



**RELIGIOUS NATURALISM IN CHAN BUDDHISM WITH  
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE BLUE CLIFF RECORD**

**BAOYU WANG**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN GLOBAL BUDDHISM  
INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE INNOVATION AND CULTURE  
RAJAMANGALA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY KRUNGTHEP  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2023  
COPYRIGHT OF RAJAMANGALA UNIVERSITY OF  
TECHNOLOGY KRUNGTHEP, THAILAND**

**RELIGIOUS NATURALISM IN CHAN BUDDHISM WITH  
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE BLUE CLIFF RECORD**

**BAOYU WANG**



**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN GLOBAL BUDDHISM  
INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE INNOVATION AND CULTURE  
RAJAMANGALA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY KRUNGTHEP  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2023  
COPYRIGHT OF RAJAMANGALA UNIVERSITY OF  
TECHNOLOGY KRUNGTHEP, THAILAND**

**Thesis** RELIGIOUS NATURALISM IN CHAN BUDDHISM WITH SPECIAL  
 REFERENCE TO THE BLUE CLIFF RECORD  
**Author** Baoyu WANG  
**Major** Master of Arts in Global Buddhism  
**Advisor** Dr. Metteyya Beliatte

---

**THESIS COMMITTEE**

.....Chairperson  
 (Assistant Professor Dr. Somboon Watana)

.....Advisor  
 (Dr. Metteyya Beliatte)

.....Committee  
 (Assistant Professor Dr. Yaoping LIU)

Approved by the Institute of Science Innovation and Culture  
 Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep in Partial Fulfillment  
 of the Requirements for the Master's Degree

.....  
 (Assistant Professor Dr. Yaoping LIU)  
 Director of the Institute of Science Innovation and Culture  
 Date.....Month.....Year.....

**Thesis** RELIGIOUS NATURALISM IN CHAN BUDDHISM WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO THE BLUE CLIFF RECORD  
**Author** Baoyu WANG  
**Major** Master of Arts in Global Buddhism  
**Advisor** Dr. Metteyya Beliatte  
**Academic**  
**Year** 2023

---

## ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the interplay of religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism, emphasizing its manifestation within the Blue Cliff Record. By contextualizing the research, the study identifies a gap in understanding naturalism in this seminal text. Religious naturalism is conceptualized as the belief in nature as a whole, negating the need for the supernatural. By comparing religious naturalism with Buddhist tenets, parallels emerge, particularly the shared accentuation on nature, experiential understanding, and non-dualism. The Blue Cliff Record, a work compiled by Chan Master Yuanwu Keqin in the Song Dynasty, emphasizes tenets such as renouncing attachments and appreciating the inherent Buddha nature. A significant portion of the analysis is dedicated to depicting flowers in the text, symbolizing the principles of harmony with religious naturalism, including simplicity and self-realization through lived experience. The dissertation concludes by revisiting its objectives, accentuating the nuanced differences between religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism, and emphasizing the potential for future interdisciplinary dialogues and research.

**Keywords: Religious Naturalism, Chan Buddhism, Blue Cliff Record, Gong'ans, Koans**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Metteyya Beliatte, for his unwavering guidance, patience, and mentorship throughout this research. His encouragement and insightful advice have been indispensable in navigating the challenges of this work.

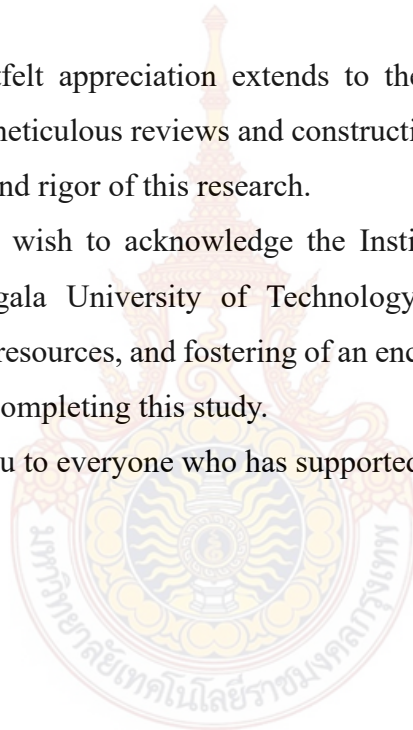
I am also profoundly thankful to Dr. Yaoping Liu for his invaluable expertise and critical insights, which have significantly shaped the direction and depth of this thesis.

My heartfelt appreciation extends to the members of the Examination Committee for their meticulous reviews and constructive feedback, which have greatly enriched the quality and rigor of this research.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the Institute of Science Innovation and Culture at Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep. Their continuous support, provision of resources, and fostering of an encouraging academic environment have been crucial in completing this study.

Thank you to everyone who has supported me on this journey.

Baoyu WANG



## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>APPROVAL PAGE .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Research Background.....	1
1.2 Research Problem.....	2
1.3 Research Objectives .....	5
1.4 Research Questions .....	5
1.5 Research Methods .....	6
1.6 Research Scope.....	8
1.7 The Limitation of the Research .....	9
1.8 Significance of the Research .....	10
<b>CHAPTER II RELIGIOUS NATURALISM .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 The Meanings of Naturalism.....	11
2.2 Defining Religious Naturalism.....	14
2.3 Religious Naturalism and Buddhist Naturalism.....	17
2.3.1 Shared Philosophy between Religious Naturalism and Chan Thought .....	19
2.3.2 Distinctions Between Religious Naturalism and Chan Thought .....	24
<b>CHAPTER III THE "BLUE CLIFF RECORD" OF CHAN BUDDHISM .....</b>	<b>30</b>
3.1 Overview of "Blue Cliff Record": Its Creation and Development.....	30
3.2 The Chan Thought in the "Blue Cliff Record" .....	32
3.3 The Impact of Chan Thought in the "Blue Cliff Record" on Chan Buddhism...41	41
<b>CHAPTER IV RELIGIOUS NATURALISM IN "BLUE CLIFF RECORD" OF CHAN BUDDHISM.....</b>	<b>44</b>
4.1 The Symbol of Flower in "Blue Cliff Record" .....	44

4.2 Naturalism behind the Symbol of Flower in the "Blue Cliff Record" .....	45
<b>CHAPTER V DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>55</b>
5.1 Review of Major Findings.....	55
5.2 Revisiting Objectives and Contributions.....	56
5.3 Additional Findings .....	58
5.4 Conclusion.....	60
5.5 Suggestions for Further Research.....	61
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>63</b>



## LIST OF TABLES

	<b>Page</b>
Table 1.1 5 Implications of "Naturalism" Given by Owen Flanagan .....	12



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

Religious naturalism is an increasingly prominent perspective in modern discourse on spirituality and religion. It emerges from the synthesis of two often conflicting domains: science and spirituality. This philosophical and spiritual perspective embraces nature as a source of inspiration and guidance, shaping spiritual growth and ethical conduct, emphasizing the interconnectedness of nature, humanity, and divinity to bridge the gap between religious and scientific worldviews.

Among Chinese Buddhist sects, Chinese Chan Buddhism exhibits elements of religious naturalism in its profound connection with and understanding of nature. Chan Buddhism, which has profoundly influenced many aspects of Chinese culture, including art, literature, and philosophical discourse, exemplifies how spirituality and nature can interweave. It creatively uses natural scenery to interpret the essence of "Chan" in poetry, inspiring people to elevate their spiritual realm to the level of "Chan" and thereby facilitating the harmonious unity of humanity and nature.

One crucial text in this tradition is the "Blue Cliff Record" from the Northern Song Dynasty, a significant source of Chan Buddhist teachings. It comprises "gong'ans," or public cases that provide nuanced insights into that era's spiritual, philosophical, and naturalistic reflections. The text uses symbolic language and rich imagery to convey Buddhist teachings, frequently using the beauty and mystery of nature as a metaphorical backdrop to deliver profound spiritual insights.

In the "Blue Cliff Record," the religious naturalism within Chan Buddhism is evident in the symbolic use of nature, particularly flowers and plants, as metaphors or teaching devices. They serve as gateways to enlightenment, offering profound truths through the appreciation and understanding of the natural world. A detailed examination of the use of these symbols and their connection to religious naturalism in the "Blue Cliff Record" can further enrich our understanding of the philosophical and spiritual dimensions of Chan Buddhism.

Hence, this research aims to delve deeper into the symbolic naturalism in

the "Blue Cliff Record" and tease apart the complex interplay of nature-centric metaphors. Through this, it seeks to foreground the principles of religious naturalism inherent in Chan Buddhism. This study will significantly advance scholarly understanding of religious naturalism in Chan Buddhism and highlight the relevance of these teachings for addressing contemporary ecological concerns.

## 1.2 Research Problem

The research on the "Blue Cliff Record" in China has historically been broad and varied. These studies often focus on aspects such as the Chan of the characters, the disciplines they have learned, and, occasionally, certain aspects of the text. For example, Grammatology conducted prepositional research on the text, philology focused on textual research, a host of scholarly commentaries examining the ideas within the text, and some textual interpretation and analysis.

Esteemed works such as Li Wenzhe's "Language Studies of the Song Dynasty" and Liu Jian and Jiang Lansheng's "Song Language Dictionary" have frequently cited the "Blue Cliff Record", underscoring its significance in Chinese studies. However, while these works and others in the same vein offer valuable insights, they delve into isolated aspects of the text, leaving a comprehensive and cohesive study of the "Blue Cliff Record" somewhat wanting.

The "General History of Chinese Chan Buddhism" is one of the prominent pieces of research that provides an overview of the composition, literary structure, authorship, and insights of the "Blue Cliff Record". Other domestic papers have also made substantial contributions. For example, Naiguang's article "Commentary on the Collection of Bi Yan", the earliest to research the "Blue Cliff Record", reviews the six most representative cases of commenting and singing, as well as praising the ancients in the "Blue Cliff Record". Gao Yuting's article "Yuan Wu Ke Qin's Chan Thought" focuses on whether Ke Qin supports interpreting Chan through words and his views on words. At the same time, it explores Ke Qin's Chan thought and the Huayan elements contained within it, explains the main spirit of Ke Qin's Chan, and reexamines his historical evaluation. In Wei Daoru's article "Several Issues on Song Dynasty's Written Chan", it is believed that "commenting on singing" is the highest form or final stage of

the development of textual Chan. The only commentary style quotations that appeared in the Song Dynasty are the "Blue Cliff Record" written by Chan Master Ke Qin. The most prominent characteristics of this book and the two tendencies arising from these characteristics are summarized.

Wu Yansheng's article "The Image System of Chanting the Ancient by Chanting the Official Case" analyzes the imaging system of Chanting the Ancient by using the original mind theory, the lost theory, the enlightenment theory, and the realm theory, respectively, through the investigation of Xuedou's "Hundred Principles of Chanting the Ancient" and Yuanwu's "Blue Cliff Record", reflecting the unique life experience of the Chan people.<sup>1</sup>

Several other papers, Pang Xiyun's study on Lao Zhuang's ideas in Chan studies, Liu Fang's discussion on Keqin's Chan and aesthetic thoughts, Wu Yansheng's analysis of the imaging system, and Zhou Yukai's exploration of Chan Etymology of Song Dynasty Poetic Terminology, among others, have enriched our understanding of various aspects of "The Blue Cliff Record".<sup>2</sup> Several other papers, such as Pang Xiyun's study on Lao Zhuang's ideas and literary purposes in Chan Studies." Chan originated from integrating Lao Zhuang's teachings into Buddhist principles. To comprehend Chan, one must also borrow the wisdom of Laozhuang to appreciate it. The metaphor of Chan's philosophy, borrowed from the characters of Laozi and Zhuangzi, makes the literature more lively and spiritual.

