

Harvard-Yenching Institute

Putting The ``Fox" Back in The ``Wild Fox Kōan": The Intersection of Philosophical and Popular Religious Elements in The Ch'an/Zen Kōan Tradition

Author(s): Steven Heine

Source: *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Dec., 1996), pp. 257-317

Published by: [Harvard-Yenching Institute](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2719401>

Accessed: 22/09/2013 06:22

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Harvard-Yenching Institute is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Putting the “Fox” Back in the “Wild Fox Kōan”: The Intersection of Philosophical and Popular Religious Elements in the Ch’an/Zen Kōan Tradition

STEVEN HEINE

Pennsylvania State University

Behind the thin animal disguise, it is universal human frailty and folly that is displayed before us.

D.D.R. Owen, on *Roman de Renart*¹

Ah, the emotions of supernatural beings reflect the meaning of human existence!

Jenshi chuan 任氏傳 (“Miss Ren”), a T’ang folktale²

THE KŌAN’S “MUTED” STRUCTURE

THE intersection of two seemingly contradictory discursive structures is expressed in the “wild fox kōan,” one of the most intriguing and frequently cited records in the vast repertoire of

Research for this paper was made possible by grants from the Research and Graduate Studies Office and the Institute for the Arts and Humanistic Studies of Penn State University as well as from the East Asian Studies Center of Indiana University. Earlier versions were presented at the Harvard University Buddhist Studies Forum (1994) and the American Academy of Religion (1994). The author is grateful for the constructive comments of the journal’s anonymous reader.

¹ D.D.R. Owen, trans., *The Romance of Reynard the Fox* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. xii.

² *Jenshi chuan* was originally recorded in the T’ang *I-wen-chi* collection and is also included in the Sung encyclopedic collection, the *T’ai-p’ing kuang-chi* (978), c. (for *chuan*) 452; an English translation is in *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*, eds. Y.W. Ma and Joseph S.M. Lau (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), pp. 339–45 (this passage is on p. 345, translation altered).

Ch'an/Zen dialogues probably best known for being included as the second case in the Sung era *Wu-men-kuan* 無門關 (J. *Mumonkan*, 1228) kōan collection commentary. This case, which retains a brief but relatively complex narrative that contrasts with many kōans known for their highly condensed or abbreviated form of expression focusing on a single phrase, word, or syllable, concerns a monk in a mountain monastery who confesses that he is really a "non-human" (C. *fei-jen*, J. *hinin* 非人). He admits that he has been transfigured into a wild fox spirit (C. *yeh-hu ching*, J. *yako-zei* 野狐精) for five hundred lifetimes as retribution for presuming that enlightenment is beyond the otherwise inescapable effects of karmic causality. The fox/monk is eventually released from the punishment when master Pai-chang 百丈 (749–814) utters a succinct, transformative "turning word" (C. *i-chuan-yü*, J. *ittengo* 一轉語) that affirms the inviolability of karma, and his fox corpse is subsequently found by Pai-chang under a massive rock on the far side of the mountain and buried with clerical rites.

The main or overt discursive structure, according to most traditional commentaries, is a metaphysical, anti-supernatural analysis of causality that is consistent with a long-standing debate in Buddhist intellectual history about the relation between determination by karma, or the realm of the conditioned (*saṃskṛta*), and enlightenment, or the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) realm of release from karma. In the kōan, the term wild fox is used merely as a rhetorical device indicating the unenlightenment of the ancient monk which is overcome by a correct understanding of karma. The core of the kōan consists of a typical Zen "encounter dialogue" (C. *chi-yüan wen-ta*, J. *kien-mondō* 機縁問答), a spontaneous repartee in which a master uses sparse and often inscrutable or nonsensical words to trigger a liberation from conceptual fixation in his disciple. Yet, despite the kōan's emphasis on strict adherence to causality, the commentaries stress a paradoxical identity of bondage and freedom, or causality and non-causality. For example, the *Wu-men-kuan* verse highlights an equalization of apparent opposites: "Not falling [into causality], not obscuring [causality]:/Two sides of the same coin" (the second line can also be rendered: "Two winning numbers, one roll of the dice").³

³ *Wu-men-kuan* no. 2, in *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, eds. Takakuṣu Junjirō 高

Yet, this exchange is rather atypical because unlike the usual disciple the fox/monk cannot be liberated from his *fei-jen* status through his own efforts alone but instead depends upon the master's recitation of a phrase with mysterious power. How is the appearance of the fox and the supernaturalism it evokes related to the philosophical commentaries? Should it be understood as an other-worldly entity or does it symbolize an interior state of mind, such as the deluded side of Pai-chang? These questions point to the fact that underlying and driving the encounter dialogue is a covert or "muted" structure generally hidden from the view of, or at least not directly addressed by, many commentators.⁴ The kōan narrative bears a striking morphological affinity with folklore tales in medieval China and Japan dealing with the exploits of shapeshifting, trickster foxes who seduce or possess unsuspecting victims and can only be eliminated by ritual exorcism.⁵ In this colloquial mythic cycle, foxes intrude on the spirits of vulnerable people or transfigure into human form often as an alluring vixen or a wayward, irregular priest either as a means of deceit or punishment or out of more compassionate motives such as providing a widower with a spouse or teaching a moral lesson. But their vulpine nature remains unseen, invisible and completely unknown to the victim who confounds illusion and reality.⁶ This condition persists until the true nature is identified and an exorcism based on the use of a Buddhist or other religious symbol, such as the

楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭 (Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–32) [hereafter *T*] 48:293b; and Hirata Takashi 平田高士, ed., *Mumonkan, Zen no goroku* 禪の語録 18 (Chikuma shobō, 1969), p. 21 — the second rendering is Hirata's *gendaiyaku* (modern Japanese translation-commentary), p. 24. A slightly different rendering is in Zenkei Shibayama, *Zen Comments on the Mumonkan* (New York: Mentor, 1974), p. 34. See also Nakao Ryōshin 中尾良信, ed., *Mumonkan, Zenseki zenbon kochū shūsei* 禪籍善本古注集成 (Meicho fukyūkai, 1983), pp. 40–51, which includes photo-facsimile versions of eight Sōtō *shōmono* commentaries, mostly from the seventeenth century (but including fifteenth through nineteenth centuries).

⁴ Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *The Monkey as Mirror: Symbolic Transformations in Japanese History and Ritual* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 212–13, citing work by Edwin Ardener and Shirley Ardener, refers to the muted structure as the inarticulated and sometimes suppressed level of discourse which contains its own inversion.

⁵ On the notion of examining the morphological or structural content in folktales as well as affinities between disparate genres, see Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Lawrence Scott (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), 2nd ed.

⁶ Alexander H. Krappe, "Far Eastern Fox Lore," *California Folklore Quarterly* 3.2 (1944): 124–47, esp. p. 136.

utterance of a *sūtra* passage or *dhāraṇī*, releases the purified person from the cause of possession. The completion of the ritual coincides with the discovery of animals scurrying underfoot or of a dead fox shape, which signifies that the source of the delusion has been terminated. Many times the fox body is given a proper burial in accord with the last wishes of the human side which was tormented by being trapped in a non-human existence.⁷

The “fox *kōan*” from its opening passage on the confession of the monk’s identity as a *fei-jen* — a term (Skt. *amanuśya*) also used in Buddhist cosmology to refer to other-than-human beings ranging from gods to beasts and demons — creates an atmosphere hospitable to the key supernatural elements in folklore tales which evoke phenomena known as the *kuai* 怪, or the anomalous and unknowable, and the *chi* 奇, or the strange, fantastic, or extraordinary. This *kuai/chi* literature features heroes and anti-heroes who are either more than human as immortals or less than human as demons or ghosts. Their animal transformations, which are referred to in Japanese as *bakemono* 化物, are considered part of natural reality.⁸ The category of non-humans who appear as or who resemble people includes spirits or fairies (C. *ching*, J. *sei* 精 — this includes fox spirits), as well as ghosts (*kuei* 鬼), goblins, demons, genii, nymphs, ogres, and evil spirits of forests and waters. Shapeshifters like the fox continually struggle with a sense of bondage due to the ever present though permeable boundaries separating the natural and supernatural realms. This tension is vividly expressed in *Jenshi chuan*, perhaps the earliest and most complex T’ang tale of anthropomorphosis that became paradigmatic for countless subsequent versions,

⁷ Rania Huntington notes two stories with this ending from the *T’ai-p’ing kuang-chi*, “Miss Jen” and “Li Nun,” in “Tigers, Foxes and the Margins of Humanity in Tang Chuanqi Fiction,” *Papers on Chinese Literature* 1 (1993): 59.

⁸ On *kuai/chi* literature see Huntington, “Tigers, Foxes and the Margins of Humanity in Tang Chuanqi Fiction”; and Karl S.Y. Yao, *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and Fantastic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). In Japanese, the verb *bakasu* (also pronounced *ke* or *ka*, C. *hua*) as the root of *bakemono* can mean “to seduce or bewitch,” but it can also imply any change or metamorphosis, including the positive manifestation of a budha or bodhisattva (*keshin* 化身). On other shapeshifting animals see Brandon Drew Hunter, *One Hundred Japanese Strange Creatures* (Tsukuba shobō, 1992); and Stephen Addiss, *Japanese Ghosts and Demons: Art of the Supernatural* (New York: George Braziller, 1985), especially p. 127 which features a print by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi.

in that the vixen who begins as a femme fatale proves more faithful and pure than her human lover, Cheng, and dies in anguish when her *kuai* identity is discovered. In a similar vein, a Tokugawa era drawing of the opening scene of the kōan illustrates the muted structure by showing a bushy foxtail, which is a typical folklore motif, peeking out from under the Buddhist robe as a giveaway of the *fei-jen*'s identity.⁹ [See Figure 1.]

This kōan also seems to borrow structural elements found in *Jen-shi chuan* and other fox tales in crafting a narrative that uses mythical time (e.g., the five hundred lifetimes, whether counted as human or vulpine) and dramatic shifts in geography or landscape (as from the monastery to the rock on the other side of the mountain) to reflect the psychological movement from ignorance and attachment to wisdom and release. Furthermore, the narrative consists of several stages that are akin to the pattern of folktales. The first stage is the apparition that manifests due to karmic retribution or as an expression of shame about prior wrongdoing. This stage is followed by an identification and purgation of the *fei-jen* status, an act of repentance and a burial which saves the human spirit despite a reversion of its body to animal form, and finally post-mortem contrition or illuminating commentary by the narrator.

The fox folktales are contained in numerous collections from the Six Dynasties through T'ang and Sung China, such as the *Sou shen chi* and *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* (parts of which are contained in the Ch'ing *Liao-chai chih-i*, which the compiler originally planned to title "Devil and Fox Stories"), as well as from Heian and early Kamakura Japan, including the *Nihon ryōiki*, *Konjaku monogatari*, *Uji shūi monogatari*, and *Kokonchomonjū*.¹⁰ While many of these texts include non-Buddhist and secular material, they also incorporate a genre of popular Buddhist morality tale literature referred to in Japanese as *setsuwa bungaku* 説話文学, which consists of brief didactic narratives that articulate supernatural themes about the moral effects of karmic retribution (C. *yeh-pao*, J. *gōhō* 業報) occurring

⁹ This is from Akizuki Ryōmin 秋月龍珉, *Zen mondō: kōan-e monogatari* 禪問答—公案會物語 (Chōbunsha, 1976), p. 128.

¹⁰ On the *Liao-chai chih-i* title, see Herbert A. Giles, trans., *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (New York: Paragon, 1960), p. xx.



Figure 1. An illustration of the opening scene of the kōan narrative which, drawing from folklore motifs, shows the fox/monk's *fei-jen* identity revealed to master Pai-chang by the tail peeking out from under the Buddhist robe (as well as the long hair and beard). Although there was no tradition of scrolls or other illustrations of kōans in Sung China or medieval Japan, this Tokugawa era print was one of several prominent series on kōan cases, including the series by Sengai cited below. It appears in Akizuki Ryōmin, *Zen mondō: kōan-e monogatari* (Chōbunsha, 1976), p. 128.

throughout past, present, and future. *Setsuwa* literature actually stems from, and the term is retroactively applied to, numerous Chinese folklore texts that have an explicitly Buddhist orientation, including the *Ming-pao chi* and *San-pao kan-ying yao-lü lu*, which were absorbed into the *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* and other comprehensive collections in China and Japan.¹¹

The *setsuwa* sources reflect the interaction of animistic and shamanistic mythology with several key aspects of the Buddhist worldview. These include a literal acceptance of the early Buddhist belief that human existence transmigrates through numerous lives in different *fei-jen* species, such as deities, angry spirits, hungry ghosts, denizens of hell, and animals; a retelling of early Buddhist *jātaka* fables about the previous incarnations of Buddha into animal forms, including foxes and jackals; and a refashioning of *avādāna* legends of Buddhist priests subduing local deities, including the spirits of magical animals often referred to as *nāga*. Because of pervasive syncretism, it is difficult to determine precisely the origins of fox folklore, that is, the extent to which it was either primarily indigenous or largely introduced by Buddhism. However, it is clear that karmic tales about a wide assortment of supernatural creatures first began to appear in the fourth century and by the T'ang era the fox emerged as a major anthropomorphic animal, along with snakes and tigers.¹² Fox folklore in China has tended to put a strong emphasis on detailed instructions in sexual alchemy by which foxes learn to transfigure or attain immortal status. In Japan there has been an emphasis at least since the inception of the Inari cult in the eighth

¹¹ See W. Michael Kelsey, *Konjaku Monogatari-shū* (Boston: Twayne, 1982), pp. 96–97, 164 n.19. On the relation between Zen literature and popular Buddhism, Victor H. Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 24, points out that the Zen recorded sayings texts were among the earliest written examples of colloquial language in China, and he also has a broader discussion of the rise of written vernacular literature in “Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages,” *JAS* 53.3 (1994): 707–51. Many of the *setsuwa* are at least indirectly influenced by early Buddhist *jātakas* which generally refer to jackals rather than foxes. However, in some cases the Sanskrit term is vague and indicates a four-legged hairy animal.

¹² The earliest appearance is in the *Sou shen chi*; see Derk Bodde, “Some Chinese Tales of the Supernatural,” *HJAS* 6 (1942): 338–57. Also, the *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi*, which consists of 500 *chüan*, contains a collection of fox tales in c. nos. 447–55, but stories with foxes appear frequently in other sections as well; see Edward H. Schafer, “The Table of Contents of the *T'ai p'ing kuang chi*,” *CLEAR* 2.2 (1980): 248–63.

century on the sacrality of the fox as a divine messenger as well as on a distinction between various kinds of demonism, including *tsuki-mono* 憑もの (foxes appearing as or possessing people) and *kitsune-mochi* 狐持 (families [accused of] fox sorcery).¹³ Despite important differences in distinct historical periods and cultural constructions there are some enduring themes in the portrayal of illusion reflected in many literary and artistic expressions. A prime example of this pattern is the way a glorious mansion is depicted in thoroughly realistic terms at the peak of one's bewitchment until it is exposed as "only some broken-down walls," as in *Jenshi chuan*, or as a hovel in a pile of weeds.¹⁴

The point of convergence is that the "fox kōan" and morality tale literature both reflect a process of transforming and being transformed by indigenous folk religiosity. The kōan can be read as the record of an encounter between the Buddhist philosophy of causality deriving from self-realization devoid of supernaturalism and the ritual of fox spirit possession generated by divine intervention, which suggests an approach to morality based on ritual purification representing an extreme form of externalization and ceremonialization that is scandalous to Zen meditative practice. Are the philosophical and supernatural implications complementary or conflicting modes of discourse? Or is it the case that we must abandon the opposition between a philosophical reading and a folklore reading and, as Pierre Bourdieu suggests in a somewhat parallel context, "undertake a simultaneously . . . *dual reading* of writings which

¹³ On this distinction see Carmen Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow: A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1975), pp. 51–68; and Yumi Morishige, "Cultural Construction of Foxes," M.A. thesis, Cornell University (1994). Both sources cite Ishizuka Takatoshi 石塚尊俊, *Nihon no tsukimono* 日本の憑もの (Miraisha, 1971), esp. pp. 39–45, 171–72.

¹⁴ To cite some examples of the fox as a symbol of social change in China and Japan: Diane Dorfman, "The Spirits of Reform: Politics of Belief in Northern China," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies (April 1994), in which the fox is associated with post-Mao reform movements; Anne Walthall, *Peasant Uprisings: A Critical Anthology of Peasant Histories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), in which foxes are connected with late Edo peasant uprisings, as in "A Tale of a Dream from the Fox Woman Plain," pp. 169–92; and Howard A. Link, *Waves and Plagues: The Art of Masami Teraoka* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1988), pp. 58–59, in which the fox symbolizes AIDS attacking a courtesan.

are defined by their fundamental *ambiguity*, that is, by their reference to two social spaces, which correspond to two mental spaces.”¹⁵ Perhaps fox folklore can be considered to highlight the personal or existential rather than metaphysical implications of karmic retribution in that a “human’s transmogrification into beast form is clearly linked with moral lapses.”¹⁶ As the narrator of *Jenshi chuan* comments after the fox heroine has been identified and dies, “Ah, the emotions of supernatural beings reflect the meaning of human existence!” The rhythm of the appearance and disappearance of the apparition coincides with and dramatizes the inner dynamics of the arising and overcoming of delusion, thereby creating a unity of narrative form and content, or of medium and meaning.

