Article

Illuminating a Truth: *Drṣṭānta* and *Huatou*

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Abstract: In Chan/Seon/Zen (禪, hereafter referred to as Chan) Buddhism, the *gongan* (公案), a word that can be literally translated as “public case”, is conceived as both the tool by which enlightenment is brought about and an expression of the enlightened mind itself. Among the diverse styles of *gongan*, perhaps the most puzzling is a form of its key phrase, *huatou* (話頭), that utilizes specific things in the world. These things are either real and empirically observable, or conversely, unreal and merely hypothetical. A typical example is the figure of the “cypress tree in the front yard”. This paper tries to demonstrate that such a *huatou* has a structural similarity to the *drṣṭānta* (喩), an element within the three-part syllogism of Buddhist logic, inasmuch as it functions as an epistemic instrument for the disclosing of a truth.

Keywords: *gongan*; *huatou*; *drṣṭānta*; *xiancheng gongan*

1. The *Gongan*

The idea that religious language, particularly in paradoxical and esoteric forms, brings about enlightenment is fundamental to most Chan texts. The phrase, “at these words, so and so was awakened” is perhaps the most common locution in late Tang to Song Chan literature (Wright 2000, p. 205). The term “these words” refers to what is called *gongan* (公案) in the Chan school. They are brief sayings, dialogues, or anecdotes that have been excerpted from the biographies and discourses of Chan patriarchs.

The term *gongan* literally translates as “public case” and is a precedent established by legal judgments. Just as the records of legal tradition deploy a certain criterion for justice into the public domain, so likewise do the “public cases” of the Chan tradition set up a criterion for awakening. Thus, *gongans* provide an authoritative standard of evaluation for the heuristic insights of Chan practitioners. They are meant to serve as an objective and universal principle through which all claims to the attainment of Buddhahood can be judged with discretion.

In early Chan history, the *gongan* developed with different implications for the Chan of *wenzi* (文字, literally “words and letters”), *kanhua* (看話, “looking into language”), or *mozhaio* (默照, “silent illumination”). Among them, two distinctive concepts of *gongan* can be illustrated, depending on the meaning and role assigned to it in Chan training.¹ On the one hand, the *gongan* is nothing more than an expedient for realizing one’s own innate enlightenment (Buswell 1991, p. 346). It is precisely the key to building the “sensation of doubt” (*iching*, 疑情) for Chan students and steering their single-minded attention to the *huatou* (話頭), its punch line. As a contemplative tool for arriving at the place where there are no doubts, the *gongan* itself has no ultimate meaning (Buswell 1991, p. 348; Wright 2000, p. 208).

The *gongan* is, on the other hand, that which exposes reality directly and without distortion (Wright 2000, p. 202). It really corresponds to the way things are. The perfect form of enlightenment is

¹ For the issues on the different interpretations of *gongan*, see Wright (2000, pp. 206–7).

already connoted in the *gongan*. If meditatively pursued, its form could be traced back to the moment of its formation as manifesting a truth.² In this respect, Chan masters employ the term *xiancheng gongan* (現成公案), which refers to the fundamental point that has to be actualized.³ As an object of realization in the practice of meditation, the *gongan* reveals a law or a universal principle, that is, a truth (Nishijima and Cross 2007, p. 41).

The two different aspects of *gongan* are not mutually exclusive but complementary. For instance, Japanese Zen master Dōgen Kogon (ca. 1200–53) deeply appreciates the *gongan* as an expedient to bring about enlightenment; yet, he also lends significance to its realization as absolute truth dynamically present in life (Kim 1985, p. 56).

2. A Style of Gongan

Traditionally, around 1700 *gongans* are said to have been in circulation in the Chan school. They are diverse in their styles. A characteristic example of a style is the well-known *gongan*, “When both hands come together in applause, a sound is produced; listen to the sound of one hand clapping”. Yet mostly, a *gongan* is set in question-and-answer form, as in the question, “Does a dog have Buddha nature?” and its answer, “No”.

Among the diverse styles of *gongans*, one of the most puzzling is those whose *huatou* (話頭), the key phrase in a *gongan*, embodies a specific thing. The following example is illustrative of how a *huatou* employs a real object.

Gongan 1 Q: “What was Bodhidharma’s intention in coming from the west?”

A: “The cypress tree in the front yard”.⁴

In addition to things that are real, some *huatous* employ things that are unreal. For example, there is a different answer to the same question presented in *Gongan* 1.

Gongan 2 Q: “What was Bodhidharma’s intention in coming from the west?”

