

length – much in the vein of the Finnish Kalevala epics collected and creatively supplemented by the folklore enthusiast Elias Lönnrot (1802–84).

A fundamental difference was, however, that the main informant of McLaren’s project, Zhu Hairong (b. 1930), was not at the outset an academic, but an “insider” – a peasant singer, who acquired literacy and was able to sing, record, and transcribe his own and others’ songs. As the author notes: “[he] composed something that is neither a transcript of a folk song-cycle nor a folklorist-produced representation ... but something that transcends both. He could be best understood as a composer-recorder who retains fidelity to the aesthetic resources of his region ... a new type of Yangzi Delta folk genre, that is worthy of investigation in its own right.” Qian Afu (1907–93), a star singer since the 1950s, deeply immersed in the local culture as a performer and transmitter, and the female peasant singer Lu Amei (1902–86), had both been recorded and published under similar conditions. Mountain song collections were “re-created” for local folklorists, who were keener on obtaining well-adapted texts than preserving the tradition in “raw”, unmediated form. The dialectal phraseology and the contents of these hybrid versions were usually heavily rewritten and “cleaned” according to political and moral norms of the period.

With analytical expertise and characteristic frankness, McLaren has sifted and gleaned from the archives of the Wu folk epics, giving a many-faceted treatment of the state of the art in written transmission. She has truly opened the door wide into the spiritual and material culture distinctive of the Lower Yangzi region.

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**Richard John Lynn (trans.): *Zhuangzi: A New Translation of the Sayings of Master Zhuang as Interpreted by Guo Xiang*  
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After his translations of the *Yijing* or *The Classic of Changes* (1994) and the *Laozi* or *The Classic of the Way and Virtue* (1999), both following the readings transmitted in Wang Bi’s (226–249) commentaries, Richard Lynn’s translation of the *Zhuangzi* as interpreted by Guo Xiang (265–312) completes his translation series of the three core readings of the so-called Neo-Taoist or *xuanxue* (Lynn: “arcane learning”) school of the Six Dynasties (222–589).

Presenting a fully integrated translation of the entire *Zhuangzi* with Guo Xiang’s commentary, this new translation differs fundamentally from the array of translations of *Zhuangzi* at our disposal so far. Where Guo’s lengthy commentary remains opaque and less forthcoming than one might hope, Lynn supplies detailed explanations that further elucidate Guo’s readings, including those transmitted in Cheng Xuanying’s (c. 600–c. 660) subcommentary and in Lu Deming’s (c. 550–630) glosses in his *Jingdian shiwen* (Textual explanations for classics and scriptures). Guo Qingfan’s (1844–96) *Zhuangzi jishi*



(Collected explanations of Master Zhuang) serves as the base text of this translation. The textual arrangement of Lynn's *Zhuangzi* will be familiar to readers accustomed to his earlier translations: the translation of the main text (*Zhuangzi*) appears in bold print; the translation of Guo Xiang's interlinear commentary is in regular print. This layout helps remind us of the interwoven nature of the textual layers (main text, commentary, and to a certain extent also the subcommentary and further exegetical notes) which, in the heads of historical as well as modern readers, are all too often fused into one indiscriminating textual fabric.