A main theme in recent studies of both Eastern and Western religion concerns the relation between magic based on colloquial spirits of the so-called little tradition and the scholasticism based on a universal theology of the great tradition that often scorns and repudiates supernaturalism. In the engagement between great and little traditions in medieval Europe, according to Aron Gurevich, “Ancient, pre-Christian magical practices did not vanish. However, they existed now in an entirely new mental context. Their practitioners and participants had to become aware of the limits of magic and had to develop a critical attitude towards it.”¹⁷ The kōan is an example of medieval Buddhism creating a new context for understanding supernatural beliefs which did not simply disappear but were transmuted by virtue of a critical, transcendental attitude at once exploiting and surpassing their original literal meaning. The process of syncretism is usually portrayed in terms of a two-tiered, “trickle-down” model which focuses on how the great tradition elevates the little tradition. But it is also relevant to ask the reverse question — without hierarchical ranking — of the extent to which folk religion infiltrates the great tradition. How is the mental context of philosophy affected and changed by the mutuality of assimilation? What are the benefits to the architects of scholasticism,

¹⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*, trans. Peter Collier (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 3.

¹⁶ Huntington, “Tigers, Foxes and the Margins of Humanity in Tang Chuanqi Fiction,” p. 43.

¹⁷ Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. Janas M. Bak and Paul A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 97.

including the possibilities for enhancing a metaphysical understanding of morality, aside from concessions simply made to accommodate supernaturalism?

My analysis of the relation between philosophy and folk beliefs is influenced by several excellent studies of the process by which medieval Buddhism suppresses and converts, or de-encodes and re-encodes the gods and symbols of popular religiosity.¹⁸ These studies demonstrate that Buddhism is not a unitary, pure, discrete and unchanging essence but consists of complex, diverse phenomena continually interacting and interpenetrating with other- and non-Buddhist theories and practices.¹⁹ Nevertheless, several of these studies tend to overlook the multiple levels of interconnectedness generating shifting alliances and digressions and thus they are not necessarily free from presupposing a hierarchical two-tiered model. In the concluding section I will critically evaluate three approaches to the relation between great and little traditions within Zen discourse: one view emphasizes epistemological differences and incompatibility, or an irreconcilable discursive gap; another view stresses harmonious continuity and complementarity; and a third view achieves a compromise position by highlighting a creative tension involving both reinforcement and challenge. My approach extends the compromise view by explaining the complex process of intersecarian and intertextual appropriation and sublimation as a key to overcoming the two-tiered model.

I will be drawing on two main theorists who deal with the interaction between overlapping or conflicting discourses: Roland Barthes, who examines the polysemy or multiple meanings of a single sign or symbol that enables it to function in two distinct but interacting rhetorical systems; and Pierre Bourdieu, who argues that a discursive context is based on and invariably references back to a more general

¹⁸ Valerie Hansen, "Gods on Walls: A Case of Indian Influence on Chinese Lay Religion?", in *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, eds. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), pp. 75–113, esp. 76–80; and Bernard Faure, "Space and Place in Chinese Religious Traditions," *History of Religions* 26.4 (1987): 350, on the idea of "re-encoding."

¹⁹ David Barnhill provides an insightful overview of the trends in scholarship especially with regard to Bashō's religiosity that encompasses Shinto, folk, and Chinese elements, and he also suggests an ecologically based model, in "Folk Religion and Shinto in the Ecosystem of Bashō's Religious World," presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Chicago (November 1994).

universe of the undiscussed or undisputed. Bourdieu refers to the undiscussed as a homological “*field of opinion*, the locus of the confrontation of competing discourses,” or as a “doxa” encompassing the polarity of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, the sum total of the theses tacitly posited on both sides of an inquiry which is simply taken for granted by all parties and thus often not articulated.²⁰

The polysemy of the term “wild fox spirit” is used on diverse, dispersed levels reflecting the dialectical tensions between the interlocking rhetorical perspectives of the mythological/supernatural and the philosophical/anti-supernatural. These perspectives, while at times competing, also depend upon and reinforce one another in continually referencing back to fox imagery as a doxic field suggesting illusion, self-deception, or a dream-like liminal realm in which the contours and boundaries of reality are called into question. The Zen kōan literary tradition seeking to establish its hegemony over local folk traditions, as well as its credentials as a rational ideology in a Neo-Confucian environment in Sung China, on one level selectively assimilates while at the same time actively dispels and displaces the pattern of fox possession lore. Yet, we must recognize that the philosophy of causality absorbs and is transformed by the supernaturalism it rejects in the very act of disdaining it. The relation is characterized by a homological dimension of convergence and complementarity in that both discourses highlight the problematics of delusion and the dynamics of attaining freedom. But it is also characterized by a heterological dimension — a notion relatively lacking in Bourdieu’s theory of doxa but supported by Barthes’ view of polysemy — of encounter and mutual subversion in that the philosophical view stresses an internal, subjective realization based on intellectual understanding and the folklore view emphasizes the external mechanics of exorcism.

Sources and Commentaries on the Kōan

The “fox kōan,” also known as “Pai-chang’s (J. Hyakujiō’s) fox kōan,” the “kōan of great cultivation (C. *ta-hsiu-hsing*, J. *daishugyō* 大修行),” or the “kōan of not obscuring causality (C. *pu-mei yin-kuo*,

²⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 168.

J. *fumai inga* 不昧因果),” is included in several of the major kōan collections of Sung China and Kamakura Japan, including the *Wu-men-kuan* case no. 2, *Ts’ung-jung lu* 從容錄 (J. *Shōyōroku*) no. 8, and Dōgen’s *Mana Shōbōgenzō* 真字正法眼藏 (or *Shōbōgenzō sanbyakusoku* 正法眼藏三百則) no. 102.²¹ The kōan apparently first appeared in the tradition of Zen records as an encounter dialogue recorded in the 1036 text, the *T’ien-sheng kuang-teng lu* (J. *Tenshō kōtōroku*), a “transmission of the lamp” style collection of bio-hagiographical anecdotes created as a supplement to the first major lamp collection, the 1004 text, the *Ching-te chuan-teng lu* (J. *Keitoku dentōroku*).²² The dialogue eventually became a part of the recorded sayings of Pai-chang Huai-hai included in the short text, the *Pai-chang yü-lu* (J. *Hyakujō goroku*), and the somewhat longer *Pai-chang kuang-lu* (J. *Hyakujō kōroku*), the extant manuscripts of which — as is the case with nearly all records of T’ang masters — date from the twelfth century or later.²³ The dialogue is also included in transmission of the lamp histories such as the *Tsung-men teng-yao chi* (J. *Shūmon tōyōshū*), *Tsung-men lien-teng hui-yao* (J. *Shūmon rentōeyō*), *Chia-t’ai p’u-teng lu* (J. *Katai futōroku*), and *Wu-teng hui-yüan* (J. *Gōtō egen*); in kōan col-

²¹ *Wu-men-kuan*, T 48:293a-b; *Ts’ung-jung lu*, T 48:231c–232b; *Mana Shōbōgenzō goi sakuin*, ed. Sōtōshū shūgaku kenkyūjō (Sōtōshū shūgaku kenkyūjō, 1993), pp. 26–27.

²² *Hsü tsang ching* 統藏經, reprint of *Nihon zokuzōkyō* (Taipei: Shin-wen-feng, n.d.) [hereafter *HTC*] 135:656b–657a. This version as well as several others, including the *Pai-chang yü-lu* and Ta-hui’s *Cheng-fa yen-tsang*, but not the *Wu-men-kuan*, *Ts’ung-jung lu*, or Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō*, includes two additional brief dialogues about Huang-po’s slap, one between Yang-shan and Ssu-ma and the other between Yang-shan and Kuei-shan.

²³ The *Pai-chang yü-lu* and the *Pai-chang kuang-lu* are included in the *Ku-tsun-su yü-yao* (J. *Kosonfuku goyō*), a record of over twenty T’ang masters published in 1144, and the former text is also included in the *Ssu-chia yü-lu* (J. *Shike goroku*), a record of four T’ang masters (Ma-tsu, Pai-chang, Huang-po, and Lin-chi) which may date from as early as twelfth century China but is extant only in a 1607 Japanese manuscript. Both the *Ku-tsun-su yü-yao* and the *Ssu-chia yü-lu*, particularly the latter, are highly problematic in terms of verifying the date and authenticity of the materials; see Yanagida Seizan’s 柳田聖山 discussion of the development of these texts in relation to other Zen records in “Goroku no rekishi 語録の歴史,” *Tōhō gaku* 57 (1985): 537–48. Two main points are: (1) the records of Pai-chang, as well as those of numerous other prominent T’ang masters, were probably created as independent texts not before but some time subsequent to the Sung era transmission of the lamp histories through a process of culling and editing from these rather voluminous texts; and (2) the notion of the integrity of the school of four masters or “four houses” (C. *ssu-chia*, J. *shike*) who represented the so-called Ma-tsu-style teachings was an even later stage of development in the tradition. The “fox kōan” in the *Ssu-chia yü-lu* version of the *Pai-chang yü-lu* is included in *HTC* 135:10–11.

lections such as Ta-hui's *Cheng-fa yen-tsang* (J. Daie's *Shōbōgenzō*) and the *Hung-chih sung-ku pai-tse* (J. *Wanshi juko hyakusoku*), in addition to the collections cited above; and among the recorded sayings and poetry collections of numerous masters, some of which are included in the *Ch'an-tsung sung-ku lien-chu-t'ung chi* (J. *Zenshū juko renshutsū shū*) collection of verses and the *Tsung-men nien-ku hui-chi* (J. *Shūmon nenko ishū*) collection of prose comments.²⁴

In the source case [see Appendix for complete annotated translation of the *Wu-men-kuan* version], a mysterious old man has been attending sermons every evening with the assembly of monks on Mt. Pai-chang. One day after everyone has departed he stays behind and informs the master of the monastery that he is a non-human suffering five hundred fox transmigrations.²⁵ Long ago, as a master of the same temple in a previous lifetime in the age of Kāśyapa, the penultimate (and final prehistoric) of the seven primordial buddhas culminating in Śākyamuni, he denied the basic Buddhist doctrine of the inviolability of cause-and-effect. When asked if even a person of great cultivation (*ta-hsiu-hsing*, continuous practice after enlightenment) is subject to causality, he had answered that there is “no falling into (or bondage to) causality” (C. *pu-lo yin-kuo*, J. *furaku inga* 不落因果). The fox/man, referred to in some commentaries as the “former Pai-chang,” beseeches the current master, renowned in Zen lore as a strict disciplinarian, to offer a turning word to release him from the retribution of perpetual transfiguration. Turning words are abbreviated linguistic devices often used in Zen dialogues to create an unmediated psycho-ontological revolution in a disciple's perspective which suddenly and intuitively liberates him

²⁴ It is also important to note collections in which the kōan is not cited, including transmission of the lamp texts such as the *Tsu-t'ang chi* (J. *Sōdōshū*) and *Ching-te chuan-teng lu*, despite the fact that these texts offer the earliest biographies of Pai-chang and both use *yeh-hu ching* as a term of derision, in addition to kōan collections such as the *Hsüeh-tou po-tse sung-ku* (J. *Setchō hyakusoku juko*), and *Pi-yen lu* (though the compiler Yüan-wu does include it in his own recorded sayings).

²⁵ This recalls a story in the early Vinaya in which a *nāga* (snake) shifts into human form and tries to pass itself off as a monk only to be discovered when it falls asleep, leading to the creation of rules against allowing non-humans into the monastic community, in *The Vinaya pitakam*, ed. Hermann Oldenberg (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879), I:86–87, as cited in John S. Strong, ed., *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1994), pp. 60–61. This story suggests a refutation of supernaturalism while accepting its existence.

from a conceptual attachment or fixation that was blocking the attainment of enlightenment. The current Pai-chang responds by pronouncing an affirmation of cause-and-effect: there is no one who “does not obscure (or remain subject to) causality” (*pu-mei yin-kuo*). The former Pai-chang, on hearing that there is no escape from karma, is thus liberated from his karmic punishment by the current Pai-chang.

Now enlightened the old man dies and his fox body discovered under the rock is properly cremated and buried, according to his last request, with a priest’s funeral. [See Figure 2.] The ceremony at first confuses the other monks because no one had been sick in the infirmary and only Pai-chang had been aware of the non-human’s existence. This indicates how important clerical burial rites had become in Sung monastic codes and institutional life.²⁶ In an epilogue to the main narrative — another literary device apparently borrowed from folktales — later that night, on hearing Pai-chang’s public explanation of the episode, his disciple Huang-po 黃檗 (d. 850) irreverently asks what would have happened to the old monk if he had answered the question about causality correctly when first asked. (Huang-po later became known for his rough handling of his own famous disciple Lin-chi 臨濟, J. Rinzai.) Challenged by the master to step forward before the entire congregation, Huang-po proceeds to slap Pai-chang, who claps and approvingly exclaims, “I thought the barbarian had a red beard [symbolic of Bodhidharma who brought Zen from the west], but here is another red-bearded barbarian!” that is, a master enlightened in the manner of the first patriarch in China.

The “fox kōan” plays a crucial role in both Rinzai and Sōtō Zen interpretive traditions. The case is contained in one of the main texts used in Rinzai training (*Kattō shū*, no. 37), and in Hakuin’s Tokugawa era system it is considered a *nantō* 難透 kōan, or case that is “difficult to pass through” but has the potential to enhance “postenlightenment cultivation” or “realization beyond realization” (*shōtaichōyō* 聖胎長養).²⁷ It also serves as the basis of two of the

²⁶ The guidelines for ritual burial of monks are in the earliest extant monastic code, *Ch’an-yüan ch’ing-kuei* (J. *Zen’en shingi*); see *Yakuchū Zen’en shingi* 訳註禪苑清規, trans. Kagamishi-ma Genryū 鏡島元隆, et al. (Sōtōshū shūmuchō, 1972), pp. 237–48.

²⁷ See Kenneth Kraft, *Eloquent Zen: Daitō and Early Japanese Zen* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), p. 42, for the first rendering.



Figure 2. A print from Sengai's famous collection on the *Wu-men-kuan* which illustrates the discovery of the fox corpse, a scene which is also depicted by numerous modern Zen masters in informal drawings that accompany kōan commentaries. The poem, according to the translation by Norman Waddell, reads: "Not falling into cause and effect can bring the wild fox to life;/ not obscuring cause and effect kills him stone dead/ If you still don't understand/ why don't you go to the foot of the north cliff and take a look at him." The print is stored at the Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo (and is printed here with permission of the museum). The translation of the poem appears in Robert Aitken, *The Gateless Barrier: The Wu-Men-Kuan (Mumonkan)* (Berkeley, CA: North Point Press, 1990), p. 20.

ninety-two fascicles in Dōgen's Kamakura era *Kana Shōbōgenzō* 仮字正法眼藏 text, "Daishugyō" ("Great Cultivation") and "Jinshin inga" 深信因果 ("Deep Faith in Causality"), as well as half a dozen prose and verse comments in the *Eihei kōroku* collection of his sermons.²⁸ In addition, the kōan is discussed in the vast material referred to as *shōmono* 抄物 collections, which are late medieval Sōtō commentaries on the major kōan collections that are extant today in photo-facsimile editions. It is particularly noteworthy that Dōgen's fascicles, written at different stages in his career, have received increasing attention in recent *Shōbōgenzō* studies because they offer nearly opposite interpretations of the source case.²⁹ "Daishugyō," the earlier fascicle, supports an equalization of karmic transmigration and the transcendence of karma in accord with standard Sung commentaries. "Because causality necessarily means full cause and complete effect," Dōgen writes, "there is no reason for a discussion concerning 'falling into' or 'not falling into,' 'obscuring' or 'not obscuring' [causality]. If 'not falling into causality' is incorrect, then 'not obscuring causality' is also incorrect."³⁰ But "Jinshin inga," composed ten years later near the end of Dōgen's life, rejects the identification with transcendence and asserts the inexorability of the karmic process. It refers to the paradoxical view as the "greatest mistake in Sung China" resulting in a non-Buddhistic denial of causality (*hanmu inga* 撥無因果).³¹

²⁸ According to the standard edition of the *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen's citation is based on the *T'ien-sheng kuang-teng lu* version (1036), but Ishii Shūdō 石井修道 argues that the real source is the *Tsung-men teng-yao lu* (1133). See *Chūgoku Zenshūshi hanashi: Mana Shōbōgenzō ni manabu* 中国禅宗史話—真字「正法眼藏」に学ぶ (Kyoto: Zen bunka kenkyūjō, 1988), pp. 223–26, 563.

²⁹ Hakamaya Noriaki 袴谷憲昭, *Dōgen to bukkō: Jūnikanbon Shōbōgenzō no Dōgen* 道元と仏教—十二巻本「正法眼藏」の道元 (Daizō shuppan, 1992), pp. 289–334.

³⁰ Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō*, 2 vols., eds. Terada Tōru 寺田透 and Mizuno Yaoko 水野穂子 (Iwanami shoten, 1970 and 1972) [hereafter *SH*], II:232–33.

