to Holzman, “as close as [Ruan Ji] ever does to writing pure religious poetry”.⁹³ Ruan's scepticism is present throughout the works, but in all cases it is clear that his scepticism is directed more at his own ability to escape a profane life of politics or inevitable death than at the truth of immortals or techniques of immortality.⁹⁴ Below I translate four poems from Ruan Ji's *Yonghuai shi*.⁹⁵ First, two poems that express Ruan Ji's scepticism about the topic:

Poem 41⁹⁶

天網彌四野，六翮掩不舒。隨波紛綸客，汎汎若浮鳧。生命無期度，朝夕有不虞。列僊停修齡，養志在冲虛。飄颻雲日間，邈與世路殊。榮名非己寶，聲色焉足娛。採藥無旋返，神僊志不符。逼此良可惑，令我久躊躇。⁹⁷

The Net of Heaven⁹⁸ extends to the Four Wilds, the wings cover and are not relaxed. Surging on the waves as a multitude of guests, floating like drifting wild ducks. Our lives and fates are without demarcated limits, our mornings and nights are unpredictable. The various immortals⁹⁹ are determined¹⁰⁰ in their cultivation of life, nourishing their wills in the Empty Void. Rising and falling on the wind in the space between the clouds and sun, they are distantly separated from worldly paths. Glory or

91 A full translation of this encounter is available in Mather (2002), pp. 354-355. The “true man” is sometimes identified as Sun Deng 孫登 (3rd century CE) – not to be confused with son of Wu kingdom warlord Sun Quan of the same name.

92 My interpretation of these poems has been significantly influenced by both the thorough interpretations by Donald Holzman (1976) and the more free translation of Hartill & Wu (1988).

93 Holzman (1976), p. 167.

94 Holzman (1976), p. 176.

95 For the purposes of this work, in these translations the intellectual aspects of the poetry has been emphasized over their literary quality. In each case I provide reference to both the Holzman and Hartill & Wu translations so that interested readers may appreciate their stylistic qualities more fully.

96 For alternate translations, see Holzman (1976), p. 180 and Hartill & Wu (1988), p. 48.

97 Chen (1987), p. 326-327.

98 As Donald Holzman points out, this is likely a reference to *Laozi* 73. See Holzman (1976), pp. 180-181.

99 Here and throughout, I am reading *xian* 僊 as *xian* 仙.

100 According to commentary in Chen (1987), p. 327, which glosses *ting* 停 as *ding* 定, following the *Shiming* 釋名.

reputation are not precious to them, [nor are] beautiful music or seductive appearance sufficient to please them. [The ones] gathering medicines did not come back,¹⁰¹ [this is] not in accord with records of spirit-like immortals. Compelled by this [I am] deeply confused, and it has caused me to long be indecisive.

Poem 78¹⁰²

昔有神僊士，乃處射山阿。乘雲御飛龍，噓噏嚼瓊華。可聞不可見，慷慨歎咨嗟。自傷非疇類，愁苦來相加。下學而上達，忽忽將如何。¹⁰³

Formerly there were spirit-like immortals, they dwelt on the slopes of Mount Ye.¹⁰⁴ They rode atop clouds and drove flying dragons; they did breath work and ate small portions of gem flowers. They could be heard of but could not be seen – I sigh deeply with great feeling [about this]. It afflicts me that I am not of their kind, and worry and bitterness come to build up [in me]. “Studying below and attaining above”¹⁰⁵ – all in a rush, what am I to do?

Of the poems presented here, Poem 41 is the most sceptical. Ruan starts with a cosmological description, and then elaborates on the vicissitudes we face as mortals. This second theme runs through out the poems, and we find Ruan perpetually reflecting on the transience of life and the mundane world. He contrasts this with the lives of the immortals, who cast off the limitations of earthly life and values. Yet he recalls that seeking the means to this kind of immortality has never been successful. Though he longs to be among the immortals, he is unsure if he can take his place there. Poem 78 likewise gives us a picture of the immortals and their activities, but again reminds the reader that though legends about these immortals exist, they have not been seen. Again Ruan is pained that he is not an immortal himself, as he longs to transcend his earthbound existence. The closing lines of this poem relay both the urgency with which Ruan hopes to escape the profane realm as well as his inability to settle on the proper course of action.

101 Holzman explains that this probably refers to failed attempts at reaching the islands of immortals in order to seek the elixir of immortality. See Holzman (1976), p. 181.

102 Alternate translations: Holzman (1976), p. 176 and Hartill & Wu (1988), p. 85.

103 Chen (1987), p. 398.

104 Probably a reference to the Mount Guye 姑射山 of the *Zhuangzi*. This same mountain is mentioned in *Liezi* 2:2.

105 A quotation from *Lunyu* 14:35. The full quotation is: 不怨天，不尤人，下學而上達。知我者，其天乎？“I do not complain against Heaven and I do not blame people. Studying below and attaining above – the one that knows me is Heaven!” (Cheng (2008), p. 1019).

Ruan Ji's scepticism is outweighed by his desire for freedom. In the following two poems we see his condemnation of mundane life as primary to questions of immortality, whether it is literal or a metaphor:

Poem 28¹⁰⁶

若木耀西海，扶桑翳瀛洲。日月經天塗，明暗不相讎。嚴達自有常，得失又何求。豈效路上童，攜手共遨遊。陰陽有變化，誰云沉不浮。朱鷺躍飛泉，夜飛過吳洲。俯仰運天地，再撫四海流。繫累名利場，駑駿同一輶。豈若遺耳目，升遐去般憂。¹⁰⁷

The *ruo* tree shines on the Western Sea, the *fusang* screens the Continent of Ying.¹⁰⁸ The sun and moon pass along the Heavenly Road, light and dark are not mutually opposed. Failure¹⁰⁹ and success possess in themselves constancy, gain and loss, as well – how can they be sought after? How could one imitate the children upon the road, linking their hands together as they ramble and roam? *Yin* and *yang* have their transformations and changes, who says they [only] submerge [but] never float? The Vermilion Turtle leaps the Flying Fountain, and at night flies past the Continent of Wu.¹¹⁰ Looking up and looking down it moves around Heaven and Earth, and again it lays a hand on the flow of the Four Seas. Tied and bound to the space of reputation and profit, an inferior horse and a superior horse are together on the same carriage pole. Is it not better to¹¹¹ abandon the ears and eyes, and ascend far off, casting off painful anxiety?

Poem 81¹¹²

昔有神僊者，羨門及松喬。喻息九陽間，升遐嘖雲霄。人生樂長久，百年自言遠。白日隕隅谷，一夕不再朝。豈若遺世物，登明遂飄飄。¹¹³

Formerly there were immortals: [they were] Xianmen, Song, and Qiao.¹¹⁴ They were drawing in breath at the fringes of the cosmos, and ascending on high to eat small portions of cloud and vapour. The lives of people are joyous when they extend a long time – they say of themselves that one hundred years is far off. The luminous sun sets

106 Alternate translations: Holzman (1976), p. 183 and Hartill & Wu (1988), p. 35.

107 Chen (1987), p. 299.

108 Both the *ruo* tree and the *fusang* are allusions to the *Shanhaijing*.

109 Following the variant of *qiong* 窮 for *yan* 嚴 in Chen (1987), p. 300.

110 In the *Lüshi Chunqiu* this creature is described as having six feet (Xu (2009), p. 316).

111 Reading *ruo* 若 for *yan* 岩.

112 Alternate translations: Holzman (1976), pp. 181-182 and Hartill & Wu (1988), p. 88.

113 Chen (1987), p. 403.

114 According to Holzman, these are references to the immortals Xianmenzi 羨門子, Chi Songzi 赤松子, and Wangzi Qiao 王子喬. See Holzman (1976), p. 182. Wangzi Qiao was an especially popular subject for Ruan Ji. Brief biographies of the latter two are available in the *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳; see Kaltenmark (1953), pp. 35, 109-110.

in the Valley of Yu¹¹⁵ – [there will be] one evening that does not return to morning. Is it not best to cast off worldly things, and ascend into the light where one can rise and fall [on the wind]?

There are three major elements common to these two poems: the mythic tropes, the anxiety of life and death, and the better choice of leaving mundane existence. Both read somewhat like the *Liezi* “Tang wen” chapter, with their descriptions of mythical places and magic beings. They are also alike in their reference to content in the *Shanhaijing*. The traces of scepticism here are faint, and all of the fantastic elements are presented without suspicion. In Poem 28 Ruan laments the seemingly arbitrary nature of success and failure, and in Poem 81 we are reminded that though daily cycles carry on, there comes for everyone a final sunset. Both poems end with a question: is it not better to carry on as an immortal than to accept our fates as human? Taking into account all of Ruan Ji's praise of immortals, we presume that theirs is the preferable path. Ultimately, Ruan Ji's position appears to be ambivalent: he is not convinced of the possibility of immortality, but the lore that surrounds the topic entices him when he is faced with the distressing realities of life and death.¹¹⁶

Xi Kang's position on the question is not equivocal – he is steadfast in his belief in immortals and the project of longevity. Xi wrote the *Yangsheng lun* 養生論 (“Discussion on Nourishing Life”), a

115 Holzman explains that this is where the sun sets. He suggests the term is only otherwise known in the *Liezi* “Tang wen” chapter (*Liezi* 5:3). In a note (found on p. 275) he argues that it is likely not the case that Ruan Ji was quoting the *Liezi*, but that they share a common source. See Holzman (1976), p. 182. I suggest that this common source may be the *Shanhaijing Dahuangbei jing* 大荒北經, which records basically the same story as found in the *Liezi*, with the variant *yu* 禺 for *yu* 隅. *Shanhaijing* in Guo (1996), vol. 1, p. 33.

116 There is a further connection between the work of Ruan Ji and the *Liezi* which I am compelled to discuss, though it is highly speculative. In his essay “Da Zhuang lun” 達莊論 (“On Understanding the *Zhuangzi*”; available in Chen (1987), pp. 133-159, and in translation in Holzman (1976), pp. 102-109) Ruan Ji chastizes the work of Master Zhuang: 且莊周之書何足道哉！猶未聞夫太始之論，玄古之微言乎！“Moreover, how can Zhuang Zhou's book even be worth talking about? He still has not heard the discussions of the Great Beginning or the subtle words of profound antiquity!” (Chen (1987), p. 156). It is remarkable that both of the concepts found to be lacking in the *Zhuangzi* – the “Great Beginning” and the “subtle words” – are found in the *Liezi*. The Great Beginning is a step in the cosmological evolution described in *Liezi* 1.2 (Yang (2007), p. 6), which both Holzman (1976), p. 269n91 and Thomas Michael in Littlejohn & Dippmann (2011), p. 120 link to the growing Daoist church of medieval China. *Liezi* 8.12 records a conversation between Kongzi and the Duke of Bai regarding “subtle words”, an expression strongly connected to the moralizing scholarship of Kongzi as recorded in the *Hanshu yiwenzhi* (see p. 25 of this dissertation). It is tempting to suppose that the compiler of the *Liezi*, having read Ruan Ji's charge against the *Zhuangzi*, was sure to avoid such omissions in the *Liezi*.

short text that elucidated his opinions on the seemingly rare presence of immortals in the world and the practices needed to extend life. He begins:

世或有謂：神仙可以學得，不死可以力致者；或云：上壽百二十，古今所同，過此以往，莫非妖妄者；此皆兩失其情。¹¹⁷

In this generation some say that becoming an immortal can be obtained by study, and not dying can be arrived at by effort. Some say that at most long life is one hundred twenty [years], and in ancient times it was the same. It is an error to go beyond this, and [of these claims] none among them are not wicked or reckless. Both of these two [positions] miss the [true] circumstances.

Xi Kang opens his discussion by immediately championing the positions that immortality and longevity, despite prevailing scepticism, are legitimate phenomenon. He also broaches the question of the means to immortality and longevity here, which he goes on to explain:

夫神仙雖不目見，然記籍所載，前史所傳，較而論之，其有必矣；似特受異氣，稟之自然，非積學所能致也。至於導養得理，以盡性命，上獲千餘歲，下可數百年，可有之耳。而世皆不精，故莫能得之。¹¹⁸

As for immortals: although they are not seen with [our own] eyes, they are however noted in the records that have been conveyed and in the former histories that have been transmitted. If we compare and discuss [these records and histories], [we see that immortals] certainly do exist. Seemingly, they are unique in receiving a different kind of *qi*: this allotment is natural, and it is not by accumulating study that they are able to achieve it. Coming to 'guiding' and 'nourishing'¹¹⁹ to obtain the principle: by fully realizing one's nature and fate,¹²⁰ one may at most obtain a thousand or more years [of life], or at least one may be able to [live] several hundred years. Yet in this generation in all cases [the people] are impure, and so none among them can obtain it.

Xi Kang is distinguishing two types of people: immortals (*shenxian* 神仙) who receive a special allotment of *qi* from their birth, and long-lived people who engage in methods of life extension. His evidence for the existence of immortals is the written record: writings about supernatural beings were

117 Dai (1962), pp. 143-144. My understanding of Xi Kang's thought has been aided greatly by the work of Robert G. Henricks, *Philosophy and Argumentation in Third-Century China* (1983).

118 Dai (1962), p. 144.

119 Henricks suggests that this is similar to the practice of *daoyin* 導引. See Henricks (1983), p. 23n3.

120 I have translated the characters *xing* 性 and *ming* 命 here separately, but they could also be read as the binome *xingming* 性命, meaning something like "fate-derived nature".

not rare in the works we now categorize as literature and history. One cannot use methods to become an immortal; however, one may use methods (such as *daoyang*) to live out to the fullest extent the years which they were naturally endowed. Both of these principles relate to Xi Kang's idea of the self, which is composed of both an inner and outer component:

精神之於形骸，猶國之有君也；神躁於中，而形喪於外，猶君昏於上，國亂於下也...是以君子知形恃神以立，神須形以存...¹²¹

[As for] the relationship of refined *qi* to the outward form, it is like a state's having a ruler. If spirit is agitated on the inside, then form is harmed externally; it is as though the ruler is stupid above, and the state is disordered below...Therefore the *junzi* knows that form relies upon the spirit to stand, and spirit must have form to be preserved within...

Xi Kang goes on to describe in great detail the various dietary and medical practices one need undertake in order to ensure that they maximize the length of their endowed years. His treatise did not go unchallenged: his fellow member of the Seven Worthies and *Zhuangzi* exegete Xiang Xiu wrote a rebuttal to the *Yangsheng lun* entitled *Nan Yangsheng lun* 難養生論 (“Critique of the Discussion on Nourishing Life”), which is extant. In this work, Xiang Xiu challenges Xi Kang's appeal to textual authority on the existence of immortals, insisting that no one has seen them. In this, his argument is reminiscent of Ruan Ji's Poem 78. He also cites the example of Kongzi (among other renowned individuals) – surely the Master was adept at all important practices and subtle arts, yet he only lived until the age of seventy.

Xi Kang, now on the defensive, subsequently retaliated with his *Da Nan Yangsheng lun* 答難養生論 (“Response to the Critique of the Discussion on Nourishing Life”). He addresses Xiang Xiu's concerns directly. On the question of Kongzi's mere seventy years, he responds:

難曰：聖人窮理盡性，宜享遐期，而堯孔上獲百年，下者七十，豈復疏於導養乎？案論堯孔雖稟命有限，故導養以盡其壽。此則窮理之致，不為不養生得百

121 Dai (1962), pp. 145-146.

年也。且仲尼窮理盡性，以至七十，田父以六弊蠢愚，有百二十者。若以仲尼之至妙，資田父之至拙，則千歲之論奚所怪哉？¹²²

In the “Critique” [you say], “The *shengren* fully comprehends the principle and fully realizes his nature, [so] it is appropriate that they enjoy a long time [alive]. Yet [in the cases of] Yao and Kongzi, they at the most received a hundred years, and in the least seventy – could it be that they were wide apart from 'guiding' and 'nourishing'?” According to my discussion: though they were Yao and Kongzi, they [each] received a fate with a limit, and so they guided and nourished [their naturally allotted natures and fates] in order to fully realize their years. If it is this way, then [it is the case that this was] the perfect full comprehension of principle, and it was not that they did not nourish life to obtain those hundred years. Moreover, Zhong Ni [i.e., Kongzi] fully comprehended the principle and fully realized nature in order to become seventy, [while] rustic farmers were confused and stupefied by means of the six failings;¹²³ [yet] among them are those that live to one hundred twenty. If one takes Zhong Ni's perfect subtlety [as a reference], and relies on the rustic farmer's perfect clumsiness [as another reference]: then as for the discussion of a thousand years of life – how is it strange?

Xi Kang's argument here is twofold. First, Kongzi was not a recipient of that unique *qi* that allowed for immortality, but was instead like most others endowed with a limited life span. That he lived to seventy was not a failure to practice the longevity methods endorsed by Xi Kang, but instead it was because he did engage in those methods that he was *able* to live to seventy. Moreover, the length of one's allotted life (that is, the limits over which they have no control) is not a good indicator of their qualities or practices. Though Xiang Xiu claims to have not witnessed immortals, he presumably has encountered mortals that lived longer than Kongzi – even simple field labourers. Xi Kang is asking his intellectual opponent to understand the means by which those uneducated farmers outlive the Master. It is simply that were allotted a greater number of years.

Much later in the same essay Xi Kang also addresses Xiang Xiu's scepticism about immortals

122 Dai (1962), p. 177.

123 A reference to *Lunyu* 17:8: 好仁不好學，其蔽也愚。好知不好學，其蔽也蕩。好信不好學，其蔽也賊。好直不好學，其蔽也絞。好勇不好學，其蔽也亂。好剛不好學，其蔽也狂。“To love benevolence but not love study – it is the failing of stupidity. To love knowledge but not love study – it is the failing of recklessness. To love trustworthiness but not love study – it is the failing of injury. To love uprightness but not love study – it is the failing of inflexibility. To love bravery but not love study – it is the failing of disorder. To love determination but not love study – it is the failing of rashness.” (Cheng (2008), p. 1210). I note that Xi Kang employs the variant *bi* 弊 for the *Lunyu* *bi* 蔽.

among us. He finds himself again arguing from the authority of the texts:

又責千歲以來，目未之見，謂無其人。即問談者，見千歲人，何以別之？欲校之以形，則與人不異；欲驗之以年，則朝菌無以知晦朔，蜉蝣無以識靈龜。然則千歲雖在市朝，固非小年之所辨矣。彭祖七百，安期千年。則狹見謂書籍妄記。¹²⁴

Moreover, you dispute [the existence of] those that have been around for a thousand years. [Because] your eyes have not yet seen them, you say there are no people [like this]. Thus I ask you, speaker – [upon] seeing a thousand year old person, how would you distinguish them [from another]? If you desire to compare them by means of their form, then with others they will not be different; and if you desire to verify them by means of their years, then [recall that] the morning mushroom lacks the means to know the evening and twilight, the mayfly lacks the means to recognize the numinous turtle.¹²⁵ If this is so, then although they are a thousand years and in the market or court [i.e., out in public], they certainly would not be distinguished from someone of fewer years. Peng Zu lived seven hundred years, An Qi lived a thousand years, yet those with narrow sight say these books and records are reckless writings.

If one accepts that immortals do indeed exist then Xi Kang's arguments are logical: Xiang Xiu would not be able to distinguish between an implausibly long lived individual and one with a normal life span. One wonders, given these constraints, how the authors of antiquity to which Xi Kang makes recourse were able to verify the ages of the immortals that had been documented. However, our purpose here is not to dissect Xi Kang's specious reasoning, but only to establish that he indeed did defend the position that immortality and longevity, while separate phenomena, were both authentic. In this, he is more adamant than Ruan Ji.

We now turn to the question of immortals in the *Liezi*. First it is prudent to make some general remarks on prevailing sentiments about this topic in the age of the work's compilation. Though a major concern of the emerging so-called “popular Daoist” tradition, elite thinkers were in the main quite

124 Dai (1962), pp. 186-187.

125 Xi Kang is rebuking Xiang Xiu with textual references here. The “morning mushroom” is a reference to the first pericope of the *Zhuangzi* “Xiao yao you” chapter – it is noteworthy that Xi Kang invokes the very work Xiang Xiu was renowned for writing a commentary. The “mayfly” and “turtle” reference relays the same message – that one cannot comprehend a life span longer than their own. Henricks cites the *Huainanzi* “Quan yan” chapter as the source for this reference (Henricks (1983), p. 60n113). The basic meaning is that Xiang Xiu would not be able to measure the years of an immortal because his life would expire before the measurement was complete.

sceptical of claims such as these.¹²⁶ Donald Holzman points out that in this, Xi Kang was actually an exception to prevailing thought, and that even the measured incredulity of Ruan Ji was unusual.¹²⁷ Remarking on the more general theme of “religion” in early medieval texts, Barrett notes that, “[w]herever readers might conceivably find a superhuman content in prestigious texts, it seems to have been carefully expunged...”, citing Guo Xiang's redaction of the *Zhuangzi* as an example.¹²⁸ Finally, it is certainly this general trend that A. C. Graham has in mind when he says, “...in the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. philosophers still kept aloof from the alchemists who had usurped the name of 'Daoists'”, and notes that only one anecdote in the *Liezi* appears non-critical of life extension arts.¹²⁹ We would expect, relying on the evidence above, that the *Liezi* would differ from the writings of Xi Kang (and to a lesser extent Ruan Ji) on the question of immortals.

Jeffrey Dippmann consciously rejects this characterization, addressing Graham's conclusions specifically, in his essay “Reading the *Zhuangzi* in *Liezi*: Redefining *Xianship*”.¹³⁰ He argues that while the *Liezi* does represent the concerns of an educated elite, it also subtly endorses the pursuits of immortality.¹³¹ He first notes the many immortal (*xian* 仙) related phenomena present in the *Liezi* text: transformation of and into animal forms, shamanic flight, dream interpretation, and healing.¹³² The positive view of Huangdi (especially in *Liezi* 2:1), a noted adept of immortality practice, is also indicative to Dippmann as tacit approval of belief in immortals and immortality pursuits. Below I aim to assess some of the instances of immortal phenomena recorded in the *Liezi*.