A: “Hair grown on an incisor-tooth”.⁵

3. Preliminary Remarks

To the best of my knowledge, a limited number of modern scholars have provided a detailed explanation about why Chan masters used such *huatous* as “the cypress tree in the front yard” or, for that matter, what they could mean.⁶ So far, these *huatous* have been regarded as mere intellectual perplexity or as a skillful means to arrest discrimination and stimulate questioning.⁷ The following questions remain: What then, do Chan teachers intend to convey to their students with these specific things as

² Wright (2000, p. 202). Yasutani also understands a *gongan* as the unerring absolute authority of the Buddha-Dharma (Yasutani 1996, p. 7).

³ The term, *xiancheng gongan* (*hyeonseong gongan* in Korean and *genjō kōan* in Japanese) has been variously translated as, “manifesting suchness”, “the realized universe”, “manifesting absolute reality”, “the presencing of truth”, or “Offenbarmachen des vollen Erscheinens”. See Davis (2009, p. 254, n. 10). For the origin of *xiancheng gongan*, note YFChY 769,a28–b2: 現成公案 不隔一絲毫 普天 匝地 是一箇大解脫問 與日月同明 與虛空等量 若祖若佛無別 元由乃古乃今同一正見 若是利根上智. See also Ishii (2005, pp. 97–101).

⁴ See WG, case 37: 趙州因僧問 “如何是祖師西來意”, 州云 “庭前柏樹子”.

⁵ ZhZhChY 365,b17: 問 “如何是祖師西來意”, 師云 “板齒生毛”.

⁶ Apropos the “cypress tree in the front yard” in the previous *Gongan* 1, Heine writes that “it is crucial to see that the cypress tree was emblematic in Chinese lore of longevity and loyalty” (Heine 2014, p. 29). Criticizing this position, Jorgensen argues that “the cypress was usually associated with death” (Jorgensen 2015, p. 2). He also maintains that “the cypress tree, if it was not used simply due to circumstances by Zhaozhou, but metaphorically, would not suggest longevity but rather that Bodhidharma came to China to die” (Jorgensen 2015, p. 2). Their analyses, however, are restricted to what the cypress tree itself means. Neither one mentions the multiplicity of different answers given to the same question, “what was Bodhidharma’s intention in coming from the west?”.

⁷ Note also Sharf (2010, p. 54).

huatous? How are their students able to attain enlightenment from investigating the aforementioned *gongans* which, on the surface, seem to be irrelevant or ridiculous?

In Buddhism, there is another approach which employs specific things, real or unreal, as its major component, and this is Buddhist logic, which contrasts with Chan in many respects. In particular, in the three-part syllogism, which is constituted by the “proposition” (*pakṣa*, 宗), the “reason” (*hetu*, 因), and the “example” (*drṣṭānta*, 喻),⁸ the last component consists of an appeal to specific things. These things have a purpose to verify a universal fact or truth.

The aim of this paper is to discuss certain individual *gongans* whose *huatou* is a specific thing, real or unreal. Among the two different understandings of *gongan*, which were introduced above, it focuses on a *gongan* which itself exposes reality as it is. Inasmuch as the *huatou* of a *gongan* adopts a specific thing for disclosing a truth, it is identical in its fundamental structure with the *drṣṭānta* of a three-part syllogism. By looking into how a specific thing as the *drṣṭānta* establishes a general law in a three-part syllogism, I will seek to uncover what kind of truth might be revealed by a *gongan* whose *huatou* employs a specific object.

4. The *drṣṭānta* in a Three-Part Syllogism

In the three-part syllogism of Dignāga (ca. 480–540), a pivotal figure in the development of Buddhist logic, the “example” (*drṣṭānta*) is recognized in the two senses, namely an “example object” (*-artha*) and an “example statement” (*-vacana*) (see Katsura 2004, p. 170). The “example object” is that in which a “reason” is shown to be followed by a “property to be proved” (*sādhya*, 所立) or is shown to be absent in the absence of a “property to be proved” (See Katsura 2004, p. 145). It is made up of the following binary: what is similar and what is dissimilar. On the other hand, the “example statement” is that which presents an “example” together with a general law that is derived from our observations or experiences. It is formulated, thus, to indicate that the “reason” is inseparably related to the “property to be proved”. Let us see what differentiates them in the following logical formula:

[proposition] Sound is impermanent.

[reason] Because it is produced.

[similar ex. statement]⁹ Whatever is produced is impermanent, like a pot.