³¹ It is also cited by Dōgen in *Eihei kōroku* 永平広録, in *Dōgen zenji zenshū* 道元禅師全集, 7 vols., ed. Kagamishima (Shunjūsha, 1988), (fascicle and paragraph) 1.62, 1.94, 3.21 (205), 7.40 (510), and 9.77 (which contains two verse commentaries), or III:42, 54–56, 138, IV:90, 234–36, respectively (7.40 is the closest to "Jinshin inga"); and in *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki* 正法眼藏随聞記, ed. Mizuno Yaoko (Chikuma shobō, 1963), 2.4, or pp. 49–50. For a comparison of the "Jinshin inga" fascicle and other comments on the kōan from the same time period, see Ishii Seijun 石井清純, "Jūnikan *Shōbōgenzō* to *Eihei kōroku*: 'Hyakujō yako' no hanashi o chūshin toshite," 十二巻「正法眼藏」と「永平広録」—「百丈野狐」の話を中心として *Shūgaku kenkyū* 宗学研究 30 (1988): 257–62.

*“Wild Fox” and the Intersecting Rhetorics of Supernaturalism
and Anti-Supernaturalism*

The kōan is interpreted in most commentaries as a philosophical tract treating the metaphysical ground of moral issues presented in the literary form of an encounter dialogue. The main debate is between a strictly literal reading of the case as an affirmation of causality and denial of non-causality, which is suggested in Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō* “Jinshin inga” fascicle, versus a paradoxical reading that maintains the identity or the nonduality of opposites, which is articulated in the *Wu-men-kuan* and most other commentaries including the “Daishugyō” fascicle. According to the main philosophical approach, an understanding of the paradox is sufficient for release from transmigration and the attainment of enlightenment. The *fei-jei* motif functions primarily as a one-dimensional literary device or metaphorical substitute for the delusion of the ancient monk, suggesting that eliminating the fox-as-unenlightenment results in the attainment of *nirvāṇa*.³² Such an image is stripped of animistic overtones and actually functions as part of a critique of supernaturalism. This accords with the standard meaning in Zen texts of the terms “wild fox” (C. *yeh-hu*, J. *yako* or *nogitsune* 野狐), which literally means a “(roaming) field fox” considered the lowliest of the numerous species implying a state beyond sanctions or control, and “wild fox spirit,” which refers to an apparition or ghost that straddles the borderline between human and non-human, or mainstream and marginal status. These terms are primarily intended as a scathing critique of a rogue, counterfeit element in those who misportray authentic teachings while attempting to deceive others into thinking they have attained a genuine realization. The terms are “critical of those who indulge in cleverness or try to claim personal liberty by repudiating cause and effect in their actions.”³³

³² In an interesting transcultural example, literary critic Jonathan Culler, in his explanation of the function of metaphors, cites the term “fox as the metaphorical substitute for a literal formulation such as ‘devious, crafty, creature,’” in *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 204.

³³ Thomas Cleary, trans., *Sayings and Doings of Pai-chang* (Los Angeles: Center Publications, 1978), p. 95 n.22. A reference in literary criticism to “wild fox heretics” (*yeh-hu wai-tou* 野狐外道; J. *yako gedō*) is in Chih-P’ing Chou, *Yüan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 38. In a caricature of Buddhist clericism and worship created by Buddhist priests, recalling the European Reynard, in monochrome scrolls

A passage in the *Platform Sūtra* is indicative of the Zen rhetorical strategy of using the symbolic meaning of supernaturalism: “The poisoned mind is an evil dragon . . . delusions are supernatural demons, the three poisons are hell.”³⁴ The images are offered in a straightforward, unambiguous way to reflect essentially negative states of mind metaphorically projected onto external realms. Just prior to this sentence, the passage uses positive images in an inverse way by equating four buddhas with the virtues of compassion, joyful giving, purity, and equanimity.

In similar fashion, Lin-chi and Dōgen repeatedly employ the epithet “wild fox” to refute incorrect teachings associated with illusion and heresy. The *locus classicus* for this is no doubt the *Lin-chi lu* 臨濟錄 (J. *Rinzai roku*), in which the term appears five times, all in a thoroughly derisive way. Lin-chi is also known for an unsparing condemnation of supernatural practices such as visions and prophecies associated with Mañjuśrī worship at the Mt. Wu-t’ai-shan cultic center.³⁵ In a devastating criticism that echoes Confucian scholar Hsün-tzu’s sharp contrast between the common folk who embrace ceremonies based on superstition and the refined *chün-tzu* who practice rituals because of their elegant ceremonial quality, Lin-chi declares:

And then there’re a bunch of shavepates who, not knowing good from bad, point to the east and point to the west, delight in fair weather, delight in rain, and delight in lanterns and pillars. . . . Lacking understanding, students become infatuated with them. Such [shavepates] as these are all wild fox spirits and nature goblins. Good students snicker, “Tee-hee!” and say, “Blind old shavepates, deluding and bewitching everyone under heaven!”³⁶

in the *Chōjū giga* collection, foxes and other animals in the form of priests strike poses that seem either mortified or overly pious as they worship Buddha in the form of a frog against a withered, leafless background; see Joan Stanley Baker, *Japanese Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), pp. 88–89.

³⁴ Philip B. Yampolksy, trans., *The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 158 (Chinese version, p. 17).

³⁵ *Rinzai roku* 臨濟錄, ed. Iriya Yoshitaka 入矢義高 (Iwanami shoten, 1991) [hereafter *RR*], p. 65; and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *The Recorded Sayings of Ch’an Master Lin-chi of Hui-chao of Chen Prefecture* (Kyoto: The Institute for Zen Studies, 1975), p. 16. See Robert Gimello, “Chang Shang-ying on Wu-t’ai Shan,” in *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, eds. Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 89–149.

³⁶ *RR*, pp. 93–94; Sasaki, *The Recorded Sayings of Ch’an Master Lin-chi*, p. 24. The Hsün-tzu passage is in Burton Watson, trans., *Basic Writings of Mo-tzu, Hsün-Tzu, Han Fei-tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 85.

Another example is a dialogue in the record of Yün-men, in which the master instructed his disciples, “The lantern is your self. Yet when you hold your bowl and eat your food, the food is not your self.” A monk asked: How about when the food is my self? The Master cried: You wild fox ghost! Country bumpkin!”³⁷ Also, in the *Pi-yen lu* 碧巖錄 (J. *Hekiganroku*) kōan collection case no. 93, Ta Kuang is asked about the meaning of another master’s utterance and he responds by dancing and the disciple bows. When Ta Kuang queries the disciple about whether this gesture reflects a genuine understanding, the monk dances in a way that apparently imitates his action without insight and Ta-kuang admonishes, “You wild fox spirit!” In his commentary on the exchange, Yüan-wu refers to Ta-kuang’s “kindness” in using the term as a turning word to “transmute the monk’s discriminating consciousness.”³⁸ Another term often used in the same way is “wild fox drool or slaver” (C. *yeh-hu hsien*, J. *yako-zen* 野狐涎), which refers to those who rabidly mimic the words or gestures of their teachers. For example, in commenting on the kōan passage “The old man on hearing this [turning] word had a great enlightenment,” the *Ts’ung-jung lu* compiler Wan-sung writes sardonically, “But he still has fox drool!”³⁹

On one level of discourse reflecting a profound skepticism and scorn of ritual practice, fox imagery, despite a rhetorical indebtedness to folklore, is used in Zen writings explicitly in order to refute and suppress any belief in supernatural or superstitious religiosity. However, in contrast to the one-dimensionality of the metaphor in some of the above examples, many of the medieval commentaries neither reject the magical nature of foxes nor overtly affirm it, but they comment frequently in an indirect and playfully ironic way on this and other aspects of supernatural beliefs. In the *Ts’ung-jung lu*, for example: “Not falling into causality is a standpoint of denial. Not obscuring causality is to go with the flow. Those who understand the teaching of the vehicles even slightly can see this clearly,

³⁷ Urs App, ed. and trans., *Master Yunmen: From the Record of the Chan Master “Gate of the Clouds”* (New York: Kodansha, 1994), p. 159.

³⁸ *Pi-yen lu* no. 93, T 48:217a-b. Also, in no. 35 (T 48:173c), Wu Cho tells Mañjuśrī with a sense of pride that the congregations in his area have three hundred or five hundred members, and Yüan-wu’s note dismisses them: “They’re all nothing but wild fox spirits.” A similar remark is in Wu-men-kuan no. 12, T 48:294c.

³⁹ *Ts’ung-jung lu*, T 48:232a.

but even though they have shed their hairy [fox] hide they still have fishy skin.” The same text also comments that Pai-chang and Huang-po “roam fearlessly like kings of the jungle, so they can certainly live in a foxhole.”⁴⁰ It is possible that the authors of the medieval commentaries felt they had no need to explain — though they could evoke indirectly — a doxic background their readers already understood or presupposed without need for discussion.

A key to clarifying how anti-supernaturalism using *kuai* imagery is inseparable from the discourse it critiques is the polysemy of the basic semiotic building block, the symbol of the “wild fox.” According to Roland Barthes, two divergent or even contradictory discursive structures are often linked by a common sign. A sign that has been constructed out of an alliance of signifier and signified in one structure then becomes a signifier contributing to the construction of a sign on another level or in a different discursive system.⁴¹ Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney stresses that within a single polysemous sign the main or overt structure and the muted or inverted structure, which harbors latent meanings, are simultaneously present and mutually dependent, causing an entire text or a ritual performance to be multivocal and ambivalent. “Symbols, including linguistic ones,” Ohnuki-Tierney writes, “are rarely univocal. As a signifier, a polysemic symbol can take on additional meanings; in fact, it always has more than one meaning. Polysemic symbols therefore embody an inherent mechanism to overcome the basic contradiction between the signifier (form) and the signified (meaning).”⁴² Because of the polysemy of “wild fox Zen” reflecting an ambivalent, duplicitous attitude — or perhaps a deliberately crafted bivalency — the main structure and the muted structure of the *kōan* are each a reservoir containing the full range of meaning of the opposite side with which it is often conflated or even camouflaged.

One level of polysemy within philosophical discourse is that, by an inversionary method in which insults such as “bed-wetting devil” or “red-bearded barbarian” become expressions of praise, “wild fox” can function as a symbol of wisdom or detachment. Zen

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Anette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p. 115; see also Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps* (New York: Guilford Press, 1992), pp. 101–7.

⁴² Ohnuki-Tierney, *Monkey as Mirror*, p. 223.

is well known for its “disingenuous blasphemy,” even towards its most venerated leaders and rites, which functions as a poison to counteract poison.⁴³ While the term fox generally represents a misguided egoism or even antinomianism, it can also stand for genuine freedom from all restrictions and therefore signify a buddha. In the *Pi-yen lu* case no. 1, Bodhidharma crosses the Yangtze River after telling the emperor, in the epitome of Zen iconoclasm, that the Dharma contains “nothing sacred” and that he “does not know [his own name].” Yüan-wu comments: “This wild fox spirit! He cannot avoid embarrassment. He crosses from west to east and back from east to west.”⁴⁴ Another example is Hakuin’s fascicle titled “Licking Up Hsi-Keng’s Fox Drool,” which expresses nothing but praise and admiration for one of his illustrious predecessors. Translator Norman Waddell explains that fox drool or slobber is “a metaphor for a lethal poison; it can work miraculous cures by purging students of their mental illness and leading them to true enlightenment.”⁴⁵ An interesting twist in the *Ts’ung-jung lu* commentary derives from a word association found in a variety of sources based on the homophone between fox and barbarian 胡, which are pronounced *hu* in Chinese or *ko* in Japanese and which are both used to stigmatize marginal persons. This text rewrites the concluding sentence of the kōan as “I thought foxes were red-bearded, but here is another red-bearded fox.”

These examples of polysemy, including those which use the terms wild fox and fox drool in a positive way, still function within the context of anti-supernaturalism. Yet, this kind of extreme demythologization and anti-syncretism, which evokes the image of the fox so as to defeat a belief in spirits, should be interpreted in terms of the

⁴³ Gimello, “Chang Shang-ying on Wu-tai Shan,” p. 122.

⁴⁴ *Pi-yen lu*, no. 1, T 48:140a. Other examples of this kind of inversion are in Kagamishi-ma, ed., *Tendō nyōjō zenji no kenkyū* 天童如浄禅師の研究 (Shunjūsha, 1983), pp. 166–67, in which the fox implies Śākyamuni; *Pi-yen lu*, no. 93, cited above, which uses the term in both negative (main case, “Ta Kuang Dances”) and positive senses (concluding prose commentary); and Dōgen’s 75-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō* “Raihaitokuzui,” *SH* I:318, which endorses fox and other animistic worship that is generally refuted in the 12-fascicle text “Kie-buppōsōbō,” *SH* II:418.

⁴⁵ Norman Waddell, trans., *The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Hakuin* (Boston: Shambala, 1994), 115 n.3. Hakuin is also known for a painting, the *Running Fox*, which uses a ludicrously well-dressed fox to highlight human foibles. I have changed “slobber” to “drool” for consistency.

broader mythological context in which it is uttered, a context which presupposes the reality of premodern supernaturalism and the viability of syncretic beliefs.⁴⁶ Another level of polysemy in Zen monastic institutional life links the philosophical discourse with its apparent antithesis. Despite Lin-chi's refutation of supernatural beliefs, historical evidence suggests that Zen monks rarely actually forbade or rejected folklore-oriented ritual practices. On the contrary, there are numerous accounts of Zen masters in China and Japan who were said to have exorcised fox demons (or handled snakes, worsted tigers, or subdued earth-deities or some other supernatural force). Even today Buddhist temples, especially Japanese Zen monasteries, usually include a fox shrine (or icon of some other local animistic deity) representing an indigenous manifestation (*gongen* 権現) of the universal Buddha-nature enshrined in a main Buddhist object of worship (*honzon* 本尊) at which monks routinely pray for the protection and prosperity of their institution.

The positive and negative uses of the term wild fox in a philosophical context are mirrored by a bivalency in folklore images of the fox as both good and evil. The fox as a trickster figure like other shapeshifting animals, particularly snakes, is an ambiguous symbol and may in some myths represent fertility or productive spiritual power, as in the Japanese Inari cult for which *kitsune* is the messenger of the rice god, instead of an invasive force.⁴⁷ "Wild fox" seems to reflect a remarkable profusion of examples of a twofold process of syncretism and stigmatization in the relation between Buddhism and indigenous traditions. This twofoldness is perhaps best reflected in twin legends about Kūkai, who is said to have supported the origin of the main Fushimi Inari shrine in Kyoto and

⁴⁶ According to *Ts'ung-jung lu* no. 10 (*T* 48:233c), there is a continuum of spiritual power linking ghosts and buddhas: "Demons and ghosts become spirits through the power of bewitchment; spells and medicines become spirits through the power of causing [effects]; heavenly beings and dragons become spirits through the power of retribution; the wise and sagely become spirits through supranormal powers; buddhas and patriarchs become spirits through the power of the Way."

⁴⁷ Karen Smyers points out differences between foxes, who perform clever tricks (as in the case of the European Reynard cycle), and the classical motif of "tricksters" who are creator deities in Native American and other forms of mythology, in "The Fox and the Jewel: A Study of Shared and Private Meanings in *Inari* Worship," Ph.D. diss., Princeton University (1993), p. 252 n.97.

used the wood from the trees on Inari mountain to build Tōji temple, but is also reported to have expelled all foxes from his home territory on Shikoku island because a fox once interfered with his prayers.⁴⁸ Here, the fox represents the dual possibilities of protection and deception, redemption and betrayal.

Foxes, especially in Japan and to a lesser extent also in China, are deified and enshrined as protectors or divine messengers as well as demonized as deceivers.⁴⁹ On the positive side, for example, the Inari/fox pantheon is often constructively assimilated with Buddhist and Zen deities and shrines, almost to the point of an indistinguishability between sects contributing to the *shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合 tradition.⁵⁰ But a prominent theme in the fox (and snake) myths is the opposition set up between universal Buddhist institutions which have the capacity to perform an exorcism and the colloquial non-Buddhist cult that utilizes the spirit's ability of transfiguration in order to bewitch and betray its victims. Buddhist exorcism is based on ritual gesture or utterance or on the administering of the precepts as performed by a variety of cult figures. These include Amida and Kannon devotees, Vinaya masters, and Nichiren priests, in addition to Zen masters, who have often been in competition with non-Buddhist practitioners, such as yin/yang wizards and *yamabushi* ascetics as well as in modern times with New Religion

⁴⁸ The first anecdote appears in Karen Smyers, "Of Foxes, Buddhas, and Shinto Kami: The Syncretic Nature of Inari Beliefs," *Japanese Religions* 16.3 (1991): 62–64. Smyers emphasizes that tracing the historical chronology suggests the fictional nature of the story, but also points out that the Inari tradition considers that Kūkai on his deathbed named the original Buddhist form (*honji* 本地), Madarajin, that is made up of Benzaiten, Shōten, and Dakiniden, which has Inari-fox as its manifestation (*suijaku* 垂迹). The story of Kūkai and Shikoku is reported in Juliet Piggott, *Japanese Mythology* (New York: Peter Bedrick, 1969, rpt. 1982), p. 48.