126 Penny in Kohn (2000), p. 112.

127 Holzman (1976), p. 153.

128 Barrett (2010), pp. 443-444.

129 Graham (1990a), p. 16. Romanization changed to pinyin. The anecdote is *Liezi* 8:28, discussed in Chapter Two of the present work, with shares commonalities with Zhongchang Tong's *Chang yan* (see p. 86).

130 Dippmann in Littlejohn & Dippmann (2011).

131 Dippmann (2011), pp. 152-153.

132 Dippmann (2011), p. 155. In this, Dippmann may be picking up on earlier criticisms noted (but not elaborated upon) by Barrett regarding Graham's neglect of the “religious element” in his *Liezi* translation (Barrett (1993), p. 307). It should be noted that very few of these passages contain reference to the character *xian* 仙.

Though the character *xian* 仙 infrequent in the *Liezi*, the “Tang wen” chapter does give an engaging account of their realm, with some similarities to those offered by Ruan Ji above. *Liezi* 5:2 states, in part, that:

渤海之東不知幾億萬里，有大壑焉，實惟無底之谷，其下無底，名曰歸墟。八紘九野之水，天漢之流，莫不注之，而無增無減焉。其中有五山焉：一曰岱輿，二曰員嶠，三曰方壺，四曰瀛洲，五曰蓬萊。其山高下周旋三萬里，其頂平處九千里。山之中間相去七萬里，以為鄰居焉。其上臺觀皆金玉，其上禽獸皆純縞。珠玕之樹皆叢生，華實皆有滋味；食之皆不老不死。所居之人皆仙聖之種；一日一夕飛相往來者，不可數焉。而五山之根無所連著，常隨潮波上下往還，不得蹙峙焉。¹³³

East of Bohai, I do not know how many hundreds of thousands or tens of thousands of *li*, there is a great gully, truly a valley that lacks a bottom. Underneath there lacks a bottom: it is named Guixu.¹³⁴ The waters of the entire world,¹³⁵ and the flowing of the Milky Way: none among them do not flow into it, yet it is never increased or diminished. In its midst there are five mountains: the first is called Dai Yu, the second is called Yuan Qiao, the third is called Fang Hu, the fourth is called Ying Zhou, the fifth is called Peng Lai. The height and circumference of these mountains are thirty thousand *li*, and their plateaus are nine thousand *li*. The spaces between the mountains are a distance of seventy thousand *li*, [yet] they are taken to be neighbours. On them are platforms and towers, all gold and jade; and birds and beasts, all pure and clean. Pearl and jade-like¹³⁶ trees all thickly grow; flowers and fruit all are abundant and delicious, and eating them in all cases leads to long life and immortality. The people that live their all immortal and sagely types; in a day and a night they fly back and forth, and they cannot be counted. But the roots of the mountains lack that to which they are connected to – they are always following the rising, falling, moving to and fro of the tides and waves, and cannot for a moment be stable...

This tale is, as has been documented in Chapter Three, characteristic of the “Tang wen” chapter. Like the other stories found there, there is no hint of doubt in the tale (in this case, it is told as part of a larger narrative on mythic history and geography by Ji in response to Tang's questions – see page 11 of Chapter One). The existence of these kinds of immortals, with supernatural powers, is simply stated. It

133 Yang (2007), pp. 151-152.

134 Literally, “Returning to Ruins”, though if one substitutes the very similar character *xu* 虛 for *xu* 墟 one arrives at the translation “Returning to Emptiness”. Zhang Zhan suggests that Guixu is the same the Weilü found in the *Zhuangzi*, implying that this text was originally found there as well (Yang (2007), p. 151).

135 Zhang Zhan glosses the *baxian* 八紘 as *baji* 八極 (the eight extreme points) and the *jiuye* 九野 as the *tian zhi bafang zhongyang* 天之八方中央 (the eight directions and center of Heaven) (Yang (2007), p. 151).

136 “Jade-like” very tentatively translates *gan* 玕, usually found in the binome *langgan* 琅玕, a precious white stone. Cf. Kroll (2015), pp. 127, 254.

is much more similar to Ruan Ji's poems than to Xi Kang's treatise, though it lacks the yearning found in Ruan's work. It has none of the prescriptions for longevity of Xi Kang's *Yangsheng lun*, and does not speculate to any appreciable degree about the unique nature of the immortals there. If Dippmann's hypothesis is correct – that the compiler of the *Liezi* did not actively remove “religious” material from the text – then this narrative may very well be traceable to a version of the *Zhuangzi* lost to modern scholarship.

Another important narrative from the *Liezi* that contains more fantastic elements is found in *Liezi* 2:12 – note the similarities to the narrative given in Chapter Three of the present work, relating the tale of Shangqiu Kai (*Liezi* 2:6):¹³⁷

趙襄子率徒十萬狩於中山，藉芴燔林，扇赫百里。有一人從石壁中出，隨煙燼上下。衆謂鬼物。火過，徐行而出，若無所經涉者。襄子怪而留之。徐而察之：形色七竅，人也；氣息音聲，人也。問奚道而處石？奚道而入火？其人曰：「奚物而謂石？奚物而謂火？」襄子曰：「而嚮之所出者，石也；而嚮之所涉者，火也。」其人曰：「不知也。」¹³⁸

Zhao Xiangzi lead followers numbering one hundred thousand. They went hunting in the mountains, they trampled the wild grass and set fire to the forests, fanning the fire for hundreds of *li*. There was a person that came out from a wall of stone, and along with the smoke and ashes he rose and fell. All present called him a ghostly being. The fire passed, he slowly came out, as though there was nothing [dangerous] to cross through. Xiangzi found him strange and detained him, and slowly inspected him: his form, appearance, and seven openings, were human; his *qi*, breath, voice, and sound were human. He asked about the way he lived in stone and entered into fire. The man replied, “What is it that you call stone? What is it that you call fire?” Xiangzi said, “What you just came out of now, was stone; what you just crossed through now, was fire.” The man said, “I did not know it.”

We do not get any further information on the ghostly being's methods, and thus cannot compare those methods to those of Xi Kang. As well, though he is able to perform great feats, there is no indication here that the ghostly being is in fact immortal (or even long lived). He merely demonstrates supernatural abilities that would ordinarily be ascribed to immortals.

137 See p. 108.

138 Yang (2007), pp. 68-69.

As Dippmann concludes in his piece: “In fact, numerous stories of the immortals reveal a similar type of certainty, again leading me to believe that the *Liezi*, far from ridiculing the practices of *xian*-ship, may have instead accepted and ultimately endorsed them.”¹³⁹ However, I believe that, in light of the strongly credulous writings of Xi Kang and the suspiciously sympathetic poetry of Ruan Ji, the immortal narratives of the *Liezi* are rather neutral for their times. One must also recall that a major theme of the *Liezi* is reconciliation with the fact of death; this principle is antithetical to the quest for long (or limitless) life. The endorsement of *xian*-ship in the *Liezi*, if it is there, is subtle indeed.

Finally, it is prudent to remark briefly on Zhang Zhan's association with bodily practice aimed at life extension. Even if we do not ultimately take him to be the *Liezi* compiler, his role as primary commentator means that his reading of the text is valuable to us as an interpretative tool. There is little doubt that he was certainly the compiler of a (now mostly lost) text on nourishing life called the *Yangsheng yaoji* 養生要集 (or sometimes simply the *Yangsheng ji* 養生集).¹⁴⁰ The fragments that remain demonstrate Zhang's keen interest in matters related to longevity. His work is quoted in the first chapter of Tamba no Yasuyori's 丹波康賴 (912-995 CE) treatise on medicine the *Ishimpō* 医心方.¹⁴¹ Another important source for Zhang Zhan's thought on longevity is preserved in the *Yangxing yanming lu* 養性延命錄.¹⁴² Here, both the *Liezi* is briefly quoted (*Liezi* 1.8 and *Liezi* 3.3), as well as part of the commentary from Zhang Zhan (on *Liezi* 3.3).¹⁴³ There exists as well what may be a lost *Liezi* fragment.¹⁴⁴ It, with Zhang's commentary, reads:

139 Dippmann (2011), p. 163.

140 Kohn in Littlejohn & Dippmann (2011), pp. 180ff. See also Michael Stanley-Baker, “Cultivating the Body, Cultivating the Self” (2006), especially pp. 16-18.

141 For a translation, see Hsia et al., (1986), pp. 43-44. I have followed their transliteration of the original Japanese.

142 See *Yangxing yanming lu* in Zhang (2004), vol. 23 pp. 642ff. Readers may wish to compare my translations here to the complete translation of the *Yangxing yanming lu* offered by Stanley-Baker (2006), pp. 77-78.

143 Zhang (2004), vol. 23 p. 643; cf. Yang (2007), p. 102. The *Yangxing yanming lu* only records the first six characters of Zhang's commentary.

144 This fragment, though attributed to the *Liezi* in the *Yangxing yanming lu* (see Zhang (2004), vol. 23 p. 643) does not appear in Yang's edition, nor in any digital edition I have searched.

和之於始，和之於終，靜神滅想，生之道也。始終和，則神志¹⁴⁵不散。¹⁴⁶

Harmonize it with the beginning, and harmonize it with the end. Make tranquil the spirit and extinguish thoughts – this the Way of life. [Zhang Zhan's commentary says:] If the beginning and end harmonize, then the spirit and the will do not disperse.

Also quoted is a brief selection from his *Yangsheng ji* as well as some fragments of what appears to be Zhang Zhan's lost *Zhuangzi* commentary, paired with Xiang Xiu's commentary.¹⁴⁷ The *Zhuangzi* selection is the opening of the “Da sheng” chapter, which says:

達生之情者，不務生之所無以為；達命之情者，不務知之所無奈何。¹⁴⁸

One that is successful with the true conditions of life does not work at what life lacks the means to do. One that is successful with the true conditions of fate does not work at what knowing cannot do something about.

Of the first claim we have the following:

張湛曰：生理自全，為分外所為，此是以有涯隨無涯也。¹⁴⁹

Zhang Zhan says: the principle of life is self-completing, it imposes divisions from outside of that which is imposed upon. This is why what has a limit conforms to what has no limit.¹⁵⁰

Of the second claim:

張湛曰：乘生順之理，窮所稟分，豈智所知何也。¹⁵¹

Zhang Zhan says: Riding upon the principle of complying with life and exhausting what one has been allotted and apportioned – is it that knowledge could know [these]?

The presence of fragments of Zhang's material in important medical and longevity works like

145 The edition in Zhang (2004) notes that the *Siku* version of this text has *qi* 氣 in place of *zhi* 志. See vol. 23 p. 649.

146 Zhang (2004), vol. 23 p. 643.

147 The *Xuanshi* and Yan Junping's *Guizhi* commentary to the *Laozi* are also quoted alongside Zhang Zhan's work. This is noteworthy, as we have seen Zhang refer to both these works in his *Liezi* preface. See p. 61 of this dissertation.

148 Zhang (2004), vol. 23 p. 643, see also Guo (2004), p. 630.

149 Zhang (2004), vol. 23 p. 643.

150 A reference to the opening the third chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, entitled “Yang sheng zhu”, translated by Watson as “The Secret of Caring for Life”.

151 Zhang (2004), vol. 23 p. 643.

the *Ishimpō* and the *Yangxing yanming lu* demonstrates his commitment to those endeavours. These fragments show us that not only was Zhang interested in documenting longevity techniques, but also that his work was held in regard by the compilers of later longevity texts. In reading his comments on the *Zhuangzi*, we find an unusual blend of longevity technique and the philosophy of Guo Xiang.¹⁵² But aside from the potentially “lost” *Liezi* fragment translated above, the *Liezi* fragments in the *Yangxing yanming lu* are only very weakly linked to bodily practices. We know from the *Zhuangzi* commentary above that Zhang Zhan was capable of offering a commentary coloured by longevity practice, but see exceedingly little of this in his extant *Liezi* commentary. Were the notion of longevity, life extension, or immortals an important theme of the *Liezi* we would expect Zhang Zhan's commentary to give greater weight to these notions.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has only touched on a few of the many themes regularly associated with *xuanxue* thought. One final point of commonality between that tradition and the *Liezi* is their conception of Kongzi. A famous and undeniably representative example would be the comparison attributed to Wang Bi of Kongzi and other masters, as found in the *Shishuo xinyu*:

王輔嗣弱冠詣裴徽，徽問曰：「夫無者，誠萬物之所資，聖人莫肯致言，而老子申之無已，何邪？」弼曰：「聖人體無，無又不可以訓，故言必及有；老、莊未免於有，恆訓其所不足。」¹⁵³

Wang Fusi,¹⁵⁴ at twenty years old,¹⁵⁵ went to Pei Hui. Hui asked him, “As for Nonbeing, if it truly is the means of living for the myriad things: the *shengren*¹⁵⁶ was

152 As the *Liezi* is clearly aligned with the thought of Wang Bi and the commentary of Zhang Zhan contains elements of Guo Xiang's thought, it seems even more likely to me that Zhang Zhan was not the compiler of the *Liezi*.

153 Xu (1984), p. 107.

154 That is, Wang Bi.

155 The text is literally “weak” (*ruo* 弱) and “cap” (*guan* 冠), referring to a coming of age ceremony at twenty years of age.

156 The *shengren* here is not generic, but is certainly meant to refer to Kongzi. Mather, in his translation, references *Lunyu* 5:13: 夫子之文章，可得而聞也。夫子之言性與天道，不可得而聞也。 “The Master's [teaching] on culture can be obtained and listened to; the Master's words on human nature and the Heavenly *Dao* cannot be obtained and listened to.” (Cheng (2008), p. 318). If this is a reference is to Kongzi's teaching on Nonbeing, it is oblique; perhaps only by understanding Wang Bi's perspective on the relationship between the *Dao* and Nonbeing is this passage relevant. See

never willing to speak on it, yet Laozi repeatedly [talked about] it without end – why is that?” Wang answered, “The *shengren* embodied Nonbeing: Nonbeing indeed cannot be taught, and therefore his words were necessarily on Being. Lao[zi] and Zhuang[zi] were not yet free of Being, always teaching that which they were not sufficient.”

Similarly to *Liezi* 4:2 and 4:3 (discussed in the previous chapter), Kongzi is presented as the most realized of masters, speaking on subjects that can edify others and remaining silent on those things that ought not be taught. Kongzi possesses both the skill and wisdom to explicate what must be explicated, and to know when teaching stops. Compare this notion to the second half of the story of Zhao Xiangzi and the “ghostly being” in *Liezi* 2:12:

魏文侯聞之，問子夏曰：「彼何人哉？」子夏曰：「以商所聞夫子之言，和者大同於物，物無得傷闕者，游金石，蹈水火，皆可也。」文侯曰：「吾子奚不為之？」子夏曰：「剗心去智，商未之能。雖然，試語之有暇矣。」文侯曰：「夫子奚不為之？」子夏曰：「夫子能之而能不為者也。」文侯大說。¹⁵⁷

The Marquis Wen of Wei heard [of the ghostly being that could walk through stone and fire], and asked Zi Xia about it, “What kind of man was he?” Zi Xia said, “[Explaining it] by what I, Shang,¹⁵⁸ have heard the Master (Kongzi) say: one that harmonizes is greatly similar to things, and among things there are none that can harm or obstruct him. He wanders through metal and stone, treads through water and fire – these are all possible.” Marquis Wen said, “Why do you and I not do it?” Zi Xia said, “Cutting open the heart-mind and discarding knowledge: I am not yet able to do this. Although it is this way, [nonetheless] I will try to tell you it provisionally.”¹⁵⁹ Marquis Wen said, “Why does the Master not do it?” Zi Xia said, “The Master is capable of doing it, yet [also] capable of refraining from doing it.” Marquis Wen was greatly pleased.

As in Wang Bi's estimation of the Master above, Kongzi is portrayed in the *Liezi* as having access to wisdom, yet he holds it back. This pattern of acclaim for Kongzi, especially his aptitude for remaining silent, is characteristic of his portrayal in the *Liezi*.

Mather (2002), p. 101.

¹⁵⁷ Yang (2007), p. 69.

¹⁵⁸ Shang 商 was Zi Xia's personal name.

¹⁵⁹ “Provisionally” here is tentative, based on the suggestion of *jia* 假 for *xia* 暇 in the *shiwen* text. Yang (2007), p. 69. I suspect that even if this passage had an antecedent in another text such as the *Zhuangzi* (no parallels exist in the received record) this final comment is likely added by the compiler. Zi Xia remarks that he will try to tell the Marquis about his understanding of the matter, but Marquis Wen abruptly changes the subject to Kongzi – some other material on topic seems to have been replaced with praise for the Master.

The *Liezi* has often been grouped with *xuanxue* texts, likely because of its identification as an early medieval text and its close association with the Zhang family. Relatively little has been said about the ways the text actually engages with the debates of the period generally and within what would retroactively be called *xuanxue* specifically. In this chapter I have shown that the *Liezi* in fact does speak a great deal to the controversies that arose between those thinkers that have been labeled members of the *xuanxue* movement. For instance, I have demonstrated that the compiler of the *Liezi* was compelled to engage in the textual debate over the value of Nonbeing between the “Wang” and “Guo” factions. The *Liezi* reliably comes down on the Wang side of the controversy, even if its primary commentator Zhang Zhan does not. This is a text that places ontological priority on the concept of Nonbeing, just as Wang's commentaries to the *Laozi* and the *Zhouyi* do. Though we cannot be certain of the compiler's motives, there are suggestions of bonds between the Wang and Zhang families.

I have also compared the perspective of the *Liezi* on the existence of immortals to the views offered in the extant writings of Xi Kang and Ruan Ji. In the final analysis, the *Liezi* is generally rather neutral on the question of the existence of these supernatural beings and of any methods of life extension; in fact, a prominent theme of the text is the inevitable and even normative return of transient beings to an unborn and unchanging state, mysteriously united yet not identical to original Nonbeing. This view is different from both the credulous position taken by Xi Kang and the more doubtful but distressed perspective we find in the poetry of Ruan Ji. Against the suggestion that the *Liezi* was more “religious” than other texts we conclude that it in fact merely utilizes stories of immortals and longevity as a didactic technique.

My aim in this chapter has been to begin to shift focus away from the question of the “authenticity” of the *Liezi* to grasping the context of the document itself, especially in light of so-called *xuanxue* thought. Though the *Liezi* makes use of a great deal of older material, it is best understood in

the context of the early medieval period. As such, we have a text that offers a glimpse into these views on the nature and source of reality, and the creatures that inhabit it.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE *LIEZI* AND BUDDHIST *PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ* THOUGHT

老耽貴柔，孔子貴仁，墨翟貴廉¹，關尹貴清，子列子貴虛...²

Lao Dan valued pliancy, Kongzi valued benevolence, Mo Di valued impartiality, Guan Yin valued purity, Master Liezi valued emptiness...³

In Chapter Two we discussed the elements of Buddhist and Indian thought embedded in the *Liezi* text that help us to settle on an approximate date of compilation for the document. Though these were not the only factors useful in dating the *Liezi* – grammar and parallels to other extant materials are also extremely valuable resources for this task – the presence of material from India, perhaps via Central Asia, is a strong indicator that the text had to have been compiled after the arrival and dissemination of Buddhism in China. In the previous discussion of Buddhist and Indian influence on the *Liezi*, I expressed some doubt about some of the passages offered as evidence of borrowing, accepting the often cited *Sheng jing* automaton narrative⁴ as one unquestionable instance of large scale textual appropriation (though the other examples cited are suggestive of the same phenomenon).

That aforementioned discussion turned on textual and linguistic questions. It was offered in order to address the question of the date of compilation for the *Liezi*, and did not deal with intellectual and spiritual claims. The present chapter is an expansion on the question of the relationship between Buddhist thought and the philosophy of the *Liezi*. It is an exploration of how the Chinese reception of Buddhism, particularly *prajñāpāramitā* thought (literally, the “perfection of wisdom”), with its focus on the notion of 'emptiness', can be compared to the ontology of this indigenous Chinese text.

First, I will give a history of the scholarly search for Buddhist thinking in the *Liezi*. I will make

1 Substituting the much more plausible *jian* 兼 for *lian* 廉 here, following Knoblock and Riegel (2000), p. 433.

2 Xu (2009), p. 467. I have concluded the list of masters with Liezi for brevity here, but in the original more are listed.

3 A similar passage is found in the reconstructed *Shizi* 尸子; notably, while there is some variation in what is valued by these various thinkers, Liezi's preference for “emptiness” remains consistent. See Fischer (2012), pp. 101-102.

4 *Liezi* 5:13.

the claim that, aside from the much cited automaton narrative, there is not much clear evidence for direct Buddhist influence. However, having previously established that the *Liezi* is concerned with *xuanxue* ideology and questions, it is useful to read the text in light of the synthesis of Buddhism and *xuanxue* happening in the fourth century. In the second part of the present chapter I will elaborate on the fundamental notions associated with *prajñāpāramitā* thought and the translation of related Mahāyāna texts in China which serve to undergird Chinese reflections on Buddhist notions of wisdom, emptiness, and non-dualism. This elaborations will provide reference for the outline of the historical context of these reflections and the synthesis of Buddhist thought and *xuanxue* interpretation that comprise the third part of this chapter. The chapter closes with an analysis of these Buddhist interpretations of emptiness advanced in China and their relevance to the claims of the *Liezi* text, purported to have been authored by a man that valued emptiness.