In Liu Fang's article "Understanding Keqin's Chan and Aesthetic Thoughts."<sup>3</sup> The famous public case of Yuanwu Keqin Enlightening has almost become an aesthetic practice among the literati and officialdom. The Chan theory of freedom, liberation, and transcendence in life, as discussed by Keqin, is also deeply imbued with the religious aesthetic theory of transcendence. Keqin's "Blue Cliff Record" creates methods not found in traditional Chinese hermeneutics and reflects certain characteristics of experiential aesthetics.

In his article "Understanding the Essence of Literal Chan from the Biyan

---

<sup>1</sup> Wu Yansheng, "The Symbolic System of Chanting the Ancient by Chanting the Official Case", *Journal of Shaanxi Normal University*, (2002): 21.

<sup>2</sup> Pang Xiyun, "First Following the Grass, Then Following the Falling Flowers - Lao Zhuang's Ideas and Literary Purposes in Chan Studies," *Appreciation of Masterpieces: Academic Edition*, no. 10

<sup>3</sup> Liu Fang, "Understanding Keqin's Chan and Aesthetic Thoughts," *Religious Studies Research* 2 (2005).

Record"<sup>4</sup>, Xie Yan believed that real understanding had nothing to do with the object of "understanding" but an "attitude" of "understanding". The essence of this posture is an enjoyable and poetic attitude towards life, with a psychological connotation of "non-oppression". It can take various forms in specific communication fields, but these opportunisms share common "timely" and "appropriate" behavioral structural characteristics.

In Zhou Yukai's "Chan Etymology of Song Dynasty Poetic Terminology,"<sup>5</sup> it is pointed out that after the middle of the Northern Song Dynasty, with the prevalence of Chan pleasure, the aesthetic mentality of Song Dynasty literati greatly changed. The traditional cultural discourse, mainly influenced by Confucianism and Taoism, could no longer fully convey aesthetic concepts. At the same time, due to the continuous infiltration of Buddhist ideological resources, language, and expression in the creation of Song poetry, especially the re-understanding of poetry texts by Song people inspired by Chan meditation, traditional literary discourse seems out of place when explaining new literary phenomena. The Song Dynasty urgently needed a new set of literary discourse, corresponding to the "eyes of the law," to fill the gaps in traditional literary discourse. As a result, many Chan terms were introduced into poetics, forming a distinct feature of Song poetics that "uses Chan as a metaphor for poetry". This article explains the sources, theoretical connotations, and relationship with Chan sects of common Chan terms in Song poetry theory.

Despite these extensive research efforts, a substantial academic gap remains. The literature primarily focuses on individual aspects of the "Blue Cliff Record" without providing a comprehensive and systematic study of its use of 'imagery' to express Chan's thoughts and the 'naturalism' it employs to express its spiritual realm. This gap in the existing research underlines the need for a more holistic, nuanced, and systematic investigation into the "Blue Cliff Record". Specifically, there is a pressing need to understand how the "Blue Cliff Record" employs imagery and naturalism to articulate Chan's thoughts and represent spiritual cultivation. Furthermore, the existing

---

<sup>4</sup> Xie Yan, "Understanding the Essence of Literal Chan from the Biyan Record," *Journal of Anhui Normal University: Humanities and Social Sciences* 34, no. 5 (2006): 5.

<sup>5</sup> Zhou Yukai, "Chan Etymology of Song Dynasty Poetic Terminology," *Research on Literary Theory* 6 (1998): 7.

literature does not sufficiently address the implications of these elements in understanding the richness of thought, the pros and cons of contemporary times, as reflected in the "Blue Cliff Record".

Thus, the primary research problem this study will address is: How does the "Blue Cliff Record" employ imagery and naturalism to express Chan's thoughts and spiritual cultivation, and what implications do these elements have for understanding the "Blue Cliff Record" in the broader context of Chan Buddhism? By addressing this research problem, this study aims to fill the academic gap left by previous research, offering new insights into the complex literary and philosophical landscape of the "Blue Cliff Record" and contributing to our broader understanding of Chan Buddhism.

By diving deep into this pivotal question, this research aspires to bridge an identified academic chasm, providing an enriched, holistic understanding of the "Blue Cliff Record" and, by extension, enhancing our broader appreciation of Chan Buddhism.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

- (1) To study the concept of religious naturalism in contemporary thought;
- (2) To explore the aspects of "religious naturalism" inherent in Chinese Chan with reference to the "Blue Cliff Record";
- (3) To interpret the meanings and implications of religious naturalism inherent in Chan Buddhism.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

- (1) How is religious naturalism perceived and interpreted in contemporary contexts?
- (2) What are the aspects of "naturalism" inherent in Chinese Chan, particularly in the "Blue Cliff Record"?
- (3) What are the meanings and implications of religious naturalism inherent in Chan Buddhism?

## 1.5 Research Methods

This research is a qualitative documentary study based on the "Blue Cliff Record" (Chinese version), found in Volume 48 of the "Da Zheng Zang", which serves as the primary source. Secondary sources will be related literature in books, dissertations, articles, and booklets. The following step-by-step process will be employed:

(1) **Gathering the manuscripts:** The first step is to collect the "Blue Cliff Record" and other relevant literature for the research.

(2) **Selecting the related texts:** Specific parts of the "Blue Cliff Record" and other literature related to the research objectives will be identified. This will involve sampling Gong'ans (*koans*) about flowers and plants from the "Blue Cliff Record" with a purposeful focus on Gong'ans that best exemplify the intersection between Chan thought and naturalism. The distinctive imagery of flowers will serve as the starting point for understanding the naturalistic accounts in the text.

(3) **Translating the selected texts into English:** The selected parts of the text will then be translated into English to facilitate an accurate interpretation of the various verses and ancient texts in the "Blue Cliff Record".

(4) **Textual Interpretation:** A significant task is accurately interpreting the various verses and ancient texts in the "Blue Cliff Record" to clarify the realm the author is trying to express. As the book was written in classical Chinese over a thousand years ago, the precise interpretation of the language and its imaginative beauty becomes vital for accurately studying the imagery of the flowers and Chan Buddhist thoughts on naturalism. Since its inception, Chan scholars have held the "Blue Cliff Record" in high esteem. According to the *Jingde chuandeng lu*<sup>6</sup>, some scholars recited the book's contents as a standard answer to questions about meditation practice. Although the author's disciples strongly criticized this approach, the reciter's memory influences the book's contents. As a result, there are many versions of the book throughout history, with varying dates of origin. This study references textual studies by Japanese scholars

---

<sup>6</sup>The *Jingde chuandeng lu* (景德傳燈錄) is a Song dynasty Chan Buddhist text compiled in 1004 CE. It contains biographies and teachings of over 200 masters documenting the spiritual genealogy of the Chan school from Bodhidharma to the 11th century.

to determine the time and place of a book's creation and the historical reasons for its disappearance in China.

The translated texts will be analyzed for:

**(1) Contextual Understanding:** With a bibliographic and linguistic approach, the study of the "Blue Cliff Record" begins with a clear understanding of the author's character, personal experiences, and the era in which the book was written. Understanding the meditation experience of the author of the "Blue Cliff Record", a renowned master of Chan Buddhism in the Northern Song Dynasty and a successor of the Linji<sup>7</sup> Sect in the late Northern Song Dynasty, is an important touchstone for comprehending the key figures of Chan Buddhism. The author's background and primary theories on Chan's studies will be briefly introduced to supplement the overall research.

**(2) Showing the Intersection of Chan Thought and Naturalism: The Linji sect, the largest school of Buddhism in China during the Northern Song Dynasty, holds unique views on the intersection of Chan thought and naturalism.** This school inherited the ideas of Hui Neng from the Tang dynasty. In terms of teaching style, it brought out Mazu Daoyi's 'great opportunity and great application' approach. On the contrary, it incorporates many of the achievements of Chan's scholarship prior to the Northern Song Dynasty. Among the many achievements, the naturalistic accounts are concentrated on the specific object of the flower. In this research, we will use representative imagery of flowers as a starting point to explore relevant cases, poems of praise, and commentary in the "Blue Cliff Record".

Definitions:

Explanation of the terms "Chan" and "Zen" in this study

In this research, "Chan" refers to the Chinese school of Mahayana Buddhism that developed in China in the 6th century CE. "Chan" is the transliteration of the Chinese word 禪 (pronounced as "Chán" in Mandarin), meaning meditation or

---

<sup>7</sup>Linji School, one of the major Chan Buddhist traditions from late Tang dynasty China, founded by Linji Yixuan (義玄) (810-866 CE), is known for its unorthodox methods, like shouting and striking, to prompt instant enlightenment. It remains influential in contemporary practice.

meditative absorption. "Zen" is the Japanese equivalent of the Chinese term "Chan" - it is a transliteration of the Japanese word 禪 (pronounced as "Zen"), which derives from the Chinese character for Chan.

In Buddhism, "Chan" refers to the tradition and lineage of the Chinese school, while "Zen" refers to the Japanese school that traces its origins to Chinese Chan. The Zen school was founded in the 12th century CE when Japanese monks traveled to China to study Chan and brought those teachings back to Japan.

While the terms "Chan" and "Zen" share the same Buddhist roots and many similarities in their practices and philosophies, the traditions developed separately in China and Japan over time, leading to variations.

## 1.6 Research Scope

This research will concentrate on an in-depth examination of the "Blue Cliff Record" (Chinese version) found in Volume 48 of the 'Da Zheng Zang', commonly referred to as the *Taishō Tripitaka* (大正藏)<sup>8</sup>. The core focus will be on the "Blue Cliff Record" retrieved version. This revered text faced an unfortunate fate when Chan Master Dahui Zonggao obliterated its original wood carving. This led to its near-complete absence from Chan literature for nearly a century. While a few remnants survived this hiatus, it was not until the Ming Dynasty that the complete text re-emerged, thanks to the relentless efforts of Zhang Mingyuan, who meticulously gathered, verified, and propagated manuscripts from diverse origins.

The heart of this research is a profound exploration of the authorship, textual content, and the singular Chan ideologies embedded within the "Blue Cliff Record". Moreover, the study will encompass an all-encompassing review of associated texts, literary works, scholarly articles, and annotations pertinent to the "Blue Cliff Record". The overarching aim is to unearth the profound perspectives on Chan thought as articulated in the text, thereby enhancing our comprehension of its esteemed position within the spectrum of Chan Buddhism.

---

<sup>8</sup>The *Taishō Tripitaka* (大正藏) is a definitive collection of East Asian Buddhist texts compiled in Japan between 1924-1934. It contains over 2,000 texts in 100 volumes, including sutras, vinaya, treatises, and other writings important to Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Buddhism.

It is noteworthy that, out of the numerous gong'ans (koans or public cases) presented in the "Blue Cliff Record", this study will strategically select and focus on 100 of them. These selections will predominantly align with the theme of religious naturalism, examining how they resonate with naturalistic elements and thereby testing the concept within the confines of the "Blue Cliff Record".

To facilitate a holistic view, English references will be sourced from diverse "Blue Cliff Record" translations, ensuring a well-rounded and comprehensive interpretation of the text's nuances. Consequently, the research ambit encompasses the illustrious legacy of Chan thought and aims to enrich our appreciation of the "Blue Cliff Record" and its timeless significance.

## 1.7 The Limitation of the Research

This research faces certain challenges, outlined as follows.

**(1) Language Barrier:** The "Blue Cliff Record" comprises many ancient texts that, even in modern vernacular translations, can be very difficult to understand accurately. The challenge is further compounded when translating these texts into English for this study. This poses a significant challenge for expressing the original text's true essence and accurately capturing its underlying ideas.

