



**Monsieur Richard LYNN**

Former Professor at the Department of East Asian Studies,  
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donnera une conférence intitulée

**Whose *Zhuangzi* 莊子? Master Zhuang's, Guo Xiang's 郭象, or  
Cheng Xuanying's 成玄英?**

**Who Says What in the Commentary Tradition**

**le vendredi 12 avril à 17h**

Lieu : **Université Paris-Diderot**

**Salle Léon Vandermeersch**

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The complete manuscript of my *Zhuangzi: A New Translation of the Sayings of Master Zhuang As Interpreted by Guo Xiang* will go to Columbia University Press by the end of March. Here are some essential features: Despite occasional explicit differences in interpretation of the text of the *Zhuangzi*, Cheng's commentary is definitely a sub-commentary to Guo's. Cheng's remarks are more wordy and, usually close to the standard *guwen* of the Tang era, easier to understand than Guo's elliptical, ambiguous and cryptic, often totally opaque, prose. As a commentary on Guo's commentary, it has proved very helpful in several ways: By providing (1) factual information such as the identification of persons and places mentioned in the *Zhuangzi* text, something that Guo almost never does. (2) relating single characters in the text of the *Zhuangzi* or Guo's commentary to binomial expressions, most of which seem (at least to me) appropriate to narrowing down the range of meaning involved to fit the contexts. (3) As Guo brightens the opaque passages in the *Zhuangzi*, so Cheng further brightens the opaque ambiguities of Guo's commentary—with the proviso that the Daoist priest Cheng's two-fold arcane learning 重玄學 forays into Buddhist terminology and concepts are not allowed to add dimensions of meaning that cannot have been present in Guo's thought. However, having read so much of it I tend to think that most of Cheng's supposedly two-fold arcane thought is actually one-fold, and thus very close to Guo's. (4) Cheng rarely explicitly disagrees with Guo, but when he does, that is helpful too. As for Guo, whereas the interpretation of the text in some passages seem either off the mark or beside the point, the overwhelming majority enhance rather than distort the meaning of the "original" *Zhuangzi*—such is my opinion after having translated both all of it and all of Guo's commentary. Some things about Guo's commentary continue to puzzle, for example, his obsession with denying a place for causality in both the physical and human realms, as well as his equally obsessive insistence on independent selfhood for all things, including the human (about fifty terms beginning with 自 are now collected in the book's glossary). While it should go without saying for it should be manifestly obvious, that "as interpreted by Guo Xiang" means that the entire text of the *Zhuangzi* must be re-translated. Simply to tack on Guo's commentary to some earlier translation, leading the pack Watson's or Mair's, is out of the question. My work integrates the commentary with the *Zhuangzi benwen* 本文. This takes much time and effort, for one must go back and forth between the two, fitting one with the other, but the results are often strikingly different from Watson's and Mair's, which should make for an interesting read. However, do I claim that this results in the "true" meaning of the "original" *Zhuangzi*? Not at all, for the *benwen* is so ambiguous and opaque in places that there, at least, no such claim can ever be made. Peipei Qiu (Vassar) has been working for years on a similar book: a Lin Xiyi 林希逸 (1193-1271) interpretation of the *Zhuangzi*. Peipei's book, like mine, has suffered many delays over the years, but will be most welcome when it appears. The more such interpretations we have, the more the meaning of the *benwen* will become apparent. Presentation here is a large excerpt from Chapter 25 of the book.

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