5.1 The Search for the Buddhism in the *Liezi*

In Chapter Three we discussed *Liezi* 4:3, in which Kongzi asserts that there is a “*shengren* in the West”.⁵ As Graham points out, though the obvious referent is Laozi, it had long been suspected that the text may also be referring to the Buddha.⁶ We have also reviewed the case of the mysterious illusionist from the west that visited King Mu of Zhou and inspired his ecstatic (though ultimately fruitless) dream in *Liezi* 3:1.⁷ Though he is never explicitly identified as Buddhist, Indian, or Central Asian, it has been surmised that he indeed was at least one of these.⁸ As noted in Chapter Two, Zhang Zhan suggested in his preface to the *Liezi* that “... that which it clarifies is often similar to Buddhist sūtras...”;⁹ I have lamented in that chapter that Zhang does not go on to elaborate on the point. Below I offer further

5 See p. 117.

6 Graham (1990a), p. 79. Erik Zürcher cites a passage from Dao Xuan's 道宣 (596-667) *Guang hongming ji* as an example of the belief that this refers to the Buddha. Zürcher seems to agree with Dao Xuan's suggestion. See Zürcher (2007), pp. 274-276.

7 See p. 111.

8 See for example Zürcher (2007), pp. 421-422 note 155.

9 See p. 61.

examples of perceived Buddhist influence in the *Liezi*.

A. C. Graham reads *Liezi* 7:2 as an explicit account of the idea of Buddhist reincarnation: 太古之人知生之暫來，知死之暫往 “The men of the distant past knew that in life we are here for a moment and in death we are gone for a moment”.¹⁰ His note attached to his translation reads, “The suggestion of the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation...is curious; elsewhere the hedonist author [of this “Yang Zhu” chapter] assumes the finality of death.” Zhang Zhan comments on this passage, and reinterprets it in light of the first chapter of the *Liezi*:

生實暫來，死實長往，是世俗長談；而云死復暫往，卒然覽之，有似字誤。然此書大旨，自以為存亡往復，形氣轉續，生死變化，未始絕滅也。注天瑞篇中已具詳其義矣。¹¹

[That] life really temporarily comes, and death really [for a] long [time] goes – this has long been the conventional claim. Yet the text says “death is, moreover, temporarily going”. With a hasty look at the text, it seems that the wrong characters are here. However, the main idea of this text is that things exist or do not exist, go or return; form and *qi* transfer and continue, life and death transform and alter – there is never a termination. [My] commentary in the “Tian rui” *pian* has already provided the details of this meaning.

Though we know that Zhang Zhan sees Buddhist parallels in the *Liezi*, he does not remark on that here. Graham's interpretation of this passage as an instance of the promotion of a Buddhist doctrine is perhaps possible,¹² the meaning is opaque and the content is limited enough that were this to be about the doctrine of reincarnation, it would be too insignificant to be noteworthy.

As pointed out by Derk Bodde, another popular *Liezi* passage that is often linked to Buddhist practice is 8:29. Below is a translation of the entire pericope.

10 Source text in Yang (2007), p. 220. The translation here is Graham's, not my own. See Graham (1990a), p. 140 for this translation and the subsequent note.

11 Yang (2007), p. 220.

12 Most other translations, however, do not follow his interpretation. For example, consider Lafitte: “On connaissait sous la Haute Antiquité la brièveté de la vie, dont on savait qu'elle se hâtait vers la mort.” (“In Grand Antiquity one knew of the brevity of life, in which one rushes towards [one's] death.”). Lafitte (1997), p. 136.

邯鄲之民以正月之旦獻鳩於簡子，簡子大悅，厚賞之。客問其故。簡子曰：「正旦放生，示有恩也。」客曰：「民知君之欲放之，故競而捕之，死者眾矣。君如欲生之，不若禁民勿捕。捕而放之，恩過不相補矣。」簡子曰：「然。」¹³

The people of Handan, on the dawn of the lunar new year, offered doves to Jianzi. Jianzi was greatly pleased and generously rewarded them. A guest asked about the reason for this. Jianzi said, “On the dawn of the new year one releases a living thing – it demonstrates one's kindness.” The guest said, “The people know of your desire to release [the doves], and so they compete to catch them. Many [doves] die [because of this]. If you desire to have [the doves] live it would be better to prohibit the people from catching them. To catch and then release them – the kindness does not go far enough to repair [the damage done from catching them].” Jianzi said, “This is so.”¹⁴

Under particular scrutiny here is the expression *fangsheng* 放生, which is the Buddhist practice of releasing caged animals as an act of kindness. But Bodde, following Waley, demonstrates that the practice and usage of this term post-date the arrival of Buddhism in China by centuries, and did not gain currency until after even the latest suggested dates of composition for the *Liezi*.¹⁵ Bodde's argument was (as is common in discussions of the text) focused on determining a date of compilation for the *Liezi*. Having already discussed this question at length, for our purposes here it is sufficient to note that Bodde's research reveals an existing non-Buddhist tradition to which *Liezi* 8:29 may be traced. Leaving aside the difficult to date parallel in the *Kongcongzi*, Bodde reveals that there existed in the Han dynasty an existing fascination and celebration of doves, as demonstrated in the donation of staffs decorated with doves to persons over eighty years in age,¹⁶ the legend of Liu Bang's 劉邦 (Emperor Gaozu 高祖, r. 202-195 BCE) escape from Xiang Yu 項羽 (232-202 BCE) by means of the sympathetic participation of doves,¹⁷ and dove motifs found on chariots from the Han period.¹⁸ Though the term *fangsheng* certainly did exist in later Buddhist usage, Bodde concludes that the expression

13 Yang (2007), p. 269.

14 Bodde notes a parallel passage in the *Kongcongzi*. Bodde (1959), p. 25.

15 Bodde (1959), p. 26, 30.

16 Bodde (1959), pp. 26-28.

17 Bodde (1959), pp. 28-29.

18 Bodde (1959), pp. 29-30. Of the three pieces of evidence presented, this final suggestion is the least relevant.

here is not linked to that tradition.

T. H. Barrett has noted that *Liezi* commentator Lu Chongxuan also saw a Buddhist focus on vegetarianism, as demonstrated in his commentary to *Liezi* 8:30.¹⁹ Below is the *Liezi* passage, already partially translated in Chapter Two of this dissertation.²⁰

齊田氏祖於庭，食客千人。中坐有獻魚雁者，田氏視之，乃歎曰：「天之於民厚矣！殖五穀，生魚鳥以為之用。」眾客和之如響。鮑氏之子年十二，預於次，進曰：「不如君言。天地萬物與我並生，類也。類無貴賤，徒以小大智力而相制，迭相食；非相為而生之。人取可食者而食之，豈天本為人生之？且蚊蚋嚼膚，虎狼食肉，非天本為蚊蚋生人、虎狼生肉者哉？」²¹

Mr. Tian of Qi sacrificed in his courtyard and gave a banquet to a thousand guests. Seated among them was one offering fish and geese. Mr. Tian looked up and giving a sigh he said, "How generous is Heaven toward the people; it causes the five grains to propagate and generates fish and birds in order for [the people] to use." The group of guests that were with him echoed [his statement]. [But] Mr. Bao's twelve-year-old son, seated on the farthest rank, came forward to say, "It is not as you say. Heaven and Earth, the myriad things, and us are generated together, and [all] are of a single type. These types lack a greater or lesser, it is only by means of being smaller or larger, intelligence or strength that they rule, and alternately eat one another. It is not that they are made for one another and thus are generated. People take what they can eat and eat it, is it that Heaven originally generated [these things] for people? Moreover, mosquitoes and black flies sting our skin, tigers and wolves consume our flesh. Is it that²² Heaven originally generated humans for mosquitoes and black flies, or generated our flesh for tigers and wolves?"

Lu Chongxuan attaches this interpretation to the end of the passage:

夫食肉之類，更相吞噉，滅天理也，豈天意乎？鮑子之言，得理之當也。嘗有俗士言伏羲為網罟，燧人熟肉而食；彼二皇者，皆聖人也。聖人與虎食肉何遠耶？釋氏之經非中國聖人約人為教，利人而已矣。釋氏是六通，聖人約識為教，通利有情焉。今列子之書乃復宣明此指，則大道之教未嘗不同也。²³

As for the species that eat meat [i.e., carnivores], they will mutually eat one another. [This] destroys the Heavenly Principle – how could this be intention of Heaven? As for Bao's son's statement, it obtains the correct principle. There is [the case of] the

19 Barrett (2011), p. 18.

20 See p. 66.

21 Yang (2007), pp. 269-270.

22 Here reading *qi* 豈 for *fei* 非, as suggested by the commentaries included by Yang Bojun. Yang (2007), p. 270.

23 Yang (2007), p. 270.

common folk claiming that Fuxi used a fishing net, or that Sui ren cooked flesh and ate it; these two august ones were both *shengren*.²⁴ [So] what is it that separates the *shengren* from a tiger in their eating of meat? The texts of the Buddhists are not [by] the *shengren* of the Middle Kingdom, [who are] concerned with the instruction of being human, [and so] only benefit human beings. The Buddhists are [in possession of] the six supernatural powers,²⁵ [these] *shengren* are concerned with the instruction in consciousness, [and so] they benefit all sentient beings. The present *Liezi* text then declares and illuminates this instruction, and so its teaching of the Great Way is not different [from Buddhist texts].

The argument is of the kind that we would expect (but do not receive) from Zhang Zhan when he notes the similarities between the *Liezi* and Buddhist texts. Lu Chongxuan is not explicitly arguing for Buddhist influence here, but rather a convergence of ethical principles. However, a textual precedent for this kind of argument does lie outside of the Buddhist textual tradition, and is more likely what the compiler of the *Liezi* was drawing upon. The argument in *Liezi* 8:30 is less about the humane treatment of animals by humans and more about the ambivalent attitude of Heaven towards living beings in general. Yang Bojun cites an example from Wang Chong's *Lunheng*:

天生萬物，欲令相為用，不得不相賊害也，則生虎狼蝮蛇及蜂蠆之蟲，皆賊害人，天又欲使人為之用邪？²⁶

If Heaven generates the myriad things, and desires to command them to mutually use one another, but not mutually injure or harm one another, and thus generates tigers, wolves, vipers, and snakes, along with insects such as wasps and scorpions, all of which injure and harm humans, [does] Heaven indeed desire to have humans serve as a useful item to these creatures?

Yang is correct in noting the similarity here. However, I believe a strong case can also be made for the influence of *xuanxue* thinker Wang Bi on this passage.²⁷ As noted in the previous chapter, Wang Bi's thought has clearly influenced that of the compiler of the *Liezi*. Keeping in mind the basic sentiment of

24 Fuxi and Sui ren are both legendary sage emperors of the distant past – Fu Xi renowned for inventing the act of fishing (among other things), and Sui ren is credited with the discovery of fire. The point Lu is making is that these *shengren* do not have ethical qualms with the eating of animal flesh.

25 These are six supernatural powers obtained by a buddha. Among the six are the ability to see and hear the suffering of all beings, as well as know their thoughts. The implication seems to be that such beings would encompass all beings in their compassionate attitude, not just human beings as the native Chinese tradition does.

26 Huang (2006), p. 147.

27 Derk Bodde makes a similar point in his translation of Fung (1953), p. 194, note 3.

Liezi 8:30 – that Heaven's creation of items of consumption is not undertaken with the benefit of human beings as an objective – we see parallels when we read Wang Bi's commentary to the opening of *Laozi*

5: 天地不仁,以萬物為芻狗 “Heaven and Earth are not benevolent – they take the myriad things to be straw dogs”.²⁸

天地任自然，無為無造，萬物自相治理，故不仁也。仁者必造立施化，有恩有為。造立施化，則物失其真；有恩有為，則物不具存。物不具存，則不足以備載矣。（天）²⁹地不為獸生芻，而獸食芻；不為人生狗，而人食狗。無為於萬物而萬物各適其所用，則莫不贍矣。若慧由己樹，未足任也。³⁰

Heaven and Earth entrust [things] to being so-of-themselves – [by] not acting and not creating [they have] the myriad things regulate and order themselves. Thus [they] “are not benevolent”. The benevolent must create, establish, bestow, and transform – they have kindness and they have activity. [But if] they create, establish, bestow, and change, then things will lose their genuineness. [And if] they have kindness and they have intention, then things will not fully exist. If things do not fully exist, then they will not have sufficient means to completely support [themselves]. Heaven and Earth do not generate straw for the sake of beasts, yet beasts eat straw; they do not generate dogs for the sake of humans, yet humans eat dogs. They do not act in relation to the myriad things yet among the myriad things each [has what] is fit for it to make use of – none among them are insufficient. If insight comes from one is rooted, [then] it will not be sufficient for entrusting [things to being so-of-themselves].

In my reading of the various interpretations, I find that the *Liezi* pericope most closely resembles this passage from Wang Bi. There are many claims made here, but the most relevant is Wang Bi's suggestion that dogs (and one presumes, by extension of the principle, other domesticated animals) are not created for the benefit of humans – yet they are consumed (and thus benefit) humans. The idea that Heaven has no interest in benefiting humanity can be traced back at least as far as Xunzi's “Tian lun” chapter: 天不為人之惡寒也輟冬 “Heaven does not, for the sake of humans, hate the cold [and thus] stop the winter”.³¹ Lu's reading of a Buddhist-like promotion of vegetarianism here is perhaps plausible, but unlikely.

28 Lou (1980), p. 13.

29 Following the suggestion in the critical edition, Lou (1980), p. 13.

30 Lou (1980), p. 13.

31 Wang (2008), p. 311.

Having pursued these few supposed instances of Buddhist thought in the *Liezi* and found them to be at best inconclusive, one may wonder if reading the *Liezi* in the context of Buddhist thought is a worthwhile endeavour. I believe that it is. We have already seen that the content of the *Liezi* is entwined with the debates of the third and fourth centuries in our examination of the text and the *xuanxue* movement. Early Chinese Buddhist thought is also linked to the *xuanxue* movement, especially as it appears in the fourth century. In this chapter I will examine one type of Buddhist thought – the early Chinese *prajñāpāramitā* translations and traditions, and the resultant ontological speculations upon emptiness and non-dualism – in relation to the *Liezi*. In doing so, I do *not* intend to argue that these schools had a direct influence on the compilation of the text. Instead, this undertaking will be an exercise in comparative religious studies, facilitated by the knowledge that the *Liezi* was compiled during a period in which a nascent *prajñāpāramitā* discourse was flourishing in China.

Finally, I note that an undertaking such as this necessarily draws on both a broad textual corpus of primary materials and extensive history of secondary scholarship. As such, my presentation of Buddhist material here is unavoidably summary in nature; certainly, the following work will be representative rather than exhaustive. However, in its representation of Buddhist thought it will not be controversial. This representation does not challenge consensus or dominant views on the material, but rather adopts them, in order to facilitate my basic project of comparing Buddhist thought with that of the *Liezi*. The aim of the following chapter is to contribute to the scholarship on the relationship of the *Liezi* and early medieval Chinese Buddhism. Proper recourse to the appropriate scholarship is noted for interested readers.

5.2 Buddhism in Translation up to and in the 4th Century CE

The early history of Buddhism in China has been studied by both China scholars interested in

its impact on Chinese culture and Buddhism scholars seeking clues into the earliest extant translations of texts lost in Indian or Central Asian languages.³² The survey below will for the most part ignore speculative or pious legends, focusing as much as reasonably possible on well documented evidence.³³ My survey admittedly directs attention primarily to what Erik Zürcher has (with hesitation) called “gentry Buddhism”,³⁴ as it is difficult to meaningfully reconstruct Buddhist thought in this early period outside the textual resources that have come down to us in the present. As literacy was generally only within the purview of the educated elite (though, as Zürcher points out, not necessarily the very wealthy³⁵), it is prudent to keep in mind that our reconstructions are probably only applicable to those who created and had access to these texts. The survey presented is thus, by necessity, largely a survey of texts and translators, and not of practice and devotees. What follows is an historical and biographical sketch of the major translators and thinkers we will consider, as well as a discussion of the texts and the claims therein.

This brief survey of non-Chinese *prajñāpāramitā* literature will provide context for the developments in Buddhist thought indigenous to China that will be discussed in Part Three of this chapter. My aim here is to demonstrate the nature of this doctrine and collection of texts as both fundamental yet largely impenetrable – at least, impenetrable through intellectual and linguistic means. Understanding these notions about the *prajñāpāramitā* clarifies exactly what Chinese Buddhists were attempting to do in the fourth century BCE. That is, the *prajñāpāramitā* discourse in early medieval

32 My summary of the dissemination of Buddhist thought into China here will be brief and mainly in service to my discussion of *prajñāpāramitā* literature up to the fourth century. For more in-depth information on this period in general, I refer readers to the four excellent studies that have formed the foundation of my research: Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (2007 reprint); Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, *Han Wei Liangjin Nanbei Chao fojiao shi* 漢魏兩晉南北朝佛教史 (2011 reprint); Jan Nattier, *A Guide to the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Translations* (2008); and an essay by Sylvie Hureau, “Translations, apocrypha, and the emergence of the Buddhist canon” in *Early Chinese Religion Part Two: The Period of Division (220-589 AD)* (2010).

33 For accounts of these more speculative accounts of Buddhism's arrival in China, see Zürcher (2007), pp. 19-22; Tang (2011), pp. 3-10.

34 Zürcher (2011), p. 4.

35 Zürcher (2011), pp. 4-5.

China was an attempt to convey information about an absolutely crucial concept while recognizing that the conventional methods of conveying information were deficient. The survey here provides evidence for the sense of primacy and mystery that surround the notion of *prajñāpāramitā* as they entered into China in translation.

Before offering this historical survey, however, it is necessary to briefly review important Buddhist terminology that is relevant to the discussion at hand.³⁶ Central to this project is the notion of *prajñāpāramitā* (Chinese: *bore boluomi* 般若波羅蜜), usually translated as the “perfection of wisdom”. It is the highest of the *pāramitās* which comprise the perfections of the bodhisattva, who has vowed to work towards the release of all sentient beings from the cycle of death and rebirth. A quality crucial to the notion of the *prajñāpāramitā* in particular, and Mahāyāna thought in general, is the authentic perception of *śūnyatā* (Chinese: *kong* 空), or the true emptiness of all phenomena. This is an extension of the earlier Buddhist doctrine of *anatman* (Chinese: *wuwo* 無我) or “no-self” to all phenomena or *dharmas* (Chinese: *fa* 法). Emptiness here is not the unreality of these *dharmas*, but instead their lack of *svabhāva* (Chinese: *zixing* 自性) or intrinsic nature. That is to say, all things (not only the self) are completely reliant on conditions and do not exist independent of conditions. It is because of their shared quality of *śūnyatā* that all dualisms that are conceived of linguistically or intellectually ultimately fail to reflect the penetrating understanding offered by the *prajñāpāramitā*. Thus, this “perfection of wisdom” is characterized by a perception of the empty, non-dual nature of all phenomena. Finally, it is important to note that the discussion below will ignore the important contributions to the understanding of *śūnyatā* offered by Nāgārjuna and Madhyamaka thought, as the relevant texts were not available in China at the time under consideration.

³⁶ Detailed information on all the concepts discussed below are available in a number of specialized studies. The best sources are Edward Conze's *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature* (1978) and Paul Williams' *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (2001).

The first major translator of Buddhist texts into a Chinese vernacular on record is the Parthian An Shigao 安世高 (mid 2nd century CE), who focused his efforts mainly on foundational Buddhist texts and eschewed documents of the Mahāyāna variety.³⁷ As such, he is noted in this survey as an important antecedent to the later translators discussed, though his work is not relevant to the project at hand. Of much greater importance to us is the Indian monk Lokakṣema 支婁迦讖 (mid to late 2nd century CE), whose catalog of confirmed translations include two important *prajñāpāramitā* texts: the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*Daoxing bore jing* 道行般若經 or the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines*, commonly abbreviated and hereafter the *Aṣṭa*) and the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (*Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經 or the *Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present Sūtra*,³⁸ abbreviated and hereafter the *PraS*).³⁹ Both the *Aṣṭa* and the *PraS* are important *prajñāpāramitā* documents, and all of Lokakṣema's extant works are, in contrast to those of An Shigao, rooted in Mahāyāna doctrine.⁴⁰ It appears from the historical record that Lokakṣema, like An Shigao, worked in the city of Luoyang 洛陽.⁴¹

The next important translator⁴² we will consider is Zhi Qian 支謙 (d. ~252 CE), a lay disciple of Lokakṣema. Both the aforementioned translators spent the greater part of their careers in Luoyang – Zhi Qian began his studies there, but during the Three Kingdoms Period (220-280 CE) he made his

37 Zürcher (2011), p. 33; Nattier (2008), pp. 41-42.

38 The English translation for the *Aṣṭa* is standard; for the *PraS*, I have adapted the English translation for the title of the text suggested by Paul Harrison. See Harrison (1998), p. 2.

39 For the ascription of these texts to Lokakṣema, see Harrison (1993), pp. 141-150; Nattier (2008), pp. 76ff. As best as I can determine, all scholars accept the attribution of these translations to Lokakṣema, with the exception of the verse passages in the *PraS*, which are likely later revisions. However, Nattier concludes that the revisions are very consistent with the work of Zhi Qian (also discussed in this chapter), in which case even these passages not translated by Lokakṣema are still relevant to our investigation to fourth century Buddhism and the *Liezi*. See Nattier (2008), pp. 81-83.