**(2) Artistic Conception:** The cases and poems of Chinese Chan Buddhism mainly reflect a strong artistic conception of self-cultivation. Expressing Chan's artistic conceptions, mainly through the aesthetic of the "flower", can sometimes be challenging due to the ineffability of these profound experiences. Hence, accurately expressing these conceptions in another language presents considerable difficulty.

**(3) Lack of Existing Research:** Although there are many scholarly works on the "Blue Cliff Record", the specific topic of the 'imagery'<sup>9</sup> of Chan Buddhism, and more specifically, its 'naturalistic imagery' has been relatively unexplored. This research aims to fill this knowledge gap and contribute to a niche but significant area within the field. However, the scarcity of directly or indirectly related scholarly works on the subject is also an objective fact and can limit the scope for comparison and cross-

---

<sup>9</sup> The so-called image is the objective phenomenon that is selected and orderly organized in the subjective consciousness.

referencing.

## 1.8 Significance of the Research

This research's significance lies in its in-depth exploration of the spirit and essence of "naturalism" in Chinese Chan Buddhism, drawing on the "Blue Cliff Record" as its foundation. This involves differentiating the naturalism expressed in Chinese Chan Buddhism from Western religious naturalism. Here are some ways this research could be beneficial:

**(1) Insight into Chan Buddhism:** Chinese Chan Buddhism has formed its unique form of naturalism as a Sinicized sect of Buddhism. This research provides a theoretical exploration of this unique Chan naturalism, enriching our understanding of Chan Buddhism.

**(2) Integration of Various Views:** The "naturalism" of Chinese Chan Buddhism integrates Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian views on nature and metaphysics. This study illuminates the influence of these various perspectives on Chan naturalism, thereby contributing to broader scholarly discourse on comparative religion and philosophy.

**(3) Aesthetic Significance:** The naturalism of Chinese Chan Buddhism has the "naturalism" of Chinese Chan Buddhism formed by integrating the "natural view" of Buddhism, the "natural view" of Taoism and metaphysics, and the "natural view" of Confucianism. Its theoretical connotation mainly manifests in the following four aspects: nature, the "Buddha nature" of mountains and rivers, the natural realm of life, and natural enlightenment. Its aesthetic significance mainly manifests as follows: a. the perceptual manifestation of Buddha nature; b. No distinction, absolutely waiting; c. Hyper spatiotemporal; d. Self-sufficiency, freedom, and the "naturalism" of Chinese Chan Buddhism. It significantly impacted ancient Chinese aesthetics and various artistic genres. The indistinguishable, absolute, and freely formed "naturalism" of Chan Buddhism is characteristic of the present and aligns with the psychological mechanism of aesthetic prosperity. Under the influence of Chan's naturalism, ancient Chinese monks and literati often pursued a life realm of emptiness, tranquility, seclusion, and natural recklessness. In terms of aesthetics and art, this life realm was manifested as the pursuit of emptiness, simplicity, and style. It could also shed light on how Chan's view of nature contributed to the development of the concept of "artistic conception," which

has significantly impacted Chinese poetry, painting, calligraphy, gardens, and other arts.

## CHAPTER II

### RELIGIOUS NATURALISM

The fundamental principles of religious naturalism provide a valuable context for exploring its significance and impact in Chan Buddhism, particularly regarding the "Blue Cliff Record". This section explores religious naturalism comprehensively, encompassing its definition, historical progression, core tenets, and its convergence with science, spirituality, and ethics.

#### 2.1 The Meanings of Naturalism

Naturalism is a term with an imprecise meaning in contemporary philosophy. However, it is widely associated with rejecting supernatural entities and accepting science as a potential route to important truths.<sup>101</sup> The modern understanding of the term stems from the mid-20th century American movement, which aimed to align philosophy more closely with science.<sup>111</sup> Notable philosophers from this period, such as John Dewey, Ernest Nagel, Sidney Hook, and Roy Wood Sellars, argued that reality is exhausted by nature, containing nothing supernatural, and promoted the use of the scientific method to investigate all areas of reality, including the "human spirit."<sup>112</sup>

Despite its widespread acceptance among contemporary philosophers, the term "naturalism" is subject to different interpretations and lacks a universally accepted meaning, a complexity especially notable among religious naturalists. This was underscored by the eminent philosopher Owen Flanagan, who observed that the terms 'naturalism' and 'naturalist' do not have a single fixed meaning.<sup>113</sup> He detailed 15 distinct meanings or implications of "naturalism" (see Table 1) while acknowledging the

---

<sup>11</sup>David Papineau, "Naturalism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2007, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/naturalism/>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Owen Flanagan, "Varieties of Naturalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton and Zachary Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 430-452.

existence of even more interpretations.

Table 1.1 5 Implications of "Naturalism" Given by Owen Flanagan<sup>14</sup>

No.	15 Implications of "Naturalism"
1.	Philosophy should 'respect, be informed by, wholeheartedly accept' the methods and claims of science.
2	When a well-grounded philosophical claim and an equally well-grounded scientific claim are inconsistent (whatever 'equally well-grounded' means), the scientific claim trumps.
3	Philosophical questions are not distinct from scientific questions—they differ if they do differ, only in level of generality.
4	Both science and philosophy are licensed only to describe and explain how things are.
5	In addition to the businesses of description and explanation, philosophy and science give naturalistic justifications for epistemic and ethical ideals and norms.
6	There is no room, or need, for invoking immaterial agents or forces or causes in describing or accounting for things.
7	Mathematics and logic can be understood without invoking a Platonic (non-naturalistic) ontology.
8	Ethics can be done without invoking theological or Platonic foundations. Ethical norms, values, and virtues can be defended naturalistically.
9	Naturalism is another name for materialism or physicalism; what there is, and all there is, is whatever physics says there is.
10	Naturalism is a form of non-reductive physicalism; there are genuine levels of nature above the elemental level.
11	Naturalism is a thesis that rejects both physicalism and materialism; there are natural but 'non-physical' properties, e.g., informational states.
12	Naturalism claims that most knowledge is a posteriori.
13	Naturalism is indifferent to claims about whether knowledge is a priori or a posteriori, so long as whatever kind of knowledge exists can be explained naturally.
14	Naturalism is, first and foremost, an ontological thesis that tells us about everything that there is.
15	Naturalism is, first and foremost, an epistemic thesis, which explains, among other things, why we should make no pronouncements about 'everything that there is'.

<sup>15</sup> Owen Flanagan, "Varieties of Naturalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton and Zachary Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 430-452.

These meanings of naturalism encompass a spectrum: from advocating that philosophy should be science-informed to prioritizing scientific over philosophical claims, blurring the boundaries between philosophy and science, and asserting epistemic and ethical norms through a naturalistic lens. They range from rejecting immaterial agents to defending ethical norms and recognizing various levels of nature in non-reductive physicalism. At its core, naturalism focuses on ontology and epistemology, guiding our understanding of existence and knowledge.

Prominent philosophers like Arthur C. Danto have highlighted that naturalism often takes a polemical stance against the belief that entities or events could exist beyond the reach of scientific explanation. In *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Danto defines naturalism as "repudiating the view that there exists or could exist any entities or events which lie, in principle, beyond the scope of scientific explanation".<sup>115</sup> Similarly, Lacey, in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, aligns with the idea that scientific explanation is central to naturalism's perspective.<sup>116</sup>

The "Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary" provides two definitions of "naturalism".<sup>117</sup> The first pertains to the literary and artistic realm, indicating a style of art or writing that depicts people, things, and experiences as they are.<sup>118</sup> The second definition is more philosophical, stating that naturalism is "the theory that everything in the world and life is based on natural causes and laws, and not on spiritual or supernatural ones."<sup>20</sup>

Additionally, the "Encyclopedia Americana" explains that, in philosophy, naturalism holds that nature encompasses all that can be known in reality and that the scientific method is the only means to ascertain truth.<sup>21</sup> Rather than a strict philosophical system, it is more appropriately described as a particular approach or path to philosophical questions and a set of conclusions that answer them. The *Encyclopedia Americana* offers a concise explanation: naturalism is a philosophical doctrine that

<sup>16</sup> Arthur C. Danto, "Naturalism," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (1967): 5-448.

<sup>116</sup> Alan R. Lacey, "Naturalism," in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 604-606.

<sup>117</sup> *Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary*, 6th ed. (Oxford: The Commercial Press; Oxford University Press, 2004), 1151.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana*, vol. 19 (Foreign Languages Press, 1994), 506.

asserts that everything in the universe, regardless of its nature, is natural, thus linking scientific methodology with philosophy.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, all knowledge about the universe falls within scientific inquiry.

However, it is important to note that naturalism is not a monolithic view. Variants like religious naturalism attempt to reconcile religious or spiritual beliefs with a naturalistic worldview, although they diverge on the extent to which scientific explanation is necessary or sufficient for understanding all aspects of existence. In summary, naturalism is an intellectual commitment to a fundamentally comprehensible reality through empirical observation and scientific reasoning, while allowing for a spectrum of interpretations and nuances.

## 2.2 Defining Religious Naturalism

As a variety of naturalism, religious naturalism is a philosophical approach that seeks to reconcile spirituality with a naturalistic worldview. Rejecting the notion of a supernatural realm, this framework grounds its beliefs within the observable universe. With its three significant tenets—naturalism, inherent values, and religiosity—religious naturalism offers an intellectually rigorous and spiritually resonant coherent belief system.<sup>23</sup>

The first foundational tenet of religious naturalism is naturalism - the view that the natural world is all there is.<sup>24</sup> For religious naturalists, nature encompasses everything, including all entities, forces, and phenomena. No separate supernatural realm or divine beings transcend or undergird the natural world. As Loyal Rue states:

*"[Naturalism] simply declares that whatever is natural is real and whatever is real is natural. Reality does not break out into the natural and supernatural realms. Naturalism rejects the notion that anything transcends nature, except nature itself."*<sup>25</sup>

This observation anchors naturalism as the core principle of religious

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Norton-Smith, "One Shawnee's Reflections on Religious Naturalism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Naturalism*, edited by Donald A. Crosby and Jerome A. Stone (Routledge, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> Loyal Rue, *Nature Is Enough: Religious Naturalism and the Meaning of Life* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012).

<sup>25</sup> Loyal Rue, *Nature Is Enough: Religious Naturalism and the Meaning of Life* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012).

naturalism, defining nature as the only realm of existence and rejecting the supernatural. By equating "natural" with "real," the author dismisses anything beyond nature as unreal. However, the phrase "nothing transcends nature, except nature itself" allows for emergent realities within the natural world.

Besides, Owen Flanagan, again, regarded "anti-supernaturalism" as the common core to all varieties of naturalism. He notes:

*"Anti-supernaturalism forms the common core, the common tenet, of "naturalism" insofar as "naturalism" is anything like a coherent philosophical doctrine spanning the last four centuries.... The objectionable form of "supernaturalism" is one according to which (i) there exists a "supernatural being or beings" or "power(s)" outside the natural world; (ii) this "being" or "power" has causal commerce with this world; (iii) the grounds for belief in both the "supernatural being" and its causal commerce with this world cannot be seen, discovered, or inferred by way of any known and reliable epistemic methods."*<sup>26</sup>

These contrast with most traditional theistic religions, which posit a supernatural deity or deities that exist apart from the natural world and often intervene in it through revelation, miracles, or divine action. Religious naturalism firmly rejects any such supernaturalism. No spiritual forces are acting upon the natural world from the outside. Human nature, culture, and history are not supernatural forces but part of the natural world that religious naturalists seek to understand through empirical inquiry.