⁴⁹ Japan tends to see the fox in more positive ways than most other cultures, and D.C. Buchanan speculates that Japanese foxes were invariably good until Chinese influences brought the notion of demonic qualities, in "Inari: Its Origin, Development, and Nature," *TASJ* 12 (1935): 137. However, this is contradicted by evidence of fox worship in early China; see Sawada Mizuho 澤田瑞穂, *Chūgoku dōbutsu dan* 中国動物譚 (Kōbundō, 1978), pp. 172–73.

⁵⁰ On the remarkable degree of syncretistic temples and deities see Gorai Shigeru 五来重, ed., *Inari shinkō no kenkyū* 稲荷信仰の研究 (Sanin shinbunsha, 1985), pp. 75–170 (on Buddhist sects generally) and pp. 541–638 (on Zen, especially Sōtō temples). Sōtō Zen temples also have extensive syncretisms with a variety of indigenous deities as well as deities imported from India, both Buddhist and Hindu; for a full list see Azuma Ryōshin 東隆真, *Sōtōshū: waga ie no shūkyō* 曹洞宗—わが家の宗教 (Daihōrinkan, 1993), pp. 82–88.

movements such as the *okiyome* rite in Mahikari.⁵¹

This bivalency is dramatically played out in the Japanese Sōtō Zen institutional structure. On the one hand, there is the famous case of fox exorcism practiced by Gennō Shinshō 源翁心昭, a disciple of Gasan Jōseki, the fourth descendant of Keizan (who founded Yōkōji temple based on a prophetic dream of a white fox and also enshrined Inari there) and the abbot of Sōjiji temple whose followers are credited with the tremendous regional expansion of medieval Sōtō. In 1389 Gennō is said to have exorcised one of the most demonic of foxes, the infamous “nine-tailed fox” that was originally expelled from India and that yin/yang master Abe no Yasunari, featured in numerous *setsuwa* tales, had dealt with until it took possession of a “killing stone” (*sesshō seki* 殺生石) from which it was murdering people. The fox spirit dwelling in this stone, apparently a volcanic rock emitting poisonous gases, was confronted and converted by Gennō’s use of a purification stick and his chant based on one of Dōgen’s best-known phrases, “*genjōkōan* 現成公案 is the great matter.”⁵² On the other hand, the fox cult is fully syncretized in the Sōtō sub-sect of the Toyokawa Inari shrine which occupies the same compound as the Zen temple at Myōgonji temple in Aichi prefecture and subsidiary temples throughout Japan. These shrine-temple

⁵¹ In addition to the sources cited in fn. 12, see Winston Davis, *Dojo: Magic and Exorcism in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), pp. 115–60; Naoe Hiroji 直江廣治, ed., *Inari shinkō* 稲荷信仰 (Yūzankaku shuppan, 1983), pp. 287–93; and Kondō Yoshiro 近藤喜博, *Inari shinkō* 稲荷信仰 (Hanawa shobō, 1978), pp. 176–78. An interesting example is reported in M. W. de Visser, “The Fox and the Badger in Japanese Folklore,” *TASJ* 36.3 (1908): 34 — an abbot is startled helpless by foxes hoping to make him ill by eating abominable food, “but their magic power came suddenly to an end at the first stroke on the prayer bell.” Also, Blacker cites a case in which a picture of the Meiji emperor was used with immediate efficacy in fox exorcism.

⁵² See Anne-Marie Bouchy, “Le Renard, élément de la conception du monde dans la tradition japonaise,” in Marie-Lise Befa and Roberte Hamayon, eds., *Le Renard, tours, détours et retours, Special issue of Études mongoles . . . et sibériennes* 15 (1984): 9–70; William M. Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), p. 173; and Bernard Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 281. There are many such accounts in vols. 16 and 17 (*Shiden* 1 and 2) of *Sōtōshū zenshō*, 18 vols. (*Sōtōshū shūmuchō*, 1970–73), esp. 17:278a as discussed in Hirose Ryōko 広瀬良弘, “Sōtō zensō ni okeru shinjin kado-akurei chin’atsu 曹洞禅僧における神人化度—悪霊鎮圧,” *Indogaku bukkyōgaku no kenkyū* インド学仏教学の研究 21.2 (1983): 233–36. Sōtō syncretism with fox mythology is also indicated by the hagiographical tradition that Keizan was guided to the site for founding Yōkōji temple in Noto peninsula by the messenger of the local god in the form of a white fox; see Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 166 n.27.

complexes which are under the jurisdiction of the main temple at Eihei-ji worship the fox on several levels of a pervasive network of sacred associations: the white fox who carries the goddess Dakini-shinten is venerated and is also protected by Inari fox icons which are enshrined in the adjacent shrine hall (*honden* 本殿); in addition, Dakini is also assigned as the main deity (*honzon*) of Inari conceived as its avatar (*gongen*). This provides further evidence of an ambivalence in Sōtō Zen that is expressed on another level in Dōgen's contradictory readings of the kōan and views on animism.

These examples of polysemy clearly derive their rhetorical force and practical flavor in conveying delusion and bewitchment from *kuai* (or *chi* or *bakemono*) imagery. The main meaning that emerges from the folklore constructions is that the fox as a creature poised seductively in the twilight represents a crossing of permeable boundaries, a doorway into a realm of liminality, or a "thin veil between worlds" (of sacred and secular, or an animistic realm populated by other-worldly beings and the mundane, materialistic realm of objectified entities).⁵³ For example, in Japanese lore the "fox wedding" (*kitsune-yomeiri* 狐嫁入, sometimes accompanied by a fox-fire, *kitsune-bi* 狐火), a forbidden sight, is said to take place when the sun shines in the midst of rain, or when yin meets yang or clarity intermingles with obscurity. The fox, a nocturnal, infernal, and undomesticated loner which lives on the fringe of human society, is often portrayed as possessing an elusive allure that appeals to lonely people who are craving love or companionship or are dimly aware yet deeply disturbed by their frailties, foibles, and vulnerabilities. But the relationship cannot be fulfilled in part because of the discomfort of the vixen trying to live in the phenomenal world who, like Miss Jen, may want to be a good wife or mother. In the liminal realm between worlds, the conventional distinctions between reality and illusion, Buddha and Mara, freedom and bondage, life and death, and purity and defilement are mixed and merged in confounding ways that must be confronted as a "gateless gate" (C. *wu-men-kuan*, J.

⁵³ Smyers, "The Fox and the Jewel," pp. 247–60; James Melville, *A Haiku for Hanae* (New York: Ballantine, 1989), p. 135; and Yao, *Classical Chinese Tales*, p. 8. As Archilochus says, "The fox knows many things," and the second part of the sentence is that "the hedgehog knows one big thing"; see Isaiah Berlin, *The Fox and the Hedgehog: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1978), p. 3.

mumonkan) to attain salvation. This is why the narrator of *Jenshi chuan* advises that, unlike the hapless Cheng “who only admired the vixen’s beauty but was too insensitive to appreciate her character,” one “should investigate the principle of transformation and view the limits of spirits and humans.”⁵⁴

The appearance of the fox is associated with the onset of a moral crisis and its vanquishing or disappearance represents the removal of delusion. In folklore, shame about one’s failings is the driving force generating the psychological mechanisms of displacement and projection. “In the Chinese tradition a change of form, whether from human to animal or . . . animal to human, is not an external circumstance,” Rania Huntington notes. “It is the result of internal causes: flaws of character or behavior in the case of transformations of human into beast, and determination and self-cultivation in the case of beast into human.”⁵⁵ The arising and desistence of the apparition suggests a bivalent process of overcoming illusion by means of the illusory phenomenon of the fox, whether it is considered more or less real than human existence.

The next two sections examine the relation between two paradigms of wild fox imagery intersecting in the *kōan*: the philosophical paradigm of paradoxicality and anti-supernaturalism, and the folk religious paradigm of the twofold symbolism of the supernatural.

PHILOSOPHICAL PARADIGM OF PARADOXICALITY

The *kōan* narrative falls into two parts: the tale of fox possession containing the exchange about causality between the former and current Pai-chang, followed by the demonstrative encounter in which Huang-po challenges his master’s pronouncement. A philosophical interpretation emphasizes several interconnected levels of paradoxicality which can be categorized as the *textual* level, or what is explicitly stated in the case record, especially in the first part, and

⁵⁴ In *Traditional Chinese Stories*, eds. Ma and Lau, p. 345 (translation altered); see also Huntington, “Tigers, Foxes and the Margins of Humanity in Tang Chuanqi Fiction,” p. 40. It is interesting that the original term for “(in)sensitive” is *ching* 精, the same word that is used to refer to spirits or ghosts in other contexts.

⁵⁵ Huntington, “Tigers, Foxes and the Margins of Humanity in Tang Chuanqi Fiction,” p. 43.

the *contextual* level that is primarily reflected in kōan commentaries explicating concealed yet more comprehensive meanings implicit in the second part or epilogue, including the paradoxical relation between the two. The textual paradox is that, in verbally denying causality, the old monk is victimized by karma and must endlessly suffer its effects, yet in Pai-chang's affirming the impact of causality the monk finally gains release. That is, the conceptual negation of bondage to cause-and-effect results in its perpetuation, and the affirmation results in freedom.

The literal meaning of the kōan, in contrast to most cases which are deliberately open-ended, quixotic, or even absurd, seems quite clear and beyond contest or interpretation in its strict denial of non-causality and assertion of causality as the only principle holding sway prior, during, and subsequent to enlightenment. This view seems consistent with the basic Buddhist doctrine of the universality of cause-and-effect and also helps eliminate any antinomian implication in the equalization of transcendence and delusion which may result in an unintended sanctification of defilement. Furthermore, the narrative in which Pai-chang emerges as a savior because of his assertion of the inviolability of karma has a resonance with his reputation as a stern moralist and no-nonsense disciplinarian who initiated Zen institutional life as a discipline distinct from other sects. Pai-chang's reputation is expressed in his (no doubt apocryphal) pronouncement, "A day without work is a day without food," as well as in his refusal to benefit from tax relief for monasteries or to beg from poor layfolk. It is also exemplified in his formulation of the first Zen monastic code, the *Ch'an-men kwei-shih* 禪門規式 (J. *Zenmon kishiki*, although the authorship and dating of this text has also been called into question in recent studies).⁵⁶

However, a literal reading continues to leave open the central question of what happens in the context of a thoroughgoing affirmation of causality to the status of non-causality that is traditionally associated with the attainment of enlightenment. Once released by the turning word, is the former Pai-chang still subject to cause-and-effect or does he attain full *nirvāṇa*? Looking at the issue from

⁵⁶ Foulk, "Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice in Sung Ch'an Buddhism," in *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, pp. 147-208, esp. 156-59.

another angle, what is the fate of the fox after the transfiguration is terminated? In the “Daishugyō” fascicle, Dōgen suggests that a fox spirit might have deceived Pai-chang into believing it was really a monk and therefore the fox corpse should not have received a Buddhist burial. This comment, echoed centuries later by Hakuin, shows how seriously the propriety of funeral ceremonialism was taken in medieval and early modern Zen, and represents at least a recognition of supernatural beliefs even while repudiating them.⁵⁷ Yet, Dōgen also warns against an acceptance of the mythical elements in the narrative. In a bit of ironic polemic, he points out that if the former Pai-chang “was transfigured into a wild fox body [five hundred times] by virtue of karmic causality based on his incorrect answer to the disciple’s question, then in more recent times Lin-chi, Te-shan, and many other Zen masters [Dōgen is wont to criticize] would have suffered through hundreds of thousands of wild fox re-births.”⁵⁸

The main philosophical problem is that the clear-cut conclusion emphasizing an either/or style of thinking in the first division does not convey the real significance of the kōan or its complete view of causality. The textual level seems — paradoxically — rather unparadoxical because one standpoint is asserted to the exclusion of the opposite standpoint. In order to avoid a *reductio ad absurdum* on this issue, the main focus in the vast majority of traditional commentaries is to reverse the strict assertion of cause-and-effect by highlighting the provisionality and ultimately the indistinguishability or nonduality of the not-falling and not-obscuring responses. In addition to the passages from the *Wu-men-kuan* and “Daishugyō” previously cited, Hung-chih writes, “To talk about not falling into or not obscuring causality/ Is to remain captive to the discriminating mind.”⁵⁹ Following this approach the commentary in the *Ts’ung-jung lu* maintains, “‘Not falling, not obscuring,’ it is just a matter of words,/

⁵⁷ Robert Aitken, *The Gateless Barrier: The Wu-men-kuan (Mumonkan)* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), p. 25.

⁵⁸ *SH* II:232. Thus Dōgen refutes supernaturalism on ritual and transmissional or lineal grounds, and in other passages he also critiques it on the grounds of epistemology (a fox is not aware of its lifetimes) and ontology (there can be no underlying identity of human existences or shapes).

⁵⁹ As cited in Dōgen’s “Jinshin inga” fascicle, *SH* II:435–37.

Too stubborn to stop drooling.”⁶⁰ Also according to a Sung era verse commentary:⁶¹

Not falling, not obscuring:
It is a question of interpretation;
If you can solve the puzzle,
Then there is no longer any hitch.

In addition, a natural image in Kai-feng’s verse commentary on the kōan, “Pai-chang lifted the autumn moon all the way up over the peak,” seems to show “how the ultimate freedom and enlightenment of Zen transcends rigidly divisive either/or thinking in terms of yes and no.”⁶² Furthermore, modern translator and commentator Kōun Yamada argues for the priority of the perspective of non-duality, which he refers to as an “essential nature,” thus stressing the equalization of realms which at once encompasses and undercuts the literal perspective emphasizing their separation: “The phenomenal changes were from man to fox and from fox to man, but there is no change in the essential nature. . . . Zen always treats things from the aspect of this essential nature. Therefore every kōan should be approached in this way.”⁶³

The link between the textual and contextual levels is based on Pai-chang’s liberating turning word at the climax of the first division and on Huang-po’s irreverent slap as the key to the second division. The turning word is a linguistic device which navigates the fragile border between the use of words and no-words, or what is known in Zen as “dead words,” which are discriminative and thus ineffective, and “live words,” which are nondiscriminative and have the ability to affect profoundly the listener. The turning word, “which reveals the speaker’s degree of insight or which transforms the listener’s mind at a crucial psychological moment,” is referred

⁶⁰ T 48:232a; and Yasutani Hakuin 安谷白雲, ed., *Shōyōroku* (Shunjūsha, 1973), p. 46. This version does not have the second division of the kōan, but its commentary does cite other dialogues and anecdotes that are similar to it.

⁶¹ *HTC* 115:114.

⁶² Thomas Cleary, trans., *No Barrier: Unlocking the Zen Koan* (New York: Bantam, 1993), p. 17.

⁶³ Kōun Yamada, trans., *Gateless Gate* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1979), p. 20.

to in numerous recorded sayings texts, most notably the *Lin-chi lu*.⁶⁴ It prompts a subitaneous awakening in a way that is suited to the individual's needs in a particular context.⁶⁵ As the personal psychology or the context changes, so does the utility of the specific turning word. Even though not obscuring causality appears to be the incontestable conclusion of the kōan's first part, that is not necessarily the intention of the turning word, which does not express one and only one absolute truth but functions as a provisional, pedagogical tool apropos to the moment and subject to multiple, often contradictory, interpretations. Also, in contrast to elaborate discussions about metaphysical implications, the kōan can be reduced to a single word, "not obscuring," which captures the full meaning of the case, as in a famous calligraphy by Jiun.⁶⁶

In addition, the concluding dialogue between Pai-chang and Huang-po suggests a contextual approach to the paradoxical nature of causality. Huang-po's challenging question and exaggerated gesture — a demonstrative style also associated with his disciple Lin-chi ("shouts") as well as Te-shan ("thirty blows of the stick!") — imply that there is no accurate or even relevant understanding or expression of the issue. Since all answers are arbitrary and empty of conclusive meaning causality is ineffable. In "Daishugyō," Dōgen takes the contextual paradoxical approach a step further by asking why Huang-po even referred to not-falling as "incorrect," since not-falling and not-obscuring are neither correct nor incorrect. Both answers, Dōgen argues, must be understood in terms of their fittingness for the eras in which they were uttered. "Although not obscuring causality" released the wild fox body in the current age of Buddha Śākyamuni," he maintains, "it may not have been effective in

⁶⁴ Sasaki, *The Recorded Sayings of Ch'an Master Lin-chi*, p. 82 n.174. The term is used by Lin-chi in *RR*, p. 149, by Dōgen in *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki*, p. 50, and also by Hung-chih. For the last, see Ishii Shūdō, *Sōdai Zenshūshi no kenkyū* 宋代禪宗史の研究 (Daitō shuppansha, 1987), p. 302.

⁶⁵ See Yanagida Seizan, "The 'Recorded Sayings' Texts of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism," trans. John R. McRae, in *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, eds. Whalen Lai and Lewis Lancaster (Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1983), pp. 185–205; Steven Heine, *Dōgen and the Kōan Tradition: A Tale of Two Shōbōgenzō Texts* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), pp. 183–86; and Whalen Lai, "Ma-tsu Tao-i and the Unfolding of Southern Zen," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 12.2–3 (1985): 181.