40 Nattier (2008), p. 75.

41 Nattier (2008), p. 73.

42 Or as Nattier notes, “reviser” - much of Zhi Qian's corpus are reworkings of texts already translated. However, in many cases, only Zhi Qian's redaction survives. See Nattier (2008), pp. 118-119, 125-126. Zürcher has suggested that Zhi Qian was “...the only important translator in Southern China before the late fourth century.” Zürcher (2011), p. 50.

way south and eventually settled in the Wu 吳 kingdom capital of Jianye 建業⁴³ (which would later become the Eastern Jin capital Jiankang 建康). Zhi Qian's corpus is more varied than An Shigao's or Lokakṣema's,⁴⁴ but two texts that can likely be attributed to him are relevant to the present project: they are Zhi Qian's translation of the *Aṣṭa* (translated as *Damingdu jing* 大明度經) and his translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra* (*Weimojie jing* 維摩詰經, hereafter the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*). Of the two, exclusive focus will be paid to the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, as the situation with Zhi Qian's *Aṣṭa* is somewhat complex.⁴⁵ Zhi Qian's translation of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* would later be supplanted by Kumārajīva's 鳩摩羅什 (344–413 CE) very popular version. However, it is evident that Zhi Qian's translation of this crucial text was the first in China,⁴⁶ and was popular among the *qingtan* discussants of the 4th century.⁴⁷

A final translator to be considered here is Dharmarakṣa.⁴⁸ He is, as we have seen in Chapter Two, credited as translator of the *Sheng jing* from which the *Liezi* seems to have adapted the story of the King Mu and the automaton (i.e., *Liezi* 5:13). Thus, the reason for his inclusion here is that his translation of this document may serve as a *terminus a quo* for dating the Buddhist literature available at the time the *Liezi* was compiled. Moreover, it may be noted that Dharmarakṣa is credited with having translated⁴⁹ the *Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*Guangzan jing* 光讚經, in Dharmarakṣa's version, or the *Perfection of Wisdom in 25,000 Lines*; hereafter *GZJ* following Zacchetti⁵⁰). Dharmarakṣa was likely born in Dunhuang, and completed a great deal of his translation

43 Nattier (2008), p. 116.

44 Nattier (2008), p. 117.

45 Nattier notes that Zhi Qian's *Aṣṭa* is clearly a combination of two texts (a “T225A”, with interlinear commentary, and a “T225B”, seemingly a revision of the version by Lokakṣema), the second of which is likely by Zhi Qian. The question deserves a much more detailed study than I am able to provide here, and so I will confine my discussion to other texts. For more information, see Nattier (2008), pp. 136-137. Moreover, Zürcher notes that Zhi Qian's *Aṣṭa* “...does not appear to have played any role in fourth century Chinese Buddhism...”. Zürcher (2011), p. 65.

46 Nattier (2008), p. 140; Hureau (2010), p. 744.

47 Hureau (2010), pp. 744-745.

48 Dharmarakṣa is introduced with basic biographical information in Chapter Two, pp. 91-92.

49 Daniel Boucher describes in detail Dharmarakṣa's translation process, which involved the help of native Chinese speaking assistants, most importantly Nie Chengyuan (late 3rd century). Boucher (1996), pp. 88ff.

50 Zacchetti (2005).

work in Chang'an.⁵¹

Above we have briefly sketched the biographies of the translators that imported *prajñāpāramitā* thought into the Chinese cultural sphere. Now we turn to the *prajñāpāramitā* texts themselves, in order to draw out the fundamental concepts contained therein. We can address these questions in three stages: (1) we will establish the strongly normative character of *prajñāpāramitā* in particular, as well as its relation to the other *pāramitās* or “perfections”, especially as it is found in the translated works; (2) next, we must examine the doctrinal characteristics of *prajñāpāramitā* thought, especially as it relates to the concepts of emptiness or *śūnyatā* and to the idea of non-dualism; (3) finally, we will investigate how these ontological concepts are applied and understood in the translated materials. These are the ontological understandings that inform the synthesis described in Part 3, which we will compare to the ontological conceptions of the *Liezi* in Part 4.

5.2.1 The Primacy of the *Prajñāpāramitā*

The primacy of the *prajñāpāramitā* doctrine is best illustrated by recourse to Lokakṣema's translation of the *Aṣṭa*. In this text we have the Buddha's disciple Subhūti (Xuputi 須菩提), foremost in the understanding of *śūnyatā*, lecture on the *prajñāpāramitā* under the supernatural direction of the Buddha. The primary recipients of this discourse are the disciple Śāripūtra (Shelifo 舍利弗), generally taken as foremost in wisdom among the immediate followers of the Buddha, Ānanda (Enan 阿難) disciple and cousin to the Buddha, and the Vedic deity Śakra (Shitihuanyin 釋提桓因⁵²), also called by the name Indra. Much of the text takes the form of either Subhūti or Buddha lecturing to Śāripūtra, Ānanda, and Śakra on the merits and advantages of the *prajñāpāramitā*.

It is Ānanda that poses to the Buddha this question: why lecture on the perfection of wisdom,

51 Zürcher (2011), p. 65ff.

52 More specifically, this is Lokakṣema's transliterating of the Sanskrit for “Śakra, King of the Gods”. See Karashima (2010), p. 448.

the *prajñāpāramitā*, to the exclusion of the other five perfections? The *Aṣṭa* phrases it in this way:

阿難白佛言：「無有說檀波羅蜜者，亦不說尸波羅蜜，亦不說羸提波羅蜜，亦不說惟逮波羅蜜，亦不說禪波羅蜜，亦無有說是名者，但共說般若波羅蜜者。何以故？天中天！」⁵³

Ānanda asked the Buddha, “There is no explanation for the *dānapāramitā* (perfection of giving), nor an explanation of the *śīlapāramitā* (perfection of virtue), nor an explanation of the *kṣāntipāramitā* (perfection of patience), nor an explanation of the *vīryapāramitā* (perfection of effort), nor an explanation of the *dhyānapāramitā* (perfection of contemplation); there is no discussion of these names. It is only⁵⁴ the *prajñāpāramitā* that is explained. Why is this so, god of gods?⁵⁵”

Ānanda's question to the Buddha is well put, as the dominant theme of the *Aṣṭa* is the *prajñāpāramitā*.

The Buddha responds:

「般若波羅蜜於五波羅蜜中最尊。云何，阿難！不作布施，當何緣為檀波羅蜜薩芸若？...」⁵⁶

The *prajñāpāramitā* is most exalted in its relationship with the other five *pāramitās*. Why is this, Ānanda? Without dedicating *dāna* (giving) [to omniscience], then how can one turn *dānapāramitā* into omniscience? ...⁵⁷

The Buddha likewise describes the other *pāramitās* in this manner (including the *prajñāpāramitā*): they are all ultimately in service to the ideal of “omniscience” (*sayunruo* 薩藝若).⁵⁸ Ānanda admits the primacy of omniscience, and the Buddha confirms the central role of the *prajñāpāramitā*:

「如是，阿難，般若波羅蜜於五波羅蜜中最尊。譬如極大地，種散其中同時俱出，其生大株。如是，阿難！般若波羅蜜者是地，五波羅蜜者是種，從其中生，薩芸若者從般若波羅蜜成。如是，阿難！般若波羅蜜於五波羅蜜中極大尊，自

53 CBETA T08n0224, *juan 2*. I have with great benefit checked this version against the critical edition of the *Aṣṭa* found in Karashima (2011), pp. 86-87, in all instances of citations from Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa*.

54 Karashima has expressed uncertainty as to the use of *gong* 共 here; I have left it untranslated, but do not believe it affects the meaning in an appreciable way. See Karashima (2011), p. 86, note 142.

55 Here “god of gods” translates *tianzhong tian* 天中天, following Karashima (2010), p. 482. It is in this version of the *Aṣṭa* a common designation for the Buddha.

56 CBETA T08n0224, *juan 2*; cf. Karashima (2011), pp. 86-87.

57 My translation here is strongly influenced by and closely follows that offered by Karashima in Karashima (2011), p. 87, note 148.

58 Cf. Karashima (2010), p. 395. His full gloss here is: “omniscience, the knowledge of everything, i.e. the wisdom of a buddha; an omniscient one, an all-knowing one; the state of the all-knowing (a transliteration of *sarvajña* omniscient, all-knowing)”.

在所教。』⁵⁹

“It is like this, Ānanda. The *prajñāpāramitā* is most exalted in its relationship with the other five *pāramitās*. It is as though there were a great ground, and seeds scattered upon it at the same time grow into great tree trunks. It is like this, Ānanda. The *prajñāpāramitā* is this ground, and the other five *pāramitās* are the seeds; and from their growing, omniscience comes from the accomplishment of the *prajñāpāramitā*. It is like this, Ānanda. The *prajñāpāramitā* in its relationship with the other five *pāramitās* is at the height of exaltation, and what it teaches is derived of its self.”⁶⁰

The metaphor in the text sets the *prajñāpāramitā* apart from the other *pāramitās* in its importance – it has, as the “ground”, become the necessary condition for the “trees”. Moreover, it is not only necessary for the other *pāramitās*, but is also different in its nature. The *Aṣṭa* relates in great detail the veneration that ought to be accorded to the *prajñāpāramitā*.⁶¹ The Buddha, in dialogue with Śakra, explains the relative merit derived from venerating the text of the *prajñāpāramitā* as compared to other, perhaps more conventional, forms of Buddhist devotion. Offered to Śakra are many comparisons, which by way of hyperbole emphasize the importance of the *prajñāpāramitā*. Below I select only one representative example:

若三千天下四面皆滿其中七寶塔。若有善男子、善女人盡形壽自歸作禮，承事，供養天華、天搗香、天澤香、天雜香、天繒、天蓋、天幡。云何，拘翼！是善男子、善女人其福寧多不？⁶²

Suppose that within a trichilocosm⁶³ in which the four directions were all filled with seven-jeweled *stūpas* there were good men and good women that for the entirety of their lives relied upon, revered, honoured, and made offerings of divine flowers, divine incense, divine ointment, divine silk, divine canopies, and divine banners [to these *stūpas*]. What say you, Kauśika?⁶⁴ For these good men and women, would their

59 CBETA T08n0224, *juan 2*; cf. Karashima (2011), p. 88.

60 “Derived of its self” follows a compromise of Karashima’s two glosses: (1) “self-existent, independent, master of one’s self” and (2) “at will, as one likes”; see Karashima (2010), p. 670. Karashima, in his rendering of the passage, adopts meaning (2); see Karashima (2011), p. 88.

61 It must be noted here that some historians of the *prajñāpāramitā* writings in India suspect that these documents, early in their existence, took on the role of a venerated spiritual artifact. The description contained in the *Aṣṭa* is perhaps a reflection of this. See Williams (2001), p. 22.

62 CBETA T08n0224, *juan 2*; cf. Karashima (2011), p. 73. Here I have adopted the punctuation suggested by Karashima against that offered by CBETA.

63 A feature of Buddhist cosmology, comprising an incomprehensibly large world-system several orders of magnitude greater in size than our own. Employed here in order to suggest immense scale.

64 Kauśika is another name for Śakra/Indra.

good fortune be greater or not [than someone that venerated the *prajñāpāramitā*]?

Śakra correctly responds that the veneration of the *prajñāpāramitā* would be greater. The implication here, as in most *prajñāpāramitā* literature, is that the *prajñāpāramitā* is the highest teaching of the bodhisattva path, to the exclusion of all other instruction. As such, the devout are tasked with the pursuit of this teaching.

5.2.2 The Ontology of Non-dualism Described

Having provided textual support for the primacy of the *prajñāpāramitā*, we can turn to an investigation of the meaning of the doctrine. Discussion of this question is present through the corpus of early Buddhist translations, but particularly helpful articulations of the idea of *sūnyatā* and the non-dualism it entails can be found in the ninth chapter of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*.⁶⁵ While not explicitly a *prajñāpāramitā* text, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* is a Mahāyāna document aligned with the philosophical orientation of *prajñāpāramitā* discourse. In this chapter, Vimalakīrti has challenged the other bodhisattvas that have gathered in his presence to explain their understandings of non-duality.⁶⁶ Below I present only two representative instances of the approximately thirty formulations.

愛觀菩薩曰：「世間空耳，作之為二。色空不色敗空，色之性空，如是痛想行識空而作之為二，識空不識敗空，識之性空，彼於五陰，知其性者，是不二入。」⁶⁷

Bodhisattva Aijin⁶⁸ said, “There are only the mundane world⁶⁹ and emptiness, and these form a duality. [As for] form's being empty, it is not that form is destroyed by emptiness, [but that] form is by nature empty. Like this, afflictions, thought, actions

65 Here, as suggested above, reference will be made exclusively to Zhi Qian's version of the text (T474), rather than Kumārajīva's later translation of the text (T475), which became more popular but certainly post-dates the period in which we are interested. As of yet, there are no direct translations of Zhi Qian's version. Notable English translations include Thurman's (1976), from the Tibetan, and Watson's (1997) and McRae's (2004), both based primarily on Kumārajīva's translation. An important French translation is Lamotte's (1962).

66 Lamotte notes that a few of the explications of the bodhisattvas found in Kumārajīva's translation are absent from Zhi Qian's version of the text; see Lamotte (1962), p. 4. These textual differences do not impact our use of the Zhi Qian version here.

67 CBETA T14n0474, *juan 2*.

68 I have left the name here untranslated, but this is certainly Kumārajīva's Bodhisattva Xijian 喜見, translated as “Joyful Seeing” by Watson (see Watson (1997), p. 106).

69 I take this as a shorthand for the five aggregates, as the text goes on to discuss their relationship with emptiness.

and consciousness [also] form a duality with emptiness. [And as for] consciousness' being empty, it is not that consciousness is destroyed by emptiness, [but that] consciousness is by nature empty. In one's attitude toward the five aggregates [the *bodhisattva*] knows their nature [of being empty]; this is the entrance to non-duality.”

深妙菩薩曰：「空異、無相異、無願異為二，如空則無相，無相則無願，無願者不意、不心、不識、不行，其以一向行眾解門者，是不二入。」⁷⁰

Bodhisattva Shenmiao⁷¹ said, “Emptiness being distinguished, being without attributes being distinguished, and being without desires being distinguished⁷² form dualities. [Yet] emptiness is being without attributes, and being without attributes is being without desires; [and] to be without desires is to not think, not have a mind, not be conscious, and to not act. Therein by means of this one practice they proceed to the many gates of liberation⁷³; this is the entrance to non-duality.”

Though neither passage above is the final answer to Vimalakīrti's question, both convey the inherent difficulty of expressing a non-dualistic ontology by means of necessarily dualistic language. In Bodhisattva Aijin's explication, the nature of non-duality is expressed in the equivalence of the five aggregates – equivalent in the sense that they are by nature empty. Bodhisattva Shenmiao's take on an ontology of non-duality by stressing the equivalence of the three *samādhis*, namely emptiness (*kong* 空), being without attributes (*wuxiang* 無相), and being without desires (*wuyuan* 無願)⁷⁴. Even by distinguishing these methods for understanding non-duality one employs duality. It is remarkable that in Zhi Qian's translation of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* it is *not* Vimalakīrti that offers the last word on entering the gate of non-duality, as is true in the much more renowned Kumārajīva version, but instead it is Mañjuśrī, bodhisattva associated with wisdom, that does so:

70 CBETA T14n0474, *juan* 2.

71 As above, I leave the name untranslated, but suggest that this is the same as Kumārajīva's Shenhui 深慧. Watson renders this name “Deep Wisdom”; see Watson (1997), p. 108.

72 This is a particularly difficult passage to translate, and I have relied on the parallel passage in T475 to help elucidate its meaning: 是空、是無相、是無作為二。See CBETA T14n0475, *juan* 2. The point of both versions is the focus on distinguishing emptiness, etc., from what it is not – a process that relies on the notion of dualism.

73 Again, I make recourse to Kumārajīva's translation (T475) for clarity: 於一解脫門即是三解脫門者。Watson translates: “This single doctrine of emancipation is the same as the threefold doctrine of emancipation [regarding emptiness, formlessness, and nonaction]” (Watson (1997), p. 108; the bracketed clarification is Watson's). If we take T475 as a more faithful translation, then in his rendering Zhi Qian seems to have missed some technical nuance in the original, though capturing the basic message.

74 It ought to be noted that Kumārajīva renders “being without desire” as *wuzuo* 無作.

文殊師利曰：「如彼所言，皆各建行，於一切法如，無所取、無度、無得、無思、無知、無見、無聞，是謂不二入。」⁷⁵

Mañjuśrī said, “As for what has been spoken, each of you establishes the practice:⁷⁶ All *dharmas* as they are are without that which is grasped, without conveyance,⁷⁷ without obtaining, without thought, without knowing, without seeing, without hearing; this explains the entrance to non-duality.”

In my reading, Mañjuśrī's summary of the bodhisattva's explications on non-duality do not trump their formulations so much as summarize them, and thus contrast with Vimalakīrti's famous silent response not found in Zhi Qian's version. Regardless, we have here an attempt to put into words a description of a reality unsuited to such an undertaking.

5.2.3 The Ontology of Non-duality in Practice

It is one matter to attempt to understand the nature of non-duality, and it is another matter to understand how non-duality impacts practice. This is especially apparent in the *PraS*, which sets out to reconcile meditative experience, especially of Buddhas and Pure Lands, with the Mahāyāna emphasis on *śūnyatā*, or the inherent emptiness of all phenomena.⁷⁸ The text does this by employing metaphors of dreaming, which explain the equivalency of experiences in both an awakened and sleeping state – equivalent, at least, in terms of their emptiness. In one example, Buddha explains to the bodhisattva Bhadrāpāla the practitioner's goal of seeing the bodhisattva Amitābha:⁷⁹

佛告颯⁸⁰陀和，「譬如人臥出於夢中，見所有金銀珍寶，父母兄弟妻子親屬知識，相與娛樂，喜樂無輩，其覺已，為人說之，後自淚出，念夢中所見，如是颯陀和菩薩，若沙門白衣所聞西方阿彌陀佛刹，當念彼方佛不得缺戒，一心念若一晝夜，若七日七夜，過七日以後，見阿彌陀佛，於覺不見。於夢中見

75 CBETA T14n0474, *juan 2*.

76 This rendering is notably different than Kumārajīva's more succinct version, in which Mañjuśrī affirms his own interpretation over that of the other bodhisattvas: 如我意者... See CBETA T14n0475, *juan 2*. Watson translates: “To my way of thinking...”. Watson (1997), p. 110.

77 “Conveyance” here is tentative, and is read in the sense of *du* 渡. I am open to the notion that perhaps Zhi Qian had a more general meaning of *du* as “measurement” in mind.

78 This is well summarized in Harrison (1993), pp. 147-148, and Harrison (1998), p. 3.

79 Paul Harrison notes that though the *PraS* demonstrates important *prajñāpāramitā* themes, it is also important in Pure Land Buddhism, in which Amitābha is central. See Harrison (1998), p. 2.

80 I have inserted *ba* 颯, here and following, instead of CBETA's rendering of the character as 颯-台+(发-义+又).

之。」⁸¹

Buddha said to Bhadrāpāla, “It is like a person asleep in a dream. He sees the precious metals and jewels that he has, and his parents, brothers, wife, children, and relatives in his awareness. With [all of these] he is amused and delighted without parallel. When he wakes he tells others about it, and after he spontaneously cries recalling what he had seen in the dream.⁸² It is like this, Bodhisattva Bhadrāpāla: whether *śramaṇa* or white robed,⁸³ [when] one hears of Amitābha's realm in the Western direction one ought to think of the Buddha of this realm and not be deficient [in their keeping] the precepts. They are single-minded [in doing this], whether for a day and night, or whether for seven days and seven nights; after seven days, they will see Amitābha. If while awake they do not see [Amitābha], then in a dream they will see him.”

Buddha assures Bhadrāpāla that the practice he is teaching will have results, and that those results are as valid whether they are perceived in a dream or while awake, just as the dreaming man of the parable undergoes true anguish at being separated from the joyous experience of his dream. The *PraS* makes extensive use of the dream metaphor, and below I include one more example, which is a continuation of the parable offered above:

譬如人夢中所，不知晝，不知夜；亦不知內，不知外。不用在冥中，故不見；不用有所蔽礙，故不見。如是毘陀和，菩薩心當作是念。時諸佛國界名大山須彌山。其有幽冥之處，悉為開闢。目亦不蔽，心亦不礙。是菩薩摩訶薩，不持天眼徹視，不持天耳徹聽，不持神足到其佛刹。不於是間終生彼間，佛刹乃見，便於是間坐見阿彌陀佛。聞所說經悉受得。從三昧中悉能具足，為人說之。⁸⁴

“It is like what is seen by someone in a dream – they do not know if it is day and do not know if it is night; they also do not know if they are inside or if they are outside. It is not because they are in darkness that they do not see, and it is not because there are hindrances that they do not see. It is like this Bhadrāpāla; the mind of the *bodhisattva* should recall like this. [Then] at this time the various Buddha realms,

81 CBETA T13n0418, *juan* 1. I have changed the punctuation. Paul Harrison's translation has been an invaluable guide in conceiving my own renderings here; see Harrison (1998), pp. 17-18.

82 Astute readers of the *Zhuangzi* will perhaps see some similarity to a similar passage in Chapter Two (“Qi wu lun”) of that work: 夢飲酒者，旦而哭泣；夢哭泣者，旦而田獵。“One that dreams of drinking alcohol cries when he wakes; one that dreams of crying hunts in the fields when he wakes.” (see Guo (2004), p. 104). The ultimate meanings here are different, however: in the *Zhuangzi*, what happens in the dream state can affect the dreamer, but it is recognized as unreal – a dreamer laments the loss of wine had in a dream when waking, or goes about his business when waking from a dream in which he was distressed. In the *PraS*, the emphasis is on the equivalency of these states, in terms of their “emptiness”.

83 “White robed” here indicates a lay person.

84 CBETA T13n0418, *juan* 1. Punctuation has been changed; reading *yong* 用 as *yin* 因.

great mountains, Mount Sumeru, and all places that are obscured and dark will be opened. Their eyes will not be hindered, and their minds will not be obstructed. This is the *bodhisattva-mahāsattva*:⁸⁵ they do not rely on divine vision to see all, they do not rely on divine hearing to hear all, and they do not rely on spiritual powers to access the Buddha realms; nor do they die here and become born there in the Buddha realm, and only then see [the Buddha realm]. Truly they sit here and see Amitābha, hear him explain the sūtras, and understand them all. Following this *samādhi* they are completely able to preach to others.”

Here, the actuality of the world around the dreamer is of no consequence to the reality of the dream – dreamers do not account for the time of day when they dream. Though the meaning of the metaphor here is somewhat opaque, the point made is that acquisitions of Amitābha's explications of scripture attained in a meditative state – here identified with the conventionally unreal “dream state” – are a sufficient means for the bodhisattva to acquire the ability to pass on that knowledge to others.

