**Conference topic:** The conference focuses on interpretative approaches to the early Chinese “Masters” (zhuzi) in the light of recent developments in philology, textual criticism, manuscript studies, and the history of philosophy. The participants scrutinize approaches to zhuzi writings as “philosophical texts”, a term prone to evoke the image of a single author expressing a coherent set of ideas. The conference highlights aspects such as text production, purpose, use, and circulation that present valuable clues to a constructive reading. Traditionally, the Masters have tended to be understood as unified books. Apparent incongruities resisting easy interpretation were frequently neglected or assimilated into unifying hermeneutic strategies. It is now relatively uncontroversial, however, to consider the Masters’ texts as heterogeneous in terms of their generic variability, genesis and subsequent textual history. The conference treats this as a starting point for explorations into novel hermeneutic approaches, reading strategies, and methods of meaning construction. For this purpose, various specific questions are addressed by the conference:

- **Compositionality:** How can we arrive at a workable definition of compositionality? What motivates compositionality? How does it relate to intertextuality? Is it a feature that emerges from or is encouraged by the physical properties of ancient writing materials and scribal practices, or do we need to look for other motivations, possibly philosophical or cognitive ones?

- **Coherence:** Does compositionality undermine coherence? Do structuring devices exist that create coherence in spite of a text’s composite character, and are such devices characteristic of specific genres or purposes?

- **Authorship:** Is the ancient Chinese author ‘dead’? Or are we, in posing this question, merely rehashing a problem that has long been settled in Western literary criticism? Does it make sense still to discuss the philosophy of a text if its readers cannot conclusively identify the author, or if they need to assume multiple authorship?

- **Contexts:** Assuming that in early China existing textual units were regularly integrated into new compositions, can we still reconstruct these units’ original (or at least earlier) contexts, understood as the co-texts and discourses in which they were embedded and the social constellations in which they were produced? What do such reconstructions tell us about the zhuzi as a bibliographic or generic category?

- **Hermeneutics:** In light of what can be inferred about the origins and early history of the zhuzi texts, is it a productive strategy to focus on the reconstruction of coherent philosophical arguments? Would it be more fruitful to single out ideas or textual snippets we are interested in and then use them for philosophical inspiration? Do the texts themselves, through certain features, imply ways to integrate textual data into a coherent understanding?
The list of participants:

- Attilio Andreini, Ca’ Foscari University, Italy
- Scott Cook, Yale-NUS College, Singapore
- Carine Defoort, KU Leuven, Belgium
- Joachim Gentz, The University of Edinburgh, UK
- Paul R. Goldin, University of Pennsylvania, USA
- Michael Hunter, Yale University, USA
- Lisa Indraccolo, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- Martin Kern, Princeton University, USA
- Lee Ting-mien, KU Leuven, Germany
- Andrew Meyer, The City University of New York, USA
- Christian Schwermann, University of Bonn, Germany
- Dušan Vávra, Masaryk University, Czech Republic
- Oliver Weingarten, Oriental Institute, Czech Republic

- Conference fees: The conference is free of charge. Invitation letters will be provided on request.

- Accommodation: Detailed information on accommodation in Brno can be found on the webpage http://chinet.cz/category/conferences/.

- About the city of Brno:
  - the capital of the South Moravian Region with a population of almost 400,000 people;
  - a strategic geographic position within Central Europe with excellent transport accessibility, including an international airport;
  - a modern, dynamic and fast growing centre of industry, trade, science, information technology, research and innovation with business incubators and centres of excellence in science;
  - a city of universities with more than 86,000 students at 14 universities and 3 university campuses;
  - an important centre of international trade fairs and exhibitions;
  - support infrastructure for business in the field of science, research and innovation;
  - a high quality of life – a centre for culture and sports, historical sights (Villa Tugendhat – a UNESCO site, functionalist architecture, shopping centres and services for leisure time).

- About Masaryk University: Masaryk University, located in Brno, is the second-largest public university in the Czech Republic and the leading higher education institution in Moravia. At present it comprises nine faculties with over 200 departments, institutes and clinics. Recognized as one of the most important teaching and research institutions in the Czech Republic and a highly-regarded Central European university, it has been infused with a strong democratic spirit ever since its establishment in 1919. The university also plays a major role in the social and cultural life of the South Moravian Region.

- About the conference venue: A Neo-Renaissance building from the period 1859–1860, built after the project of Ignaz Latzel by the architect Josef Arnold. The sculptural decoration of the attic was accomplished by Franz Schwarzer; the author of allegorical sculptures in the foyer is Joseph Cesar. Nowadays the building is the seat of the Faculty of Medicine. The extensive and costly reconstruction of the building was enforced by disrupted statics – the building was built as part of a representative boulevard, in the place of the destroyed city walls – and it was carried out in the years 1998–2000. The installation of a bronze sculpture of T. G. Masaryk was part of the construction process. The author of the sculpture is Vincenc Makovský.

If you want to attend the conference, click here for registration!

For further details and the complete program visit the CHINET website: www.chinet.cz or contact us at the e-mail: janamasko@gmail.com

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