[dissimilar ex. statement]¹⁰ Whatever is permanent is not produced, like the ether.¹¹

In this formula, the “reason” is the property of being produced (*kṛtakatva*) and the “property to be proved” is impermanence (*anityatva*). The “example object” here is, in the first instance, a pot (*ghaṭa*), in which the property of being produced is shown to be followed by impermanence, and in the second instance, the ether (*ākāśa*), in which the absence of impermanence is shown to be followed by the absence of the property of being produced. The pot is denoted as a *similar* example, while the ether is denoted as a *dissimilar* example. The “example statement” in this logical formula comprises, on the other hand, the expressions that “whatever is produced is impermanent, like a pot” and “whatever is permanent is not produced, like the ether”. The former is called positive concomitance (*anvaya*, 合), while the latter is called negative concomitance (*vyatireka*, 離). The role of the two examples in the positive and the negative concomitances is to reveal the pervasion (*vyāpti*) or the inseparable relation (*avinābhāva*) between the “reason” and the “property to be proved”, here, the property of being produced and impermanence.

⁸ For more on the three-part syllogism and its elements, see Katsura (1998, pp. 265–69); Tachikawa (1971, pp. 113–18).

⁹ The “similar example statement” refers to the Sanskrit term, *sapakṣānugamavacanā*, which literally means the “statement in accordance with a similar instance”.

¹⁰ The “dissimilar example statement” refers to the Sanskrit term, *vyatirekavacanā*, which means the “statement of negative concomitance”.

¹¹ Cf. NP 141,6–9: *anityaḥ śabda itī pakṣavacanam. kṛtakatvād itī pakṣadharmavacanam. yat kṛtakam tad anityam drṣṭam yathā ghaṭādir itī sapakṣānugamavacanam. yan nityam tad akṛtakam drṣṭam yathākāśam itī vyatirekavacanam*; YJL 11,b20–23: 聲無常者是立宗言。所作性故者是宗法言。若是所作見彼無常如瓶等者是隨同品言。若是其常見非所作如空者是遠離言。

Dignāga wanted to present both similar and dissimilar examples in order to induce the general proposition of pervasion. In any case, his use of the “example statement”, whether similar or dissimilar, is to express the pervasion of the “reason” by the “property to be proved”. Dharmakīrti (ca. 600–60), who further developed Dignāga’s logic, laid emphasis on such characteristics of the “example statement” and adopted a new proof formulation that consists of the statements of the “pervasion” (*vyāpti*) and the “reason’s being a property of the topic of a proposition” (*pakṣadharmatā*). He and his followers used the formulation to affirm Buddhist truths such as the theory of momentariness.

[pervasion] Whatever is existent is momentary, like a pot.

[reason’s being a property of the topic of a proposition] These things under debate are existent.¹²

In this logical formula, the “pervasion” encompasses all that is existent. Such pervasion is called “all-inclusive pervasion” (*sarvopasaṃhāravāpyāpti*). It is applied to everything, and demonstrates a general law i.e., here, momentariness.¹³ Therefore, a pot placed within the above “pervasion” (*vyāpti*) is an example that illustrates a truth (i.e., the truth of momentariness).

5. The Three-Part Syllogism in the Buddhist Community of Tang and Song China

Although the two-part syllogism was unknown to the Buddhist community of Tang and Song China, the three-part syllogism was widely used and was popular. Buddhist experts on the “science of reasons” (*hetuvidyā*, 因明), such as Xuanzang (玄奘, ca. 602–64), frequently used the three-part syllogism in a simplified form: its last element, *drṣṭānta*, is embodied in an “example object” without presenting the positive and negative concomitances.¹⁴ For instance,

[proposition] The views of self do not take the real *ātman* as an object.

[reason] Because they have their [own] objects.

[example] Like the mind taking other things as its object.¹⁵

It is highly conceivable that the Chan masters in the time of Tang and Song were actually aware of the three-part syllogism. Mazu Daoyi (馬祖道一, ca. 709–88), the retrospective patriarch of the Hongzhou House (洪州宗), one of the five houses of the Chan school, tried to prove the nature of the body of *Dharma* (法身) by means of this logical formula.

[proposition] [The body of *Dharma*] neither abandons conditioned [*dharmas*] nor dwells in unconditioned [*dharmas*].

[reason] Because it does not dwell in any basis, in the case that conditioned [*dharmas*] are a function of unconditioned [*dharmas*] and unconditioned [*dharmas*] are a basis of conditioned [*dharmas*].

[example] Like the space that does not have any basis.¹⁶

¹² Cf. HB 5*,19–20: *yat sat tat sarvaṃ kṣaṇikam, yathā ghaṭādayaḥ. saṃś ca śabda iti*; see also KSA 67,6: *yat sat tat kṣaṇikam, yathā ghaṭaḥ. santaś cāmi vivādāspadībhūtāḥ padārthāḥ*; KBhA 1,8: *yat sat tat kṣaṇikam, yathā jaladharaḥ. santas tu bhāvā ime*.

¹³ “All-inclusive pervasion” encompasses all existing things. Its components, the “reason” (*hetu*) and the “property to be proved” (*sādhya*) belong to everything. In the previous logical formula of Dharmakīrti and his followers, for instance, ‘existence’ and ‘momentariness’ are properties of all things. For more on this pervasion, see Funayama (2001, pp. 315–18); Shiga (2011, pp. 521–34).

