

Steven HEINE, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text: Philosophy and Folklore in the Fox Kōan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000. 312 pp. \$58.00 cloth, ISBN 0-8248-2150-5. \$31.95 paper, ISBN 0-8248-2197-1.

IN HIS BOOK *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text*, Steven Heine presents an impressive multivalent exploration of the fox kōan, which, not unlike its subject matter, operates on a multiplicity of discursive levels. On one level, he investigates the transmission and interpretation of Pai-chang Huai-hai's fox kōan as presented in the *Wu-men kuan* (*Mumonkan*) and the *Ts'ung-jung lu* (*Shōyōroku*). On a second level, Heine, who is a distinguished Dōgen scholar, recognizes the importance of the fox kōan to the work of Dōgen and, specifically, to the current controversy in Dōgen studies between proponents of Critical Buddhism (*hihan Bukkyō*), such as that of Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shirō, and traditional scholarship. At the center of this controversy lies the relationship between Dōgen's 75-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō* and his 12-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*. The Buddhological and philosophical difference between both texts is expressed in the diverging interpretations of Pai-chang's fox kōan in

the fascicles “Daishugyō” and “Jinshin inga.” His exploration of this controversy leads Heine furthermore into the Buddhist discourse on causality as well as its implications for the conceptualization of samsara, nirvana, and Buddha-nature (*tathāgatagarbha*) and, by implication, its significance for the discussion of the “thought of original enlightenment” (*hongaku shisō*). Finally, Heine enters the particular discussion on whether Zen Buddhism in Sung China and in the Kamakura period rejected or appropriated folklore traditions and, subsequently, as Bernard Faure implies, the relationship between “great” and “little” traditions in the more general discourse of religious studies. In each case, Heine, faithful to a postmodern and/or Zen approach, seems to refuse to privilege one extreme position over its counterpart. While this tactic might frustrate the reader, this insightful study not only critically illuminates the complexities of the controversies in question and the difficulty (if not impossibility) of assuming an exclusive position in these debates, but also implicitly points the way towards a Zen approach towards Zen studies.

In discussing Pai-chang’s fox kōan, its antecedents (which he traces as far back as the Jātaka tales), and the history of its transmission and interpretation, Heine does a superb job identifying the various literary strands and overlapping discourses that constitute the complex structure of the kōan. The kōan, which is transmitted under the names “Pai-chang’s fox kōan,” “Pai-chang and the wild fox,” and “kōan of great cultivation” (Ch. *ta-hsiu-hsin*; Jp. *daishugyō*), relates the story of the encounter between Zen master Pai-chang and a *fei-en* (a fox spirit with shape-shifting ability) disguised as a monk. The kōan reveals that the *fei-en*, who had been the abbot at Pai-chang’s temple in the age of the Buddha Kāśyapa, was transformed into a fox spirit upon telling a student that “a person of great cultivation does not fall into causality” (Ch. *pu-lo yin-kuo*; Jp. *furaku inga*). When Pai-chang explains to him that “such a person does not obscure causality” (Ch. *pu-mei yin-kuo*; Jp. *fumai inga*), the old man is instantaneously awakened. In the postscript of this encounter dialogue, the corpse of the fox is buried according to monastic rules and Huang-po, Pai-chang’s disciple, corrects Pai-chang’s own understanding of the subject matter. Thus, the fox kōan clearly incorporates standard, de-mythological Ch’an/Zen rhetoric, mythological elements of folklore, a discussion of monastic rituals, and the philosophical discourse on causality.

Exploring the interpretive traditions of this particular kōan, Heine argues that traditional commentaries fall into two basic groups. One follows the *Wumen kuan*’s observation that “Not falling [into causality]” and “not obscuring [causality]” are “Two sides of the same coin” and Dōgen’s “Daishugyō,” which asserts the non-duality of causality and non-causality and, subsequently, samsara and nirvana. The other, which is represented by Dōgen’s “Jinshin inga,” rejects the notion of non-causality in favor of a strictly causal worldview. Heine describes these two positions using Zen polemic as “the Zen of ‘wild fox drool’” (Ch. *yeh-hu hsiên*; Jp. *yako-zen*) and “wild fox Zen” (Ch. *yeh-hu Ch’an*; Jp. *yako-Zen*) respectively. Similarly, contemporary historians point out the mythological and syncretistic elements in the fox kōan while Zen proponents predominantly interpreted this kōan to be de-mythological and iconoclastic in its function. However, Heine adds insightfully that, besides the

traditional Buddhist discourse on causality and the classic Zen polemic against supernaturalism, the fox kōan addresses two further topics: on the one hand, it affirms the belief in supernatural beings and metamorphoses and, on the other, it introduces the motif of repentance. Drawing on William LaFleur's comparative study of kōans and *setsuwa* literature, Heine suggests that one could interpret the fox kōan as the conversion of Pai-chang. Heine provides three keys for such an interpretation. First, the five hundred life times, which the previous abbot spent as a fox, indicate Pai-chang's endurance of a "profound sense of shame." Second, the fact that the transformed individual is the previous abbot of Pai-chang's temple suggests that the abbot/fox symbolizes a previous form of Pai-chang himself. Third, Huang-po's slap identifies Pai-chang as the subject of the possession, confession, exorcism, and renunciation.