The second key tenet of religious naturalism is the idea of inherent values. The belief that objective and intrinsic values are embedded in the natural world.<sup>27</sup><sup>21</sup> Religious naturalists argue that certain universal values emerge from the very nature of reality itself rather than being imposed from outside by a divine lawgiver. As Loyal Rue states, there are "objective, universal, and ultimate" values that are part of the fabric of nature.<sup>28</sup><sup>22</sup>

For example, religious naturalists see life as an inherent value within nature,

---

<sup>26</sup> Owen Flanagan, "Varieties of Naturalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton and Zachary Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 430-452.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Norton-Smith, "One Shawnee's Reflections on Religious Naturalism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Naturalism*, edited by Donald A. Crosby and Jerome A. Stone (Routledge, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> Loyal Rue, *Nature Is Enough: Religious Naturalism and the Meaning of Life* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011).

as evidenced by the tenacity and persistence of living organisms. Related values include diversity, complexity, symbiosis, and creativity, which arise through evolution. Beauty and splendor are also intrinsic to certain aspects of the natural world. Donald Crosby articulates a range of inherent values encompassing "life, biological species, ecological systems, the biosphere, diversity, creativity and splendor."<sup>29</sup><sup>23</sup>

At the same time, religious naturalism recognizes certain disvalues as also inherent to nature, such as predation, death, pain, and suffering. These are not the result of human sin or divine judgment but instead built into the very structure and dynamics of the natural order. As Crosby notes, "Nature...is replete with value, including religious value" and disvalue.<sup>30</sup><sup>24</sup>

Religious naturalism asserts an ethical framework tied directly to our scientific understanding of the world, grounding objective values in nature rather than in an external divine source. Moral truths are discovered, not revealed. This naturalistic value theory is at odds with theistic perspectives that derive morality from a transcendent deity. Religious naturalists argue for an ethics grounded in reality.

In summary, the perception of inherent values and disvalues embedded in nature is a core tenet of religious naturalism and its naturalistic worldview. Values emerge from within nature, not imposed from without.

The third defining feature of religious naturalism is religiosity, a sense of spirituality and sacredness arising from the natural world. While firmly rejecting supernaturalism, religious naturalists regard aspects of nature as worthy of reverence, evoking religious feelings of awe and wonder. Certain natural entities and processes acquire profound spiritual significance. As Jerome Stone explains, religious naturalists see "sacred things as events, things, processes which are of overriding importance and yet are not under our control." The cosmos' complexity, beauty, and mystery elicit an attitude of humility and reverence. Loyal Rue describes religiosity as taking "nature to heart" and allowing it to transform one's sense of meaning and purpose.

This spiritual dimension allows religious naturalists to utilize religious language about nature while avoiding the implications of a supernatural deity. For instance, nature may be described as majestic, sublime, boundless, eternal, and

---

<sup>29</sup> D. Crosby, *A Religion of Nature* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

mysterious. Some metaphorically employ "God" to capture this sacred sense of nature. Rue notes that religious naturalists "refer to nature as 'sacred,' in the sense of being inviolate and worthy of deep reverence." However, this religiosity and sanctification of nature do not imply that nature is under divine governance or human control. Nature remains an independent, unpredictable entity beyond our manipulation. We can only stand in wonder before its vastness. As Donald Crosby writes:

*"Nature itself, when we rightly conceive of it and comprehend our role in it, can provide ample context and support for finding a purpose, value, and meaning in our lives."*<sup>31</sup><sup>25</sup>

In essence, religious naturalism offers a nontheistic spirituality grounded in the awe-inspiring qualities of the natural world. It sacralizes nature while avoiding theistic implications of a controlling deity. The reverence for nature arises from its inherent values and unfathomable mysteries.

To summarize, religious naturalism is a complex, multifaceted belief system that strives to reconcile the empirical and the sacred by embedding spirituality within the natural world. From the perspectives of prominent thinkers such as Crosby, Rue, and Stone, it is evident that religious naturalism offers a nuanced framework for living a scientifically informed and spiritually fulfilling life. This philosophy challenges traditional theistic viewpoints by advocating for an ethical framework directly tied to our scientific understanding of the world.

### **2.3 Religious Naturalism and Buddhist Naturalism**

Buddhism has no specific doctrine or theory known as "naturalism." "Buddhist naturalism" has emerged as an approach that seeks to fully integrate Buddhism with modern scientific and philosophical findings.<sup>32</sup><sup>26</sup> This perspective prioritizes nature over the unquestionable authority of the Buddha. Buddhist naturalism incorporates certain Buddhist practices, such as meditation, but rejects supernatural beliefs, such as rebirth. While the Buddha is recognized as a significant historical figure,

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Jay N. Forrest, "Buddhism and Religious Naturalism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Naturalism*, ed. Donald A. Crosby and Jerome A. Stone (Routledge, 2020), 200.

he is not revered as an infallible authority.

This approach critiques secular Buddhism for not delving deeply enough into the critical examination of Buddhist concepts and frameworks. Buddhist naturalism aims to liberate Buddhism from its traditional confines and foster complete freedom of thought.<sup>3327</sup>

From this viewpoint, Buddhism is a conceptual framework open to adjustment and reconstruction based on evidence and scientific knowledge.<sup>3428</sup> Not all teachings seamlessly align; some may require reinterpretation or rejection. There are no rigid canons or scriptures; the focus is on practices and ideas that align with naturalism, reason, science, and the betterment of human life. Everything remains open to revision. However, challenges arise in determining which aspects of Buddhism to reconstruct or reject, and in recontextualizing and reinterpreting specific teachings and concepts.<sup>3529</sup> Nonetheless, this process is viewed as ongoing and imperfect, constantly evolving and progressing.

Buddhist Naturalists face the intricate task of discerning which facets of Buddhism to reconstruct, reinterpret, or discard.<sup>3630</sup> Unlike traditional adherents who may have canonical scriptures or authorities to guide them, Buddhist Naturalists primarily turn to science, reason, and human well-being to appraise and adjust Buddhist teachings. Their objective is to reshape Buddhism in alignment with the most credible evidence available.<sup>3731</sup> This often necessitates reevaluation, reinterpretation, and sometimes rejection of certain doctrines and practices. A significant challenge lies in extricating the Buddha's teachings from their original milieu and embedding them within a contemporary scientific framework. They undergo continuous scrutiny to ensure Buddhist tenets and methodologies are consistent with naturalism and scientific understanding. This remains a dynamic, imperfect endeavor, ever-evolving and progressing.

While the challenge of aligning Buddhist naturalism with contemporary

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

scientific thought is complex, it raises the question of whether certain schools of Buddhist thought are more naturally inclined towards a naturalistic view. Chan Buddhism, a notable school with a significant following, presents intriguing parallels with Western Religious Naturalism that warrant closer examination.

### **2.3.1 Shared Philosophy between Religious Naturalism and Chan Thought**

The realms of religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism are extensive and varied, offering a multitude of paths toward wisdom and understanding. At first glance, these two philosophies, emerging from significantly different historical and cultural contexts, might appear as distant branches of thought. Nevertheless, upon closer examination, we can find shared insights between religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism despite their distinct origins and perspectives. Though sometimes subtle, these connections highlight a fascinating interplay of ideas that enrich our understanding of both traditions. It is intriguing to explore how these seemingly disparate paths converge on certain key principles while diverging on others, ultimately guiding their adherents toward a deeper appreciation of existence and the natural world.

#### **(1) View of Nature**

##### **A. Reverence and Awe for Nature:**

Religious Naturalism and Chan Buddhism owe profound significance to the natural world, asserting its pivotal role in shaping human comprehension and providing moral guidance. These traditions hold that genuine wisdom and spiritual enlightenment arise from recognizing the intricate interconnectedness of all aspects of existence, from the vast celestial bodies to the smallest living organisms. This realization fosters a deep sense of humility. It encourages viewing nature not merely as a resource but as a spiritual mentor and a mirror of our inner selves.

Within the domain of Religious Naturalism, the marvels of nature's vastness and intricacy are recognized and celebrated. A testament to this perspective can be found in Loyal Rue's work, "Nature is Enough,"<sup>38</sup> where Rue eloquently articulates the inherent magnificence of nature's multifaceted systems, presenting them as wonders

---

<sup>38</sup> Loyal Rue, *Nature Is Enough: Religious Naturalism and the Meaning of Life* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011).

that evoke admiration and inspiration. For the religious naturalist, the grandeur of the universe, whether manifested in the expansive realms of galaxies or the intricate choreography of subatomic particles, serves as an endless source of wonder.

In stark contrast, Chan Buddhism adopts a more introspective approach, perceiving the external world as a mirror reflecting internal truths. Natural phenomena, from the unyielding flow of rivers to the majestic presence of mountains, are metaphors for spiritual lessons, guiding seekers to comprehend the nature of existence and the impermanence of reality. A prime example is the "Blue Cliff Record," a revered collection of Chan koans compiled by Yuanwu Keqin, which utilizes elements of nature as symbolic gateways, each leading to deeper introspection. At its core, this approach conveys the notion that true enlightenment is attained when one discerns the harmony of the natural world and aligns it with one's innate essence. Through this process, the Chan practitioner gains insights into the external world and uncovers profound truths about their being.

In synthesizing these perspectives, a common thread emerges: nature, in all its diversity and marvel, offers more than mere aesthetic pleasure. It serves as a compass, directing us toward deeper truths, inviting us to engage with, understand, and ultimately transcend the boundaries of our existence.

### **B. Nature as an Active Spiritual Insight**

Chan Buddhism and religious naturalism recognize nature as a profound medium of spiritual insight rather than just a passive backdrop. Chan Buddhism perceives human experiences in nature as encounters with the sacred, transcending the mere scenic beauty. It regards nature as emblematic of profound spiritual truths, a perspective mirrored in religious naturalism, which views nature as an awe-inspiring, intricate source of enlightenment. As the Zen Master Dogen perceived the essence of the nature of existence in the *Mountains and Waters Sutra*:

*"Mountains and waters right now are actualizing the ancient Buddha way. Each, abiding in its phenomenal expression, realizes completeness. Because mountains and waters have been active since before the Empty Eon, they are alive at this moment. They are emancipation-realization because they have been the self since before form*

*arose.*"<sup>39</sup><sub>33</sub>

The quote from Master Dogen exemplifies this perspective of nature as an active spiritual insight, seeing mountains and waters as manifestations of the "ancient Buddha way". Dogen argues that nature inherently contains completeness and enlightenment, independent of human perception. Since nature predates human conceptualizations, it represents a liberated, self-realized state of being. Therefore, for Dogen, the mountains and waters enact and present the Buddhist path independently of any observer. In this passage, Dogen poetically evokes nature as an enlightened teacher, an insight shared by religious naturalists who find spiritual meaning in the natural world. Both Chan Buddhism and religious naturalism recognize that nature offers profound spiritual truths beyond mere scenery.

While their origins differ, both philosophies appreciate nature's active role in spiritual and ethical realization. This reverence underscores the spiritual richness within nature, guiding adherents towards a harmonious existence.

#### **(1) Mutual Interdependence and Co-arising:**

The principle of interconnectedness stands as a shared intellectual and spiritual cornerstone for Western Religious Naturalism and Chan Buddhism. This central idea offers a comprehensive, integrative perspective on existence, where each component—living or non-living—is inextricably linked in a complex web of relationships.

In Chan Buddhism, interconnectedness is far from peripheral; it is a foundational aspect of its worldview. The "Dependent Origination" teachings provide a nuanced explanation of this interconnected existence.