The thinkers that make up what are called the “Six Houses and Seven Schools” of the fourth century made recourse to these texts and concepts in their attempts to explicate complex Buddhist ontology to a local audience. They were aware of the primacy of the *prajñāpāramitā* doctrine, the association of that doctrine with the notions of *śūnyatā* and non-dualism, and that these notions taken together were not merely theoretical, but instead applicable to all aspects of belief, understanding, and practice. In the following part we will examine major players in the indigenous Chinese expression of the *prajñāpāramitā* doctrine. In interpreting their positions we must remain aware that they did not yet have access to the Madhyamaka interpretations (i.e., those of Nāgārjuna) that had developed outside of China.

85 Or “perfected bodhisattva”.

5.3 The “Six Houses and Seven Schools”⁸⁶ of the 4th Century

The concept of the *prajñāpāramitā* is not grasped through intellectual means – it is a notion that is meant to be experienced directly by the practitioner, not readily reduced to language or discourse. Regardless, attempts to understand and explain the *prajñāpāramitā* and the underlying emptiness of all phenomena propounded thereby were undertaken in the fourth century. The earliest recorded instances of these are what have been called the “Six Houses and Seven Schools” (*liujia qizong* 六家七宗), all of which were superseded with the popularization of Madhyamaka thought by Kumārajīva and Sengzhao 僧肇 (384-414 CE).⁸⁷ Readers of the *prajñāpāramitā* texts are immediately struck by the non-linear nature of the discourse, as well as the frequent recourse to negative descriptions, paradox, and what Alan Sponberg has called “a rhetorical creation that systematically deconstructs its own status as an ultimate truth in the very process of asserting the view that it represents is an ultimate truth.”⁸⁸ In light of a natural desire to understand the doctrine, thinkers in the fourth century worked to systematize and explain these doctrines to a wider audience. Zürcher characterizes the earliest records of these attempts, the Six Houses and Seven Schools (hereafter referred to as “the *Prajñā* Schools”)⁸⁹, as being informed by three related factors: (1) the *xuanxue* discourse of the period, which seemed to be similar in aspiration, style, and tone; (2) the difficult to construe nature of the doctrine, which encouraged

86 The use of the term “schools” here has been appropriately problematized in Zürcher (2011), p. 100, and it is difficult to offer a case for its continued use apart from its near ubiquity in existing treatments of the subject. I will likewise adopt the usage with the understanding that these positions did not have the institutional or intellectual structures seen in later Buddhist “schools”, such as Tiantai or Chan. Zürcher suggests the term “theories”, which is not widely employed but certainly more accurate. It is also relevant to note, as Liebenenthal does, that these “schools” were not related to any existing debates in India; see Liebenenthal (1968), p. 133.

87 Zürcher (2011), p. 102.

88 Sponberg in Keown & Prebish (2007), p. 587. While I am strongly sympathetic to Sponberg's description here, I suggest that the term “systematically” can only be employed on a limited scale: the overall structure (the macro level) of the *prajñāpāramitā* texts discussed in this chapter are far from what I would deem “systematic”, even when employing standard textual organization (e.g., beginning a sūtra with “Thus have I heard”, followed by an enumeration of the disciples and supernatural beings present) and stock phrases of hyperbole, simile, or apophatic language. However, the smaller pericopes that comprise these sūtras (the micro level), such as those reviewed in Part 2 of this chapter, can in my view be aptly described as systematic. It is furthermore noted that Sponberg's description is broadly applied to *prajñāpāramitā* literature, including texts beyond the scope of this project not discussed above.

89 Following Lai (1983).

disparate adaptations and formulations; (3) the misuse of Chinese terms in translated texts, which often carried a host of philosophical implications and cultural assumptions unintended by the translators.⁹⁰ It is beyond the scope of this project to discuss in detail all of these *Prajñā* Schools, and so I will limit the summary here to those which had the greatest impact on the intellectual climate and for which the most extensive textual record is available. These are (i) the *Xinwu* 心無 School, (ii) the *Jise* 卽色 school, (iii) the *Benwu* 本無 school.⁹¹ The positions of each will be summarized below, with reference made to their leading advocates.

5.3.1 The *Xinwu* 心無 School (“Emptiness of Mind”)⁹²

The question of *sūnyatā* in this school is usually interpreted as having been answered by equating the emptiness asserted by the doctrine with the mind of the enlightened being, *not* to phenomenal reality, which is taken as existent.⁹³ If this is an accurate reading, then in this sense it is perhaps most distant from the later orthodox interpretation of the *prajñāpāramitā*. As with all the *Prajñā* Schools, a philosophically robust and satisfying explication of the position of the *Xinwu* School is not possible due to the paucity of what are admittedly hostile interpretations of the thought. A concise summary of the standard position is offered below, along with a challenge to that interpretation.

The name most often associated with the *Xinwu* School is that of Zhi Mindu 支愨度 (fl. ~325 - 340 CE), an early cataloger of *prajñāpāramitā* texts and creator of a synoptic version of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, now lost.⁹⁴ Virtually any discussion of Zhi Mindu makes reference to an anecdote about him found in the *Shishuo xinyu*, which asserts that Zhi Mindu formulated his notion of *xinwu* as part of an

90 Zürcher (2011), p. 101.

91 I follow the order in which Sengzhao addresses the schools; other authors usually list the *Benwu* School and its variant first.

92 The translation of *xinwu* as “emptiness of mind” is following Liebenthal (1968), p. 135. Other renderings include “Non-existence of Mind” in Zürcher (2011), p. 100, and “Non-being of Mind” in Fung (1953), p. 252.

93 Zürcher (2011), p. 102; Liebenthal (1968), pp. 135-138; Fung (1953), pp. 252-256.

94 Zürcher (2011), p. 99; Mather (2002), pp. 542-543.

illicit money-making scheme.⁹⁵ It is unfortunate that no record of Zhi Mindu's actual writings survive, but one may attempt to reconstruct his ideas from a criticism found in Sengzhao's concise characterization of this school in his essay on *sūnyatā* (*Buzhenkong lun* 不真空論, part of the *Zhaolun* 肇論, T 1858):

心無者，無心於萬物，萬物未嘗無。此得在於神靜，失在於物虛。⁹⁶

The [idea] of *xinwu* is that there is no mind directed at the myriad things, [and that] the myriad things are never non-existent [i.e., they are existent]. This [doctrine] succeeds in getting [the idea of how to] make the spirit tranquil,⁹⁷ but it fails to grasp [the idea that] things are [in actuality] empty.

On my reading, what Sengzhao is suggesting that the *Xinwu* school as he understood it did grasp the functional nature of the *prajñāpāramitā*, but misunderstood the ontological reality of the emptiness of all things. An expanded explanation of Sengzhao's characterization of the *Xinwu* school, again not linked directly to Zhi Mindu but instead intended as broadly descriptive of the philosophy, is found in Madhyamaka specialist Jizang's 吉藏 (549–623 CE) *Commentary on the Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* (*Zhongguanlun shu* 中觀論疏, T 1824)⁹⁸:

心無者：無心於萬物，萬物未嘗無。此釋意云，經中說諸法空者，欲令心體虛妄不執，故言無耳。不空外物，即萬物之境不空。⁹⁹

The [idea] of *xinwu* is that there is no mind directed at the myriad things, [and that] the myriad things are never non-existent.¹⁰⁰ This idea elaborated thus: In the sūtras it

95 The full anecdote is available in nearly any discussion of Zhi Mindu, and so I only summarize the point here. See the translation in Mather (2002), pp. 482-483.

96 CBETA T45n1858. Punctuation has been changed. My translation of this terse passage is aided greatly by Liebenthal (1968), p. 55.

97 Liebenthal inserts nuance into his translation of this succinct line: “This is correct with regard to mind when it is calm ('empty') (like that of) the Spirit...”. See Liebenthal (1968), p. 55.

98 I have restricted my translations here to matters only directly relevant to the topic at hand. For a complete rendering of Jizang's remarks see Wing-tsit Chan's translation in Chapter 20 of his *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy* (1963).

99 CBETA T45n1824, *juan* 2. Punctuation changed. I have benefited in my translation by consultation of Fung (1953), p. 252 and Chan (1963), p. 340-341. My interpretation does not notably depart from theirs; I have noted instances in which it does below.

100 This is a direct quotation of Sengzhao's characterization above; what follows is Jizang's elaboration of the statement. Chan reads the passage as prescriptive (i.e., how one *should* relate to the world), while Fung reads it as descriptive (i.e., how a sagely person *does* see the world). See references in the previous note.

is explained that all *dharmas* are empty; this is [done to] cause the fundamental mind to be detached from the empty and false.¹⁰¹ Thus it only speaks to [the notion of] Nonbeing,¹⁰² and not the emptiness of external things – that is, [it wrongly suggests] that the phenomena of external things are not empty.

We may summarize the material presented thus far in this way: the emptiness of form or other constituent parts of reality is not affirmed; instead the *sūnyatā* of the *prajñāpāramitā* doctrine is not literal, but is understood as a state of mind experienced by the adept. This interpretation has been challenged in Lai (1983), which aims to move beyond the polemics of the Mādhyamikas and present an alternative understanding of the *Xinwu* school.¹⁰³ He draws on Liu Xiaobiao's 劉孝標 (462-521) commentary to the *Shishuo xinyu*, specifically in reference to the negative characterization of Zhi Mindu referenced above. The comment to the passage is much more neutral in tone:

舊義者曰：「種智有是而能圓照。然則萬累斯盡，謂之空無；常住不變，謂之妙有。」而無義者曰：「種智之體，豁如太虛。虛而能知，無而能應，居宗至極，其唯無乎？」¹⁰⁴

The old theory: “Omniscience¹⁰⁵ being extant and all able to be completely illuminated: if it is thus, then the myriad troubles are thus ended. This is called 'empty Nonbeing'. Eternal and unchanging, it is called Subtle Being.” The 'Nonbeing'¹⁰⁶ theory: “As for the substance¹⁰⁷ of omniscience – it is open like a great void. Void yet able to know, non-existent yet able to respond; dwelling in the original ideal¹⁰⁸ and reaching to the extreme – is this alone Nonbeing?”

On the basis of this quotation, Lai reads this interpretation of the *Xinwu* school as actually closer to the

101 My rendering here of *xu wang buzhi* 虛妄不執 is tentative, but I believe the basic meaning is correct. Fung (1953), p. 252 has it: “...to be void and free from its erroneous clinging (to things)”. He renders *xinti* 心體 as “essence of the mind”, while Chan (1963), p. 341 gives us “substance of our minds”. These translations of this seemingly technical term point to a concept of mind that is more basic than one's mundane cognitive activity. Both *kong* 空 and *xu* 虛 have been translated as “empty”; in this passage *kong* 空 is an ontological state of emptiness where *xu* 虛 is a judgment of negative value. I am especially grateful to Jinhua Chen for his instruction in helping me to begin to understand this passage.

102 Here, Chan (1963), p. 341 reads *wu* 無 as *wuxin* 無心; I follow Fung in reading it as simply “Nonbeing”.

103 Lai (1983), p. 61.

104 Xu (1984), vol. 2, p. 459.

105 “Omniscience” here translates *zhongzhi* 種智; we have also previously translated *sanyunruo* 薩芸若 as “omniscience” in Part 2 of this chapter.

106 Both Mather (2002), p. 483 and Lai (1983), p. 64 translate this as the “new theory”, without comment.

107 “Substance” here translates *ti* 體, opposed to its counterpart “function” *yong* 用.

108 “Original ideal” translates *zong* 宗, in an attempt to capture a meaning of both being pre-existent and exemplary. Another rendering would be “prototype”.

prajñāpāramitā doctrine than other schools, as it explicitly draws attention to the fact that omniscience itself is empty. In Lai's reading, Zhi Mindu and the *Xinwu* School received their abuse because they did not accord with the “Buddhist” side of the debates concerning the “non-extinguishing of the spirit” (*shen bumie* 神不滅); that is, where the “Buddhist” side was (quite surprisingly, in light of the view of the *anātman* doctrine)¹⁰⁹ in favour of the *shen* 神 (“spirit” or “soul”) persisting after death, the *Xinwu* School seemed to suggest that it lacked permanency.¹¹⁰ In this account of the *Xinwu* School the doctrine of the emptiness of all *dharmas* must be inferred.

Thus we can with a degree of caution offer two contradictory accounts of the *Xinwu* School: the Sengzhao account, which affirms the non-empty nature of all phenomena, and understands “emptiness” only in terms of the mind's relation to external phenomena, and the Liu Xiaobiao account, which articulates a conception of “emptiness” that truly encompasses all *dharmas*, including ultimate states of cognition and awareness (i.e., “omniscience”). Rather than claim one account to be authoritative – a challenging task, considering the lack of reliable material – we will proceed with reference made to the “Sengzhao account” and the “Liu Xiaobiao account” of the *Xinwu* School.

5.3.2 The *Jise* 即色 School (“Emptiness is Identical with Matter”)¹¹¹

This school is most frequently associated with the monk, *qingtan* participant, and *Zhuangzi* exegete Zhi Dun 支遁 (or Zhi Daolin 支道林, 314-366 CE).¹¹² Relevant to our discussion in Part 2 of this chapter, it is also notable that Zhi Dun was an expert in the *prajñāpāramitā*, and relevant to our discussion of the *Liezi* he is notable in his time for making an important (but now mostly lost)

109 An excellent overview of this phenomenon is found in Jungnok Park's *How Buddhism Acquired a Soul on the Way to China* (2012).

110 Lai (1983), pp. 64-65.

111 The translation of *jise* as “emptiness is identical with matter” is following Liebenthal (1968), p. 138. Other renderings include “matter as such” or “identity with matter” in Zürcher (2011), p. 123, and “matter as such” in Fung (1953), p. 248.

112 Mather (2002), pp. 542-543; Zürcher (2011), pp. 116ff. A good (though now dated) summary of Zhi Dun's life and work is available in Roth (1973).

explanation to the first chapter of the *Zhuangzi*.¹¹³ The *Jise* School seems to derive its name from a (mostly lost) treatise of Zhi Dun's composition, the *Treatise on Wandering in the Mystery without Departing from Matter as Such* or *Jise youxuan lun* 卽色遊玄論, often abbreviated as the *Jise lun* 卽色論.¹¹⁴

There is more textual material related to the thought of Zhi Dun than there is available for Zhi Mindu, and material about the *Jise* School generally mentions the former by name. Regrettably, however, Zhi Dun's philosophy on the nature of reality is still only available in short quotations, all of which are exceedingly difficult to understand. As in our discussion of the *Xinwu* School, we begin with Sengzhao's characterization:

卽¹¹⁵色者：明色不自色，故雖色而非色也。夫言色者，但當色卽色，豈待色色而後為色哉？此直語色不自色，未領色之非色也。¹¹⁶

The [idea of] *jise* is that form is not so-of-itself form.¹¹⁷ So although it is form, it is not form. To speak of form: it¹¹⁸ must only be form as form is present.¹¹⁹ Why rely on form being formed and only then take it as form? In this it is true to say that form is not so-of-itself form, [but the idea above] still does not comprehend form's not being form.

Sengzhao's interpretation of the *Jise* School position acknowledges the notion that form (standing in for the five *skandhas*) has no unconditioned existence, which resonates with the general *prajñāpāramitā* notion that all *dharmas* lack *svabhāva*, or intrinsic nature. His rejection of the *Jise* School's position lay

113 Mather (2002), p. 115, 542; Zürcher (2011), p. 116, 119, 129; Fung (1953), p. 250. The *Shishuo xinyu* and its related commentaries also allude to Zhi Dun's likely familiarity with the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*; see Mather (2002), p. 117, 120.

114 Fung (1953), p. 249. I have adopted Fung's translation of the title. See also Liebenthal (1968), p. 139.

115 The CBETA documents consistently use the variant *ji* 卽 for *ji* 卽 - I have preserved the CBETA version, but read the characters as variants with no difference in meaning. In my quotation of source and secondary material I will employ the variant found in the respective source.

116 CBETA T45n1858. Punctuation altered.

117 Liebenthal renders it: "...'emptiness' (*śūnyā*) identical with matter"; Liebenthal (1968), p. 55.

118 Liebenthal (1968), p. 139 reads *jise* 卽色 as *jise kong* 卽色空; the subject is "emptiness" in his reading. Zürcher (2011), p. 123 does not follow this reasoning; I have followed Zürcher in my understanding, but recognize the merits of Liebenthal's interpretation.

119 Liebenthal renders *dan dang se jise* 但當色卽色 as "*śūnyā* is identical with *rūpa* as it is found" (again inserting "emptiness" as subject – see above note); Liebenthal (1968), p. 140. Zürcher renders this difficult passage as "[one] must only (realize) that matter is matter as such (without any substrate)"; Zürcher (2011), p. 123.

in what is in his view the proponent¹²⁰ failing to recognize the non-duality of form and what is not form (*feise* 非色), i.e., emptiness. A commentary on the *Zhaolun* by Huida 惠達 (557-589 CE) entitled the *Zhaolun shu* 肇論疏 (T 866) quotes Zhi Dun's *Jise lun*:

吾以為即色是空，非色滅空。此斯言至矣。何者？夫色之性，色雖色而空，如知不自知。雖知恒寂也。彼明一切諸法無有自性。¹²¹

I [i.e., Zhi Dun] take it that form as present is empty, and it is not that form is annihilated to become empty.¹²² This expresses the ultimate [idea]. Why? As for the nature of form – form, although being form, is empty. It is like knowing's not being so-of-itself knowing – although knowing, it is always silent. This clarifies how all *dharmas* are without intrinsic nature.

Zhi Dun's articulation of the concept here is consistent with *prajñāpāramitā* thought, both in doctrine and style. He affirms that “form is empty”, though without a logically satisfying explanation of why this is so. An analogy to “knowing” is made, which is equally unsatisfying: one cannot help but suspect there is more to the analogy than is preserved in this regrettably concise quotation.

Liu Xiaobiao also offers a fragment of Zhi Dun's thought in his commentary to the *Shishuo xinyu*:

夫色之性也，不自有色，色不自有，雖色而空。故曰：「色即為空，色復異空。」¹²³

As for the nature of form, it does not so-of-itself have existence as form. If form does not so-of-itself exist, then although it is 'form', it is still empty. So it is said: “Form is exactly emptiness, yet form is different from emptiness.”¹²⁴

120 Unlike other attested sources, Sengzhao does not explicitly associate this school with Zhi Dun, although I think it is reasonable to do so.

121 CBETA X54n0866, *juan* 1. Punctuation changed.

122 Zürcher astutely recognizes this as a paraphrase of Zhi Qian's translation of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, which I have quoted in Part 2; he also notes that the formulation here is closer to Kumārajīva's rendering of the same passage, and may have influenced that version. See Zürcher (2011), p. 362 note 215.

123 Xu (1984), vol. 1, p. 121.

124 Mather notes parallels to this final quotation in two versions of the *Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* or *Perfection of Wisdom in 25,000 Lines*, citing both Dharmarakṣa's *GZJ* mentioned above, as well as well as Mokṣala's (late 3rd century CE) translation, entitled *Fanguang banruo boluomi jing* 放光般若波羅蜜經 (T 221). Mather (2002), p. 117 note 1.

This is a more satisfying interpretation, as it suggests form's lack of intrinsic nature as the justification for deeming it 'empty' – quite in line with mainstream *prajñāpāramitā* doctrine. It is worth noting that in both alleged Zhi Dun quotations reviewed thus far he makes recourse to existing sūtras as evidence for his position.

In his effort to clarify Zhi Dun's thought, Zürcher makes reference to Zhi Dun's “Preface to a Synoptic Extract of the Larger and Smaller Versions (of the *Prajñāpāramitā*)” or *Daxiaopin duibi yaochao xu* 大小品對比要抄序 as preserved in Sengyou's 僧祐 (445-518 CE) *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集 catalog (T 2145).¹²⁵ While not a direct discussion of *Jise* School ontology, a sample from the text will shed light on Zhi Dun's beliefs about the nature of the *prajñāpāramitā*:

夫般若波羅蜜者，眾妙之淵府，群智之玄宗，神王之所由，如來之照功。其為經也，至無空豁，廓然無物者也。無物於物，故能齊於物；無智於智，故能運於智。¹²⁶

As for the *Prajñāpāramitā* [texts], they are the vast storehouse of the myriad subtleties,¹²⁷ the profound origin of all manners of wisdom. They are that which spiritual kings follow. They are the *Tathāgata*'s illumination of merit. In their being sūtras they [demonstrate] the empty openness of ultimate Nonbeing and the boundless absence of things. They [demonstrate] the absence of things in things,¹²⁸ and therefore are able to make things equal.¹²⁹ They [demonstrate] the absences of knowledge in knowledge, and therefore are able to make knowledge advance.

Most salient, I believe, is Zhi Dun's interest in affirming the equality of things by invoking the *Zhuangzi* text, so popular among *xuanxue* discussants. Here, Zhi Dun suggests that the “equality of things” sought by the author of the *Zhuangzi* is realized through the *prajñāpāramitā* doctrine, which equalizes all things in their wholly conditioned, and therefore empty and non-dual, nature. It has been

125 Zürcher (2011), p. 124.

126 CBETA T55n2145, *juan* 8. Punctuation adapted. My translation below benefits greatly from Zürcher (2011), p. 124.

127 “Myriad subtleties” *zhongmiao* 眾妙 recalls the opening chapter of the *Laozi*, unsurprising considering Zhi Dun's noted expertise in *xuanxue* metaphysics.

128 Or, if a direct *Zhuangzi* allusion: “They [demonstrate] the absence of being made a thing by things”. See the discussion that follows this translation.

129 *Qi yu wu* 齊於物 calls to mind the title of the second chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, the “Qi wu lun” 齊物論 or “Discussion on Equalizing Things”. As in his reference to the *Laozi*, Zhi Dun's reference here both demonstrates his *xuanxue* expertise as well as speaks to the concerns of a *xuanxue* audience.

noted that although Zhi Dun's commentary on the *Zhuangzi* was thought to be superior to that of Guo Xiang,¹³⁰ it is possible to see some influence of Guo Xiang's thought in Zhi Dun's.¹³¹ Guo posits the equivalence of things in that they are all equally self-created;¹³² Zhi Dun denies the self-created aspect of things (or forms), but does emphasize their equivalence in emptiness.