¹⁴ This simplified form of the three-part syllogism is not a new innovation of East Asian Buddhism. It was already widely used in India, even around the time of Dignāga. For instance, see NP 143,16–17: *nityaḥ śabdo ’mūrtatvāt paramāṇuvat*.

¹⁵ ChL 2,a6: 諸我見所緣實我有所緣故 如緣餘心. For some more instances of the three-part syllogism, note ChL 1,c14–15: 餘行餘色亦非實我, 如虛空等, 非覺性故; ChL 3,a10–11: 彼所執非實德等應非離識有別自性, 非實攝故, 如石女兒; and ChL 3,a11–12: 非有實等應非離識有別自性, 非有攝故, 如空華等.

¹⁶ MDChG 812,b13–14: [法身]不盡有為 不住無為, 有為是無為家用 無為是有為家依 不住於依故, 云如空無所依.

In addition, Yongming Yanshou (永明延壽, ca. 904–75), the 3rd patriarch of the Fayan House (法眼宗), made good use of the three-part syllogism in his *Zongjing lu*. For instance,

[proposition] Mind must hold the image of an object.

[reason] Because it grasps an external thing.

[example] Like a mirror at the time of manifesting a face.¹⁷

Furthermore, there is a strong possibility that Dahui Zonggao (大慧宗杲, ca. 1089–163), who exerted a profound influence upon the Kanhua Chan, was conversant with this line of reasoning. Dahui enumerated the three-part syllogism i.e., the “proposition”, the “reason”, and the “example”, in order to demonstrate the fact that the Mind (心) cannot, like the gem of Maṇi, be contaminated due to its original purity.¹⁸ Above of all, the celebrated *gongan* collection entitled the *Biyān lu* (碧巖錄) begins with the sentence, “When you see smoke on the other side of a mountain, you immediately know there is fire”.¹⁹ This is obviously a reference to the well-known illustration of a prototypical syllogism cited in ancient India.

6. Specific Things as a *huatou* and Their Manifesting a Truth

Even though it is fairly certain that some Chan masters were aware of the three-part syllogism, it is unclear whether they really adopted the idea of *dr̥ṣṭānta* in their *gongan* formulations. However, it cannot be denied that specific things, real or unreal, are actually used as key phrases (*huatou*, 話頭) in the Chan dialogues. For instance, the “cypress tree in the front yard”, previously mentioned, is an object that Chan masters utilized in their answer. At this point, my question is focused primarily on whether these things employed in *gongans* presuppose a general law as do those used in the above logical formulas. In the previous three-part syllogism discussed in page 3 of this paper, the “pot” is an example that reveals the impermanence of all conditioned things (*saṃskṛtadharma*, 有為法). If so, is the “cypress tree in the front yard” an example that is meant to illustrate a certain truth?

Chan masters use the term “original face” (*benlai mianmu* 本來面目) to describe the inherent state of enlightenment.²⁰ As not having originated from and being free from the duality of subject and object, the “original face” is that which encompasses every existence. By way of illustration, let us look at the following *gongan* in the *Biyān lu*, which is a Chan dialogue between a monk and Zhaozhou.

Gongan 3 Q: “All things return to one; where does the one return?”

A: “When I was in Qing providence, I made a cloth shirt, which weighed seven pounds”.²¹

According to the Japanese Zen master, Hakuin Ekaku (ca. 1685–768), author of a commentary on the *Biyān lu*, this form of questioning in the *gongan* is called a “wrapping up question”, so called because the monk wants a definitive answer to the question: what is the ultimate point in which everything is included? (See Cleary 2000, p. 148). The “one” in the above question has other appellations such as Dharma realm (*dharmadhātu*, 法界), One mind (*ekacitta*, 一心), and Buddha nature (*buddhadhātu*, 佛性).²² Although diversely depicted in accordance with the various scriptural teachings, it expresses

¹⁷ ZL 799,a5–7: 心上必帶境之影像, 宗因云 心對外質, 同喻 如鏡照面時。

¹⁸ Note DPChF 923,b15–17: 如清淨摩尼寶珠 置泥濘之中 經百千歲 亦不能染污, 以本體自淨故, 此心亦然。

¹⁹ BYL 140,a12: 第一則 垂示, “隔山見煙早知是火”。

²⁰ The full sentence of *benlai mianmu* is: “What was your ‘original face’ before your parents conceived you (父母未生前 本來面目)?” The “parents” allude to the duality of subject and object, etc. The term of *benlai mianmu* is best known in Case 23 of the *gongan* collection, *Wumen guan* (無門關), in which the sixth patriarch Huineng says, “not thinking of good, not thinking of evil, at this very moment, what is your ‘original face’?”. See WG 295,23: 不思善不思惡 正與麼時那箇是明上座本來面目。