A reading which underlines the complex structure of the fox kōan, Heine argues convincingly, cannot be done justice in a simple reduction to one discourse. First, he addresses the controversy surrounding the claim of Critical Buddhism that Dōgen's rejection of non-causality in "Jinshin inga" has to be interpreted as a conversion of Dōgen to the "true Buddhism" of, what Heine calls, "deep faith in causality" rather than an expedient means (Skt. *upāya*; Jp. *hōben*) for disciples unable to grasp the non-duality of causality and non-causality as suggested by traditional Dōgen scholarship. While Heine is sympathetic to Hakamaya's emphasis on Dōgen's assertion of causality, he criticizes Hakamaya insofar as he "examines the 12-fascicle text in one-sided isolation from Dōgen's other writings." Ultimately, Heine concludes, both traditional Dōgen scholarship and Critical Buddhism fail "to acknowledge the influence of popular religiosity" in Dōgen's work. However, Heine is careful to avoid the other extreme which focuses almost exclusively on the role of popular religion and/or the history of monastic institutions as it is suggested by the positive historiographies of William Bodiford, Martin Collcutt, and Griffith Foulk.

Heine also refuses to accept the simple dichotomy between the "little" and the "great" traditions that implies that Zen either adopts or rejects folklore beliefs in supernatural beings and powers. On the contrary he argues, following Faure, that underlying the "facade of univocality is a pervasive multivocality." However, Heine suggests that it is not enough to acknowledge, following Yamaoka Takaaki, the "two levels of religiosity" of Sung and Kamakura Ch'an/Zen, namely "self-discipline and self-negation," on the one side, and the quest for "worldly benefits" (Jp. *genze riyaku*) on the other, but includes the monastic discipline as a third discourse. Ultimately, however, Heine suggests an "intertextual transference," which rejects the hierarchical (or reductionist) models in favor of a horizontal model.

Heine argues successfully "that the compromise approach shows how Zen was affected by popular religion in that both derive from a common but dispersed and polysemous force field of fox imagery where 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." Thus, Heine not only critically illuminates the polysemous and multilayered structure of the fox

kōan but he also points Zen scholarship toward a new methodological approach. Heine suggests supplementing historical, textual, and anthropological approaches with the insights of critical theory, suggesting that one considers the double meaning of Jacques Derrida's *différance* as "to defer" and "to differ" as a hermeneutical clue. In addition, his approach could be read to suggest that the kōan discourse itself can contribute important hermeneutical clues—Heine ends his essay with a quote from the *Wu-men kuan* asking "[n]ow, tell me, what will you do?" Could the unfolding dialogue structure, which Bernard Faure suggests to be characteristic of the Ch'an/Zen kōans and encounter dialogues, not function as a hermeneutical device to decipher the kōans and their polysemous and multivalent structure? Similar, if non-duality is at the heart of Ch'an/Zen rhetoric, does this not disqualify any kind of reductionism as an interpretive strategy?

In his *Shōbōgenzō* fascicle "Mitsugo," Dōgen himself offers a hermeneutical strategy of reading kōans (in this case Shakyamuni's flower sermon), which suggests, in almost Derridean fashion, to continuously undercut and destabilize any interpretation that attempts to destroy or reduce the inherent ambivalence of silence and words in the kōan. In his essay "Ch'an Hermeneutics," Robert Buswell similarly suggests that Ch'an/Son/Zen hermeneutical devices such as "[t]he live word/dead word notion and the use of circular graphics provide an approach to Ch'an interpretation that follows greater fidelity to the historical and doctrinal contexts of that tradition than would the inevitably culture-bound concepts of Western hermeneutics" (BUSWELL 1988, p. 250). I think the same would apply to kōan studies. I believe that a dialogue between different hermeneutics can only enrich our methodological devices. Thus, Heine's *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text* not only presents an extremely thoughtful analysis of the fox kōan but also makes an invaluable contribution to Zen studies in general in that it opens the door to new methodological considerations which may take their clues from the kōan discourse itself.

#### REFERENCE

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