*"When this is, that is;*

*This arising that arises;*

*When this is not, that is not;*

*This ceasing, that ceases.*"<sup>40</sup><sub>34</sub>

The doctrine of dependent origination holds that all things are

---

<sup>39</sup> Eihei Dogen, *Moon in a Dewdrop* (San Francisco, CA: North Point Press, 1995).

<sup>40</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation of the *Nidanavagga Sutta* in "The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the *Samyutta Nikaya*."

interconnected and come into existence through other things. It challenges the idea of independent existence, emphasizing a complex web of mutual conditioning and co-arising. Nothing exists in isolation; everything relies on other phenomena for identity and existence.

Similar approaches or understandings were also found in Zen Master Dogen's writing on mutual interdependence. For him, interconnectedness is not static but dynamic.<sup>4135</sup> He views humans as ongoing processes, continuously emerging in interdependence with all other aspects of the universe. This perspective resonates with humans as an emergent part, dynamic, co-created, co-evolving view of nature, an idea that aligns closely with religious naturalism. In Western Religious Naturalism, the principle of interconnectedness is often explored through the lens of contemporary science and philosophy. As Aldo Leopold eloquently articulates in his seminal work, "A Sand County Almanac," the natural world is seen as a grand ecological network of mutually dependent elements. Regardless of its size, each entity exists in a continuum of interactions, continuously shaping and being shaped by its environment.<sup>4236</sup>

Thus, both traditions emphasize that all elements of existence are interconnected in a complex, ever-changing network. As figures like Dogen and Leopold elaborated, this perspective instills an ethical imperative for responsible action. The understanding of mutual interdependence serves as an intellectual concept and fosters deep-seated compassion. This compassion, in turn, becomes the foundation for ethical decisions and harmonious coexistence.

### **(1) Emphasis on Inner Exploration:**

Both religious naturalism and Chan thought champion the importance of introspection and the journey inward, urging individuals to deepen their understanding of themselves and their connection to the universe.

Exploring the inner self in religious naturalism is intrinsically tied to understanding one's relationship to the vast universe and discerning one's place in it. Such introspection often leads to profound clarity, awe, and a heightened interconnectedness. By immersing oneself in the wonders of nature and pondering the

---

<sup>41</sup>, 2020), 215. Stephanie Kaza, "Zen Buddhist Perspectives on Religious Naturalism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Naturalism*, edited by Donald A. Crosby and Jerome A. Stone (Routledge

<sup>42</sup> Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986).

mysteries of existence, individuals can experience spiritual revelations and profound reverence. This journey of self-discovery aligns with the overarching tenets of religious naturalism, which emphasize finding purpose, meaning, and a deep sense of belonging in the universe.

The significance of inner exploration in Chan is manifest in its practices, which provide direct insight into the nature of the mind and reality. Meditation, central to Chan's practice, is a tool that helps the mind observe its intricacies, remain still, and achieve enlightenment. Numerous koans in Chan's teachings challenge practitioners to move beyond mere intellectual comprehension and grapple with the inherent paradoxes. By engaging with these koans and dedicating oneself to meditation, practitioners aim to cultivate a rich, experiential awareness of Chan's teachings. Sitting meditation is often highlighted as an essential practice for experiencing and expressing Chan's fundamental essence.<sup>4337</sup>

### **(1) Direct Experience over Dogma:**

Both religious naturalism and Chan thought prioritize lived experiences and first-hand knowledge over prescriptive doctrines or unwavering dogmas. They champion the view that truth is better grasped through direct experience rather than through intellectual or theoretical understanding.

This philosophical perspective intersects science and spirituality, advocating for a worldview grounded in empirical evidence and personal revelations. Instead of adhering unquestioningly to religious scriptures or mandates, religious naturalists often base their beliefs on observable realities, scientific discoveries, and personal encounters with the natural world. For them, genuine understanding arises from grappling with the universe's complexities through logical analysis and contemplating profound existential questions. This approach promotes a fluid, ever-evolving relationship with the cosmos rather than a fixed set of beliefs.

The emphasis on direct experience in Chan Buddhism is rooted in its foundational teachings. Unlike some religious traditions that may promote strict adherence to scriptures or the teachings of religious authorities, Chan Buddhism encourages individuals to witness the truth for themselves. Famously, there is a saying

---

<sup>43</sup> Yinshun, *History of Chinese Zen* (Yangzhou: Guangling Book Company, 2008).

in Chan circles, "If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him,"<sup>4438</sup> which underscores the danger of becoming attached to any fixed image or conception of enlightenment. Instead, practitioners are encouraged to turn inwards, using meditation and contemplation to pierce through surface-level understandings and attain deeper realizations. This direct insight is far more valuable than merely parroting religious scriptures or doctrines.

In referencing both approaches, it is evident that they converge on a shared respect for individual exploration and discovery. While religious naturalism draws on the vast reservoir of scientific knowledge and personal experience of nature, Chan Buddhism draws on its practitioners' meditative practices and intrinsic wisdom to grasp the truth. Both underscore the significance of an active, engaged journey toward understanding rather than passively accepting established dogmas.

The rich tapestry of overlaps and subtleties within these two traditions extends far beyond the scope of our current exploration. A more in-depth analysis of these intersections will be undertaken in Chapter IV, where we will examine naturalistic themes within Chan's works, mainly focusing on "The Blue Cliff Record."

### **2.3.2 Distinctions Between Religious Naturalism and Chan Thought**

Although religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism share some overlap in core principles and values, they differ significantly due to their historical, cultural, and ideological backgrounds. Both traditions emerged from a desire to reconcile spiritual exploration with a grounded understanding of the natural world, yet they did so from different vantage points and with distinct emphases. This exploration will focus on the philosophical distinctions between the two, including their respective approaches to understanding and engaging with the natural world and the implications of these differences for the broader philosophical landscape.

#### **(1) Relationship with Science and Reason**

Religious naturalism and Zen Buddhism differ in how they incorporate science into their respective religious frameworks. In religious naturalism, science assumes a prominent and influential role, serving as a robust counterbalance to curb the

---

<sup>44</sup> Sheldon B. Kopp, "The Pilgrimage of Psychotherapy Patients", but this line is derived from the koan "Kill the Buddha When Seeing him" in the *Linji Record*.

excesses of fanaticism and mystical tendencies. Here, science transcends its role as a mere knowledge-acquiring tool; it serves as a touchstone of reason, advocating clarity of thought and fostering an empirical approach to understanding the universe. This veneration for rational thinking converges with an acknowledgment of the inherent limitations of human knowledge, instilling a profound sense of humility among its practitioners.

A faction of religious naturalists delves deeply into the holistic insights offered by evolutionary biology, ecology, and cosmological physics. These scientific domains, characterized by their expansive and intricate frameworks, provide sweeping narratives that many religious naturalists believe can shed light on humanity's place within the vast cosmic tapestry. One prevailing theme among religious naturalists is the promotion of a shared, overarching narrative. This narrative traces the journey of human existence, beginning with the Big Bang, the symbol of the cosmos' inception, progressing through the geological epochs that shaped our planet, and culminating in the diverse evolutionary paths that gave rise to various life forms.

Conversely, as Dogen's teachings portray it, Zen Buddhism casts a more skeptical eye on the wholesale acceptance of scientific methods. In his "Shobogenzo," Dogen presents a worldview that challenges the often compartmentalized and dualistic approaches central to Western science. His exploration of "*genjokoan*" (現成公案) underscores the profound interconnectedness of existence, suggesting that the binary lens of subject/object inherent in much scientific inquiry might inadvertently limit our understanding. Dogen cautions against over-reliance on any one exploration mode, including the scientific. To him, a singular commitment to the empirical risks overshadows life's complex, interwoven fabric, potentially hindering genuine spiritual insight and awakening.

*"Even if you see mountains as grass, trees, earth, rocks, or walls, do not take this seriously or worry about it; it is not a complete realization. Even if there is a moment when you view mountains as the seven treasures shining, this is not returning to the source. Even if you understand mountains as the realm where all Buddhas practice, this understanding is not something to be attached to ... Turning an object and turning the mind is rejected by the great sage. Explaining the mind and explaining true*

*nature is not agreeable to Buddha ancestors ... There is something free from all of these understandings ... You should study this in detail.*"<sup>4539</sup>

Dogen cautions against viewing nature through a limited, conceptual lens. He argues that seeing mountains as physical objects like "grass, trees, earth, rocks" is incomplete. Even seeing them as mystical "treasures" or the trappings of Buddhas is still limiting. Dogen says true wisdom comes from a perspective free of these constrained understandings. He rejects overly analytical, subject/object approaches that "turn the object" and "turn the mind". Dogen argues that excessive intellectualization blocks a holistic view of the profound interconnectedness of all existence. True insight comes from transcending compartmentalized thinking.

In this citation, Dogen challenges binary modes of inquiry, suggesting openness rather than clinging to a single viewpoint. This contrasts with some scientific methods that rely heavily on analytical categorization. Dogen encourages a more expansive mindset, beyond conceptual constraints, to appreciate the boundless continuity underlying nature's myriad manifestations.

## **(2) A Non-dual Approach to Everything**

Whereas Western religious naturalism tends to utilize dualistic categories common in ethical philosophy, Chan/Zen Buddhism emphasizes a radical nonduality in its worldview. At the core of Master Dogen's teachings is the constant underscoring of nonduality as the awakened perspective on reality. He states in the opening verse of the *Genjokoan*:

*"As all things are buddha-dharma, there is delusion and realization, practice, birth, and death, and there are buddhas and sentient beings. As the myriad things are without an abiding self, there is no delusion, no realization, no Buddha, no sentient being, no birth and death. The Buddha's way is leaping clear of the many and the one; thus, there are birth and death, delusion and realization, sentient beings, and Buddhas. However, in attachment, blossoms fall, and in aversion, weeds spread."*<sup>4640</sup>

These opening lines of Dogen's *Genjokoan* point students beyond

---

<sup>45</sup> K. Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen* (San Francisco, CA: North Point, 1985).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

superficial dualistic thinking on all matters. Dogen teaches that existence is not divided into discrete entities with inherent natures but is an interdependent, dynamically interwoven whole. Apparent opposites like delusion/realization or birth/death lack a fixed self-nature when viewed through the lens of nonduality. Dogen encourages transcending attachment to conceptual distinctions and appreciating the fluid continuity underlying all phenomena. This nondual approach contrasts with the binary subject/object framing often found in Western thought. While religious naturalism shares Zen's reverence for nature, it has yet to fully integrate nonduality into its ethical frameworks. Exploring Zen's nondual foundations could help religious naturalists move beyond familiar dualisms into a more expansive ethical vision.

