

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT SPEAKER SERIES



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ZHUANGZI'S INTELLECTUAL HUMILITY ROUTE TO SKEPTICISM

A TALK BY DR. JAMES BEEBE
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO

Room: MACK 230
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11:30-1:00



ABSTRACT

The professional consensus within philosophy is that radical skepticism about the external world is an important view to teach and consider for these reasons:

(i) Since skepticism represents a significant threat to something important (viz., human knowledge), it is essential to be able to neutralize the threat and to understand why the threat ultimately fails. (ii) There is intrinsic value in engaging in any kind of philosophical contemplation. (iii) Understanding that fallibilism (i.e., that our reasons and evidence rarely guarantee the truth of what we believe) leaves open the possibility of skepticism is an important part of understanding the human condition.

In this talk, I will argue that standard (Cartesian) approaches to skepticism generally fail to satisfy the desideratum represented in (iii) and that (i) is part of the problem. I will also argue that the approach to skepticism offered by the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi (4th Cent. BCE) does a better job of satisfying (iii), provides us with reason to question (i), and has greater potential to lead us to a point of intellectual humility via the consideration of skepticism.