It has also been noted¹³³ that Sengzhao's account of the *Jise* School employs the phrasing *sese erhou* 色色而後為色, which may be reminiscent of the *Zhuangzi*'s *wuwu er buwu yuwu* 物物而不物於物.¹³⁴ “To make things things and not be made a thing by things.” Here, however, it is not clear if this is truly Zhi Dun's phrasing – Sengzhao does not attribute it as such, and Sengzhao himself was certainly conversant enough on the *Zhuangzi* to employ such reference. Furthermore, the grammatical structures are not perfectly parallel.

Last to be addressed in a summary of the *Jise* School is the meaning of the term *ji* 即 itself. Lai has suggested that the best way to construe the meaning of *ji* here is as “going along with” or “while abiding in”.¹³⁵ His argument rests on two proofs. His first more compelling proof is that the title of Zhi Dun's lost *Jise youxuan lun* is most comprehensible when read as “while abiding in or being in the middle of form (reality), to rove freely nonetheless in mysteries”.¹³⁶ His second proof suggests that *ji* ought not be employed as “is” or “*qua*”, as we only find the expression *jise* 即色 and never *jikong* 即空 in Zhi Dun's writing.¹³⁷ For Lai, this suggests that it is not an equivalency between form and emptiness that is implied,¹³⁸ but instead a directive on how to reach an ontological understanding of form: “we

130 See for example Mather (2002), pp. 115-116. This supposed superiority would logically include superiority to Xiang Xiu's commentary, on which Guo Xiang's was allegedly based.

131 I owe this insight to Zürcher (2011), p. 123, and Qian (2001), pp. 79-81.

132 Zürcher (2011), p. 123. See also Chapter Four, Part 2 of this dissertation.

133 See Liebenthal (1968), p. 140; Zürcher (2011), pp. 92, 123.

134 Guo (2004), vol. 2, p. 668.

135 Lai (1983), p. 70.

136 Lai (1983), p. 70.

137 Lai (1983), p. 70.

138 Compare the opposite assumption in Liebenthal (1968), p. 139.

discover Emptiness in the midst of these very real forms themselves while going along with or abiding in them.”¹³⁹ While I am not aware of Zhi Dun employing the phrasing *jikong* 卽空 in his extant writings, he does employ a similar phrase in quotation, as recorded by Liu Xiaobiao in his *Shishuo xinyu* commentary. The phrase in question (already translated above) is *se jiwei kong* 色卽為空, which Lai himself translates as “form as such is emptiness”.¹⁴⁰ Ultimately, I do not find Lai's proofs compelling enough to negate all previous interpretations of the *Jise* School.

As a summary of the *Jise* School position on the nature of all *dharmas*, we arrive at the assertion made by Zhi Dun that form is empty, as witnessed in all accounts aside from Sengzhao's. However, this assertion is only explained by recourse to Liu Xiaobiao's note or Zhi Dun's other writings. The explanation is non-dualistic, and affirms the equivalency of all phenomena, and in these ways is similar to Guo Xiang's ontology; however, we need be aware that Zhi Dun's ontology finds this equivalency in all things' shared emptiness, not a shared capacity for self-creation.

5.3.3 The *Benwu* 本無 School (“Original Emptiness”)¹⁴¹

At the outset, it is salient to note that *benwu* was in early translations of Buddhist sūtras used for Tathāgata – this is not the meaning of *benwu* in the *Benwu* School.¹⁴² Here, the meaning is clearly a reference to some kind of “original” or “pre-existent” absence, potentially rendered “emptiness” when in a specifically Buddhist context, but certainly carrying *xuanxue* tones of “Nonbeing”.¹⁴³ Lai suggests that the *Benwu* School is the earliest of the *Prajñā* Schools, serving as the basic position which later schools, like the *Xinwu* School or the *Jise* School, would criticize.¹⁴⁴ Sengzhao lists it as the third and

139 Lai (1983), p. 70.

140 Lai (1983), p. 71.

141 “Original Emptiness” is a slight variation following Liebenthal (1968), p. 143. Fung (1953), p. 244 offers “Original Nonbeing”.

142 See discussion in Zürcher (2011), p. 191.

143 Liebenthal does explicitly suggest that *wu* 無 and *kong* 空 are the same entity; I will discuss this question further, but for the sake of clarity in translations I will translate the two terms consistently as I have been doing.

144 Lai (1983), pp. 61-62.

final school in his summary of the *Prajñā* Schools that existed before the time of Kumārajīva:

本無者，情尚於無多，¹⁴⁵觸言以賓無。故非有，有即無；非無，無亦無。尋夫立文之本旨者，直以非有非真有，非無非真無耳。¹⁴⁶

As for [idea of] *benwu* – there are many that are partial to Nonbeing, [and so] in all their words they follow Nonbeing. Therefore, “it is not Being” means that Being is actually Nonbeing, and “it is not Nonbeing” means that Nonbeing is also Nonbeing. Going back to the original meaning of these phrases: one merely takes “it is not Being” to mean “it is not true Being”, and “it is not Nonbeing” to mean “it is not true Nonbeing”.

Sengzhao's criticism of the *Benwu* School idea, which is not directed towards a named proponent, is focused on the propensity to identify the referent of every ontological claim with Nonbeing. Sengzhao suggests instead that these ontological claims – as found in the sūtras, one presumes – do not all point to Nonbeing, but are instead indicate the empty nature of both Being and Nonbeing (i.e., they are not “true” Being or Nonbeing). Jizang does link the *Benwu* School to two named proponents in his description of the school's tenets: they are Dao'an 道安 (314-385 CE) and Zhu Daoqian 竺道潜 (286-374 CE).

一者釋道安明本無義，謂無在萬化之前，空為眾形之始。夫人之所滯，滯在未有¹⁴⁷。若說心本無，則異想便息。¹⁴⁸

First is Shi Dao'an, who clarified the meaning of *benwu*. He explained that Nonbeing lay before the myriad transformations [of phenomena], and that emptiness was the origin of the various forms. The haltings and hindrances of people lay in resultant Being.¹⁴⁹ If they would lodge¹⁵⁰ their minds in *benwu* then [this] heterodox thinking would immediately subside.

Jizang goes on to explain: 此與方等經論什肇山門義無異也。 “This is not different from the

145 This change in punctuation adopted from Liebenthal (1968), p. 56. Liebenthal's translation has greatly informed my own.

146 CBETA T45n1858. Punctuation changed (in addition to that noted above).

147 The CBETA text has *weiyou* 未有; I have amended this to *moyou* 未有, the logical antithesis to *benwu* 本無 here in and in cases below (which will be noted).

148 CBETA T42n1824, *juan* 2. Punctuation changed.

149 “Resultant Being” translates *moyou* 未有, sacrificing elegance for logical and lexical consistency.

150 Reading *zhai* 宅 for *cha* 說. Fung (1953), p. 244 seems to do the same, though without comment or annotation. Also see the parallel quotation attributed to Dao'an below.

meaning of the broad [i.e., Mahāyāna] sūtras discussed at the mountain gate¹⁵¹ of Kumārajīva and Sengzhao.”¹⁵² Thus Jizang suggests a harmony of Dao'an's doctrine with Sengzhao's. If the description of the *Benwu* School in the *Zhaolun* is indeed in reference to Dao'an, then Sengzhao would not agree with Jizang's claim about the unity of their teachings. Jizang's positive characterization of the *Benwu* School does seem to broadly conform to that of Sengzhao's negative account, in that Nonbeing is central. However, in Jizang's interpretation of this doctrine Nonbeing's primacy lay in its pre-existence. It, like emptiness, share the quality of temporal (i.e., chronological) priority, expressed as *qian* 前 or *shi* 始. This aspect of *benwu* is not present in the *Zhaolun* account.

Jizang goes on to describe the other “variant” (*yi* 異) *Benwu* School, which will explain how he can harmonize Dao'an's account with Sengzhao's: Sengzhao was not talking about Dao'an at all.

次琛法師云，“本無者，未有¹⁵³色法。先有於無，故從無出有。即無在有先，有在無後。故稱‘本無’。此釋為肇公《不真空論》之所破，亦經論之所未明也。”¹⁵⁴

Next [is the version of *benwu*] given by Dharma-master Shen.¹⁵⁵ *Benwu* means the non-existence of form and *dharmas* [i.e., material existence conventionally understood]. Given that non-being is there first, from Nonbeing came Being. As Nonbeing was before Being, and Being was after Nonbeing, we therefore call it “original Nonbeing” [*benwu*]. This is the explanation refuted in Monk Zhao's *Buzhenkong lun* [essay found in the *Zhaolun*]; as well, it has not been discussed in the sūtras.

Jizang has redirected Sengzhao's criticism away from Dao'an and towards Zhu Daoqian. However, in my reading, the two philosophies described by Jizang are not remarkably different. Both give the same temporal priority to Nonbeing, though only the Zhu Daoqian version explicitly links Nonbeing with the production of phenomena (故從無出有 “Therefore, from Nonbeing came Being”); the Dao'an version

151 Or “main gate” of a temple, synecdoche for the temple or monastery as a whole; I believe the basic reference here is to Kumārajīva and Sengzhao's theatres of instruction. Chan (1963), p. 388 simply has it as “schools”.

152 CBETA T42n1824, *juan* 2.

153 Here I have left the text as found in CBETA, as I do not believe it was *moyou* 未有 that was intended in this instance.

154 CBETA T42n1824, *juan* 2. Punctuation altered.

155 Zhu Daoqian, whose style name was Fashen 法琛.

merely describes the chronological relationship between Nonbeing and phenomena. However, if we understand Nonbeing (*wu* 無) and emptiness (*kong* 空) in the version attributed to Dao'an as addressing the same referent – not unlikely, in my view – then we must question whether this common referent is the origin (*shi* 始) of what is conventionally understood as material phenomena (*zhongxing* 眾形). Whether or not Nonbeing in Dao'an's understanding is in possession of a generative quality will be discussed below.

Jizang may have had two reasons for suggesting that Sengzhao's negative account of the *Benwu* School was only directed at Zhu Daoqian's version. First, Jizang may have had some stake in preserving the respective reputations of Dao'an and Sengzhao, as both were taken as orthodox interpreters of Buddhism. Second, the version of *Benwu* School doctrine attributed to Zhu Daoqian is much more explicit its use of Being and Nonbeing as ontological concepts, resembling closely Sengzhao's refutation. While the principles in the Dao'an version are not radically different, their expression is more dissimilar to Sengzhao's description of the doctrine. Thus, if the materials by which Jizang worked out his formulation of the two *Benwu* School doctrines are accurate reflections of the respective thinkers' attitudes, we can at least understand the ready association of the Zhu Daoqian version with Sengzhao's refutation.

Recourse to Dao'an's own position would be ideal, and such a source may be available in quotation, found in the *Mingseng zhuan chao* 名僧傳抄 (X 1523) attributed to Baochang 寶唱 (502–557 CE):¹⁵⁶

如來興世，以本無佛教。故方等深經，皆備明五陰本無。本無之論由來尚矣。何者？夫冥造之前，廓然而已。至於元氣陶化，則群像稟形。形雖資化，權化之本，則出於自然。自然自爾，豈有造之者哉？由此而言，無在元化之先，空

156 Both Liebenthal (1968), p. 145 and Zürcher (2011), p. 192 take this as fairly attributed to Dao'an; Liebenthal suggests it may “possibly be a quotation from Dao'an's *Benwu lun* 本無論.”

為眾形之始。故稱本無。非謂虛豁之中，能生萬有也。夫人之所滯，滯在未有¹⁵⁷。苟宅心本無，則斯累豁矣。夫崇本可以息末者，蓋此之謂也。¹⁵⁸

[When] the *Tathāgata* came into the world he gave *benwu* as Buddhist teaching. Therefore the broad [i.e., Mahāyāna] profound sūtras in all cases give clarification [to the idea that] the five *skandhas* are originally Nonbeing.¹⁵⁹ This is where interest in the discussion of *benwu* came from. Why? Prior to the obscure formation there was only openness. Then it came to be that the Primordial *Qi* reformed it, and the many shapes were endowed with form. Although these forms were by nature transforming, they were fundamentally transitory transformations, emergent so-of-themselves. Being “so-of-themselves” means “spontaneous”. Is there then one which created it? From this I say: Nonbeing is prior to the Primordial Transformation, and emptiness was the origin of the various forms; we therefore call it “original Nonbeing” [*benwu*]. It is not saying that an empty opening is capable of producing all that exists.¹⁶⁰ As for that which hinders people: hindrances lay in resultant Being. If [people] would only lodge their minds in *benwu* then these obstructions would be resolved. Undoubtedly one may say that by exalting the root one thereby make flourish the branches.¹⁶¹

One immediately notices the similarities with Jizang's presentation of Dao'an's position above, as well as the copious reference made to *xuanxue* concepts. In the first case, the claim that “emptiness was the origin of the various forms” is identical in both. “Hindrances” (*zhi* 滯, which I have translated as “haltings and hindrances” when reduplicated) are in both cases grounded in “resultant Being” (*moyou* 未有). Finally, the exhortation to “lodge one's mind in *benwu*” (*zhai xin benwu* 宅心本無) serve to sum up each quotation. The *Mingseng zhuan chao* account and Jizang's account appear consistent.

The word *ziran* 自然 is a favourite of *xuanxue* adepts, but it is the content of Dao'an's thought that have led some to see his *benwu* theory as closely parallel to both the speculation on Nonbeing of Wang Bi¹⁶² or the equality of all phenomena found in the thought of Guo Xiang.¹⁶³ The passage is

157 As in an above note, I have amended the CBETA original *weiyou* 未有 to *moyou* 未有.

158 CBETA X77n1523. Punctuation changed.

159 My reasons for translating *benwu* here as “originally Nonbeing” (rather than leaving it untranslated) is that the author here is explaining the meaning of *benwu*, not using it as a descriptor for a theoretical position or concept, and thus the constituent parts of the phrase ought be explained in this instance.

160 Liebenthal suggests that the meaning here is that the myriad forms are not produced simultaneously, but in progression from an initial generative action of Nonbeing; Liebenthal (1968), p. 145. Zürcher reads this phrase as signaling Nonbeing's role as substrate rather than progenitor; Zürcher (2011), p. 192. See discussion that follows.

161 Note the remarkable similarity here to Wang Bi's summary of the *Laozi*'s message: 崇本息末而已矣 “It is simply exalting the root to have the branches flourish”. See p. 150.

162 Liebenthal (1968), pp. 145-146; Qian (2002), pp. 77-78.

163 Lai (1983), p. 68.

ambiguous as to the exact role of Nonbeing. Like Wang Bi, it is granted a special status in opposition to Being, the latter of which is the source of human difficulties. Original Nonbeing is the principle in which we are to “lodge our minds”, and thus its acceptance has a normative aspect. Moreover, Nonbeing is decidedly prior to Being, just as emptiness is prior to the various forms.

However, unlike Wang Bi, this status does not seem to clearly include a generative quality. Dao'an says that it was Primordial *Qi* that reformed the empty space, and furthermore insists that “empty space” (*xuhuo* 虛豁) cannot produce the many phenomena. Is this “empty space” the same as Nonbeing and emptiness, or is Dao'an insisting that Nonbeing and emptiness are not merely “empty space”? If it is the former, then Nonbeing lacks generative powers. If the latter, then Nonbeing *may* be the progenitor of Being, but it should not be understood as simply “nothing”. The instigation of the generative process in the passage, the obscure formation (*mingzao* 冥造), is described as the Primordial *Qi* (*yuanqi* 元氣) working on “openness” (*kuoran* 廓然) to produce forms (here *xing* 形 and not *se* 色 or *rūpa*). Is this “openness” Nonbeing? If it is, then Nonbeing must be some manner of pre-existent, chaotic substrate which is acted upon and present in all forms. Is this what is meant when he says that “the five *skandhas* are originally Nonbeing”?

As a final complication, in a claim redolent of the ontology of Guo Xiang, Dao'an claims that the transformation of forms are spontaneously emergent (or “emergent so-of-themselves” 出於自然). And thus transformative power, and perhaps generative power, are relocated to the forms themselves. The question is asked by Dao'an: “Is there then one which created it?”

The ontology of the *Benwu* School is a complex *xuanxue* pastiche. In aiming to harmonize Buddhist thought with Wang Bi and Guo Xiang, Dao'an offers an ambiguous picture of the “original Nonbeing” which he purports were offered by the Buddha and the sūtras. What we can say with

confidence about Dao'an's presentation is that (1) Nonbeing has a normative priority over Being, (2) Nonbeing (as well as emptiness, as either an aspect of Nonbeing or a separate phenomena) has chronological priority over Being, and (3) Nonbeing has some kind of ontological priority over Being, likely not as the generative force of Being, but probably as an original substance. In these ways, the *Benwu* School account is closer to Wang Bi than Guo Xiang, in that Nonbeing is clearly exalted at the expense of Being.

To summarize the basic positions of the *Prajñā* Schools: (i) the *Xinwu* School, in Sengzhao's account, understands emptiness as a cognitive state which affirms the non-empty status of external phenomena; in Liu Xiaobiao's account, both external phenomena and even the highest cognitive states are recognized as empty; (ii) the *Jise* School, which emphasizes the non-dual empty nature of all phenomena; like Guo Xiang's ontology, the equivalency of all things is asserted, but grounded in emptiness, not the capacity for self-generation; (iii) the *Benwu* School, which grants normative, temporal, and ontological priority to Nonbeing over Being, much like Wang Bi, but does not unambiguously promote Nonbeing as a generative agent.

5.4 The *Prajñā* Schools and the *Liezi* Compared

We are now in a position to compare the *Liezi* to early *prajñāpāramitā* thought in China. The comparison will focus on the idea of 'emptiness', fundamental in *prajñāpāramitā* thought and alleged to be the concept for which Lie Yukou is reported to have reserved the most praise. Two versions of 'emptiness' will be examined: the first, the notion of Nonbeing as it appears in both the *Prajñā* Schools and in the *Liezi*. Second, we will investigate the *Liezi*'s notion of 'emptiness' (*xu* 虛) and contrast it with notions we have seen in the Buddhist material presented in this chapter.

A discussion of the *Liezi* conception of Nonbeing, especially as it relates to the ontological theories of Wang Bi and Guo Xiang, has been discussed at length in the fourth chapter of the present

work. I will briefly summarize the conclusion arrived at there: (1) the ontological theory of the *Liezi* includes two exclusive categories, namely Nonbeing (*wu* 無) and Being (*you* 有); (2) there is a unidirectional influence between the two categories; (3) influence in the relationship between Nonbeing and Being is exclusively the domain of Nonbeing. For our purposes, it is prudent to recall that Nonbeing in the *Liezi* ontological scheme is not generated, but is responsible for the generation of Being. The ultimate conclusion of the Second Part of Chapter Four of this dissertation is that the ontological claims of the *Liezi*, as they relate to Nonbeing and Being, closely mirror those of Wang Bi. I will argue that the claims of the *Liezi* also parallel some of those we have delineated in the *Benwu* School – a claim which should be unsurprising, in that we have already noted similarities between that notion of emptiness and the thought of Wang Bi.

Two selections from the *Liezi* examined in previous chapters are especially relevant here. First is the explicit hierarchy of generation established in *Liezi* 1:5, with a reference to the mysterious *Book of the Yellow Emperor*:

形動不生形而生影，聲動不生聲而生響，無動不生無而生有。

Form moving does not generate form, but generates a shadow; sound moving does not generate sound but generates an echo; Nonbeing moving does not generate Nonbeing but generates Being.¹⁶⁴

In this rare case of the *Liezi* compiler addressing Nonbeing by the standard character *wu* 無 we have an unquestioned signal of intellectual allegiance to Wang Bi's ontological camp. This is more explicit than that we have found in the admittedly fragmentary work attributed to Dao'an, who is confident in assigning Nonbeing all privileges without ambiguity except that of generative function. But in the same way that a shadow's existence is dependent on form and an echo's existence is dependent on sound, in the *Liezi* Being is dependent on – and thus necessarily temporally subsequent to – Nonbeing. In this,

¹⁶⁴ See p. 158.

the *Liezi*, Dao'an, and Wang Bi all align. Sengzhao's account of the *Benwu* School, which suggests an undue predilection for Nonbeing by those that adhere to the school, could thus aptly describe all three of the above.

Next, we shall consider one of the *Liezi*'s more ambiguous references to Nonbeing – specifically, the appellations “Original Unborn” (*benbusheng* 本不生) and “Original Lacking a Shape” (*benwuxing* 本無形). We also read in *Liezi* 1:5:

有生則復於不生，有形則復於無形。不生者，非本不生者也；無形者，非本無形者也。

The Born then returns to being ungenerated, the Shaped then returns to lacking a shape. But “being ungenerated” is not the Original Unborn, and “lacking a shape” is not the Original Lacking a Shape.¹⁶⁵

The *Liezi* here is employing the adjective “original” (*ben* 本) to modify the Unborn and Formless agent (i.e., Nonbeing) that exerts powers of creation over the transient beings (i.e., Being) in the same way the *Benwu* School describes an “original” Nonbeing. In both cases an important distinction is being made by the inclusion of the “original” adjective. In the case of *Liezi* 1:5, the argument made is that though transient things will die and lose their corporeal forms, becoming “unborn” and “unshaped”, they are still not that *original* unborn and unshaped entity responsible for the existence of all transient beings (including those that return to their unborn and unshaped states). There are distinctions between the creative agent and the created phenomena, and these created phenomena are explicitly denied the properties of generation.

