Towards a New Paradigm of Subjectivity:

On the Contemporary Significance of the Zhuangzi

International Workshop, Charles University, Prague

June 29-July 2, 2017

Organized by the Institute of East Asian Studies, Charles University

Sponsored by: Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation International Sinological Center at Charles University and the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, Academia Sinica

“The true way goes over a rope which is not stretched at any great height but just above the ground. It seems more designed to make people stumble than to be walked upon.” (Franz Kafka)

The book Zhuangzi is generally regarded as a classic of Daoism. Among Chinese commentators, however, there is a long tradition that links Zhuangzi less to Laozi than to Confucius and the Confucian school. Recently, Yang Rubin 楊儒賓, Professor at National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan, has published an astonishing book that bears the provocative title of Zhuangzi as a Confucian (儒門內的莊子). In this book he tries to revive the tradition of a Confucian interpretation of the Zhuangzi.

In a different, but also very provocative way Jean François Billeter has turned against dominant tendencies of research into the *Zhuangzi*. He is strongly convinced that the critical force of the Zhuangzi already has been largely eliminated by its first and most influential commentator, the scholar Guo Xiang (252-312): due to the idea of an energetic-cosmic “unity of man and heaven” (天人合一), which runs through Guo’s interpretation, a depoliticizing, spiritualizing and aestheticizing way of reading the Zhuangzi became prevalent, assigning Zhuangzi the role of herald of passive and non-critical aloofness towards worldly affairs, through which his writings could be assimilated into Confucian “imperial order”.

The first day of this workshop will focus on the attempt to deepen and broaden the transcultural communication between two thought provoking and highly unconventional interpretations of the *Zhuangzi* and to discuss them critically from different perspectives. The second day will further investigate into aspects of subjectivity, identity and the self in the *Zhuangzi*.

The intellectual background of this workshop is documented in two Chinese volumes (to be published in 2017): *If Zhuangzi speaks French* (若莊子說法語) and *Zhuangzi in Transcultural Turmoil* (跨文化漩渦中的莊子). Billeter’s idea of ​​a “new paradigm of subjectivity” in the Zhuangzi as developed in his *Four lectures on the Zhuangzi* (French: *Leçons sur Tchouang-tseu*) and Yang Rubin’s conception of a “transformative subject” (氣化主體) or of a “wandering subject” (遊之主體) have strongly influenced a group of scholars in their creative attempt to develop the field of transcultural studies in the *Zhuangzi*. A philosophical debate of considerable depth has emerged around the two perspectives, expressed in Yang’s *Zhuangzi as a Confucian* as well as in Billeter’s *Notes on Zhuangzi and philosophy* (French: *Notes sur Tchouang-tseu et la philosophie*; Chinese translation: 莊子九札).

This controversy on subjectivity is important well beyond the narrow field of sinology, because it touches upon a fundamental problem of modern philosophy (Western scholars have often doubted the existence of “subjectivity” in classical Chinese literature) and the question whether Zhuangzi may serve as a passage way (通道) for opening up truly transcultural possibilities in the discussion of classical and contemporary Chinese philosophy, in the Chinese speaking world and within the context of contemporary European philosophy and sinology.

June 29, 2017

16:00-16:30 Opening and introduction: Fabian HEUBEL何乏筆 (Academia Sinica, Taipei), Olga LOMOVÁ (Charles University, Prague),

16:30-18:30 Round Table Discussion: Why transcultural studies in the *Zhuangzi*?