⁶⁶ See Stephen Addiss, *The Art of Zen: Paintings and Calligraphy by Japanese Monks, 1600–1925* (New York: Harry N. Abrams), p. 155.

the age of Buddha Kāśyapa.’’⁶⁷

But what exactly transpires in the dialogical exchange that releases the fox/monk, and on whom does it have an impact — a human or a non-human being? These questions delving into the realm of the supernatural are not dealt with directly by the medieval commentaries, which generally are silent about taking a stance on belief or disbelief or about persuading other monks on this topic. Rather, the commentaries are concerned with a rhetorical use of the fox image in order to steer free of any attachment to one or another aspect of conceptual polarity. Their use of supernatural imagery is consistently ironic, as suggested by Daitō Kokushi’s view that even the words delusion and enlightenment are nonsensical: “ ‘Delusion,’ ‘enlightenment’ — /just fox-words fooling/ Zen monks everywhere.’ ”⁶⁸

The kōan commentaries’ aim is to equalize opposites fully and flexibly by maneuvering through each side of the equation without attachment or bias from the standpoint of trans-causality beyond dichotomization. According to Zenkei Shibayama’s modern commentary on the *Wu-men-kuan*: “ ‘When ‘not falling’ and ‘not ignoring’ [or ‘not obscuring’] are both transcended and wiped away, you can for the first time yourself . . . get hold of the real significance of this kōan. . . . What I want you to know is that Zen is alive and active in quite another sphere where it makes free use of both ‘not falling’ and ‘not ignoring.’ ”⁶⁹ The commentaries avoid endorsing a naive or reductionist sense of oneness so that multiplicity is eclipsed by the freedom to shift stances in a provisional fashion that continually overcomes limitations caused by fixed habits of the mind. Thus it may be misleading to compare the traditional commentaries to the modern logical formulation of Nishida Kitarō’s notion of *zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu* 絶対矛盾的自己同一 (absolute contradictory self-identity) which equates all opposites.⁷⁰ For example, an attachment to the not-obscuring view of causality is challenged by the first part of the *Wu-men-kuan* verse, “ ‘Not falling, not obscuring: /Two sides of the same coin [which can also be read as “ ‘Odd and even are on

⁶⁷ *SH* II:231–32.

⁶⁸ From the *Hyakunijussoku* 百二十則, as cited in Kraft, *Eloquent Zen*, p. 116, originally in Hirano Sōjō, *Daitō Zen no tankyū* (Kyōiku shinchōsha), p. 61.

⁶⁹ Shibayama, *Zen Comments on the Mumonkan*, p. 39.

⁷⁰ This comparison is suggested by Akizuki Ryōmin, *Zen mondō*, p. 131.

one die’],’ and an attachment to the not-falling view of non-causality is overcome by the second half of the verse, ‘Not obscuring, not falling: /A thousand entanglements, ten thousand entanglements!’⁷¹ Similarly, the introductory section of the *Ts’ung-jung lu* eliminates a fixation on the correctness of not-obscuring by asserting that ‘if you swallow just one drop of fox drool, it cannot be spit out for thirty years.’⁷² Another example of Sung poetry highlights the paradoxical relativity of opposite views by reversing their sequence in the first and third lines — a feature seen in numerous verse commentaries — and suggesting a transcendence of the debate in the last two lines:⁷³

Not obscuring and not falling,
Did the old man make a great mistake?
Not falling and not obscuring,
This is obviously correct.
I explain this again to all of you,
Do you understand it now, or not?
A green mountain rising above the field,
A pilgrim traveling even beyond the mountain.

In addition, in the *Wu-men-kuan* the affirmation and denial of causality as well as of the fox and human existences are ultimately equalized, for the monk is said to have experienced his fox incarnations as a joyful blessing: ‘If you can see this with a single eye [of insight] you will understand how the former head of Pai-chang monastery cultivated his five hundred incarnations.’⁷⁴

However, the issue of why Pai-chang could be considered to cultivate his fox lives raises an important question about the ethical implications of karma that is also not directly addressed or resolved in the commentaries. One possibility is that the former Pai-chang transfigured as a bodhisattva-like mission, but this conflicts with the statement that he has been punished. On the other hand, the suggestion that he valued his fox lives, even if expressed in a tongue-in-cheek fashion, may be effective in highlighting paradox-

⁷¹ *T* 48:293b.

⁷² *T* 48:231c.

⁷³ *HTC*: 115:113–14.

⁷⁴ *T* 48:293b.

ical nonduality yet problematic from the standpoint of morality. If causality contains its own transcendence or already encompasses non-causality, as the majority of commentaries suggest, where is the imperative to follow the Buddhist precepts as a path of moral purification? Furthermore, is there not an antinomian implication, or the beginning of a slippery slope leading to misbehavior, in that the equality of causality and non-causality eventually results in a privileging of the not-falling standpoint? Once this standpoint takes priority, one could be led either to the path of Buddha or to its opposite, the path of Mara, which is paradoxically identified with Buddha, as suggested in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* passage, “If the bodhisattva treads the wrong ways he enters the Buddha path,” or in Ikkyū’s famous saying that it is more difficult to enter the realm of Mara than the realm of Buddha.⁷⁵ An aphorism from the *Lin-chi lu* (a recorded sayings text that does not contain commentary on the kōan) contrasts with the antinomian tendency and seems to assert the priority of the not-obscuring view in a way that accords with the literal reading: “if [a seeker] cannot distinguish Mara from Buddha, then he has only left one home to enter another. He may be dubbed a karma-creating sentient being, but he cannot be called a true renouncer of home.”⁷⁶ This warns of the danger in the Zen paradoxical view which “unconsciously lapses into Mara in the name of Buddha and yet believes itself to be practicing Buddha.”⁷⁷

A refutation of the antinomian tendency is most forcefully seen in Dōgen’s later, 12-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō* text in which he rewrote several fascicles from the early, 75-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*.⁷⁸ In the commentary on the kōan in “Daishugyō,” Dōgen characteristically argues for

⁷⁵ Charles Luk, trans., *The Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1972), p. 81. Concerning Ikkyū, his poetry alluding to the “fox kōan” also “speaks of his fear that his own Zen [marked by licentious behavior] was one that ignored karma,” according to Sonja Arntzen, trans., *Ikkyū and the Crazy Cloud Anthology: A Zen Poet of Medieval Japan* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1986), p. 34.

⁷⁶ RR, p. 52; Sasaki, *The Recorded Sayings of Ch’an Master Lin-chi*, p. 12.

⁷⁷ Masao Abe, *A Study of Dōgen: His Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Steven Heine (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), p. 220.

⁷⁸ “Daishugyō,” first written in 1244, no. 68 in the 75-fascicle text, was apparently rewritten as “Jinshin Inga,” compiled by Ejō in 1255, no. 7 in the 12-fascicle text (no. 26 in the 28-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō* text with “Daishugyō” no. 17). See Kagamishima Genryū and Suzuki Kakuzen 鈴木格禪, eds., *Jūnikanbon Shōbōgenzō no shomondai* 十二卷本「正法眼蔵」の諸問題 (Daizō shuppan, 1991).

the enlightened status of all parties involved at every stage of their interaction. He thus asserts that the fox/monk spoke the truth in his original denial of causality and that these words are of equal value to the current Pai-chang's maintaining the importance of not obscuring causality. But in Dōgen's later interpretation in the "Jinshin inga" fascicle, this paradoxical view is not satisfactory. Both *Shōbōgenzō* fascicles at least on the surface refute the elements of superstition and supernaturalism which may distract from a single-minded pursuit of enlightenment. Yet, whereas "Daishugyō" refuses to criticize the old monk's view of not-falling, "Jinshin inga" repudiates the position Dōgen embraced a decade before. In the later work he asserts emphatically that only not-obscuring is accurate and that not-falling, which is equal to the denial of causality, must be mistaken: "The single greatest limitation of the monks of Sung China today is that they do not realize that not falling into causality' is a false teaching."⁷⁹

In "Jinshin inga," Dōgen also criticizes the verse commentaries of three of his predecessors, Hung-chih (who collected the kōans in the *Ts'ung-jung lu*), Yüan-wu (commentator of the *Pi-yen lu* kōans collected by Hsüeh-tou), and Ta-hui (collector of the *Cheng-fa yen-tsang*) — all towering figures in the Sung era kōan tradition — for their lack of a genuinely dynamic approach to causality.⁸⁰ The verse by Hung-chih cited above, "To talk about not falling into or not obscuring causality / Is to remain captive to the discriminating mind," according to Dōgen, overemphasizes the relativity of causality and non-causality and has a nihilistic implication. Yüan-wu's verse, "For nothing can escape from the perfect mirror of causality / Which is as vast and universal as the sky," seems better in stressing that "nothing can escape . . . causality," but even this has traces of denying cause-and-effect in its eternalistic association of causality with the emptiness of "sky." Finally, Ta-hui's verse, "Not falling into and not obscuring causality / Are as closely related as stone to earth," in Dōgen's view, lapses into the standpoint of denying causality.

For the later Dōgen, the real problem is not simply a matter of

⁷⁹ SH II:433. The 92-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō* combines the 75-fascicle and 12-fascicle editions with five additional fascicles.

⁸⁰ SH II:435–37.

identifying polarities or of shifting the conclusion from one side to the other, but of equalizing them in such a way that the moral imperative of karmic causality is highlighted rather than concealed. If the morality of cause-and-effect is suppressed because it is overly influenced by an emphasis on transcendence, then a genuine state of non-causality which is never free from causality cannot be attained. Dōgen attempts to resolve this dilemma by asserting in “Jinshin inga” that “the law of causality (*inga*) is clear and impersonal (or selfless)” (*watakushi nashi*). That is, the freedom of non-causality can be attained only through the continuing process of purification perfected within the realm of causality. From this perspective, causality functions in an impersonal manner regardless of whether it is accepted or rejected, or affirmed or denied by particular persons. Thus, according to Dōgen’s standpoint of “deep faith in causality” (*jinshin inga*), Shibayama’s argument mentioned above about the “free use” of both subjection to and independence from causality seems to misrepresent enlightenment, which must be based on a wholehearted acceptance of selfless karma.

A literal reading of the kōan associates the image of the fox with the misconception of not-falling, but in the paradoxical view, as Daitō’s brief verse above suggests, the fox reflects an attachment to either not-falling or not-obscuring. Why does the late Dōgen reassert the literal view, and what are the implications for the use of fox imagery? There are two main interpretations. According to the majority of Dōgen scholars, the “Jinshin inga” and other fascicles in the 12-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō* were written for novices who could not appreciate the subtlety of the paradoxical view expressed in the 75-fascicle text.⁸¹ However, according to scholars in the recent methodology known as Critical Buddhism (*hihan bukkō* 批判仏教), especially Hakamaya Noriaki, the 12-fascicle text expresses a bold refutation of any trace of animism that the paradoxical view still allows.⁸²

⁸¹ Kawamura Kōdo 河村孝道, “Jūnikanbon o meguru shosetsu” 十二巻本をめぐる諸説, in *Budda kara Dōgen e* 仏から道元へ, ed. Nara Yasuaki 奈良康明 (Tōkyō shoseki, 1992), p. 231.

⁸² Hakamaya Noriaki, *Hihan Bukkyō* 批判仏教 (Daizō shuppan, 1989); and Matsumoto Shirō 松本史朗, “Jinshin inga ni tsuite: Dōgen no shisō ni kansuru shiken 深信因果について—道元の思想に関する私見,” in *Jūnikanbon Shōbōgenzō no shomondai*, pp. 199–247. See also Steven Heine, “Critical Buddhism (*Hihan Bukkyō*) and the Debate Concerning the 75-Fascicle and 12-Fascicle *Shōbōgenzō* Texts,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 21.1 (1994): 37–72.

Yet it seems that both interpretations are reluctant to acknowledge the influence of popular religiosity on Dōgen's thought.

A close reading of the 12-fascicle text indicates that both camps — the majority group and Hakamaya — overlook the interface of Zen texts and folk Buddhist literary genres, thereby reaching a conclusion that is overly clear-cut and one-sided. Although Dōgen frequently criticizes animistic practices in the 12-fascicle text in favor of a literal view of karma that seems consistent with the approach expressed in Pali sources, at the same time he often appeals to another early Buddhist source, the mythological, supernatural *jātaka* tales which influenced *setsuwa* literature, in order to illustrate his view of the inviolability of karmic retribution and the possibilities for reversing negative karma through the act of repentance. For example, Dōgen cites anecdotes which probably derive from the *Abhidharma-Mahāvibhāṣā* about a eunuch who regains his potency and a prostitute who is redeemed when as a joke she touches a Buddhist robe for a moment.⁸³ The strict affirmation of causality is somewhat ironically based on an acceptance of supernaturalism in a text that also rejects it. It is plausible that Dōgen was reacting to the impact of the conception of karma in the *setsuwa* genre, which may also have influenced his early ambiguity in “Daishugyō” about the propriety of the funeral ceremony. The main point here is that Dōgen was not so much interested in a literal reading of the *kōan* or of supernatural beliefs but in overcoming the antinomian view and restoring the moral implications of karma. This was achieved by touching base with the undiscussed background of fox imagery as a symbol of illusion — neither explicitly endorsed nor refuted — underlying any apparent ambivalence in his early and later interpretations.

FOX AS A POPULAR RELIGIOUS SYMBOL OF BIVALENCY

Before analyzing folk religious elements in the “fox *kōan*,” it is necessary to discuss how many *kōans* share a discursive arena with morality tale literature in that both genres reflect an encounter with

⁸³ T 27:592a–93b.

supernaturalism that determines their spiritual message. However, while the major kōan commentaries deal to a large extent with philosophical arguments, often in at least indirect competition with Taoist metaphysics and Neo-Confucian ethics, *setsuwa* literature represents a form of preaching that absorbs and refashions popular religiosity in terms of the doctrine of the immediate retribution of good and evil (C. *hsien-pao shan-o*, J. *genpō zen'aku* 現報善惡).⁸⁴ The concrete, inescapable effects of causality are played out in narratives about the release of karmic turmoil based on themes of temptation, lust, greed, ambition, betrayal, delusion, and revenge, as well as repentance and compassion. The tales teach lessons that drive home the need to avoid succumbing to the foibles of deceit, arrogance, and false pretense by cultivating an attitude of acceptance and gratefulness for one's lot in life. People are urged not to give in to the temptation to overstep the bounds of fate and circumstance symbolized by the fox's transfiguration, but instead to identify sympathetically with the plight of family and friends and to heed their pleas.⁸⁵

For many interpreters kōans based on self-emancipation and *fei-jen* literature based on divine intercession cannot be juxtaposed as interacting and overlapping discourses, for there is simply an epistemological gap which makes them distant and unrelated. William LaFleur's chapter "In and Out of the Rokudō" in *The Karma of Words* is one of the few studies to discuss the "fox kōan" directly in the context of morality tales, particularly the *Nihon ryōiki*. LaFleur concludes that popular morality operates through the paradigms of the infiltration of deities into the world and the transcendence (or rebirth) of believers in the Pure Land. Kōans — here LaFleur follows the paradoxical model of interpretation — are an example of the copenetration of ultimate and phenomenal realms or,

⁸⁴ Kyoko Motomichi Nakamura, *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition: The Nihon ryōiki of the Monk Kyōkai* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 33; the *hsien* (J. *gen*) in *hsien-pao* (J. *genpō*) refers to retribution in the immediate or present life, but the principle also encompasses karmic effects in the three tenses including the next life and future lives.

⁸⁵ Kiyoshi Nozaki, *Kitsune: Japan's Fox of Mystery, Romance and Humor* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1961), p. 21.

further, a sustained process of ludization in which everything, including moral judgments, is conditioned, relative, and nonhierarchical.⁸⁶ Therefore, the genres represent separate, parallel, but incompatible paradigms. However, this argument fails to see that both kōans and morality tales are part of the “move to assimilate shamanic symbols . . . in which the threat of defilement is domesticated and assimilated into the structure of the sacred.”⁸⁷ The genres interpret the encounter with the supernatural from opposite though complementary standpoints. Kōans store supernaturalism in a muted structure while the main structure forefronts a paradoxical perspective of critical transcendence collapsing all dualities. Morality tales are the inversion of this, forefronting supernaturalism as the main structure while harboring a demythological, allegorical level of symbolism based on the bivalency of fox imagery beyond literal claims of divine intervention.

The “fox kōan” is but one of numerous examples in the *Wu-men-kuan* and other collections in which key aspects of popular religiosity, including pilgrimages to cultic sites, shamanistic trance and bilocation, and the banishing of demons and converting of indigenous gods through the use of miraculous symbols and icons, form a discursive context alluded to or evoked, though they are often at the same time critiqued and scorned.⁸⁸ Although the commentaries generally tried to distance themselves from the mythological roots of Zen discourse by defusing or reorienting any focus on the reality or unreality of folk beliefs in favor of the rhetoric of abbreviation and iconoclasm, in many kōan cases supernatural themes provide a necessary narrative background. A prominent example in the *Wu-men-kuan* is case no. 35 which reads simply, “Master Wu-tsu said,

⁸⁶ William R. LaFleur, *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 56–57, citing the “fox kōan” as a prime example of “ludization.”

⁸⁷ Michele Marra, *Representations of Power: The Literary Politics of Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), p. 95; see also Janet Goodwin, *Alms and Vagabonds: Buddhist Temples and Popular Patronage in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), p. 126.