### **(3) Approach to Scriptures and Texts**

Western religious naturalism embraces a more flexible approach to spirituality, diverging from strict adherence to ancient religious texts. It welcomes modern insights, allowing the integration of contemporary knowledge from science and philosophy. While honoring the wisdom found in age-old traditions, this worldview enthusiastically embraces the wealth of wisdom offered by scientific and philosophical advancements.<sup>4741</sup>

Chan Buddhism deeply respects and incorporates the core teachings of traditional Buddhist sutras, but it also possesses a unique literary corpus of its own. This includes koans, commentaries, poems, and the recorded sayings or "yulu" of eminent masters. These texts, such as the "Blue Cliff Record" and "The Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp," are not merely for academic study but also serve as practical guides for meditation and introspection. The way these texts are approached in Chan is often dynamic; they are meant to be lived, experienced, and deeply pondered upon rather than just intellectually understood. The teachings emphasize a direct, experiential understanding, urging practitioners to penetrate their essence rather than merely grasp their surface meaning.<sup>4842</sup>

### **(4) Religious Practices**

Within Western Religious Naturalism, the sacred is commonly found in the

---

<sup>47</sup> Ursula Goodenough, *The Sacred Depths of Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>48</sup> Andy Ferguson, *Zen's Chinese Heritage: The Masters and Their Teachings* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2011).

expansiveness of nature rather than in elaborate rituals or man-made holy spaces. For religious naturalists, the cosmos becomes a sanctified arena that inspires awe and mystery. Ritualistic practices are typically less prominent, and individualized contemplative practices take precedence. The journey of introspection evolves through spontaneous connections with nature, leading to transformative insights and a sense of interconnectedness.<sup>4943</sup>

In sharp contrast, Chan Buddhism centers around the disciplined practice of meditation, which serves as an internal expedition to uncover one's inherent nature. This inward focus is enriched by an elaborate array of rituals, ceremonies, and practices that draw from the broader Buddhist context<sup>5044</sup>. Activities like incense offerings, sutra chanting, and daily mindfulness in chores like kitchen work serve as multi-layered gateways to deeper understanding and spiritual enlightenment.<sup>5145</sup> These rituals also provide a tangible link to a long lineage of spiritual masters and are often seen as integral elements in one's spiritual journey. Far from solitary acts, they form a harmonic blend with meditative practices, reinforcing individual spiritual inquiry and a communal affirmation of shared values and beliefs.

### **Conclusion**

In exploring the realms of religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism, it is evident that there are intriguing convergences alongside divergence between these rich philosophical traditions. While they share a reverence for the natural world, an emphasis on experience over dogma, and an appreciation of interconnectedness, they differ significantly in their relationship to science and reason, their approach to spiritual texts, and their religious practices. Perhaps the most profound distinction lies in their perspectives on nonduality, with Chan's radical nondual view challenging the predominantly dualistic framing in Western thought.

As our planet faces growing ecological and social upheaval, the holistic worldviews offered by religious naturalism and Chan may provide guidance to help humanity move forward with care, compassion, and wisdom. Their reverence for nature

---

<sup>49</sup> Chet Raymo, *When God is Gone, Everything is Holy* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2008).

<sup>50</sup> Stephanie Kaza, "Zen Buddhist Perspectives on Religious Naturalism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Naturalism*, edited by Donald A. Crosby and Jerome A. Stone, 214 (Routledge, 2020).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

and life could help spur greater environmental responsibility, while their inward paths remind us to look within and transform consciousness. Blending the empirical openness of religious naturalism with Chan's nondual insight could lead to a deeply meaningful ethics of interdependence.

Despite divergent origins, religious naturalism and Chan share common ground in their sacralization of nature, integration of science, inward paths, and non-authoritarian exploration of existential questions. As we struggle to find meaning and ethics in an increasingly complex world, these traditions can enrich one another and humanity as a whole. With open and discerning minds, we can continue to learn from their respective strengths. The actual value of these philosophies lies not in their differences but in their collective ability to bring us closer to the natural world, each other, and our innermost essence.



## CHAPTER III

### THE "BLUE CLIFF RECORD" OF CHAN BUDDHISM

The "Blue Cliff Record", also referred to as "Biyan Lu" in Chinese, is a revered text in the Chan Buddhist tradition, carrying profound historical and spiritual significance. This remarkable collection comprises 100 public cases, known as koans, along with accompanying verses and prose commentaries. The "Blue Cliff Record" is an invaluable resource for deciphering the spirit of "naturalism" embedded in Chinese Chan. This chapter provides an overview and demonstrates the typical Chan thoughts it conveys, so that we can discuss the religious naturalism presented in this iconic Chan work in Chapter IV.

#### 3.1 Overview of "Blue Cliff Record": Its Creation and Development

The "Blue Cliff Record", an esteemed work in Chan Buddhism, was compiled during the Song Dynasty under the guidance of Chan Master Yuanwu Keqin. Its development, various editions, and impact over time are significant in understanding the text's importance and the historical context within which it was created.

While Master Keqin's early life and contributions to Chan Buddhism were notable, his role in creating the "Blue Cliff Record" began around the age of 40. After returning to his hometown and subsequent travels, he engaged in various religious discussions. Notably, a pivotal conversation with Zhang Shangying, a Taoist hermit, resulted in Zhang's enlightenment. These interactions and experiences laid the groundwork for the "Blue Cliff Record".

The earliest known version of the "Blue Cliff Record" is the sixteen-volume edition. As its popularity grew, different versions emerged. However, the text's journey was not without challenges; notably, Dahui Zonggao's decision to burn the work introduced complexities in its transmission. This research sheds light on these versions and their development over time.

Chan Master Keqin continuously promoted the text and, during his residences in Jiashan and Daolin, refined it multiple times. These adaptations, while varying in wording, maintained a central theme. As the text circulated over two decades,

variations and inconsistencies emerged, as detailed in works such as Wang Jinrui's "Blue Cliff Record Jie Shi".

Various scholars have identified discrepancies between different prefaces in the "Blue Cliff Record". According to a comparison between the Preface to "Blue Cliff Record"<sup>52</sup> written by Puzhao and the "Epilogue to Wudang", Japanese scholars Sumi Wenmei and D. T. Suzuki believed there were contradictions between the two. They believed these two prefaces were different versions of texts produced by Chan Master Keqin when he lived in Sichuan and Jiashan, respectively. However, these statements are only speculation without solid historical evidence.

Upon its publication, the "Blue Cliff Record" received great admiration from the people of that time. Akin to a cherished treasure, it even experienced a grand ceremony of recitation and practice in the morning and evening, known as "Zhixue."<sup>5346</sup> However, this act of case commentary was regarded by many Chan practitioners as a violation of Chan's tenet - "no writing, no teaching", which also foreshadowed the later burning of Dahui Zonggao's manuscript. According to many documents, such as "Chanlin Baoxunbi Shuo"<sup>5447</sup> and "Republish the Collection of Yuanwu Buddhist Master Biyan Lu"<sup>5548</sup> and so on, the woodblock of Biyan Lu was burned by Dahui Zonggao, which shows the truth of the matter. According to the historical records, the exact day of the burning is still uncertain. At present, a more accurate and reasonable statement, inferred by Mr. Wang Jinrui, is that this event happened "between the seventh year to the tenth year of the Shaoxing era of Emperor Gaozong in the Song Dynasty, that is, between 1137 and 1140 A.D."<sup>5649</sup>

The "Blue Cliff Record" is a testament to the depth and dynamism of Chan Buddhist thought during the Song Dynasty. By tracing its creation, development, and the challenges it encountered, we gain a comprehensive understanding of its enduring relevance and significance.

---

53 The Legend of Chan Forest's Treasure Training Brush, The New Compilation of the Great Japanese Sutra by the Swastika, Volume 64.

54原文“所以大慧和尚。親往福建。即碎燬其板。”

55原文“大慧密室勘辨。知無實詣。毀梓不傳權也。”

56 Wang Jinrui: *Blue Cliff Record Jie Ti*, Modern Buddhism Series, Volume 9.

### 3.2 The Chan Thought in the "Blue Cliff Record"

To promote the teachings of previous generations, Chan Master Keqin always advocated the Chan philosophy of "not relying on written texts". He thought highly of ancient official cases and wrote the "Blue Cliff Record", which significantly boosted the importance of written Chan teachings in the Song Dynasty. This shift had a profound impact on the future of Chan Buddhism. Throughout history, Master Keqin's "Blue Cliff Record" has received more praise than criticism. However, to this day, many scholars still hold a derogatory attitude towards the "Blue Cliff Record." To determine if this skepticism is warranted, a thorough exploration of the Chan ideology embedded in the "Blue Cliff Record" is necessary.

#### (1) Discarding Emotions and Thoughts

Chan Master Keqin believed that emotions and intentions cannot explain Chan. He maintained that clinging to the secular world, persistent desire, and afflictions hinder people from attaining enlightenment.

【七八】古有十六开士。于浴僧时随例入浴。忽悟水因。诸禅德作么生会。他道妙触宣明。成佛子住。也须七穿八穴始得.....

如今人亦入浴亦洗水。也恁么触。因甚却不悟。皆被尘境惑障。粘皮着骨。所以不能便惺惺去。若向这里。洗亦无所得。触亦无所得。水因亦无所得。<sup>5750</sup>

#### Translation:

*[Case 78: In ancient times, sixteen eminent monks followed the custom of bathing. During this ritual, they suddenly achieved enlightenment regarding the nature of water...In modern times, people also bathe and wash with water, experiencing a similar touch. Nevertheless, they fail to grasp the underlying truth, obstructed by worldly illusions that cling to them like skin and bones. Consequently, they struggle to attain immediate clarity or understanding. Even in reflecting upon this, one finds nothing to gain from the washing, the touching, or the cause of water itself.]*

This case, featuring the ancient Sixteen Monks who suddenly realized about water while bathing, offers profound insights that extend beyond the historical and

---

<sup>57</sup> Yuanwu Keqin, Blue Cliff Record by Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu, Volume 48, Taishō Tripitaka, p.205

spiritual context. In modern times, people engage in the same ritual of bathing and washing with water, experiencing a touch similar to that of ancient monks, yet failing to grasp the underlying truth. The failure here is not an oversight but a barrier obstructed by worldly illusions.

These illusions cling to the individual's perceptions, acting as tangible obstructions like skin to the bones. They are the prejudices and biases that cloud judgment and impede the understanding of reality's purest form. The clinging to superficial values hampers the ability to perceive deeper truths, echoing the ancient monks' profound understanding of water's nature.

This case emphasizes the struggle to attain immediate clarity or understanding, which is not a trivial matter but a profound spiritual journey requiring shedding the shackles of worldly attachments. Chan Master Keqin's teaching here underscores the need to transcend these distractions. By not being deluded by worldly matters, one must deeply understand oneself without getting entangled in the duality of right and wrong. This level of detachment and mindfulness transcends the mundane and reaches the essence of being.

Reflecting upon the Sixteen Monks' enlightenment, the teaching illustrates the importance of authentic self-realization. The acts of washing, touching, or even comprehending water serve as metaphors for life. The realization comes from peeling away illusions and seeing the truth for what it is. There is nothing to gain from surface interactions; the real gain lies in enlightenment and profound understanding.

【一二】僧问洞山。如何是佛山云。麻三斤……

贱卖担板汉。贴秤麻三斤。千百年滞货。无处着浑身。尔但打叠得情尘意想。计较得失是非。一时净尽自然会去。

**Translation:**

*[A monk asked Dongshan, "What is the Buddha?" Dongshan responded, "Three catties of hemp..." It is like a humble peddler who, with his carrying pole, measures out three catties of hemp. For thousands of years, this unsold merchandise has been unable to find a place to rest. However, if one can momentarily set aside their thoughts, imaginations, and all considerations of gain and loss or right and wrong, everything will be purified, and a natural understanding will emerge.]*

This quotation illustrates how Master Dongshan, when questioned about what the Buddha Mountain is, responded by indicating its ordinary state with a seemingly irrelevant answer: "Three catties of hemp." This response may appear enigmatic, but it is rich with meaning and speaks to the core principles of Chan Buddhism.

Dongshan's reply serves as more than just an answer; it is an analogy that opens up a multitude of interpretations. By referencing "Three catties of hemp," he draws attention to something ordinary and mundane, perhaps even overlooked. This analogy clarifies how individuals often underestimate the value of such simplicity. They are caught pursuing grandeur and complexity, neglecting the inherent worth of what is ordinary or seemingly insignificant. In likening the profound concept of Buddha nature to something as simple as weighing hemp, Dongshan brings complex spiritual ideas into an everyday context.