Chairs: Fabian HEUBEL, Olga LOMOVÁ

Jean François Billeter (University of Geneva), CHENG Kai-yuan 鄭凱元 (National Yang-Ming University, Taipei), CHUNG Chen-yu 鍾振宇 (Academia Sinica, Taipei), Carine DEFOORT (Leuven University), KE Xiaogang 柯小剛 (Tongji University, Shanghai), LAI Shi-san 賴錫三 (National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung), Yang Rubin 楊儒賓 (National Tsing Hua University, Hsinchu)

Conference welcome party

June 30, 2017

**Subjectivity in the Zhuangzi**

9:00-10:30 Jean François Billeter: A New Concept of the Human Subject

10:30-11:30 Response

Fabian HEUBEL: Subjectivity, Energetic Transformation and Politics 主體、氣化與政治

LAI Shi-san賴錫三: Body, Energetic Transformation and Political Critique: On the Theory of the Subject in Billeter’s Interpretation of the Zhuangzi 身體、氣化、政治批判──畢來德莊子研究中的主體論

LIN Ming-chao 林明照 (National Taiwan University, Taipei): The Second Person Standpoint and the Value Reflection in the Zhuangzi 第二人觀點與《莊子》的價值反思

Heiner ROETZ (Bochum University): The Robber Motif in the Zhuangzi

11:30-11:45 Coffee Break

11:45-13:00 Open Discussion

13:00-14:00 Lunch

**Subject and Energetic Transformation 主體與氣化**

14:00-15:30 YANG Rubin楊儒賓: The Wandering Subject 遊之主體

15:30-16:15 Response

Jana ROŠKER (University of Ljubljana): Li Zehou’s Concept of Subjectality (主體性) and Yang Rubin’s Transformative Subject (氣化主體) – A Comparison form the Viewpoint of Contemporary Sinology

CHUNG Chen-yu 鍾振宇 (Academia Sinica, Taipei): Critical Theory of Qi-Energy: The Contemporary Significance of Zhuangzi’s Theory of Energy 批判的氣論──莊子氣論之當代開展

KE Xiaogang 柯小剛 (Tongji University, Shanghai): The Whole and the Paradox of Transformation: A Reading of the First Chapter in the Zhuangzi 整全與轉化的弔詭：《莊子·逍遙遊》讀解

16:15-16:30 Coffee Break

16:30-17:00 Carine DEFOORT (Leuven University): Mental Fasting in the Study of Chinese Philosophy: Liu Xiaogan versus Esther Klein

17:00-18:30 Open Discussion

Dinner

July 1, 2017

9:00-9:45

TSAI Miao-kun 蔡妙坤 (Academia Sinica, Taipei): A Zhuangzian Perspective on Self-Identity 莊子與自我觀問題

9:45-10:30

JIANG Dandan 姜丹丹 (Jiao Tong University, Shanghai): Subjectivity, Plurality and Transversal Communication

10:30-11:15

Jan VRHOVSKI (University of Ljubljana + Charles University, Prague): Manifestations of the “true”: Zhuangzi-an “subjective persona” in the perspective of the dichotomy between subjectivism and objectivism

11:15-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-12:15

CHENG Kai-yuan 鄭凱元 (National Yang-Ming University, Taipei): Levels of Time in Zhuangzi

12:15-13:00

SONG Gang 宋剛 (School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, Paris): On Relations in the Zhuangzi「相與於無」的生命政治：試論《莊子》的「關係」思想

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-14:45

LIU Tsang-long 劉滄龍 (Taiwan National Normal University, Taipei) : Recognition for Nature. Contemporary Social Philosophy and the Zhuangzi 承認自然：當代社會哲學與《莊子》

14:45-15:30

LIN Chun-chen 林俊臣 (Ming Dao University, Changhua): Zhuangzi’s Influence on the Chinese Art of Writing 莊子思想對中國書法之積極影響

15:30-15:45 Coffee Break

15:45-16:30

Marcin JACOBY (University of Warsaw): The perfect device of persuasion – Zhuangzi’s yuyan in the context of late Warring States Period Chinese literature

16:30-17:15

Dušan VÁVRA (Masaryk University, Brno): Reception of Zhuangzi over centuries and different options of reading

17:15-17:30 Coffee Break

17:30-18:30 Discussion with Jean François BILLETER and YANG Rubin

Dinner

July 2, 2017

9:00-10:00 A tribute to Franz KAFKA: Reading Zhuangzi and Kafka in different languages

10:00- Free Wandering 逍遙遊