⁸⁸ See William F. Powell, trans., *The Record of Tung-shan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), pp. 5–6 on the rustic, colloquial style of recorded sayings in contrast to the refined, baroque style of “transmission of the lamp” histories. An interesting aspect of this is the way many kōans lend themselves to a “monogatari-ization” as in Akizuki, *Zen mondō*.

‘Ch’ien and her soul are separated. Which one is the true soul?’ ” This case appears to be dealing with the philosophical topic of non-duality: how can a person be divided into component parts, such as body and soul, when she constitutes an indivisible collective unity? Yet, the case is just as clearly based on a famous T’ang legend recorded in the *Li-hun chi* 離魂記 (J. *Rikonki*), expressing the theme of duty versus passion (which later became such an important influence on Tokugawa literature).⁸⁹ The folktale uses supernatural elements such as a spirit journey and bilocation in the story of a young woman who appears to her parents, who have resisted her wedding plans, to be sick and lifeless when she is separated for five years from the man she loves. Yet the “other Ch’ien” has run off with her lover and spent the time in a secret marriage. When she returns home out of a sense of responsibility for her family, Ch’ien is reunited with her tormented soul that was manifested in a body lying motionless in bed the entire time of her flight. Everyone, now purged of feelings of guilt and deception, is able to experience a sense of harmony and fulfilled responsibilities.

A key strategy of a number of kōans is the transmutation from the standpoint of critical transcendence of the theme of “the veneration of the accomplished meditator — the great ascetic, sunk in profound *samādhi* or wielding the psychic powers of *dhyāna*,”⁹⁰ which

⁸⁹ The *Li-hun chi* is discussed in Akizuki, *Mumonkan o yomu* 無門関を読む (Tōsho insatsu, 1990), pp. 15–16; Hirata, *Mumonkan*, pp. 130–31; and Shibayama, *Zen Comments on the Mumonkan*, pp. 253–54. To show that the “fox kōan” is but one of many cases in which mythical themes figure prominently, I will cite several more instances although a full analysis lies beyond the scope of this paper: a case dealing with a woman who cannot be roused from deep trance even by hundreds and thousands of manifestations of Mañjuśrī until a lowly bodhisattva liberates her; a case containing the narrative of Hui-neng who, after being pursued in his flight from the monastery, casts down his robe, symbolizing faith, which proves to be “immovable as a mountain,” and who asks the stunned pursuer one of Zen’s most famous demythological utterances, “What is your original face?”; a case in which a monk experiences a revelatory dream of being called upon to give a spontaneous dharma-talk before Maitreya, the future buddha; and two cases on Chao-chou’s extrasensory mental faculties — one in which he enters a “dharma contest” with two hermits, and the other in which he “sees through” an old woman who has been successfully challenging Zen monks entering the cultic center at the foot of Mt. Wu-t’ai-shan and who may represent a shamaness. These examples beginning with the story of Ch’ien are *Wu-men-kuan* case nos. 35, 42, 11, 31, 25, 23, or *T* 48:297b, 298a–b, 294b, 297a, 296a, 295c, respectively; see also *Ts’ung-jung lu* no. 10 (*T* 48:233a–c), which is very close to *Wu-men-kuan* no. 31, and nos. 24 (*T* 48:242c–243b) and 59 (*T* 48:264a–c), both of which deal with snake deities, among others.

⁹⁰ Carl Bielefeldt, *Dōgen’s Manuals of Zen Meditation* (Berkeley: University of California

was also a longstanding morality tale topos. An example of this is “Nan-chüan meets the earth-deity.”⁹¹ The background is the notion found throughout Zen hagiographical literature of the encounter between a master and local spirits, celestial beings, or demons who have jurisdiction over a particular domain.⁹² Prior to attaining full realization the master-to-be makes and receives offerings from the gods, but once perfected he escapes from ever being seen or known by the other-worldly entities because his supranormal power based on meditation (C. *shen-t’ung*, J. *jinzū* 神通, literally “divine penetration,” Skt. *abhijñā*) surpasses the powers deriving from their *fei-jen* status. If the attained master is subsequently spotted, however, it is taken as a sign of failure highlighting the need to continue his training and to appease the deity. According to the *kōan*, Nan-chüan is surprised as he enters a vegetable patch, where he usually goes unnoticed, when he is greeted by a novice who says that the field god had notified him of the master’s imminent arrival. Nan-chüan now must make an offering to the deity before resuming his discipline.⁹³

The key to understanding the discursive function of the case lies in the context in which it is cited and interpreted. For example, when used in transmission of the lamp texts such as the *Ching-te chuan-teng lu*, the original source of the anecdote, it contributes to the genealogy of the master. The case is also mentioned in Dōgen’s “Gyōji” fascicle (part I), the closest his *Shōbōgenzō* writings come to the transmission text genre, as he retells his lineal history in light of the doctrine of “sustained [zazen] practice” (*gyōji* 行持) which has

Press, 1988), p. 71.

⁹¹ *SH* I:180; also in *Mana Shōbōgenzō* no. 18 (in *goi sakuin*, p. 5), and *Eihei kōroku* 9.63 (pp. 381–82). There is also a story of Ma-tsu and the earth-spirit in *Baso* [C. Ma-tsu] *goroku* 馬祖語錄, ed. Iriya Yoshitaka (Kyoto: Zen bunka kenkyūjō), pp. 120–29.

⁹² Koichi Shinohara, “Buddhist Precepts in Medieval Chinese Biographies of Monks,” in *Buddhist Behavioral Codes and the Modern World*, eds. Charles Wei-hsun Fu and Sandra A. Wawrytko (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 75–94; Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), pp. 145–46; and Robert H. Sharf, “The Idolization of Enlightenment: On the Mummification of Ch’an Masters in Medieval China,” *History of Religions* (1992): 8–9.

⁹³ The main Zen monastic code, the *Ch’an-yüan ch’ing-kuei*, refers to the earth-deity hall *t’u-ti-tang* (J. *dojido*), in Kagamishima, et al., *Yakuchū Zen’en shingi*, pp. 76, 77, 256. See also T. Griffith Foulk, “Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice in Sung Ch’an Buddhism,” pp. 177–78.

the spiritual power to support buddhas and sentient beings, heaven and earth, self and other. Early in the fascicle, Dōgen refers to masters Ching-ching and I-chang as being notable because they cannot be perceived by the native gods. Then he contrasts Nan-chüan, who has been spotted, with Hung-chih, before whom a local deity is literally stopped in its tracks as its feet will not budge (recalling the “immovable robe” in the legend of Hui-neng’s escape). On the one hand, Dōgen seems to be scoring a sectarian point on behalf of Hung-chih, a predecessor of his mentor Ju-ching, while denigrating a master from a rival Rinzaï lineage. Up to this stage, Dōgen is operating within, though at the same time refashioning, the standard mythological framework. But he then moves on to demythology by commenting that the real meaning of being seen or not seen lies not in supernatural power in the literal sense but in the perpetuation of authentic discipline. This requires an ongoing process of detachment from or the casting off of conventional pursuits. Yet Dōgen’s demythological turn reveals an assumption of the efficacy of the indigenous spirit world.

Whereas kōans transmute supernaturalism from a transcendental standpoint, morality tales generate a “polarity pattern” based on the creative tension between delusion and redemption.⁹⁴ It appears that in the pre-Buddhist view of supernatural beings representing a combination of nearly indistinguishable angelic/benevolent/self-sacrificing and demonic/chaotic/destructive elements, there is no clear moral judgment.⁹⁵ These beings tend to exact revenge rather than retribution and foster gratification instead of spiritual fulfillment. Buddhist morality literature draws on the bivalent imagery of foxes and snakes as deities or demons, protectors or cunning opponents, to create a transition from a horizontal, nonevaluative or amoral twofoldness of guardianship and demonism to a vertical, evaluative or moral contrast of the forces of compassion (Buddha) and deception (Mara). Whatever is threatening, disorderly, disruptive, and chaotic gets translated into bad karma. Buddhism claims that its deities are effective in performing exorcisms because they

⁹⁴ Robert C. Ellwood, *Introducing Religion: From Inside and Outside* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983), p. 19.

⁹⁵ Blake Morgan Young, *Ueda Akinari* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982), p. 61.

have a universal power that overcomes the fragmentized abilities of non-syncretized spirits. Yet the appropriation of supernaturalism is more complex than that because animals which are demons in one context can also function as compassionate Buddhist gods. While opposite forces are generally held apart in any particular tale, they also shift roles and reverse positions when the literature is surveyed as a whole. In some morality tales involving clerics, Mara-like foxes seduce virtuous priests, or priests who are overly virtuous are suspected of being foxes in disguise. In other tales, bodhisattvas take the form of foxes which function as catalysts leading people to the verge of a breakthrough.⁹⁶ The wild fox is at once assimilated and stigmatized, a bivalent view captured from a different angle in Zen's anti-supernatural rhetoric and its inversion. For example, foxes associated with Inari shrines that are often amalgamated with Buddhist and Zen deities can be used to exorcise demons, but foxes associated with the Izumo shrine are excluded from this category and their sorcery must be exorcized by other foxes charged with sacred powers.⁹⁷

An illustration of how supernaturalism becomes a symbol of an interior struggle within the structure of the polarity pattern is the film *Ugetsu*, a postwar refashioning by director Kenji Mizoguchi of Tokugawa era didactic tales by Ueda Akinari that were influenced in turn by a variety of medieval Chinese and Japanese folklore collections.⁹⁸ At the beginning of the narrative, Genjuro, a potter, and his brother-in-law Tobei decide to pursue their fortune in the city during wartime, despite the warnings of their wives and the village-master that they stick to their own trade and not overstep their talents or fate. While they heedlessly venture off in pursuit of fame and fortune, their wives suffer miserably without their love and pro-

⁹⁶ Edward Kamens, trans., *The Three Jewels: A Study and Translation of Minamoto Tamenori's Sanbōe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), p. 285, and cited in several texts including *Fa-yuan chu-lin* (J. *Hōen shūrin*, T 53:882c) probably borrowed from *Wei-ts'eng-yu yin-yuan ching* (J. *Mizōu innengyō*, T 17:577c), and alluded to in *Mo-ho chih-kuan* (T 46:45b); and also cited in Dōgen's "Kie Buppōsōbō" fascicle of the 12-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*, SH II:427–29.

⁹⁷ The conflict between Inari and Izumo seems to recall a mythic struggle in early Japanese mythology between Amaterasu, a Yamato deity, and her chaotic brother Susano, apparently a stigmatized Izumo deity.

⁹⁸ Ueda Akinari, *Ugetsu Monogatari: Tales of Moonlight and Rain*, trans. Leon Zolbrod (Tuttle, 1977), pp. 30–32, and Appendix 4 and 5.

tection. Tobei becomes a famous samurai after stealing the severed head of an enemy chieftain, but in his absence his wife is raped and when he finally returns home he finds that she has had to become a prostitute to support herself. The potter becomes wealthy, or so it seems, and he later learns that his wife has been brutally attacked and killed while he was away.

Prior to the tragedy, Genjuro fantasizes about buying his wife an expensive kimono with his new fortune; she says she loves the clothes he has given her not for their fineness but for the love they reflect. Just as he is envisioning his wife in the new garment, he becomes entranced and seduced by a beautiful ghost — according to one of the stories in *Ugetsu monogatari* it is a trickster fox — whose identity is fully concealed and who demands his devotion, as in a famous Kuniyoshi woodblock print.⁹⁹ “I wouldn’t care,” he declares in the midst of his passion while living in her luxurious mansion, “if you were a demon! I will not let you go! I never imagined such pleasures existed! This is divine! It is paradise!” However, when Genjuro goes to town to buy a gift for his ghost-bride, a Buddhist priest seeing him walk down the street immediately recognizes his ailment and, reminding him of his familial obligations, provides a protection by painting Sanskrit letters in the esoteric Siddham script on his body while *sūtras* are chanted in the background. The potter

⁹⁹ The film seems to be based on two, or perhaps three, stories in the collection of nine tales in five volumes dealing with supernatural foxes, ghosts, and spells in a highly moralistic context. One main influence is “The House Amid the Thickets” (“Asaji ga yado”), in which a man leaves home to seek his fortune and returns after seven years pass “as in a dream” to find that his wife had died, yet “bewitched by a fox” he thinks at first he finds her and the house intact. When he recognizes that his wife is a ghost and that desolation has overtaken his former home, foxes and badgers appear in the area. Filled with contrition he confesses his guilt to his grandfather. Another influence is “The Caldron of Kibitsu” (“Kibitsu no Kama”), in which a man who is haunted by the ghost of the wife he deserted for a beautiful mistress is at one point shocked back to his senses by the barking of a dog — according to fox lore beginning with *Jenshi chuan*, dogs are the one natural enemy of fox spirits. The wife later appears in the form of a serpent, and he is taken to a Buddhist soothsayer/diviner who performs an exorcism by writing Sanskrit spells over his entire body and warning him to stay pure. But as the man does not offer a full confession of his sin, he is eventually tortured and devoured by the ghost. The third story is “The Lust of the White Serpent” (“Jasei no in”), in which a man is tormented by a serpent which due to his lack of courage causes him to do vile things, but in this case there is a successful exorcism and the animal form of the demon is exposed and destroyed. Also, a print by Utagawa Kuniyoshi which shows the transfiguration into a vixen while the vulpine source remains hidden from the view of the bewitched victim can be found in Juliet Piggot, *Japanese Mythology*, p. 23.

returns for the last time to the mansion which is only revealed in its true form, as in many early Chinese stories, as a burned-out hovel after the ghost becomes frightened and dissolves. Genjuro then journeys home to seek out his wife and succumbs to one last delusion that she is still alive and waiting for him. When he realizes that she has been killed during his illusory dalliance he suffers an intolerable grief mollified only by the calming voice of his wife's spirit that encourages his everyday labors while he cares for his son alongside the similarly chastened Tobei and his wife.

When morality tales are interpreted for their multifaceted literary symbolism rather than taken literally or seen as truncated theological tracts that merely assert the efficacy of magic, they have a distinct communicative power deriving from a sophisticated theoretical base on the nature of and possibilities for overcoming human frailty and folly that converges with the metaphysics of karma.¹⁰⁰ The *setsuwa* philosophy can be referred to as an "illusionary realism" because the chimerical is more real than what is apprehended with the senses.¹⁰¹ There is a Kafkaesque quality in that the ultimate aim is to eliminate illusion, but the hallucinatory events are necessarily portrayed at a key point in the narratives in realistic language, even while accompanied by supernatural occurrences. This establishes a convergence of perception and external reality, akin to Yogācāra philosophy of "idealism," so that when the hero is in the depths of illusion, such as the potter's ghostly mansion, that is just what is depicted. The reality of illusion, or the literal depiction of chimera, equals the illusion of reality, or the character's inability to

¹⁰⁰ There is also sometimes a sophisticated philosophical perspective expressed in commentaries on fox folktales as in the following passage which outdoes Chuang Tzu on the meaning of a story in the *Liao-chai chih-i* collection known as "A Fox Dream": "So he wasn't dreaming, and yet it was a dream; he was dreaming, and yet it wasn't a dream. How was it not a dream? How was it *not* not a dream? How was it *not* not not a dream?" In Judith T. Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 179.

¹⁰¹ I am using this term in a sense parallel to the "magical realism" of contemporary Latin American fiction, especially the works of Gabriel Marquez, but also to reflect the distinctive externalization of emotional states in East Asian art such as Chinese ink paintings and the Noh chorus; see also Keiko McDonald, ed., *Ugetsu: Kenji Mizoguchi, director* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993), p. 11; and Kelsey, *Konjaku Monogatari-shū*, p. 155. The *Konjaku* collection is in *NKBT*, vols. 24–26.

resist the temptation of his or her fantasies. The power of animals to transfigure and bewitch functions as a symbol of attachments and misdeeds, for it never affects people who are not currently suffering from these problems. In *Ugetsu* the ghost is a mirror image of how the potter's rather understandable yearnings have resulted in lust, greed, and indifference to his family. In *Konjaku* tales, "transformation into a snake was that which happened to individuals who valued [things of this world] too highly. But it posed no threat to innocent bystanders. It merely lurked behind the scenes as the symbol of the evil inside us all. Interestingly, it was mostly Buddhist monks and women who needed to fear the snake within themselves."¹⁰² Thus, an exorcism of the interior snake or fox is not merely an external ritual but functions as a thorn to remove a thorn, or a poison to counteract poison — a characterization often applied to the function of kōans. The exorcism is based on the power that exists within people to recognize and come to terms with their shame, and it symbolizes a consequent sense of revulsion and profound change of heart.

The main moral implication is that being enraptured by illusion must be taken to its logical extreme or "bottoming-out" stage — as in the potter's hopeless, delirious passion — as a necessary emotional turning point before attaining transformation. In contrast to some kōan commentaries in which correct understanding alone is sufficient for attaining liberation, morality tales require a full cycle of karmic suffering and emancipation.¹⁰³ Undergoing bewitchment eventually results in the drama of self-realization that philosophy alone cannot express. The *setsuwa* approach resembles practices in esoteric Buddhism in which the experiences of suffering, hell, and often symbolic death are necessary for spiritual rebirth.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² W. Michael Kelsey, "Salvation of the Snake, the Snake of Salvation: Buddhist-Shinto Conflict and Resolution," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 8.1-2 (1981): 110.