His emphasis lay on the fact that only by abandoning the delusions and attachments that obscure and hinder the manifestation of self-nature can one achieve success in practice and experience this natural, ordinary state. This is a philosophical argument and a practical guide to spiritual living. Dongshan urges his followers to abandon the endless calculations of gain and loss, right and wrong, and to set aside thoughts and imaginations that cloud their perception.

The imagery of a humble peddler unable to sell his hemp stock for thousands of years underscores the persistence of human attachments. It highlights how these attachments have been passed down through generations, becoming inherent parts of human nature, and symbolizes how difficult they are to overcome. The peddler's situation mirrors the human condition, where people are weighed down by their thoughts, desires, and misconceptions.

The quote also emphasizes the transient nature of these attachments. One can achieve clarity by setting them aside, even for a moment. This idea is profound and empowering, as it offers a pathway to enlightenment accessible to anyone willing to undertake the journey.

#### Transcending Binary Oppositions

In Chan teachings, all binary opposition is nothing but bondage. Therefore, it is essential to transcend all binary thoughts to obtain enlightenment. This transcendent

view allows one to realize that one can exist in a state of contentment even in humble circumstances—metaphorically, 'living in the charcoal of a pot soup'. The realms of right and wrong and the truth converge into one, facilitating the realization of the true essence of Chan. For those who understand this, worldly dualities like fame and fortune, honor and disgrace, conformity and rebellion should not disturb their mental equilibrium. They should try to reach and maintain the "unattached mind" state that "neither arises nor decays, neither defiled nor purified, neither increases nor decreases". Such is the level of detachment that allows one to navigate life with a balanced and tranquil mind, unaffected by worldly distractions and attachments.

## (2) Seeking Buddha-Nature Through Personal Experience Internally

Chan Buddhism has always rooted its theoretical principles in the inherent nature of Buddha, similar to inner exploration in the framework of naturalism. It emphasizes the pursuit of insight into this true nature as the ultimate goal of practice. As Master Huineng said, "The Nature is the Buddha, and the Buddha is the nature."<sup>58</sup> This fundamental principle is also echoed in the "Blue Cliff Record" by Chan Master Yuanwu Keqin, extracted as follows.

【五】我当时在德山棒下。如桶底脱相似。嵩头喝云。尔不见道。从门入者。不是家珍。须是自己胸中流出。盖天盖地。方有少分相应。<sup>59</sup>

【九十】古人道。汝等诸人。六根门头昼夜放大光明。照破山河大地。不只止眼根放光。鼻舌身意亦皆放光也。<sup>60</sup>

### Translation:

*[Case 5: When I was under the tutelage of Master Deshan, subjected to his disciplinary stick, it felt as if I was liberated from the confines of a barrel's bottom. He thundered at me, exclaiming, "Do you not understand? The truth that comes through the door is not a cherished family possession. It must emerge from deep within your being, overwhelming heaven and earth; only then can there be a slight resonance with the truth."*

*Case 90: The ancient sages proclaimed, "All of you, awaken! At the*

58 Zong Bao Edition: The Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Treasure Platform Sutra, Taishō Tripitaka, Vol. 48, page 350, lines 21-22.

59 Yuanwu Keqin, Blue Cliff Record by Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu, Volume 48, Taishō Tripitaka, p. 145

60 Ibid, p. 215

*threshold of your six sense organs, let a brilliant light shine forth, day and night, breaking through and illuminating the mountains, rivers, and the very earth itself. Recognize that it is not merely the eyes that radiate this light, but every aspect of your being — nose, tongue, body, and mind — all these parts emit this enlightenment."]*

Here, "emerging from" and "light" refer to sentient beings with inherent Buddha nature. However, Chan practitioners at that time, even today, do not realize that this radiating "light" is released by themselves, leading them to seek it externally and from afar. Even when they know that light is self-emitted, they often remain unaware of how to use it, thus remaining in a dark, dim state.

Chan Master Keqin's teachings do not deviate from the essence of Buddha-nature. Instead, he emphasizes the importance of diligent practice and religious righteousness. He discourages seeking liberation solely through learning and imitating the words, phrases, and practices left by predecessors. After realizing the matter of life and death, one cannot rely on others; one can only achieve it through self-cultivation and self-awareness.

In the "Blue Cliff Record", Chan Master Keqin emphasized that the great significance of Chan lies in practical life experiences. Understanding one's nature has nothing to do with quick fixes. It is obtained through consistent daily practice. Master Keqin likens meditation and enlightenment to routine tasks, like "eating Congee in the morning or fasting—It is just ordinary."<sup>6154</sup> The mystery of Buddhism lies not in mystery but in understanding the present moment. However, this view can potentially mislead. It is important to clarify that Chan's meditation is not simplistic, like eating when hungry, drinking when thirsty, or sleeping when tired. Such a perception may lead to a lax, complacent approach to practice, far from Chan's true intention. This potential misinterpretation is addressed and clarified further in the "Blue Cliff Record".

【九】有般底人道。本来无一星事。但只遇茶喫茶。遇饭喫饭。此是大妄语。谓之未得谓得。未证谓证。元来不曾参得透。见人说心说性说玄说妙。便道只是狂言。本来无事。可谓一盲引众盲。殊不知。祖师未来时。那里唤天作地。唤山作水。来为什么祖师更西来。诸方陞堂入室。说箇什么。尽是

---

61 Ibid., p. 145.

情识计较。<sup>6255</sup>

**Translation:**

[Case 9: *Some people say, "There is nothing at all; just drink tea when it is tea, eat when it is mealtime." This is a grave misunderstanding, equating mere encounters with realization. They speak of profound concepts but dismiss them as madness, likening it to a blind person leading the blind. They overlook the wisdom of Patriarch Bodhidharma, who transcended mere sentimentalities and calculations, teaching more profound truths. Their words reflect a lack of true enlightenment.*]

The case highlights a profound yet easily misunderstood aspect of life. When some people speak of "ordinary," they refer to mundane activities such as eating and drinking tea. While seemingly simple, this perspective can lead to naïveté and ignorance if one merely follows these actions without a more profound understanding.

The danger in this mindset is that it may lead one to dismiss the profound as mere madness or irrelevance. The analogy of a blind person leading the blind underscores how superficial interpretations of the "ordinary" can create a collective misunderstanding that obscures deeper truths. The essence of "ordinary," as understood by those with authentic realization, is far from impermanent or shallow. Instead, it acknowledges the profound interconnectedness of all aspects of life, where even the simplest activities can carry deep significance.

To recognize this requires more than just a superficial engagement with daily tasks. It calls for introspection, personal understanding, and a willingness to transcend mere sentimentalities and calculations. Drinking tea or eating meals is not enough; one must engage with these actions mindfully, recognizing their place in a greater cosmic order.

Furthermore, the reference to the Chan masters' teachings invites us to explore the wisdom handed down through generations, which goes beyond mundane existence. The masters did not randomly equate the sky with earth or mountains with water; they understood the profound unity underlying apparent differences. The mention of Patriarch Bodhidharma from India is a historical reference and a metaphorical inquiry into the origins of wisdom and the journey toward enlightenment.

---

62 Yuanwu Keqin, *Blue Cliff Record by Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu*, Volume 48, Taishō Tripiṭaka, p.149.

It invites contemplation on the path that those who have delved deeply into understanding the nature of existence take.

### **(3) The Wordless Transmission of Chan**

Since the establishment of Chinese Chan Buddhism by Patriarch Bodhidharma from India, the cornerstone of Chan practice has been summarized in three tenets: "No reliance on written words, a special transmission outside of the scriptures, and mind-to-mind transmission". Those with a basic understanding of Chan would find countless written records of the preceding masters' speeches and quotations in the history of Chinese Chan Buddhism. The tradition of "no reliance on written words or letters" seems to have gradually given way to an era characterized by "great reliance on written words".

Based on much Chan literature, this "great reliance on written words" phenomenon reached its zenith after the emergence of the "written Chan" in the Song Dynasty. The "Blue Cliff Record" stands as a representative piece of Chan's written works. Does the "Blue Cliff Record" truly adhere to the earlier-mentioned concept of "no reliance on words," or does it engage in an intense exploration of textual expression while appearing not to rely on them? The answer lies in the "Blue Cliff Record," which features "great reliance on written words".

Although the "Blue Cliff Record" records hundreds of thousands of words, it stays true to the Chan spirit through Chan Master Keqin's emphasis. He repeatedly stressed that learners should not be bound by language and writing, warning that excessive focus on textual understanding might hinder genuine comprehension. Master Keqin's teachings serve as a continual reminder that words are merely guiding markers on the path of learning, not the ultimate goal. This delicate balance between adhering to textual tradition and following the Chan principle of not relying on words highlights the captivating intricacy of Chan Buddhism.

【八】盖为后学着他言句。转生情解。所以不见古人意旨。<sup>6356</sup>

【一五】一切业缘。皆是自作自受。古人分明向尔道。若论此事。

---

63 Ibid, p148.

不在言句上。若在言句上。三乘十二分教。岂是无言句。更何用祖师西来。<sup>6457</sup>

【七四】古人道。鉴在机先。不消一捏。所以衲僧家。寻常须是向格外用始得称本分宗师。若只据语言。未免漏逗。<sup>6558</sup>

**Translation:**

*[Case 8: Later, students only follow the literal words and sentences. They interpret things based on their understanding, not the original context. As a result, they miss the true, original meaning of the ancient teachings.]*

*[Case 15: Karma and causality stem from one's actions. The ancients have already explained this principle. However, the essence of this teaching is not about the words and sentences themselves. After all, the Buddhist scriptures are full of words. The point is to understand the meaning behind the words. Mere words are not enough, which is why the Patriarchs traveled from India to China - to transmit the essence of the teaching.]*

*[Case 74: The ancients taught that a teacher must discern the student's capacity and teach accordingly, without hesitation. Therefore, in Chan Buddhism, typically, only those masters who use unconventional, skillful means can be considered true masters. If one relies on language and words, they will inevitably fail to hit the mark.]*

The extracts warn against the over-reliance on the literal interpretation of written or spoken teachings. Instead, individuals should aim for a deeper, more personal understanding. These teachings argue that while language can be used as a tool, it must not be the sole basis of understanding, as it may lead to missing the broader, more profound insights of Chan Buddhism.

There are numerous instructions like this, all of which remind learners not to depend solely on words as life-saving straws in seeking enlightenment. Chan goes beyond the realm of language. The words and teachings of Chan School, while crucial in guiding learners, are not the end goal but merely stepping stones toward a more profound understanding.

【九】不知古人方便门中。为初机后学。未明心地。未见本性。不

---

64 Ibid, p155.

65 Ibid, p202.

得已而立箇方便语句。如祖师西来。单传心印。直指人心。见性成佛。那里如此葛藤。须是斩断语言。格外见谛。透脱得去。可谓如龙得水。似虎靠山。<sup>6659</sup>

**Translation:**

*[Case 9: The ancient masters' expedient means are unknown. For novices and those who have yet to grasp the mind-ground or recognize their true nature, they had no alternative but to use skillful phrases. Much like the patriarchs from the West, they transmitted the mind-seal, pointing directly to the human mind and illuminating the path to enlightenment. This approach has no complexity or confusion; it requires cutting through unnecessary words, perceiving the more profound truth, and penetrating to attain freedom. ]*

This "Blue Cliff Record" excerpt encapsulates a profound concept in Chan Buddhism. It emphasizes the journey of beginners and late learners who are yet to fully grasp the intricacies of their minds and recognize their true nature. They may find solace in expedient words and phrases as they seek understanding. This mirrors the approach of the patriarchs from the West, who transmitted wisdom through direct mind-to-mind transmission, guiding practitioners to awaken to their Buddha nature through a heart-to-heart connection.