²¹ BYL 181,c17–19: 舉 僧問趙州 “萬法歸一 一歸何處”, 州云 “我在青州 作一領布衫 重七斤”。

²² For a breakdown of the different names related to the “one”, see Buswell (1991, p. 335; 1992, pp. 121–22). From the beginning of Buddhism, a truth has been expressed in multiple ways. For instance, the Noble Truth of Suffering (*duḥkhasatya*, 苦諦) has been configured as four aspects (*ākāra*): impermanence (*anityatā*, 無常), selflessness (*nairātmya*, 無我), suffering (*duḥkhatā*,

a Buddhist truth, constituting the fundamental principle of everything (Note Faure 1986, pp. 110–12; Buswell 1991, p. 341; Welter 2011, pp. 52–55).

In *Gongan* 3, Zhaozhou answers that the “one” returns to a “cloth shirt that weighed seven pounds”. This means that the “shirt” here is not simply clothing perceived by ordinary people. Rather, it is a being or object that reveals an all-encompassing truth that the “one” illustrates.²³ The aforementioned “cypress tree in the front yard” serves the same logical function as the “shirt” in the sense that it is a specific thing that enabled Chan teachers to provide an answer to the question, “What is Buddhist ultimate truth?”. Therefore, the same can be said of the “cypress tree in the front yard”: namely, from the enlightened teacher’s perspective, it itself is that which manifests a truth.

7. A *huatou* as a *dr̥ṣṭānta*

Given that the “cypress tree in the front yard” uncovers a truth, it is worth asking what kind of truth it might express. Let us consider this issue by looking at one of the most popular concepts in the Chan teachers’ repertoire, the Dharma realm. According to Huayan Buddhism, everything is the full revelation of the body of the cosmic Buddha.²⁴ A real thing in the actual world is nothing other than a Dharma body (*dharmakāya*, 法身).²⁵ Each Dharma body is that which manifests the true reality of the Dharma realm.²⁶ For instance, a pine tree reveals its true reality; a chestnut tree reveals its true reality.²⁷ This Huayan thought is well stated in Chan master Mazu’s following description: “There is no place to stand where one leaves the truth. The very place one stands on is the truth; it is all one’s being. If that is not so, then who is that? All *dharmas* [things] are Buddhadharmas and all *dharmas* never leave suchness. Whether walking, standing, sitting, or reclining, everything is always the inconceivable function [of suchness]. The scriptures say that a Buddha is everywhere”.²⁸

Insomuch as the “cypress tree in the front yard” is a real thing (or object), it is a Dharma body from the Huayan standpoint, a lens through which Chan masters see this world.²⁹ Therefore, this “cypress tree” is a thing which manifests the true reality of the Dharma realm. In other words, the “tree” is that in which the property of “being a Dharma body” is shown to be followed by the property of “revealing the true reality of the Dharma realm”. Since the “cypress tree in the front yard” is an instance which presents a positive concomitance (*anvaya*, 合)—i.e., “Whatever is a Dharma body reveals the true reality of the Dharma realm”—it is entirely plausible to propose that Zhaozhou’s *gongan* is expressed in the following three-part syllogism, a logical formula which was already known in the China of his time.

[proposition] A real thing reveals the true reality of the Dharma realm.

[reason] Because it is a Dharma body.

[similar ex. statement] Whatever is a Dharma body reveals the true reality of the Dharma realm, like the cypress tree in the front yard.³⁰

苦), and emptiness (*śūnyatā*, 空). By way of example, impermanence conforms to the truth that all conditioned things are impermanent; selflessness confirms to the truth that all conditioned things are selfless; etc. For more on this, see Conze (1962, pp. 34–39).

²³ See YFChY 769,a28–29: 現成公案 不隔一絲毫 普天匝地 是一箇大解脫門. Note also, Roshi Taisen Deshimaru’s statement that “all phenomena of our life become a truth” (Coupey 1979, p. 21).

²⁴ See DGHJ 454,c2–3: 清淨妙法身 應現種種形 猶如大幻師 所樂無不現 and DGHJ 486,b18–19: 三世一切佛 法身悉清淨 隨其所應化 普現妙色身.

²⁵ Note BYL 177,b28: 法身覺了無一物.

²⁶ DGHJ 39,b28: 華藏世界所有塵 一一塵中見法界.

²⁷ See BDChR 758,a26–b4: 法界佛無處不至故者 一塵法界 松木法界 栗木法界 乃至十方三際虛空法界 總是佛身 所謂真如 前際不滅 後際不生 現在不動. 如來亦爾 過去無滅 未來無生 現今無動 無形無相 如虛空界 不可量故. 百千萬劫已說 今說當說 終不可盡 無有邊際故 曰法界佛也.