Lynn's translation strategy inevitably leads to a situation where his reading based on Guo Xiang's commentary is incompatible with other renditions of the *Zhuangzi*, especially with those deriving directly or indirectly from Lin Xiyi's (c. 1210–c. 1273) syncretistic interpretation. In some instances readers may well disagree with Guo's understanding of the text and postulate that they have arrived at a more "suitable" or "correct" reading of the *Zhuangzi*. However, there are at least two, in my view, compelling arguments against the advancement of such criticism. First, given the interdependence of the main text and the commentary, Lynn's translation aims to represent and stay true to Guo's reading. Alternative reading options are discussed occasionally in Lynn's footnotes but do not divert from his task at hand. Second, it is well known that the *Zhuangzi* shows plenty of ambiguities. Where Guo's textual understanding differs from that of later readers, the question as to whose reading is to be taken as the "correct" one will largely depend on one's presumptions and conjectures, regardless of whether we are talking about the standpoints of a commentator/exegete or a translator. To go one step further, we may argue, from the perspective of the reception and effective history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) of a text, that the question of whether an interpretation of a particular phrase is to be perceived as "correct" or not is immaterial, if not irrelevant. After all, hermeneutics requires phantasy and is somewhat akin to informed guesswork. What really matters is how Guo Xiang's commentary came to serve as one of the most influential interpretations of the *Zhuangzi*. Notwithstanding its imperfections, there is no question that Guo Xiang's reading choices played an enormously significant, in part even definitive role in the effective history of the *Zhuangzi*. It is for this aspect that we applaud Richard Lynn's rendition as an invaluable contribution to our appreciation of the historical dimensions of reading the *Zhuangzi*. As he has done in his translations of Wang Bi's *Yijing* and *Laozi*, Lynn's English version of Guo Xiang's *Zhuangzi* exemplifies a much-needed departure from an approach that takes historical reading choices as a pile of synchronic entities and, say, indiscriminately follows an early medieval commentary, intertwines it in with a gloss from the Song period, and knits it with an interpretation from the late imperial period, only to weave it all together with the presuppositions of the current reader. To be quite blunt, the treasure house of historical commentarial traditions is not a post-modern marketplace where glosses that are born out of different historical and philosophical backgrounds are displayed for our disposal *at libitum* and irrespective of their specifics. Richard Lynn's commitment to representing one historical reading in its entirety opens up a most valuable window for us to observe, like in a frozen picture, one particular moment in the reception history of one of the key texts of the Chinese tradition. Guo Xiang redacted the book *Zhuangzi* into the form known today and, building on previous exegetical efforts, he compiled the earliest extant full commentary on the *Zhuangzi*, which stands as one of the most important texts of the *xuanxue* tradition and beyond. This is what makes Richard Lynn's work so enormously significant. His *Yijing*, his *Laozi* and his *Zhuangzi*, all translated as interpreted by leading commentators of the early *xuanxue* tradition, yield most remarkable insights into the intellectual world of early medieval China and make accessible, in English, contextualized views and ideas that shaped essential parts of Chinese philosophy and literature.

Richard Lynn’s translation of the main text and of Guo Xiang’s commentary are copiously annotated, helping the reader to further place within its context a work that moulded the perception of the book *Zhuangzi* for centuries. His learned and thickly annotated introduction to key issues regarding the main text and the commentary, three appendices, two glossaries, a bibliography, and an index complete this most welcome contribution to our understanding of the *Zhuangzi* and its reception history. This new translation, an admirable result of a longstanding dedication to Guo Xiang’s *Zhuangzi*, truly deserves not only a special place on our bookshelves but will become a treasured point of reference for anyone who appreciates the aphorisms, wisdom, and literary qualities of those bundles of cherished texts attributed to Master Zhuang.

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## **Daniel K. Gardner (trans.): *Zhu Xi: Basic Teachings***

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Edited by Li Jingde 黎靖德 (fl. 1263) in 1270, the *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 (Classified Conversations of Master Zhu), a posthumous compilation of educational sayings and dialogues on 26 general topics by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) arranged in 140 chapters, served as one of the guidelines of traditional Chinese learning for centuries.

The translator, Daniel K. Gardner, Emeritus Professor of History at Smith College, is well known to students of Chinese philosophy. His *Chu Hsi and the Ta-hsueh: Neo-Confucian Reflection on the Confucian Canon* (1986), *Learning to Be A Sage: Selections from the Conversations of Master Chu, Arranged Topically* (1990), *Zhu Xi’s Reading of the Analects: Canon, Commentary and the Classical Tradition* (2003), *The Four Books: The Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition* (2007), and his *Confucianism: A Short Introduction* (2014) are well established as first-rate resources for all students of Chinese philosophy, not just those with a particular interest in its later developments. It thus comes as no surprise that the leading scholar on Zhu Xi in Western Sinology provides us with a sound, small, but well-chosen selection from the *Zhuzi yulei* that is aptly described as the “basic teachings” of the thinker who shaped orthodox curricula in China, Japan, and Korea.

As a compilation of the master’s lectures and exchanges with students and followers, the *Zhuzi yulei* uses a rather straightforward conversational language, mainly in the form of pseudo-dialogues, one of the most common and efficient rhetorical means in educational literature, that encourages the reader’s direct engagement with the insights of this pre-eminent thinker whose endeavours aimed at a revival of the Confucian tradition. Gardner’s extracts reflect the situational and linguistic nature of the original very well, and offer elegant, accessible translations from what could be described as the introductory chapters that deal with matters such as the “Foundations of the Universe” (i.e. excerpts from the “Liqi” 理氣 and “Guishen” 鬼神 chapters), “Human Beings” (i.e. excerpts from the “Xingli” 性理 chapters), “Learning” (i.e. excerpts from first two of the “Xue” 學 chapters), “A theory of reading” (i.e. extracts from the third and the