¹⁰³ On the role of thinking in the kōan, according to Bassui, "Though [Buddhas and ordinary people] are not separated by as much as the width of a hair, because of the one mistaken thought — 'I am ordinary' — they think that enlightenment is difficult to realize," in *Mud and Water: A Collection of Talks by the Zen Master Bassui*, trans. Arthur Braverman (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1988), p. 28. On the other hand, Bankei, when questioned by a monk struggling with the "fox kōan" responds, "I don't make people here waste their time on worthless old documents like that," in Norman Waddell, trans., *The Unborn: The Life and Teaching of Zen Master Bankei, 1622-1693* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), p. 70.

¹⁰⁴ Blacker, *Catalpa Bow*, pp. 208-34.

Cycle of Appearance and Disappearance

The interesection of philosophical paradoxicality and folk religious bivalency in the “fox kōan” is reflected in the rhythm of the appearance/disappearance of the *fei-jen* which coincides with the stages in the former Pai-chang’s spiritual progression from the deluded to the liberated side of the polarity pattern. A tale from the *Konjaku monogatari* collection (no. 16.17) illustrates the rhythmic structure.¹⁰⁵ Yoshifuji, whose wife has gone for a trip to the capital, is seduced by a beautiful woman under the approving eye of her father who says that he “‘was always meant to come here.’” The couple pledge their eternal love, have a child together, live in her mansion, and Yoshifuji feels that he has not a care in the world. His brothers, worried at home, call upon Kannon for help in finding him. Suddenly a man with a stick, a messenger of the Buddhist deity, arrives at his new home, scares everyone in the household away, and Yoshifuji crawls out from the storehouse under his old house. He starts to show off his new son to his older boy, declaring the youngster to be his true heir, but there is in reality no one with him. After a servant finds lots of foxes under the storehouse, it turns out that Yoshifuji had been tricked into marrying a vixen. A yin-yang diviner is called upon to perform an exorcism and eventually he comes to his senses. “The thirteen days he had spent under the storehouse had seemed to him like thirteen years, and the few inches of clearance between the ground and the floor of the building had looked to him like a stately home. The foxes had done all this.” In a similar vein but featuring a Buddhist priest in a tale from the *Otogizōshi* collection, an old priest succumbs to a fox bewitchment, thinking that he has lived with a beautiful woman for seven years in a large mansion with a big gate. When Jizō appears in the form of a young priest carrying a staff, the old priest feels that he has awoken from a long dream. A fox appears as the old priest realizes, “The mansion, the splendid large dwelling house with a big gate was gone! The fine bamboo-blinds and mats were now changed into scraps of straw-mats!’”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Royall Tyler, trans., *Japanese Tales* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), p. 118; *NKBT* 24:56–58.

¹⁰⁶ Nozaki, *Kitsune*, p. 164.

The main principle underlying the cycle is that foxes at first remain invisible, hiding themselves behind their transfigured pose, and it is only “when a supernatural creature has conceded defeat, [that] it will show its true form.”¹⁰⁷ In a *Konjaku* tale (27.5), for example, when a creature that had been frightening people was caught it confessed, “I am a water spirit,” and then it disappeared, never to be heard from again.¹⁰⁸ In the case of Yoshifuji, foxes are at first nowhere in evidence, but they appear as soon as his illusory world starts dissolving due to the exorcism. In the kōan the monk says that he is a fox but he appears as a man who is only seen by Pai-chang. The other monks are told a funeral will be taking place but they are surprised because they do not know of the *fei-jen*’s existence and no one else has been sick in the infirmary. This cognitive gap is recognized by Dōgen’s “Daishugyō” commentary when he questions the propriety of granting a ceremony to a being whose human, let alone Buddhist, status has not been verified. When the current Pai-chang uncovers the fox corpse on the far side of the mountain, its death and burial represent the demise of the former Pai-chang’s illusion.

It is possible to reconstruct five stages of appearance/disappearance that symbolize the sequence of self-realization taking place in the kōan: possession, confession, exorcism, renunciation, and repentance. The first stage is the transfiguration that represents an experience of liminality or the crossing over into the realm of bivalency. This state can take place in one of two directions: either a person is changed into a fox as punishment or as a bodhisattva’s compassionate choice, or a fox anthropomorphizes. Regardless of the direction of the shapeshifting, the meaning is that the more deep-seated the delusion the more convincing or frightening is the status of the apparition. In the kōan the first stage applies to the old monk who, as a *fei-jen* due to karmic retribution, attends the sermons each day with the congregation, disguised as his former self.

The next two stages refer to the way delusions as the root-cause of the transfiguration are exposed and brought to a level of self-awareness leading to their elimination through ritual purification. In

¹⁰⁷ Masato Mori, “*Konjaku Monogatari-shū*: Supernatural Creatures and Order,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 9.2-3 (1982): 165. *Jenshi chuan* has a similar sequence.

¹⁰⁸ *NKBT* 25:83-84.

setsuwa tales, the *kuai* being “appears only *after* the man has acknowledged his past evil and begged for compassion in the life to come . . . It is only when he has taken the two steps of confession and repudiation of past evils that he can be saved.”¹⁰⁹ In the *kōan*, the old monk who gives no outward sign of being a fox explains his true identity, confesses the wrongdoing that caused it, and asks for and receives assistance from the current Pai-chang, all before the fox body becomes perceptible as a corpse once he has been released from his punishment. This requires two steps. The first is confession, or the former Pai-chang’s recognition and acknowledgment of his attachments and misdeeds.

The next step (or third stage) is the exorcism, or the use of an appropriate gesture or utterance to complete the eradication of the invading spirit and the elimination of defilement. Buddhist exorcisms can be homeopathic or non-homeopathic, ecstatic or enstatic. *Ugetsu*, like the case of Sōtō priest Gennō, is an example of non-homeopathic exorcism because the use of Sanskrit letters evokes the foreign, universal Buddhist doctrine and creates an antipathy with the local, indigenous spirit world, whereas the Mahikari *okiyome* rite is ecstatic resulting in hysteria, convulsions, glossolalia, and so on. However, many Buddhist exorcisms are homeopathic and enstatic, as in the use of dialogue to communicate with and discover the needs or demands of the intruding power.¹¹⁰ The turning word in the *kōan* is an example in the latter category because the liberating power is based simply on the substitution of a single *kanji* in a four-*kanji* phrase: from *pu-lo yin-kuo* to *pu-mei yin-kuo*. The term *lo* (J. *raku*) generally has positive connotations in a Buddhist context because it implies the casting or falling off of attachments, as in Dōgen’s notion of “casting off body/mind” (C. *shen-hsin t’o-lo*, J. *shinjin-datsuraku* 身心脱落), and the term *mei* generally has negative connotations because it implies the blindness or foolishness of delusions. When the negational prefix *pu* is added, however, the connotations are reversed and *pu-mei* becomes positive as a double negation, which suggests that the exorcistic quality of the turning word touches base with paradoxical wordplay leading to sudden release as

¹⁰⁹ Kelsey, “Salvation of the Snake,” p. 109.

¹¹⁰ Blacker, *Catalpa Bow*, pp. 53–54.

emphasized in philosophical interpretations.

The ritual function of the turning word helps answer the question, Why could not the former Pai-chang, who must have understood his error and been capable of correcting it intellectually, liberate himself without the need to consult the current Pai-chang after endless transmigrations? An aspect of the polarity pattern is that, as an icon of delusion, fox imagery allows for a metaphorical distance or psychological displacement by the deluded person who can avoid direct blame or at least have a sense of shared responsibility. Exorcism in Buddhist literature and practice does not deny the role of individuality or interiority altogether but creates a neutral focal point based on the integration of external and internal, or objective and subjective factors. According to Winston Davis, the psychology of exorcism “distributes guilt and responsibility in a way that is quite foreign to Western notions. One’s misfortunes and failures need not be borne alone, since those in the spirit world share the responsibility. In other words, responsibility is partially shifted to an external cause, reducing individual guilt.”¹¹¹ In addition, Carmen Blacker observes that because of the de-emphasis on individuality, “cases of fox possession only rarely find their way into mental hospitals in Japan. The patients will prefer the drama of the therapy to be conducted in religious terms, the malady caused by a being from another plane and the cure effected by a priest initiated into the sacred life.”¹¹² Thus, the external ritualism the former Pai-chang requires can be understood as subduing rather than increasing “bad faith” in the Sartrean sense of avoiding self-responsibility to overcome one’s delusions.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Davis, *Dojo*, p. 155.

¹¹² Blacker, *Catalpa Bow*, p. 314. See Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) on the role of *praesentia* and *potentia* in exorcism in the early medieval West. On the other hand, in Japan claims of people being possessed by a fox (*kitsune-tsuki*), as well as the magical use of foxes (*kitsune-mochi*) are so frequently reported even today, especially in some regions such as Izumo or among certain population sectors, that it is considered a culture-bound psycho-spiritual disorder (*sei-shin byō* 精神病) comparable to “running amok” in Malaya or anorexia nervosa in Western countries; see Robert C. Carson, James N. Butcher, and James C. Coleman, *Abnormal Psychology*, 8th ed. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1990), p. 85. At times there seems to be a socio-political significance to reports of fox possession and fox sorcery when, for example, a particular group (i.e., nouveau riche) are targeted for stigmatization.

¹¹³ An interesting contemporary Western literary illustration of the displacement process is

The final two stages of the cycle are renunciation and repentance which have the capacity to reverse negative karma and lead to equanimity and release. In the Yoshifuji tale the foxes flee from the storehouse as he comes to his senses. Similarly, in a *Konjaku* tale (13.17) a monk during a pilgrimage takes refuge in a cave where he is frightened and recites the *Lotus Sūtra* for protection.¹¹⁴ A large snake about to devour him consequently disappears. Then, “After a pounding rain, a man comes to the cave and thanks the monk, telling him that the rain drops were really tears of repentance, and that he has now been released from his evil existence as a snake.” In the kōan the de-transfiguration of the fox, which turns up dead and is buried by Pai-chang, represents the old monk’s renunciation. The final stage requires an act of contrition to demonstrate that one regrets prior wrongdoing and has learned from the experience of overcoming illusion, as when the potter in *Ugetsu* returns with his son to daily chores. In the kōan Huang-po’s slap is a public display of the chastising and humiliation of his mentor Pai-chang, an intriguing role reversal that becomes paradigmatic in Zen lineal transmission narratives of disciples gaining approval by standing up to or surpassing their masters.

But the question remains why the current Pai-chang is chastised when he administered the exorcism. One interpretation is that Huang-po is performing an identification of vulpine or human existence, a common theme in fox folklore, knowing better than simply to trust that his master is no different than the former Pai-chang. This interpretation sees the slap as the exorcism of the exorcist. Since fox mythology has created a state of mystification, equivalent to a dream-within-a-dream, two acts of awakening are required from the Zen standpoint. As Pai-chang gives the explanation of why the fox is receiving a monk’s burial, all the other monks look on

in Edward Albee’s play *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (New York: Signet, 1962), in which in the third act called “The Exorcism,” following the second act “Walpurgisnacht,” two couples through their interactions with one another during an evening of drinking and shocking personal disclosures come to terms with their respective delusions reflected by hysterical pregnancies and imaginary offspring that were generated as psychological compensations for infertility and sterility, which symbolize larger problems in postwar middle class America.

¹¹⁴ Kelsey, “Salvation of the Snake,” p. 103; *NKBT* 24:231–32.

with disbelief for they are amazed that he has been deceived by a *fei-jen*, which would be a sure sign of the loss of a power basic to all Zen masters. Huang-po's slap demonstrates the fact of non-deception to the other monks, and at the same time Pai-chang, who was preoccupied with his exploits in the realm of the supernatural, gratefully praises his disciple for bringing him back to his senses by pointing out the intra-psychic dimension of his encounter with the fox spirit.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS ON OVERCOMING THE TWO-TIERED MODEL

This paper has sorted out the intertwining of two paradigms of morality in the overt, philosophical and the muted, popular religious discursive structures of the kōan which reflect conflicting yet complementary views of the meaning of the term "wild fox." Both paradigms emphasize the need to discover an underlying connection between polarized elements, including the natural and supernatural, and causality and non-causality. The overt structure is metaphysical and is based on the intellectual struggle to resolve the relation between the inexorability of karmic retribution and the attainment of freedom from cause-and-effect in terms of the paradoxical identity of apparently opposite realms. This paradigm claims to surpass by reversing previous interpretations that tend to dichotomize and prioritize causality and non-causality. The paradoxical conclusion expressed in kōan commentaries violates the literal message of the case which thus creates another level of paradoxicality. The covert structure is mythological and is based on a bivalency of delusion and redemption; the distinction between good and evil can be conflated but never collapsed, and a clear and decisive victor invariably emerges as part of the polarity pattern of the moral struggle.

We can avoid privileging the paradoxical line of interpretation by highlighting the elements of bivalency. Yet it is important not simply to reverse priorities but to clarify how the two paradigms complement and enhance while at the same time remaining distant and critical of one another in stemming from a doxa which uses the fox as a symbol of illusion. The convergence between the perspectives is based on the call for overcoming illusion that must occur within the bounds of the causal process. A demythological approach regards

the fox not as a being that literally possesses people but as a trans-personal icon, or an open-ended, polysemous sign that allows for the complex crossing over and mediation between otherwise severed or facilely identified conceptual realms. After all, the *Jenshi chuan* narrator has scolded Cheng for failing to take his tragic love affair with a vixen as an opportunity to investigate the boundary — the discrepancies as well as commonalities — between spirits and humans.

The movement between realms operates on several interlocking levels: intra-psychic, intra- and inter-sectarian, and intertextual. The first level refers to the psychological movement between two sides of Pai-chang. The identity of the “former master” is a reflection of the current master’s encounter with his own attachments and arrogance in presuming that he is immune to karma. This corresponds to the way images of mythical time and space (e.g., Yoshifuji’s thirteen years and the dissolution of his mansion) are evoked in folktales. As in the narrative about two Ch’iens in *Wu-men-kuan* no. 35 discussed above, this conceit allows for a displacement of the fundamental existential problem onto another person who is mythically portrayed, thus enhancing the cathartic effect by detaching and resolving the interior event in terms of externalized circumstances. Pai-chang, in a timeless moment, is in dialogue with and liberating himself, or that part that is symbolized by fox possession, and Huang-po’s slap completes and confirms an act of contrition for his misunderstanding.

The second level of conceptual movement pertains to Zen’s intra- and inter-sectarian ideological exchange with other Buddhist, Taoist, Shinto, and folk religious sects and cults. By deploying the imagery of spirit possession, the kōan is at once able to borrow and usurp as well as to disdain and dispel the animistic elements used by rival ideologies. This can be characterized as a process of hegemonic functionality in that Zen discourse establishes dominance by domesticating the otherness of local cults and showing its own superiority in manipulating and controlling what is threatening and disruptive. Zen and indigenous religions coexist in a competitive relation, a kind of chess game in which the “winner” is often based on ritual efficacy (orthopraxy) rather than theological consistency (orthodoxy). This is not necessarily a hostile competition but an ongoing

process of assimilation marked by compromise and accommodation as much as by conflict and contrast. Zen, like other forms of Buddhism, has had to learn to outplay indigenous cults at their own game, thereby taking on some of their features, while also trying to indoctrinate their followers with Buddhist values.

There have been three main attitudes in recent scholarship toward evaluating the lines of continuity or discontinuity, compatibility or incompatibility that emerge in a consideration of medieval Zen's hegemonic functionality. Two attitudes tend to follow a two-tiered model, while the third seeks to go beyond the methodological impasse which this model tends to generate. The first attitude interprets the relation between the discourses concerning sacred space in Zen iconoclastic philosophy and in sacramental religiosity by pointing, according to Bernard Faure's sophisticated poststructural hermeneutic, not "to an opposition between two juridically or socially distinct parties, but rather to what Lyotard would call a *différend* between incommensurable perceptions and unequal uses of the same space."¹¹⁵ This approach does not intend its reference to "unequal uses" to imply a hierarchical judgment, and it resembles Bourdieu's view of a "dual reading" as well as LaFleur's view of kōans and *setsuwa* as parallel but innately separate discourses. Yet, it tends to follow a two-tiered standpoint which sees Zen's interface with popular religion occurring along an epistemological "fault line" that represents the corruption of an essentially incorruptible, *un*-popular religion. For Faure, Zen's anti-supernaturalist rhetoric suggests an evasiveness of the sect's origins whereby "(t)he opaque, ambivalent, at times dangerous world of folk religion has been dispelled by the clear, haughty vision of the enlightened mind."¹¹⁶ This approach, if applied to the fox kōan, which Faure discusses in several instances, shows how popular religiosity was decoded and domesticated in the narrative of Pai-chang liberating the ancient monk. But it may not adequately describe how the muted structure contributes to the overall Zen view of karmic retribution and release. The tendency to focus on the heterological dimension may overlook Derrida's notion of *différance* implying "to

¹¹⁵ Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights*, p. 170; see also Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy*, p. 311.

¹¹⁶ Faure, "Space and Place in Chinese Religious Traditions," p. 350.

defer” as well as “to differ,” which represents a different view of difference than Lyotard’s, one that leaves the door open to the intersecting aspects of, rather than the inevitable gap between, competing discourses.