²⁸ Quoted from Poceski (2007, p. 184).

²⁹ According to Yumen, every phenomenon in this world is a Dharma body. Note YWChG 559,a15–16: 一切聲是佛聲 一切色是佛色 盡大地是法身. See also Takasaki and Umehara (1997, pp. 39–40).

³⁰ It is obvious that Dharmakīrti’s logical formula was not used in China in the period of Tang and Song dynasties. For this reason, I express this *gongan* in the format of the three-part syllogism. Since the truth the *gongan* implies is all-inclusive, however, it is better to be expressed in the two-part syllogism.

The question in aforementioned *Gongan 1* i.e., “what was Bodhidharma’s intention in coming from the west?” appears a few times in the *Zhaozhou lu*. On each occasion, Zhaozhou’s answer is different. Sometimes, it is “bed legs”;³¹ at other times it is: “now, I am washing my feet”.³² Given that there are several different answers to the same question, we can assume that the Chan master’s focus is not the “cypress tree in the front yard” itself. Rather, it is the fact that from his fully enlightened perspective, everything in this world is a Dharma body. Consequently, whether it is “bed legs” or the “act of washing feet”, there is no difference, since the truth that emanates from them reveals the true reality of the Dharma realm. Hence,

[proposition] A real thing reveals the true reality of the Dharma realm.

[reason] Because it is a Dharma body.

[similar ex. statement] Whatever is a Dharma body reveals the true reality of the Dharma realm, like the cypress tree in the front yard, *and so on*.³³

As shown in the previous *gongans*, many key phrases (*huatou*, 話頭) are drawn from real empirically observable things. However, some are drawn from unreal or merely hypothetical instances. For example, the “hair grown on an incisor-tooth” stated in *Gongan 2* does not exist anywhere in the world.³⁴ The student’s question is the same in *Gongan 1* and *Gongan 2*. By placing these two dialogues together in a logical formula, we can see that the “hair grown on an incisor-tooth” exactly corresponds to a “dissimilar example” in the three-part syllogism:

[proposition] A real thing reveals the true reality of the Dharma realm.

[reason] Because it is a Dharma body.

[pervasion] Whatever is a Dharma body reveals the true reality of the Dharma realm, *like the cypress tree in the front yard*.

[reason’s being a property of the topic of a proposition] The things that the teacher and the student are seeing together are a Dharma body.

The same truth can be expressed in various ways. According to the *Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論, all things are nothing other than One mind (note DQL 576,a10–13: 是故一切法 從本已來 離言說相 離名字相 離心緣相 畢竟平等 無有變異 不可破壞 唯是一心 故名真如). Using the concept of One mind, it may be stated in the following logical formula:

[pervasion] Whatever is a phenomenon (*dharma*, 法) is the manifestation of One mind, *like the cypress tree in the front yard*.

[reason’s being a property of the topic of a proposition] The things that the teacher and the student are seeing together are a phenomenon.

³¹ See ZhZhChY 364,a30: 問“如何是祖師西來意”師云“床腳”. In BYL, there are more examples of *gongan* whose *huatou* presents a real thing: “What is Buddha?” “Three catties of flax.” (Case 12: 僧問東山“如何是佛”山云“麻三斤”); “What is the Deva school?” “A silver bowl full of snow.” (Case 13: 僧問巴陵“如何是提婆宗”巴陵云“銀碗裏盛雪”); “What is the pure Dharma body?” “A flowering hedge.” (Case 39: 僧問雲門“如何是清淨法身”門云“花樂欄”); “What is a talk beyond Buddhas and patriarchs?” “A piece of cake.” (Case 77: 僧問雲門“如何是超佛超祖之談”門云“餬餅”).

³² See ZhZhChY 369,c26–27: 師因到臨濟方始洗 臨濟便問“如何是祖師西來意”師云“正值洗腳”. For more on *huatous* that present a specific act, see BYL, Case 19: “Whenever a question was asked to Master Judi, he just raised a finger” (俱胝和尚 凡有所問“只豎一指”); Case 32: “An elder monk asked Linji: What is the great meaning of the Buddha’s teaching? Getting off his meditation seat, Linji grabbed the monk and gave him a slap, then pushed him away” (定上座問臨濟 如何是佛法大義 濟“下禪床 攙住 與一掌 便托開”).

³³ Here, “*and so on*” is equivalent to Sanskrit word “*ādi*” which is often used in the three part-syllogism in order to imply that there are many examples (*dr̥ṣṭānta*, 喻). For instance, see the part of NP 141.7–8: *yat kṛtakaṃ tad anityaṃ dr̥ṣṭaṃ yathā ghaṭādir iti*.