Dao'an also aims to distinguish his original Nonbeing from a potential notion with which it may easily be confused. When Dao'an claims that “It is not saying that an empty opening is capable of producing all that exists” the “empty opening” is *xuhuo* 虛豁, not the original Nonbeing. I believe the

¹⁶⁵ See p. 104.

point that Dao'an is trying to make is that “original Nonbeing” is not just a gaping void or vacant nothingness – it is a notion more complex, denoting an entity that simultaneously exhibits a quality of non-existence in contradistinction to all known and nameable phenomena while nonetheless serving as the basic substance upon which transient things exist and act. When Dao'an says that “five *skandhas* are originally Nonbeing” he means that Nonbeing is the reality hidden by the misperception that things truly exist.

Finally, there is what Liu Xiaobiao has called the 'Nonbeing' theory, which we have previously deemed the Liu Xiaobiao account of the *Wuxin* School. He described the 'Nonbeing' theory in this way: “as for the substance (*ti* 體) of omniscience – it is open like a great void (*huo ru taixu* 豁如太虛). Void yet able to know, non-existent yet able to respond”. This, we are told, can be none other than Nonbeing. It is only explicitly the essential substance of omniscience, and not that of all phenomena. As in our comparison with the *Benwu* School, Nonbeing seems to be a substrate instead of an agent of creation. This is in contrast to the Nonbeing of the *Liezi*, which is responsible for the existence of the transient beings, and is the point of return for all phenomena after their destruction. The *Liezi*, like Wang Bi, takes Nonbeing as the agent which initiates the processes of creation, while in the *Benwu* School and the Liu Xiaobiao account of the *Wuxin* School Nonbeing seems to be the original 'stuff' which is acted upon and serves as the material from which transient things are created.

There is in the *Prajñā* Schools discussed here one commonality in the approach to Nonbeing – the focus on the cognitive aspect. In the *Wuxin* School Nonbeing makes up the very substance of omniscience – here the ideal cognitive powers of the bodhisattva. In the *Benwu* School we are tasked with having the center of our cognitive faculties (i.e., our mind, *xin* 心) lodged (*zhai* 宅) in the original Nonbeing. The *Liezi* generally lacks this cognitive and behavioural aspect in its approach to Nonbeing, aside from the general ontological claims made by the text. Instead, the *Liezi* presents an argument for

the creation of transient things with Nonbeing as its active source, as well as Nonbeing serving as the end point to which all things return to upon their death or destruction. Sage wisdom is not possible without Nonbeing, but Nonbeing is distinct from this wisdom. Moreover, there is no prescribed behaviour undertaken in relationship to Nonbeing, such as a bodily practice or program of meditative contemplation. Where Dao'an suggests that one lodges their mind in original Nonbeing, the *Liezi* compiler is content to have readers grasp the cosmogony and cosmology of Nonbeing intellectually.

In turning to a consideration of the notion of 'emptiness', it is critical to remark upon the usage of such words as *xu* 虛 and *kong* 空, both translated here as “emptiness”. As ontological principles, *xu* is used in the *Liezi*, while *kong* is the preferred translation for the Sanskrit term *śūnyatā* in the Buddhist texts discussed above. As adjectives, nouns, and philosophical terms of art they are somewhat interchangeable, but it is worthwhile to be aware of differences in meaning.¹⁶⁶ These nuances are often ultimately dependent on the context in which they are used.

The *Liezi*, despite Lie Yukou's reputation for a fondness for the notion of emptiness (always written *xu*), offers very little by way of philosophical discussion on the idea. The only usage of the idea with any philosophical weight¹⁶⁷ is in *Liezi* 1:11, translated below.

或謂子列子曰：「子奚貴虛？」列子曰「虛者無貴也。」子列子曰：「非其名也，莫如靜，莫如虛。靜也虛也，得其居矣；取也與也，失其所矣。事之破礪而後有舞仁義者，弗能復也。」¹⁶⁸

Someone asked Liezi, “Why do you take emptiness as valuable?” Liezi said,

166 See for example the respective entries in Kroll (2015) and Muller (<http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/>); also see the entry for *kong / xu* in the *Guhanyu changyong tongyici cidian* 古汉语常用同义词词典 (pp. 273-274), which adds detail to the original meanings of these words.

167 There is also a passage in the “Zhong Ni” Chapter that mentions a certain Nanguozi 南郭子 and his “empty mind” (*xinxu* 心虛), though this appears as a derogatory statement with very little intellectual substance; moreover, this usage seems uninteresting to commentators. See Yang (2007), p. 124.

168 Yang (2007), pp. 28-29.

“Emptiness lacks value.” Master Liezi said,¹⁶⁹ “[Value]¹⁷⁰ is not its name. There is nothing better than being tranquil, there is nothing better than being empty. Tranquil and empty, one obtains their dwelling; taking and giving, one loses their spot. Those that have matters go awry and afterwards put on a show of benevolence and righteousness are not able to restore them.”

Liezi's pointed remark at the end of this short selection is a clear criticism of Confucians and their cardinal virtues of *ren* and *yi*. But the overall meaning here is somewhat unclear. It is telling that despite Lie Yukou's association with 'emptiness', it is the notions of *xu* in the *Zhuangzi* and the *Laozi* to which traditional commentaries always turn for elucidation of this passage, as will be demonstrated below.

We may turn to Zhang Zhan's comments on the penultimate sentence:

夫虛靜之理，非心慮之表，形骸之外；求而得之，即我之性。內安諸己，則自然真全矣。故物所以全者，皆由虛靜，故得其所安；所以敗者，皆由動求，故失其所處。¹⁷¹

As for the principle of 'empty and tranquil', it does not dwell on the surface of one's mental processes or in one's external form – seeking and finding it is precisely in one's own nature. If one internally calms oneself then they are so-of-themselves truly complete. Therefore the means by which things are completed is in all cases through being empty and tranquil, and thus they obtain their peace. The means by which they are thwarted is in all cases through activity and striving, and thus they lose their place.

For Zhang Zhan the principle of emptiness that Liezi values, coupled with tranquility, is behavioural. In Zhang Zhan's reading what Liezi values is not vacuity or space but an emptiness of action, devoid of intentional striving. This behaviour is directed inwardly, and identified as being part of one's nature – that is, it is crucial in the spontaneous completion of an already existent nature. Though *Liezi* 1:11 does

169 This pericope appears to me to be two different text fragments placed together – Liezi's original response to the question, and then a further explanation of his cryptic answer. The variation in appellation (“Liezi” or “Master Liezi”) is also suggestive of this. However, in most editions and translations consulted, these sections of the text are interpreted as a single pericope; only Kobayashi (1967), pp. 44-46, and Kakimura (1930), pp. 20-21, divide this text into two. This does seem to me to be the most logical textual division, but for the sake of consistency I follow Yang (2007).

170 The insertion of “value” here as the subject of this sentence is tentative, and follows Graham (1990), p. 27. As will be discussed at length below, other interpretations are possible.

171 Yang (2007), p. 29.

not use the binome *xujing* 虛靜, this concept is used as a hermeneutical fulcrum in Zhang Zhan's reading, as well as others. It is an explicit reference to a concept found in the *Zhuangzi* chapter “Tian dao”:

夫虛靜恬淡寂寞無為者，天地之平而道德之至，故帝王聖人休焉。休則虛，虛則實，實者倫矣。虛則靜，靜則動，動則得矣。靜則無為，無為也則任事者責矣。無為則俞俞，俞俞者憂患不能處，年壽長矣。夫虛靜恬淡寂寞無為者，萬物之本也。¹⁷²

It is emptiness and tranquility, quietude and placidity, soundlessly motionless and *wuwei* that are the evenness of Heaven and Earth and the height of *Dao* and Virtue. Therefore emperors, kings and *shengren* rest in these. Resting, and then empty; empty, and then full – fullness is being complete.¹⁷³ Empty, and then tranquil; tranquil, and then in action – in action they are successful. Tranquil, and [acting in] *wuwei* – when in *wuwei* those [others that are] tasked with affairs are called upon [to carry them out]. [Acting in] *wuwei*, and then at ease; at ease – for those at ease, grief and anxiety cannot settle in them, and their years will be long. It is emptiness and tranquility, quietude and placidity, soundlessly motionless and *wuwei* that are the origin of the myriad things.

The *Liezi* passage, like this above, does pair 'emptiness' with 'tranquility', though in a slightly different formulation. It is this formulation from the *Zhuangzi* on which Zhang Zhan has drawn, however, that becomes the standard interpretation for most commentators. The initial question put to *Liezi* refers to 'emptiness', and it is only his elaboration on his first enigmatic reply that incorporates 'tranquility' into the explanation.

Lu Chongxuan's interpretation of the same passage invokes imagery from *Zhuangzi*'s “Ren jian shi” chapter, including a paraphrase of Confucius' explanation to Yan Hui on the practice of the 'fasting of the mind' (*xinzhai* 心齋): 瞻彼闕者，虛室生白，吉祥止止。¹⁷⁴ “Peer into that enclosure, the empty room that generates the white [light]¹⁷⁵ – auspiciousness and good fortune stop in stopping.”

172 Guo (2004), p. 457.

173 Following substitution of *bei* 備 for *lun* 倫 as suggested in Guo (2004), p. 462.

174 Guo (2004), p. 150.

175 The idea of *shengbai* 生白 in this text is intriguing and ambiguous. Guo Xiang does not offer a gloss on *bai* in his commentary, but instead paraphrases the passage, drawing on an expression from the “Tian di” Chapter of the *Zhuangzi*: 虛室而純白獨生矣 “Empty the room and pure whiteness will self-generate” (Guo (2004), p. 151). The implication is

或問貴虛，答曰：無貴。吾所以好虛者，非為名也。夫虛室生白，吉祥止耳。唯靜唯虛，得其居矣。若貪求取與，神失其安；然後名利是非，紛競交湊，將何以堪之？故虛非我貴耳。¹⁷⁶

Someone asked about valuing emptiness, and the response was 'there is no valuing'. My being fond of 'emptiness' is not for the sake of reputation. As for the empty room that generates the white [light] – auspiciousness and good fortune stop [there] and that is all. Only by tranquility and only by emptiness does one obtain their place. If greedily seeking to take and give, the spirit loses its peace; and after, reputation and profit, 'that is it' and 'that is not it' will tangle, struggle, intersect, and converge – how could that be endured? So emptiness is not what I value.

Aside from the unattributed injection of a *Zhuangzi* passage into the selection, Lu's interpretation is largely a paraphrase of the *Liezi* text. The *Zhuangzi* passage is inserted somewhat awkwardly, and thus it is most likely meant to serve as a gloss on the concept of *xu* or 'emptiness'. If this is so, then Lu is suggesting that emptiness is not a conceptual notion but instead related to a practice similar to the “fasting of the mind” found in the *Zhuangzi*. When he says that “my being fond of 'emptiness' is not on account of its name” he is saying it is not an abstract principle called 'emptiness' that he values, but a process of behaviour that embodies tranquility and emptiness which keeps at bay the problems associated with fame, profit, and ascription of inflexible labels. In contrast to Zhang Zhan's commentary, Lu Chongxuan does not imply that this behaviour expresses or preserves any inner nature.

Jiang Yu's commentary also makes recourse to the *Zhuangzi* “Tian dao” passage that Zhang

that Guo takes *bai* as shorthand for *chunbai* 純白. The quotation from “Tian di” is in response to Zi Gong's questioning of an unnamed gardener: 有機械者必有機事，有機事者必有機心。機心存於胸中，則純白不備；純白不備，則神生不定；神生不定者，道之所不載也。 “With machine tools there must be machine matters, and with machine matters there must be a machine heart. If a machine heart is in one's chest then pure whiteness is incomplete. If pure whiteness is incomplete, then spiritual life is unsettled. If the spiritual life is unsettled, then the *Dao* is not supported.” (Guo (2004), pp. 433-434). Thus, Guo Xiang seems to take *bai* as a kind of natural, unblemished state. Cheng Xuanying offers an explicit, but in my opinion simplistic, gloss: 白，道也。 “White' means 'Dao’” (Guo (2004), p. 151). He may have based this interpretation on an identical gloss given by Gao You 高誘 (c. 168-212 CE) on a similar passage in the *Huainanzi* (He (2006), p. 146). Lu Deming's *Zhuangzi yinyi* 莊子音義 cites the commentary of Cui Zhuan 崔譔 (mid third century CE?) as giving a different gloss: 白者，日光所照也。 “White' means that which the sun's rays illuminate” (Guo (2004), p. 151). Lin Xiyi, in his *Nanhua zhenjing kouyi* 南華真經口義 seems to have been equally confused as to the meaning of *bai*, and suggests a similar meaning as Cui above: 生白即生明也，不曰生明而曰生白，此莊子之奇文也。 “Generate white' means 'generate brightness'. That [the text] does not say 'generate brightness' but does say 'generate white' is [merely] an idiosyncrasy of the *Zhuangzi* text.” (See Zhang (2004), vol. 13 p. 736). In my rendering I have followed the general meaning as explained by Cui and Lin.

176 Yang (2007), p. 29.

Zhan references:

虛靜者，萬物之本也。虛故足以受羣實，靜故足以應羣動。虛靜在我，則萬變雖起而吾心常寂，萬態雖殊而吾心常徹，此應物之本也。故曰：莫如靜，莫如虛。虛而能容，靜而常寂，周旋變故，不出性宅，是為得其居也。¹⁷⁷

'Emptiness and tranquility' are the root of the myriad things.¹⁷⁸ Emptiness is thus sufficient to accept the various realities, and tranquility is thus sufficient to respond to various actions. If there is emptiness and tranquility inside me, then although a myriad changes arise my mind is always quiet, and although a myriad circumstances vary my mind is always discerning – this is responding to the root of things. So [the *Liezi* text] says: There is nothing like being tranquil, there is nothing like being empty. Empty, yet able to be filled; tranquil, and always quiet – [in the midst of] a procession of unintended events [I] do not remove my nature from its lodging, and this is how it obtains its place.

Jiang Yu's reading seems to be a blend of both Lu Chongxuan's and Zhang Zhan's version, though he draws on the same *Zhuangzi* passage as the latter. For Jiang Yu, 'emptiness and tranquility' are deployed as effective measures to deal with the perpetual change that characterizes all transient phenomenon. These measures serve to protect the mind (*xin* 心), but are ultimately useful in keeping one's nature (*xing* 性) preserved. Where Jiang Yu's reading is remarkably different from the ones that preceded is that 'emptiness' is used to explicitly counter the anxiety associated with the myriad things as external phenomena, not as a method to guard against active striving (as in Zhang Zhan's reading) or reputation, profit, and *shifei* thinking (as in Lu Chongxuan's reading).

Song Huizong's commentary is roughly contemporary with that of Jiang Yu's, but makes use of the language of the *Laozi* instead of the *Zhuangzi* in its approach to the text:

有貴斯有賤，有名斯有實，虛則無是也。《老子》曰：致虛極，守靜篤，¹⁷⁹ 虛故足以受羣實，靜故足以應羣動。故曰莫如靜，莫如虛。以虛靜為得其居者，蓋言羣動羣實莫能闕之也。¹⁸⁰

177 Zhang (2004), vol. 15 p. 95.

178 This is a reference to the *Zhuangzi* "Tian dao" passage cited above.

179 Here I have repunctuated the text: 《老子》曰：致虛極，守靜篤，虛，故足以受羣實，靜故足以應羣動, as found in the *Zhonghua daoang* version, is clearly incorrect in its quotation of the *Laozi* text and its preserving of parallelism.

180 Zhang (2004), vol. 15, p. 58.

For there to be 'value' there must be 'deprecation'; for there to be a name there must be a reality – emptiness lacks these. The *Laozi* says, “Reach to utmost emptiness, preserve deep tranquility.”¹⁸¹ Emptiness is thus sufficient to accept the various realities, and tranquility is thus sufficient to respond to various actions.¹⁸² So [the *Liezi* text] says: There is nothing like being tranquil, there is nothing like being empty. Obtaining one's place by means of emptiness and tranquility probably means that the myriad actions and the myriad realities are not able to obstruct one.

Here, the emphasis is on utility, rather than recovery or protection of an inner nature. As in Jiang Yu's reading, the adept is using emptiness (again with tranquility) to combat the pernicious influence of external phenomena; however, where Jiang Yu is interested in protecting one's nature, Song Huizong simply intends to avoid obstructions, making no mention of one's inner state. This interpretation is furthermore interesting because it gives greater depth to the understanding of the nature of 'emptiness' – here, it is devoid of characteristics such as valuation or designation. Though this is apparent in the *Liezi* text, it is a point which most other commentators seem to touch on only lightly, if at all. Though Song Huizong's reading has a strong behavioural tone it offers as well a gloss on the concept of 'emptiness' itself.

Another explication of 'emptiness' that mirrors Song Huizong's is that of Fan Zhixu, as recorded in Gao Shuoyuan's collected commentaries on the *Liezi*:

谷以虛故應，鑑以虛故照，管籥以虛故受聲，耳以虛故能聽，目以虛故能視，鼻以虛故能嗅。有實有中，則有礙於此，虛固足貴矣。然所貴在此，所賤在彼。貴賤之名，未能兩忘。而化於道，又奚貴虛？¹⁸³

Valleys by means of emptiness causes response [i.e., an echo]; mirrors¹⁸⁴ by means of emptiness causes illumination; wind instruments by means of emptiness cause the transmission of sounds; ears by means of emptiness are able to hear; eyes by means of emptiness are able to see; noses by means of emptiness are able to smell. If there was something solid filling them then there would be something obstructing these

181 *Laozi* 16.

182 This matches exactly the phrasing used by Jiang Yu. This gloss on *Laozi* 16 was common in this period – for another example, see Jiang Zheng's 江澂 (early 12th century CE) commentary on this passage in his *Daode zhenjing shuyi* 道德真經疏義, in Zhang (2004) vol. 11, p. 36. As the documents were all written roughly contemporaneously, I have been unable to determine which is in fact the original (if any indeed are).

183 Zhang (2004), vol. 15, p. 288.

184 Probably a reference to concave mirrors.

[functions] – emptiness is certainly sufficient to be valued. However, if that which is valued is 'this' and that which is deprecated is 'that', then as for the names 'value' and 'deprecation' one is not yet able to forget the two. So in the transformations of the *Dao* why indeed does one value emptiness?

Fan Zhixu's commentary is, of all the traditional commentaries, the most attentive to the nature of emptiness. His discussion of 'emptiness' as a functional vacuous space is redolent of, without any outright reference to, *Laozi* 11:

三十輻共一轂，當其無，有車之用。埴埴以為器，當其無，有器之用。鑿戶牖以為室，當其無，有室之用。故有之以為利，無之以為用。¹⁸⁵

Thirty spokes together are one wheel, [but] in what it does not have does the cart have use; clay is used to make vessels, [but] in what they do not have do the vessels have use; [one may] chisel out doors and windows in order to make a room, [but] in what it does not have does the room have use. So: what it has is why it is profitable, [but] what it does not have is why it is useful.

Fan Zhixu's valleys, mirrors, instruments, ears, eyes, and noses are the same as the *Laozi's* wheels, vessels, and rooms, in that it is through the use of negative space do they provide value to people. For Fan Zhixu, this is why 'emptiness' could be seen as conventionally valuable. However, Fan Zhixu recognizes that becoming entangled with categories like 'valuable' ultimately obscures the reality of the *Dao*. The closing remark above is influenced by an idea found in the *Zhuangzi* “Da zong shi” chapter: 其譽堯而非桀，不如兩忘而化其道。¹⁸⁶ “[People] praise [the good ruler] Yao and condemn [the bad ruler] Jie – this is not as good as forgetting the two and transforming in the *Dao*.” In this interpretation of *Liezi* 1:11 we have an explanation of why Lie Yukou was partial to emptiness as well as why he would reject the notion that he valued emptiness.

This investigation of 'emptiness' in the *Liezi* yields a variety of interpretations. Zhang Zhan and Jiang Yu see emptiness as a method to preserve one's inner nature. Lu Chongxuan and Song Huizong have a more instrumental approach, and take emptiness as a method of protecting the self (but not

185 Lou (2009), pp. 26-27.

186 Guo (2004), p. 242.

necessarily an underlying original nature) against external delusions or anxieties. These four together can collectively be called the 'instrumental reading' of *Liezi* 1:11. Fan Zhixu offers the most explicit ontological account of emptiness, as a phenomenon, which is conventionally useful on account of what it lacks, but in an ultimate assessment that rejects conventional norms of value is not itself valuable. I will refer to Fan Zhixu's interpretation as the 'ontological reading' of *Liezi* 1:11.

Most of the commentaries above turn on the Zhuangzian concept of 'emptiness and tranquility', and it is thus quite interesting to return to Sengzhao's characterization of the *Xinwu* School discussed above. He has said that it "...succeeds in getting [the idea of how to] make the spirit tranquil (*jing* 靜), but it fails to grasp [the idea that] things are [in actuality] empty (*xu* 虛)". His account suggested that the *Xinwu* School employed 'emptiness' as a cognitive tool and denied the ontological reality of 'emptiness' – this position is echoed by Jizang, who suggests that 'emptiness' is employed to "...cause a fundamental mind (*xinti* 心體) that is empty (*xuwang* 虛妄) and unattached". This interpretation is very much like the majority of interpretations of *Liezi* 1:11 reviewed above, in that they employ 'emptiness' (along with 'tranquility') as a seemingly transcendent method of either preserving one's true nature or responding to the vicissitudes of transient existence. 'Emptiness' is in both these interpretations of the *Liezi* and the Sengzhao account of the *Xinwu* School not an ontological truth, but instead a method to be employed by the adept – 'emptiness' is not a characteristic of reality, but a tool used to deal with reality. No interpretation of the *Liezi* accords well with the Liu Xiaobiao account of the *Xinwu* School, in which 'emptiness' is understood as a pervasive ontological reality inclusive of even highest knowledge.

Turning to the *Jise* School, we return to Zhi Dun's notion of the equivalence of all things in their shared state of being empty. This again is unlike any interpretation found in the *Liezi*, for the message here in all interpretations rests on the unique nature of emptiness which sets it apart from other

phenomena. It is not that Lie Yukou valued 'emptiness' as a doctrine, but that he valued it as either a method (according to the more popular instrumental interpretation) or as a useful quality found in some phenomena (according to Fan Zhixu's ontological reading). In any reading it is clear that 'emptiness' is not a quality shared by all phenomena, and thus those phenomena that express this quality are suitable to be (at least provisionally) valued.