The approach at the other end of the spectrum emphasizes that Zen and popular religions form a harmonious continuum without ideological conflict or compromise. In discussing the relation between the monastic ideal of indifference to material rewards and the practice of medieval Japanese Sōtō masters in rituals contributing to worldly benefits (*genze riyaku*) for the general populace, William Bodiford in a finely detailed textual study argues that these elements may appear “somehow incompatible. However, the opposite can be just as true. In the eyes of rural laymen the power of Buddhist prayers was enhanced by the ritual and meditative practice of the monks.”¹¹⁷ Similarly, Neill McFarland’s examination of the various roles played by images of Bodhidharma in Japanese society as both a representative of sublime meditation and an object of devotion and prayers finds continuity and consistency in the paradoxically linked mythical and demythical levels of discourse: “Thus, the conventional interpretation of Daruma, so rigidly stereotyped, is clearly an iconographic tradition; but it is not wholly an aberration . . . It is an *iconoclastic iconography* or an *iconographic iconoclasm*.”¹¹⁸ This approach, if applied to the kōan, stresses a homological compatibility between internal spirituality and exorcistic ritual. Yet, by emphasizing that the high tradition uses popular religiosity to do its bidding, it may represent a two-tiered model that too readily reconciles contradictory materials. By diffusing any sense of difference, it fails to analyze the mutual transformation of divergent paradigms.

Therefore, the first approach stresses heterological antithesis while the second approach highlights homological synthesis. The third, compromise position emphasizes syncretism, which is an unsystematic amalgamation of multiple perspectives encompassing shifting alliances and lines of divergence rather than a combination, harmonious or otherwise, of two different elements.¹¹⁹ The starting

¹¹⁷ Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan*, p. 117.

¹¹⁸ H. Neill McFarland, *Daruma: The Founder of Zen in Japanese Art and Popular Culture* (Kodansha, 1987), p. 50.

¹¹⁹ On the difference between “synthesis” and “syncretism,” see Walter and Mary Brenne-

point for the compromise view is an understanding that the coexistence of mythological and demythological elements opening up a discursive gap was not necessarily either evaded or sanctioned but was recognized as problematic yet inspirational by many thinkers in the formative period of the kōan tradition. Robert Gimello comments on a Zen devotee's sense of turmoil about enjoying visionary experiences on Wu-t'ai-shan despite the *Lin-chi lu's* admonitions against pilgrimages since the real Mañjuśrī is located not on the mountaintop but within the heart:

The appearance of conflict between such things was noted widely during the Sung — for example, between the sober rationalism of literati culture or the disenchanting and demythologizing tendencies of Ch'an Buddhism, on the one hand, and the "otherworldly," visionary bent of those forms of Chinese Buddhism more characteristic of earlier times, on the other, or, just as often, between interior religious cultivation and exterior religious display.¹²⁰

In addition, Faure's approach, which is quite complex, also suggests that "Chan adepts may find themselves on the threshold between learned and popular culture when they interpret in a 'spiritual' or 'allegorical' sense legends that they do not completely disbelieve." According to Faure, "rather than an opposition — even if dialectical — or a fusion between Chan and local or popular religion, or between Chan and official religion, we can observe an intertwining of — or a transferential relationship among — antagonistic or analogous segments of each of these religious traditions."¹²¹

Extending the observations of Gimello and Faure in light of Barthesian semiotics and Bourdieu's social theory, I argue that the compromise approach shows how Zen was affected by popular religion in that both derive from a common but dispersed and polysemous doxic background of fox imagery, whereby one person or one text participates in two or more discourses or two or more discourses are simultaneously expressed in a single person or text.¹²²

man, *Earthwatch*, March/April (1995), pp. 6–8, based on their book *Holy Water* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994).

¹²⁰ Gimello, "Chang Shan-ying on Wu-t'ai Shan," p. 119.

¹²¹ Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy*, pp. 93, 95. In his works Faure considers a river model with tributaries flowing into a central source as well as a rhizome model with multiple horizontal roots, among others.

¹²² I recognize that there are other methods for overcoming the two-tiered model, including an inversion of the conventional hierarchy and the addition of a third, perhaps intermedi-

Thus the debate between homological and heterological interpretations is resolvable in terms of seeing a third level of conceptual movement as an intertextual transference, or a movement between fluid, interdependent texts rather than independent sects that is in turn multilevelled. The intertextual interaction of universal and local traditions forges an ideological compatibility and viability based on shared moral concerns. Yet, intertextuality is also a critical, creative tension between discourses that does not culminate in either a *differend* or an unmediated continuum, but is based on the continuing give-and-take that is at once mutually supportive and subversive. This is a process of accommodation/sublimation whereby Zen allows the folklore view to express itself while continually inverting and diverting its meaning.

Therefore it is necessary to develop an analysis not from the standpoint of how Zen trickles down to popular religion or how popular religion trickles up to Zen — both views fall into the pattern of a binary opposition — but in terms of the struggle between perspectives conceived on a horizontal playing field. According to James Berlin, “Rhetorics are usually born in conflict, representing formulations of competing ideological positions. Language is always a major arena of contention, with competing groups attempting to claim ownership of the ‘true’ methods of speaking and writing.”¹²³ The place or topos of the intertextual encounter is language, the harbinger of meaning. The kōan, a linguistic “snapshot” of the ongoing process of recording oral dialogues that convey the encounter between traditions, reflects not just two but several levels of interconnected textual and meta-textual (institutional) paradigms, at times overlap-

ary tier. Also, some social theorists as well as historians of East Asian religions argue for interpreting popular culture, or popular religion, as popular culture or religion without presupposing a dichotomy and thus the superiority of the high traditions. See, for example, such diverse works as Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 184; and Stephen Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 214–16. However, my aim is to view the relation or encounter between philosophy and popular religion as relation in a way that is fair to both sides. As Gurevich suggests, “For simply stating that paganism was fused with Christianity or that Christianity was superficially assimilated hardly explains the character of early medieval popular culture,” in *Medieval Popular Culture*, p. 75.

¹²³ James A. Berlin, “Postmodernism, Politics, and Histories of Rhetoric,” *Pre/Text* 11.3–4 (1990): 178.

ping or conflicting, that are contending for the meaning of fox.

For example, the kōan reflects the following elements. First, there is the rhetoric of anti-supernaturalism, in which commentaries often disavow and mock the claims of supernatural beliefs from a transcendental perspective and use the term wild fox as a rhetorical device indicating unenlightenment. In addition, there is the practice of amalgamation, by which indigenous spirits like the fox are integrated into the mainstream religious and ritual structure by enshrinement in temple compounds and their images are also woven into kōan narratives and other forms of literature and art to create a moral message. The final element is the legacy of exorcism, in which sacred images are seen as having a demonic, malevolent potential which, when improperly unleashed, requires a ritual that purifies and transforms its power into a Buddhist framework, through ritual that is either homeopathic (using one image of the fox to defeat another fox image) or non-homeopathic (using symbols antithetical to indigenous fox worship, such as traditional Buddhist divinities or chants). In the intersection of these standpoints, shifting alliances between opposing standpoints mediated by the polysemy of bivalent imagery continually emerge and regress. For example, the philosophical paradigm embraces anti-supernaturalism as well as assimilationism, and the popular religious paradigm encompasses both exorcism and devotionism. Furthermore, anti-supernaturalism and exorcism which are diametrically opposed in epitomizing iconoclastic philosophy and sacramental religiosity respectively converge at the point of disarming and banishing the harmful effects of the demonic fox. Both are a form of domestication and even though anti-supernaturalism considers itself able to tame exorcism it does so in a way that is influenced and determined by the very structure it seeks to suppress, which is reflected in its alliance with assimilationism. Thus, there are two levels of bivalency: the level of the fox image representing the dual possibilities of protection and deception, redemption and betrayal, good and evil; and the level of the Buddhist approach which is both for and against, assimilative and purificatory of and by the fox.

Therefore, the phrase “wild fox” harboring a double structure — anti-supernatural/supernatural, overt/muted — encompasses multiple levels, including metaphysical paradox, in which the negative

implications outweigh but are ultimately equalized with the positive, and mythical bivalency, in which positivity and negativity co-exist with the former transforming the latter. The term also contains an inverted structure when it is evoked in a positive way that overrides the derisive implications as in praise of someone's spiritual freedom or wildness; a reverse structure in that apparent heroes Pai-chang and Huang-po become the objects of criticism rather than admiration so that negativity prevails; and a de-structuring because the folktale of possession-exorcism contains the seeds of its own demythologization when understood as a process of cathartic displacement which defeats a fixation on either positive or negative meanings.

Where do the kōan commentators stand in regard to the issue of belief, suspension of disbelief, or cynical compromise with supernaturalism? On the one hand, they emphasize that the way to overcome the fox-as-ignorance is to adopt a stance of nonattachment and nondiscrimination which views causality and non-causality from the standpoint of a paradoxical equality. At the same time they stress that the misuse or false sense of identity which derives from a failure to discriminate causality and non-causality results in nothing other than . . . "wild fox Zen."¹²⁴ An intriguing waka-style commentary by Daikō also sees the fox as a symbol of enlightenment:

The thought
Of renouncing the world
Is awakened;
By the time this state has been attained,
The fox is still there.¹²⁵

Yet, the verse is ambiguous due to the fundamental bivalency of supernatural imagery and it may be interpreted to mean that the fox is a perpetual threat which, like karmic causality, never vanishes even for an enlightened person.

The aim of the commentaries is to remain non-committal on the issue of supernaturalism while using the images of the fox spirit or fox drool ironically from the standpoint of an enlightenment ex-

¹²⁴ Akizuki, *Mumonkan o yomu*, p. 183.

¹²⁵ Cited in Yasutani Hakuun, *Mumonkan* (Shunjūsha, 1965), p. 43.

perience that lies beyond and yet meaningfully explores the multiple implications of these terms. Many of the levels of meaning are contained in Fa-cheng's verse commentary on the turning word, *pu-mei yin-kuo*, "not falling into causality":

On seeing a wild fox in person,
Pai-chang granted his request most willingly;
Now I have to ask my monks,
Have you spit out fox drool or not?¹²⁶

Appendix

TRANSLATION OF *WU-MEN-KUAN* NO. 2

"PAI-CHANG AND THE WILD FOX"¹²⁷

Whenever Zen master Huai-hai of Mt. Pai-chang in Hung-chou¹²⁸ expounded the Dharma, an old man always came to hear him along with the other monks. When the group left [the lecture hall], the old man also left. One day, however, he stayed behind. Pai-chang asked who he was. The old man responded, "I am really a non-human (C. *fei-jen*, J. *hinin*)."¹²⁹ A long time ago, in the age of Buddha Kāśyapa,¹³⁰ I was head monk on this very mountain. It happened

¹²⁶ Cited in *SH* II:237-38; also in *HTC* 115:113.

¹²⁷ The title of the case in other collections is "Great Cultivation" or "Not Obscuring Causality"; see fn. 21.

¹²⁸ Pai-chang's (720-814) traditional biography is contained in the following texts: *Tsu-t'ang chi* c. 14; *Ching-te chuan-teng lu* c. 6; *Wu-teng hui-yüan* (J. *Gotō egen*) c. 3; and *Hsü kao-seng-chuan* (J. *Zoku kōsōden*) c. 10. The disciple of Ma-tsu, the second generation patriarch after sixth patriarch Hui-neng, Pai-chang was the teacher of Huang-po, who became Lin-chi's teacher. These four masters of the Hung-chou lineage constitute one of the most important lineages in the early period of Zen in China, as recorded in the *Ssu-chia yü-lu*. Pai-chang's teachings are collected in two recorded sayings text, and he is also credited with the first Zen monastic code, the *Ch'an-men kwei-shih* (J. *Zenmon kishiki*).

¹²⁹ The term *fei-jen* (J. *hinin*) is the translation of the Sanskrit term for non-human beings, *amanuśya*, and in Sino-Japanese it also refers to a shapeshifter or *bakemono*; the term has also long been used as an epithet for outcasts and marginal groups.

¹³⁰ Kāśyapa is the sixth of seven primordial buddhas culminating in Śākyamuni, who is also considered the first patriarch of Zen. Thus, his era refers to a mythical period prior to the historical Buddha, obviously long before Buddhism was ever actually preached on Mt. Pai-chang in China.

that one day a disciple asked me, 'Does even a person of great cultivation (C. *ta-hsiu-hsing*, J. *daishugyō*)¹³¹ fall into causality,¹³² or not?' I answered, 'Such a person does not fall into causality (C. *pu-lo yin-kuo*, J. *furaku inga*).' For five hundred lifetimes after that, I have been transfigured into a wild fox (C. *yeh-hu*, J. *yako*) body. Now I beseech you for a turning word (C. *i-chuan-yü*, J. *ittengo*)¹³³ that will hopefully release me from this wild fox transfiguration.' The old man then asked, 'Does even a person of great cultivation fall into causality, or not?' Pai-chang answered, 'Such a person does not obscure causality (C. *pu-mei yin-kuo*, J. *fumai inga*).'¹³⁴ On hearing this, the old man attained awakening and he said, 'I am now released from the wild fox transfiguration, and [my fox corpse] will be found on the other side of the mountain. I humbly request that you bury it with the rites accorded a deceased monk.'

Pai-chang instructed the monk in charge of rules (C. *wei-na*, J. *ina* 維那, Skt. *karmadāna*) to strike the clapper¹³⁵ and announce the burial of a deceased monk after the midday meal. The other monks were surprised and wondered, 'Who could this be as all of us are healthy and there is no one sick in the Nirvāṇa Hall?'¹³⁶ After the meal, Pai-chang led the group to the foot of a large rock on the far side of the mountain, and he used his staff to uncover the dead body of a

¹³¹ The phrase refers to an enlightened person who continues to practice meditation diligently after the attainment of enlightenment.

¹³² Causality (C. *yin-kuo*, J. *inga*) is the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit *hetu-phala*, which refers to the universal principle of the necessary relation between original or root cause and end result. In Sino-Japanese Buddhism this term also implies the moral process of karmic determination and retribution, whereby a good cause begets a good result and an evil cause begets an evil result.

¹³³ The "turning word" is referred to in numerous places, including the *Lin-chi lu*, the records of Hung-chih, and the *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki*. While never clearly defined in these texts, it seems to refer to the use of a terse utterance — a phrase or a single word — which can inspire a revolution in one's thinking that results in a liberation experience.

¹³⁴ "Not obscuring causality" is the literal rendering which I think is most effective here, but it could also be rendered as "not blind to causality" or turned into an affirmative construction as "remains subject or bound to causality." In the latter case, "not falling into causality" could be turned into a construction such as "becomes free from causality."

¹³⁵ In the Zen monastic system, the monk in charge of rules strikes an octagonal anvil with an octagonal hammer signifying an event about to take place in the institution.

¹³⁶ This refers to the infirmary, for which the name makes an association between *nirvāṇa* as the termination of mundane existence and illness/death as the end of life.

wild fox. The fox was cremated in accord with Buddhist funeral rites.¹³⁷

That evening during his sermon in the lecture hall Pai-chang told the monks the whole story. Thereupon Huang-po¹³⁸ asked, “The old man was transfigured into a wild fox for five hundred lifetimes because he used an incorrect turning word. What would have happened if his turning word had not been incorrect?” Pai-chang replied, “Come up here and I’ll tell you.” After hesitating, Huang-po approached Pai-chang and slapped him. Pai-chang, clapping his hands and laughing, exclaimed, “I thought the barbarian had a red beard, but here is another red-bearded barbarian!”¹³⁹

Prose Commentary

“Not falling into causality” — why was he transfigured into a wild fox? “Not obscuring causality” — why was he released from the fox body? If you can see this with a single eye¹⁴⁰ you will understand how the former head of Pai-chang monastery cultivated his five hundred incarnations.¹⁴¹

Verse Commentary

Not falling, not obscuring:
Two sides of the same coin.¹⁴²
Not obscuring, not falling:
A thousand entanglements, ten thousand entanglements!

¹³⁷ This passage highlights the importance of funeral rites in Zen monastic life as codified in the main text for rules, the *Chan-men ch'ing-kuei* of 1103.

¹³⁸ Huang-po (d. 850) is reported in the following texts: *Tsu-t'ang chi* c. 16; *Ching-te chuan-teng lu* c. 9; and *Hsü kao-seng-chuan* c. 20. The writings attributed to him include the *Chuan-hsin fa-yao* (J. *Denshin hōyō*).

¹³⁹ The “red-bearded barbarian” generally refers to foreigners and in Zen rhetoric implies the bearded Bodhidharma, the twenty-eighth Zen patriarch and first in China, who “came from the west (India).” The term is also used as a duplicitous insult/praise. The word for barbarian (C. *hu*, J. *ko*) is a homophone for fox, and the *Ts'ung-jung lu* version refers to “red-bearded fox.”

¹⁴⁰ The “single eye” referred to here is of course not corporeal but the eye of Dharma or of nondualistic insight.

¹⁴¹ In some translations there is a more explicit reference to the “enjoyment” of the fox incarnations.

¹⁴² This line can be rendered, “Odd and even are on one die,” or “Two winning numbers, one roll of the dice.”