³⁴ For more on *huatous* that depict an unreal thing, see SYYS: “What is the place from which all Buddhas come?” “The East Mountain walking on the water.” (Case 1034: 730,a15–16: 雲門因僧問“如何是諸佛出身處”師云“東山水山行”); “What is the teaching of your tradition?” “An iron hen which, sitting on her eggs, goes back to the Milky Way and a rabbit in the moon which, being with her young, enters into the Jami palace.” (Case 1173: 797,a21–23: 洪州鳳棲山 同安丕禪師因僧問“如何是和尚家風”師曰“金雞抱子歸霄漢 玉兔懷胎入紫微”); “What is the business surpassing the stage of a Buddha?” “The sun and the moon rising from the Chan master’s stick.” (Case 1283: 847,c19–21: 僧云“如何是佛向上事”師云“拄杖頭上挑日月”). See also Kim (2010, pp. 1217, 1191, 1251). Note also GYChCh 709, a7: “What is the self before the eons of nothingness?” “Blood dripping from a mud cow.” (“如何是空劫已前自己” 聾卓主丈一下云 金剛喫鐵棒“泥牛眼出血”).

[similar ex. statement] Whatever is a Dharma body reveals the true reality of the Dharma realm, like the cypress tree in the front yard, and so on.

[dissimilar ex. statement] Whatever does not reveal the true reality of the Dharma realm is not a Dharma body, *like the hair grown on an incisor-tooth*.

To the question, “what is the Buddha’s teaching that Bodhidharma wanted to transmit?”, whether the answer is the “cypress tree in the front yard” or the “hair grown on an incisor-tooth”, it does not simply refer to a certain existence or non-existence.³⁵ As can be seen from the above logical formula, the real intention of the teacher lies in encouraging the student to see the pervasion immanent within the dictum: “Whatever is a Dharma body reveals the true reality of the Dharma realm”; or, conversely, the counter-pervasion that “whatever does not reveal the true reality of the Dharma realm is not a Dharma body”.³⁶ This demonstrates that just as the “pot” or the “ether” in Dignāga’s three-part syllogism implies a general law, so does the “cypress tree in the front yard” or the “hair grown on the incisor-tooth” in Zhauzhou’s *gongans*.

As the two statements of similar and dissimilar examples are logically equivalent in Buddhist logic, so too are those of key phrases that are expressive of the real and the unreal in *gongans*. Yuanwu Keqin (圓悟克勤, ca. 1063–135), compiler of the *Biyān lu*, seemed to know this well.

A monk asked Yunmen, “What is the place from which all Buddhas come?” Yunmen answered, “The East Mountain walks on the water”. However, if I were asked the same question, I would say, “As a fragrant breeze comes from the south, a chilly wind blows through the main hall of a temple”.³⁷

The “East Mountain walking on the water” is self-evidently absurd, and so, it is an instance of what is unreal. On the other hand, a “chilly wind blowing through the main hall of a temple as a fragrant breeze comes from the south” is plausible enough, and there can indeed be such a real instance. The questions, “what was Bodhidharma’s intention in coming from the west?” and “what is the place from which all Buddhas come?” are, thus, the same in the end. They both ask what Buddhist truth is. If we examine the *gongans* of Yunmen and Yuanwu from the perspective of a logical formula, the former corresponds to a dissimilar example, while the latter is a similar example.

[proposition] A real thing reveals the true reality of the Dharma realm.

[reason] Because it is a Dharma body.

[similar ex. statement] Whatever is a Dharma body reveals the true reality of the Dharma realm, *like a chilly wind blowing through the main hall of a temple as a fragrant breeze comes from the south*.

[dissimilar ex. statement] Whatever does not reveal the true reality of the Dharma realm is not a Dharma body, *like the East Mountain walking on the water*.

What Yuanwu wants to emphasize here is not whether Yunmen’s answer is right or wrong. He only means to say that his answer is more effective than Yunmen’s in guiding a student, who is enveloped in the darkness of ignorance, along the right path. This is because he presented an actual event relatable to an ordinary experience, whereas Yunmen did not. This explains why real, phenomenal things greatly outnumber unreal, hypothetical things in the framing of the key phrases of *gongans*.

³⁵ There is a *gongan* which clearly shows this point, employing a “cow’s horns” and a “rabbit’s horns”. See SYYSH 642,c4–6: (Case 892) 曹山因僧問 卽心卽佛 卽不問 如何是非心非佛 師云 “兔角不用無 牛角不用有”.

³⁶ As a truth, the pervasion and the counter-pervasion are well expressed in DGHJ 444,a9–10: 法身真實相 於實知真實 非實知非實.