The *Benwu* School, as represented by Dao'an, instructs its adherents to “lodge their minds in *benwu*”, and though this phrasing uses the notion of *benwu* and not 'emptiness', it implies an undertaking similar to the instrumental interpretation of *Liezi* 1:11 offered by the commentators reviewed above. In all cases, the adept is employing the concept of *benwu* or emptiness in order to overcome hindrances present in transient reality. The correlation is certainly not perfect, however; Zhang Zhan explicitly says that the principle of emptiness and tranquility is not “manifest in mental processes (*xinlü* 心慮)”, unlike Dao'an. Other *Liezi* commentators are clear in their advocating 'emptiness', but are ambiguous in terms of the relationship of this method with the heart-mind (*xin* 心).

5.5 Conclusion

In his preface to the *Liezi*, Zhang Zhan insists that the contents of the work are similar to Buddhist teachings; moreover, the subsequent generations of commentators see much Buddhist thought in this ostensibly “Daoist” text. I have argued that these similarities, both textual and theoretical, are largely superficial, with the exception of the “automaton story” of *Liezi* 5:13. It is not peculiar that many should seek parallels in these texts, as both traditional and modern readers have done, for anyone with even passing familiarity with these traditions know that both Lie Yukou and Buddhists value something they call 'emptiness' – at least as the idea is broadly construed under various names, such as *xu* 虛 or *kong* 空.

We have seen many interpretations of this notion of 'emptiness' in both the *Prajñā* Schools and commentaries on the *Liezi*. It has appeared to us as a profound method for overcoming mundane adversity, as a fundamental non-dualistic quality of all transient phenomena, or as valuable quality located in select transient phenomena themselves. But in no case is there a perfect (or even reasonably sound) congruence of ideas. Zhang Zhan does not give us an indication of what he considers to be the points of similarity between the *Liezi* and Buddhist sūtras; if it was the notion of 'emptiness' we are lacking in evidence.

However, the above comparison is not without merit, for as we have seen the compiler of the *Liezi* and the *Prajñā* Schools are all deeply engaged with what was to be later called *xuanxue*. As such, they are struggling with the same questions that serve to characterize that movement: how can one put into language, or even understand, a notion like “Nonbeing”? If we posit a Nonbeing, what is its relationship to Being? My investigation here is not concerned with definitive answers to these questions, but instead is aimed at casting light on how these questions were answered in the fourth century. Numerous attempts have been made to locate Buddhist influence in the *Liezi*, but it is more worthwhile to observe the confluences between the *Liezi* and the experiments in Buddhist thought taking place at the time of its compilation.

Finally, I note that if there is some congruence in the *xuanxue* speculations we can find in the *Liezi* and the so-called *Prajñā* Schools (especially the work of Dao'an), it is likely not due to influence from one to the other, but can more plausibly be traced back to a common source. This common source, as alluded to earlier, would be the ontological and cosmological theories of the exegete Wang Bi. Thus if we do see some traces of Buddhist philosophical influence in the *Liezi* – something making intellectual claims about the nature of reality and what our behavioural and cognitive responses to that reality ought to be – then I submit that those traces would simply be the contents of Wang Bi's

philosophical contributions in a Buddhist garb.

CONCLUSION

There are two major objectives of this dissertation. First, I have aimed to demonstrate not only that it is reasonable to read the *Liezi* as a medieval document of approximately the middle of fourth century of the common era, but also why such a document might be compiled. Second, having established the veracity of the former claims, I have offered a reading of the thought of the *Liezi* in the context in which it was compiled. Such a context was in part characterized by a flourishing philosophical discourse later called *xuanxue* and local interest in the foreign religious tradition of Buddhism. These questions are of interest to scholars of both early and medieval China, in that they add nuance to an understanding of the development of the Masters Text category as well as serve to deepen our comprehension of the philosophical and spiritual debates we find in our medieval textual sources. Furthermore, I expect that scholars interested in the *Liezi* in particular or so-called “Daoist” writings more generally will find that this dissertation extends our understanding of the message and structure of this important document. Below I will summarize my key findings.

In the first chapter I laid out a brief history of the Masters Text category, building on existing studies by Wiebke Denecke, Tian Xiaofei, Michael Puett, Mark Edward Lewis, and others. I argue that a trend emerges when we both read and read about Masters Texts far beyond the Warring States period – we see that as the relative status and authority afforded to Masters Texts increases it becomes an increasingly unwelcome endeavour to produce a new Masters Text. That is to say that there is a sense that becomes evident in Han dynasty writings about the 'Masters' that it would be presumptuous, impertinent, or otherwise unsavory to produce a text of one's own, label it a Masters Text, and anticipate it to be uncritically accepted as such.¹ We have seen thinkers, such as Yang Xiong and Wang Chong, circumvent this challenge by producing texts of similar style and purpose as Masters Texts

¹ This is not to say that such a practice was advocated before the Han – but Han writers seem to write consciously about this problem.

while denying their status as such. It appears that writings attributed to Wang Su or his intellectual circle, such as the *Kongzi jiayu* and the *Kongcongzi*, at least suggest another alternative, if not provide outright evidence for it – the calculated compilation of a new text, combining both old and new material, labeled as a recovered Masters Text. Such a text, if acknowledged as genuine, retains the prestige of the Masters Text while serving as a means for a compiler to introduce their views onto the intellectual stage. Such is the model of compilation I have suggested for the *Liezi*.

Having made the claim that the *Liezi* is not authentically ancient, I have used my second chapter as an opportunity to review and evaluate the best evidence to date for the provenance of the text. Multiple lines of evidence suggest that Yang and Graham's influential accounts of the text's origins in the fourth century give the most reliable conclusion. This evidence includes an analysis of the grammar and vocabulary of the text, as well as textual parallels between the *Liezi* and other classic texts of both Chinese and Indian origin. However, I have also attempted to test the conclusions of Yang and Graham, widely accepted uncritically in western sinological circles, against the growing body of scholarship in Chinese that advocates for the existence of a pre-Qin *Liezi*. Though I ultimately agree with what I have called the '*Liezi* sceptics', settling on a date of compilation of approximately 350 CE, I have been convinced by evidence found in Chinese language scholarship that the primary commentator of the *Liezi*, Zhang Zhan, is most likely not the compiler of this text.

Chapter Three makes use of many passages of the *Liezi* to provide readers largely unfamiliar with the text a guide to its content and claims. I believe my largest contribution to scholarship on the *Liezi* in this chapter is a two part division of the text, which I have called the “Core Chapters” (chapters one through five) and the “Appended Chapters” (chapters six through eight). It is my contention that the first five chapters of the text are an integrated unit which offer a coherent picture of cosmology, ontology, epistemology, and normative guidelines. I assert that the compiler of the *Liezi* text used these first five chapters as an opportunity to present a consistent world view with a philosophical agenda. In

doing so, he most certainly made use of existing narratives and arguments; but these existing bits of text would be adapted to suit his unique intellectual program. The Appended Chapters do not strictly maintain this uniform line of argumentation, though they may at times overlap with it. I have concluded that the materials in both the “Li ming” (“Effort and Fate”) chapter and the “Yang Zhu” chapter were constrained by extant beliefs about what those chapters ought to contain. As such, I suggest that the compiler was coerced by circumstance to include material congruent with notions related to the chapter titles rather than material explicitly suited to his own purposes. The rationale behind the final chapter remains somewhat mysterious – it appears as a chronologically arranged collection of short anecdotes largely unrelated to the *Liezi* Core Chapters.

The fourth and fifth chapters explore the relationships between the *Liezi* and *xuanxue* thinkers such as Wang Bi, Guo Xiang, Ruan Ji, and Xi Kang, and between the *Liezi* and what can broadly be called *prajñāpāramitā* thought, including that attributed to Buddhist thinkers in China such as Zhi Mindu, Zhi Dun, and Dao'an. Of all these relationships, I argue that the most explicit is that between the *Liezi* and the thought of Wang Bi, which is largely consistent. This is in contrast to the philosophy of Guo Xiang, critical as it is of Wang Bi's position – I believe the *Liezi* was in part compiled to bolster the Wang Bi side of the debate. I have also investigated the position of the *Liezi* on the topic of “immortals” or *xian* 仙, and compared this view to those held by poet-philosophers Ruan Ji and Xi Kang. I have found that the *Liezi* makes use of longevity language as parables or allusion in service to other intellectual aims, and is perhaps most accurately described as being agnostic on the question of the existence of beings of an exceedingly long lifespan. This is in contrast to the bold credulousness of Xi Kang and even the wistful scepticism of Ruan Ji. In the fifth chapter I examine claims for a Buddhist influence in the thought of the *Liezi*, but find these cases to be more aptly explained by native, non-Buddhist Chinese influences. I delve deeply into the questions of Nonbeing (*wu* 無) and emptiness

(*xu* 虛) as they appear in the *Liezi* and compared this to analogous notions in Buddhist thought contemporary to the compilation of the text, and find that though there are no obvious signs of influence the thinkers examined it is apparent they were writing in response to similar questions on the nature of reality. Both chapters four and five demonstrate the value of reading the *Liezi* as a medieval document, as doing so opens grants us a broader view of the intellectual climate of that time.

I have written above on the nature of the *Liezi* text as a document and the claims it makes about reality and our role as participants in it. However, there are many more avenues of investigation worthy of exploration. I have only touched briefly on the relationship between the *Liezi* and the growing “Daoist church” in medieval China. I have not remarked on possible influence, in either direction, between the text and this community, but suggest here that either the presence *or* lack of an impact of one on the other is worthy of comment. Moreover I have not explored the textual and thematic parallels found between *Liezi* and the apocryphal *Qianzuodu* 乾鑿度,² or any other apocryphal texts from the Han dynasty. It is also worth developing a more comprehensive perspective on how the *Liezi* was received after its dissemination into wider Chinese culture – a thorough evaluation of the use of the text as an authoritative source in an immense, commissioned work, such as the *Taiping yulan*, will certainly yield valuable information about how and why the *Liezi* was read. Endeavours such as these, and others still unarticulated, must wait. For the moment it is my hope that the work I have provided here may serve as a point of reference for future inquiry into, and appreciation of, this creative and intriguing text.

2 For more information, see Nielsen (2003), p. 304.

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APPENDIX: A FINDING LIST FOR THE *LIEZI*

Below is a finding list designed to facilitate in correlating my usage of the *Liezi* text with the main English translation (Graham) and two important critical editions of the text. There is currently, to my knowledge, no universally or even widely adopted system of notation for the text; though such a system would be useful, I do not expect the notation system used here to be of benefit outside the scope of this dissertation. I have adopted the notation system used by the Chinese Text Project (<http://www.ctext.org/liezi>), but in all my usage of the actual primary text I rely exclusively on that which is found in Yang (2007). I have noted where sources differ in their division of the text; Graham's textual divisions often follow Yang's.

| Index # (from ctext.org) | Graham, 1990 | Yang, 2007 | Lau (ICS), 1996 |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| 1 – “Tian rui” 天瑞 | | | |
| 1.1 | 17 | 1 | 1/1/1 |
| 1.2 | 18 | 5 | 1/1/13 |
| 1.3 | 19 | 9 | 1/1/21 |
| 1.4 | 20 | 11 | 1/2/8 |
| 1.5 | 22 | 18 | 1/3/3 |
| 1.6 | 23 | 21 | 1/3/11 |
| 1.7 | 24 | 22 | 1/3/16 |
| 1.8 | 24 | 23 | 1/3/23 |
| 1.9 | 26 | 26 | 1/4/10 |
| 1.10 | 10 | 27 | 1/4/14 |
| 1.11 | 27 | 28 | 1/4/21 |
| 1.12 | 27 | 29 | 1/5/1 |
| 1.13 | 27 | 30 | 1/5/6 |
| 1.14 | 29 | 33 | 1/5/19 |
| 1.15 | 30 | 35 | 1/5/24 |
| 2 – “Huangdi” 黃帝 | | | |
| 2.1 | 33 | 1899-12-30 | 2/6/15 |
| 2.2 | 35 | 44 | 2/7/4 |

| Index # (from ctext.org) | Graham, 1990 | Yang, 2007 | Lau (ICS), 1996 |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| 2.3 | 35 | 46 | 2/7/9 |
| 2.4 | 37 | 48 | 2/7/23 |
| 2.5 | 38 | 51 | 2/8/5 |
| 2.6 | 39 | 53 | 2/8/12 |
| 2.7 | 42 | 58 | 2/9/15 |
| 2.8 | 43 | 59 | 2/10/5 |
| 2.9 | 44 | 62 | 2/10/14 |
| 2.10 | 44 | 64 | 2/11/5 |
| 2.11 | 45 | 67 | 2/11/12 |
| 2.12 | 46 | 68 | 2/11/16 |
| 2.13 | 47 | 70 | 2/12/1 |
| 2.14 | 49 | 76 | 2/13/4 |
| 2.15 | 51 | 80 | 2/13/16 |
| 2.16 | 52 | 81 | 2/14/1 |
| 2.17 | 52 | 82 | 2/14/6 |
| 2.18 | 53 | 83 | 2/14/14 |
| 2.19 | 55 | 86 | 2/15/11 |
| 2.20 | 56 | 86 | 2/15/17 |
| 2.21 | 56 | 87 | 2/15/22 |
| 3 – “Zhou Mu wang” 周穆王 | | | |
| 3.1 | 61 | 90 | 3/16/10 |
| 3.2 | 65 | 99 | 3/17/12 |
| 3.3 | 66 | 101 | 3/18/1 |
| 3.4 | 67 | 104 | 3/18/12 |
| 3.5 | 68 | 105 | 3/18/21 |
| 3.6 | 69 | 107 | 3/19/6 |
| 3.7 | 70 | 108 | 3/19/17 |
| 3.8 | 72 | 111 | 3/20/1 |
| 3.9 | 73 | 113 | 3/20/10 |
| 4 – “Zhong Ni” 仲尼 | | | |
| 4.1 | 75 | 114 | 4/20/18 |
| 4.2 | 77 | 117 | 4/21/10 |

| Index # (from ctext.org) | Graham, 1990 | Yang, 2007 | Lau (ICS), 1996 |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| 4.3 | 78 | 119 | 4/21/20 |
| 4.4 | 79 | 122 | 4/21/28 |
| 4.5 | 79 | 123 | 4/22/7 |
| 4.6 | 80 | 126 | 4/22/18 |
| 4.7 | 81 | 127 | 4/23/3 |
| 4.8 | 82 | 129 | 4/23/11 |
| 4.9 ¹ | 83 | 130 | 4/23/20 |
| 4.10 | 83 | 132 | 4/23/23 |
| 4.11 | 84 | 132 | 4/23/26 |
| 4.12 | 84 | 133 | 4/23/29 |
| 4.13 | 85 | 135 | 4/24/8 |
| 4.14 | 86 | 137 | 4/24/18 |
| 4.15 | 90 | 143 | 4/25/6 |
| 4.16 | 90 | 144 | 4/25/12 |
| 5 – “Tang wen” 湯問 | | | |
| 5.1 ² | 94 | 147 | 5/25/21 |
| 5.2 | 97 | 151 | 5/26/7 |
| 5.3 ³ | 99 | 159 | 5/27/15 |
| 5.4 | 101 | 162 | 5/28/10 |
| 5.5 | 102 | 163 | 5/28/15 |
| 5.6 | 104 | 165 | 5/29/3 |
| 5.7 | 104 | 168 | 5/29/10 |
| 5.8 | 105 | 171 | 5/29/16 |
| 5.9 | 106 | 173 | 5/30/3 |
| 5.10 | 107 | 175 | 5/30/11 |
| 5.11 ⁴ | 108 | 177 | 5/30/21 |
| 5.12 | 109 | 178 | 5/31/1 |

- 1 Both Graham and Yang read 4.9 and 4.10 as a single pericope. In Graham, 4.10 begins “When Chi Liang died...”. In Yang it begins “季梁之死...”.
- 2 Both Graham and Yang read 5.1 and 5.2 as a single extended pericope. In Graham, 5.2 begins “T'ang asked again:...”. In Yang it begins “湯又問...”.
- 3 Both Graham and Yang split 5.3 into two separate pericopes. In Graham the second begins “K'ua-fu, rating his strength too high...” (p. 101); in Yang it begins “夸父不量力...” (p. 161).
- 4 Graham splits 5.11 into two separate pericopes; the second begins “Ch'in Ch'ing turned to a friend and said...” (p. 109). This does not follow Yang, who reads it as a single pericope (cf. Yang, p. 177).

| Index # (from ctext.org) | Graham, 1990 | Yang, 2007 | Lau (ICS), 1996 |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| 5.13 | 110 | 179 | 5/31/7 |
| 5.14 | 112 | 182 | 5/31/20 |
| 5.15 | 113 | 184 | 5/32/9 |
| 5.16 | 114 | 186 | 5/32/21 |
| 5.17 | 117 | 189 | 5/33/15 |
| 6 – “Li ming” 力命 | | | |
| 6.1 | 121 | 182 | 6/33/21 |
| 6.2 | 122 | 194 | 6/34/1 |
| 6.3 ⁵ | 124 | 196 | 6/34/19 |
| 6.4 | 127 | 201 | 6/35/15 |
| 6.5 | 127 | 202 | 6/35/19 |
| 6.6 | 128 | 204 | 6/36/5 |
| 6.7 | 129 | 205 | 6/36/15 |
| 6.8 | 130 | 206 | 6/36/21 |
| 6.9 | 130 | 208 | 6/37/1 |
| 6.10 | 131 | 211 | 6/37/8 |
| 6.11 | 132 | 213 | 6/37/17 |
| 6.12 | 133 | 214 | 6/38/3 |
| 6.13 | 133 | 215 | 6/38/7 |
| 7 – “Yang Zhu” 楊朱 | | | |
| 7.1 | 138 | 216 | 7/38/12 |
| 7.2 | 139 | 219 | 7/38/22 |
| 7.3 | 140 | 221 | 7/39/5 |
| 7.4 | 141 | 221 | 7/39/12 |
| 7.5 | 141 | 222 | 7/39/15 |
| 7.6 ⁶ | 141 | 222 | 7/39/19 |
| 7.7 | 142 | 222 | 7/39/21 |
| 7.8 | 143 | 224 | 7/40/3 |
| 7.9 | 146 | 227 | 7/40/24 |
| 7.10 | 147 | 229 | 7/41/10 |

5 Graham splits 6.3 into three separate pericopes; the second begins “The highest sage...” (p. 126), and the third begins “Hsi P'eng does not want to be told...” (p. 126).

6 Yang reads 7.6 and 7.7 as a single textual unit. 7.7 begins “晏平仲問...”.

| Index # (from ctext.org) | Graham, 1990 | Yang, 2007 | Lau (ICS), 1996 |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| 7.11 | 148 | 230 | 7/41/18 |
| 7.12 | 150 | 231 | 7/42/3 |
| 7.13 | 152 | 233 | 7/42/20 |
| 7.14 | 152 | 234 | 7/42/27 |
| 7.15 | 153 | 234 | 7/43/5 |
| 7.16 | 154 | 235 | 7/43/14 |
| 7.17 ⁷ | 156 | 238 | 7/44/4 |
| 8 – “Shuo fu” 說符 | | | |
| 8.1 ⁸ | 158 | 239 | 8/44/14 |
| 8.2 | 158 | 239 | 8/44/16 |
| 8.3 | 159 | 241 | 8/44/23 |
| 8.4 | 160 | 242 | 8/45/3 |
| 8.5 | 161 | 242 | 8/45/9 |
| 8.6 | 161 | 243 | 8/45/13 |
| 8.7 | 162 | 244 | 8/45/17 |
| 8.8 | 162 | 245 | 8/46/3 |
| 8.9 | 164 | 246 | 8/46/17 |
| 8.10 | 164 | 247 | 8/46/22 |
| 8.11 | 165 | 248 | 8/47/7 |
| 8.12 | 166 | 249 | 8/47/15 |
| 8.13 | 167 | 251 | 8/47/22 |
| 8.14 | 168 | 253 | 8/48/9 |
| 8.15 | 169 | 253 | 8/48/17 |
| 8.16 | 169 | 255 | 8/49/1 |
| 8.17 | 170 | 258 | 8/49/13 |
| 8.18 | 171 | 258 | 8/49/17 |
| 8.19 | 171 | 259 | 8/49/22 |
| 8.20 | 171 | 260 | 8/50/4 |
| 8.21 | 172 | 262 | 8/50/12 |

7 Graham splits 7.17 into three separate pericopes; the second begins “Being loyal is not enough...” (p. 156), and the third begins “Yü Hsiung said that...” (p. 156).

8 Both Yang and the ICS volume takes pericopes 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3 as a single textual unit. For the ICS volume, I have indicated the section breaks in the index. For Yang, the second pericope begins “關尹謂子列子...”; the third begins “嚴恢曰...”. Graham reads these as three different textual units.

| Index # (from ctext.org) | Graham, 1990 | Yang, 2007 | Lau (ICS), 1996 |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| 8.22 | 173 | 263 | 8/50/18 |
| 8.23 | 174 | 264 | 8/51/1 |
| 8.24 | 174 | 265 | 8/51/7 |
| 8.25 | 175 | 265 | 8/51/10 |
| 8.26 | 176 | 267 | 8/51/24 |
| 8.27 | 177 | 267 | 8/52/4 |
| 8.28 | 177 | 268 | 8/52/7 |
| 8.29 | 178 | 269 | 8/52/15 |
| 8.30 | 178 | 269 | 8/52/19 |
| 8.31 | 179 | 270 | 8/52/25 |
| 8.32 | 179 | 271 | 8/52/29 |
| 8.33 | 179 | 271 | 8/53/1 |
| 8.34 | 180 | 271 | 8/53/5 |
| 8.35 | 180 | 272 | 8/53/9 |
| 8.36 | 180 | 272 | 8/53/13 |