³⁷ See DPChF 883,a15–18: “僧問雲門 如何是諸佛出身處 門云 東山水上行 若是天寧不然 如何是諸佛出身處 薰風自南來 殿閣生微向”.

8. Concluding Remarks

Essentially, *gongans* are based on the difference of perspectives between Chan teachers and students. Teachers represent the realm of *nirvāṇa*, while students represent the realm of emotional afflictions (*kleśa*). Teachers create *gongans*, employing various methods to guide students to enlightenment which they, the teachers, have already experienced for themselves.³⁸ In this respect, there is a strong possibility that Chan teachers, who regarded simplicity and shortcuts (徑截) as the highest of virtues, showed a special interest in a logical formula (*prayoga*) of Buddhist logic, which was designed to succinctly express a truth or fact. As noted above, the way that a *gongan* employs a specific thing, whether real or unreal, as a *huatou* is structurally quite similar to the manner in which the three-part syllogism employs it as a *dr̥ṣṭānta*. In both cases of the *huatou* and the *dr̥ṣṭānta*, the specific thing illustrates a truth (or fact). The main difference between them can be described thus: the *huatou* utilizes a specific thing to induce a realization of a truth yet to be revealed, whereas the *dr̥ṣṭānta* utilizes a specific thing to verify a truth completely revealed.

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Abbreviations

BDChR	<i>Bupgye dogi chongsu rok</i> 法界圖記叢髓錄. In T no. 1887B, 45: 716,a21–767,c20.
BYL	<i>Biyan lu</i> 碧巖錄. In T no. 2003, 48: 139,a1–225,c14.
ChL	<i>Chengweishi lun</i> 成唯識論. In T no. 1585, 31: 1,a1–60,a12
DGHJ	<i>Dafang guangfo huayan jing</i> 大方廣佛華嚴經. In T no. 278, 9: 395,a1–788,b9.
DPChF	<i>Dahui Pujue chanshi fayu</i> 大慧普覺禪師法語. In T no. 1998A, 47: 890,a1–943,b4.
DQL	<i>Dasheng qixin lun</i> 大乘起信論. In T no. 1666, 32: 575,a1–583,b17.
GYChCh	<i>Gaofeng Yuanmiao chanshi chanyao</i> 高峰原妙禪師禪要. In X no. 1401, 70: 702,a1–713,a13.
HB	<i>Hetubindu</i> of Dharmakīrti, part I, ed. E. Steinkellner. Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1967.
HBJ	<i>Hanguk bulgyo jeonso</i> 韓國佛教全書
J	<i>Jiaxing jing</i> 嘉興藏
KBhA	<i>Kṣaṇabhāṅgasiddhi-Ānvayātmikā</i> of Jñānaśrīmitra. In A. Thakur, ed. 1987. <i>Jñānaśrīmitranibandhāvaliḥ</i> : 1–159. Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute.
KSA	<i>Kṣaṇabhāṅgasiddhi-Ānvayātmikā</i> of Ratnakīrti. In A. Thakur, ed. 1975. <i>Ratnakīrtinibandhāvaliḥ</i> : 67–82. Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute.
MDChG	<i>Mazu Daoyi chanshi guanglu</i> 馬祖道一禪師廣錄. In X no. 1321, 69: 809,a1–816,b18.
NP	<i>Nyāyapraveśa</i> of Śaṅkarasvāmin. In Tachikawa (1971), pp. 140–44).
SYSH	<i>Seonmun yeomsong yeomsong seollwa hoebon</i> 禪門拈頌拈頌說話會本. In HBJ, vol. 5: 1,a1–925,c5.
T	<i>Taisho tripiṭaka</i> 大正藏
WG	<i>Wumen guan</i> 無門關. In T no. 2005, 48: 292,a23–299,c25.
X	<i>Xuzang jing</i> 續藏經
YFChY	<i>Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu</i> 圓悟佛果禪師語錄. In T no. 1997, 47: 713,b19–810,c29.
YJL	<i>Yinming juchengli lun</i> 因明入正理論. In T no. 1630, 32: 11a–12c.
YWChG	<i>Yumen Wenyan chanshi guanglu</i> 雲門偃禪師廣錄. In T no. 1988, 47: 544,c23–577,c29.
ZhZhChY	<i>Zhaozhou Zhenji chanshi yulu</i> 趙州真際禪師語錄. In J no. B137, 24: 357,a1–372,b15.
ZL	<i>Zongjing lu</i> 宗鏡錄. In T no. 2016, 48: 415,a1–957,b16.

³⁸ The encounter dialogues between Chan masters and students played a crucial role in the development of Chan discourse. For their significance as the basic literary unit of the great majority of *gongan* cases, see Yanagida (1983, pp. 192–94); Heine (2000, pp. 139–42).

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