The case questions the necessity of complex verbal expressions when the essence lies in direct experience. It urges practitioners to go beyond linguistic entanglements and break free from the confines of words. This liberation is akin to a dragon finding water, finally reaching its source, or a tiger finding refuge by leaning on a mountain's strength. It emphasizes abandoning dependence on mere words. One can attain a deeper understanding of reality by relinquishing reliance on verbal explanations and by exploring direct experience. The text cautions that without the guidance of the Chan predecessors, future scholars might be akin to blind individuals feeling like elephants - struggling to grasp the complete picture.

The "Blue Cliff Record" illuminates the essence of Chan's teachings: the realization of truth lies beyond mere verbal expression. It stands as both a historical testament to the wisdom of the past and a guiding light for future generations, offering

---

66 Ibid, p149.

a path toward enlightenment through the experiential practice of Chan Buddhism. By encouraging direct engagement with one's inner landscape and the world around them, Chan's philosophy unveils the boundless potential of self-discovery and spiritual realization. The text's emphasis on experiential wisdom underscores the transformative power of direct experience, challenging seekers to transcend language and intellectual analysis to uncover the profound truth within their hearts. Thus, the "Blue Cliff Record" serves not only as a testament to the depth of Chan's thought but also as an invitation for all seekers to explore the boundless terrain of their consciousness in pursuit of ultimate understanding.

### **3.3 The Impact of Chan Thought in the "Blue Cliff Record" on Chan Buddhism**

The "Blue Cliff Record" and its author, Chan master Yuanwu Keqin, have been the subjects of various critical reviews. Some scholars believe that this book violates the Chan tradition of "not relying on written texts" and may even hinder Chan practitioners from attaining enlightenment. Through a detailed analysis of primary sources, this section provides a fresh and profound evaluation of these viewpoints.

In the "Blue Cliff Record", Chan Master Keqin repeatedly emphasized that meditation should "not rely on words." Nevertheless, this becomes a fallacy for those with clumsy roots who depend heavily on textual interpretation. If one cannot accurately comprehend the content and philosophical underpinnings of the "Blue Cliff Record", it is indeed a lamentation of Chan. Regarded as the "first book of Chan" in its initial publication, this book holds immense literary and philosophical values, meriting immeasurable attention and in-depth research by future generations of scholars. The rise of "written Chan" in the "Blue Cliff Record" during the Song Dynasty broadened the ranks of Chan scholars. It infused new vitality into the evolution of Chan.

The principles and methods in the "written Chan," as exemplified in the "Blue Cliff Record," were established in response to the actual situation of Chan during the Song Dynasty. They were intended to steer people away from an over-reliance on language and texts and address the widespread trend of discussing Chan court cases. The "Blue Cliff Record" employs a lively and inventive writing style that weaves

together poetry, verse, hymn, and commentary. This approach resonated deeply with the people of its time, especially the educated elite who practiced Chan music at the time. The Record not only sounded the horn of the convergence of Chan Buddhism but also a collision between Buddhism and Chinese culture, particularly in terms of aesthetics. This interaction brought about significant transformations within Chan Buddhism. In the later period, the influence of the "Blue Cliff Record" remained strong, with many Buddhist works adopting its distinctive format. Examples include the "Collection of Empty Valley Commented by Master Linquan" (*Linquan Conglun*: "Master Linquan's Commentary on the Collections of Ode to the Ancient Empty Valley") and "Elder Master Wansong's Commentary on the Ode to the Ancient Congrong Nunnery of Master Jue of Mount Tiantong,"<sup>6760</sup> included in the "New Compilation of the Great Japanese Sutra," Vol. 67, No. 1303.

As mentioned, the "Blue Cliff Record" emerged as a landmark "written Chan" event in the Song Dynasty. It broadened participation in Chan practice, most notably among scholars and officials. These people, attempting to enter through the imperial examination, had a good educational background. Primarily drawn to Chan's mysterious teachings, they contributed significantly to the official compilation of Chan quotes, cases, and scriptures during the Song Dynasty. The development of textual Chan also promoted the exchange of traditional Chinese literature and Buddhist culture, highlighting the unique charm of Chinese culture.

Throughout the history of Chinese Buddhism, Chan gradually declined after the Song Dynasty, and there were few Mahasiddha, mainly because of the subtle changes in the relationship between politics and religion and the uneven quality of monks. The rise of written Chan, represented by the "Blue Cliff Record", played a significant role. It expanded the dissemination of Chan, facilitated greater acceptance and practice among the literati and the public, and invigorated Chan with new vitality during this transition.

The "Blue Cliff Record" inherits Chan's excellent traditional teachings, offering accessible explanations of its theories of mind and nature. This makes the Sixth Patriarch Huineng's Chan method, typically practiced by those with superior roots,

---

67 Xingxiu, Elder Master Wansong's Commentary on the Ode to the Ancient Congrong Nunnery of Master Jue of Mount Tiantong, Taishō Tripiṭaka Vol. 48.

universally applicable. In response to current drawbacks, Chan's theories of mind and nature are elaborated profoundly. Combining these theories in the "Blue Cliff Record" and Western-born naturalistic thought complements each other, making them more suitable for contemporary learners and providing a new direction for modern philosophical investigations.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the "Blue Cliff Record", elucidating its origins, development, contents, and significance within Chan Buddhism. Tracing its creation by Master Yuanwu Keqin and complex textual history, the chapter illustrates how this iconic collection of 100 koans and commentary encapsulates profound Chan principles.

Examining core ideas in the "Blue Cliff Record" reveals key facets of Chan's thought, including discarding attachments, looking inward to recognize Buddha's nature, embracing the ordinary mind in daily life, and using language expediently to gesture toward truths beyond words. While there are criticisms that the text violates Chan's mistrust of written words, Master Keqin's teachings continually remind readers not to cling to language but to use it as a skillful means to awaken.

The "Blue Cliff Record" played a vital role in the emergence of textual Chan in the Song dynasty, broadening Chan's reach and transforming it through increased literary aesthetics. Its unique format inspired many subsequent Buddhist texts. While later misconceptions may have hindered its full impact, the text remains an invaluable source for appreciating the sophistication of Chan's philosophy.

In summary, this overview of the "Blue Cliff Record" establishes vital foundations for the in-depth discussion of its naturalistic elements in the next chapter. It highlights the text's enduring value as a crystallization of Song dynasty Chan thought and its skillful blending of spirituality with literary invention. The examination paves the way for further analysis of how the "Blue Cliff Record" interweaves Buddhist teachings with an aesthetic attunement to the natural world.

## CHAPTER IV

### RELIGIOUS NATURALISM IN "BLUE CLIFF RECORD" OF CHAN BUDDHISM

In Chapter II, we have explored some intersections of religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism, uncovering numerous similarities between these seemingly disparate philosophies. Now, we will delve deeper into the "Blue Cliff Record" of Chan Buddhism. Specifically, our focus will be on the flower's symbolism in its koans, which serves as a poignant representation of the core tenets of religious naturalism within the context of Chan. This focused inquiry aims to paint a more comprehensive and vivid portrait of naturalism's presence in Chan Buddhism.

#### 4.1 The Symbol of Flower in "Blue Cliff Record"

In Chan Buddhist literature, a rich array of symbols originates from nature, encapsulating profound philosophical wisdom." These symbols, such as mirrors, flowers, water, and the moon, are not merely discrete images but interconnected elements mirroring the interdependent nature of existence in Buddhist philosophy. Among these recurrent symbols, the "Blue Cliff Record" prominently features the "flower" symbol 92 times, highlighting its profound significance within the text. Even its title, though it does not mention the word "flower", is also related to flowers, which is rooted in one of Chan Master Jiashan's best-known poems:

*"(Someone)Asks, 'How is Mount Jiashan?'*

*The master answered, 'Apes embrace their children and return to the green mountains, while birds carry flowers and drop them in front of the blue cliff.'"<sup>6761</sup>*

In this poem, the bird is compared to the Buddha, the flower symbolizes the Buddha's teachings, and the blue cliff signifies the current world. Later, Chan Master Yuanwu Keqin adopted the title "Blue Cliff Record" when editing Chan's sayings to record the teachings of Chan masters for future scholars.

---

<sup>67</sup>Yuanwu Keqin, *Blue Cliff Record by Chan MasterFoguo Yuanwu*, TaishōTripiṭaka Volume 48, 1114.

Within the "Blue Cliff Record," many instances employ the expressive beauty of poetry to guide practitioners, offering a unique perspective on "Chan" and revealing the profound essence of naturalism. As we progress, our focus will shift towards exploring how Chan Buddhism perceives the external world and the intricate relationship between humans and nature through the lens of naturalism. Through a thorough qualitative analysis of specific cases and an in-depth examination of texts, we aim to shed light on the core of Chan's naturalistic approach to life. Given the abundance of material available, we will highlight only the most representative and insightful instances in this chapter.

## 4.2 Naturalism behind the Symbol of Flower in the "Blue Cliff Record"

(1) Reverence for Nature: Embracing inherent order and rhythms of nature

The "Blue Cliff Record" abounds in symbols and metaphors that offer profound insights into its philosophical foundations. Among these symbols, the flower stands out as a crucial link between the text's teachings and the principles of naturalism. Rather than being a mere decorative element, the recurring presence of the flower in the "Blue Cliff Record" reflects the deep-rooted naturalistic concepts in Chan Buddhism. By exploring this symbol, we can uncover multiple layers of meaning and philosophical significance that deepen our understanding of how Chan's thought relates to the harmonies of the natural world.

Case 88: 葉落花開自有時。若到此境界。雖然見似不見。聞似不聞。說似不說。飢即喫飯。困即打眠。任他葉落花開。葉落時是秋。花開時是春。各各自有時節。

### Translation:

*[Leaves fall, and flowers bloom in their own time. When reaching this state, it seems like seeing without seeing, hearing without hearing, speaking without speaking. When hungry, eat; when tired, rest. Let the leaves fall, and flowers bloom. The falling leaves represent autumn, and the blooming flowers represent spring. Each has its season.]*

At its core, naturalism is a philosophy rooted in a deep recognition and

respect for the laws of nature. It is not just an intellectual perspective but a way of life that sees the natural world as a guide and mirror. The cycles of birth, growth, decay, and rebirth in nature are not just phenomena to be observed; for the naturalist, they are profound lessons on impermanence, interconnectedness, and the beauty of life's rhythms. The dropping of leaves and the blossoming of flowers are not just passive events; they symbolize nature's inherent order and wisdom, which operate beyond human constructs and desires.

This profound respect for nature's laws and rhythms translates into a spiritual practice. Drawing from these naturalistic insights, Chan practitioners cultivate an attitude of harmony with the environment. They see the unfolding of natural events not as mere occurrences but as teachings, as reminders of the delicate balance of life. For them, living in accordance with nature's flow means embracing change, surrendering to the present moment, and finding peace in the inherent order of the cosmos.

By appreciating the natural world and its processes, the naturalist and the Chan practitioner find themselves not as dominators or passive observers but as active participants in the grand dance of life. This shared ethos of interconnectedness and reverence forms the bedrock of their understanding and approach to existence.

## (2) Leading a simple life with "Ping Chang Xin."

The essence of "Ping Chang Xin", also rendered as "ordinary mind" in Chan Buddhism, is the embrace of the ordinary, the everyday, and the unadorned. It is the realization that enlightenment and genuine understanding are not found in the extraordinary but in life's simple, everyday actions and experiences.

This flower in the "Blue Cliff Record" beautifully encapsulates this. "When hungry, eat; when tired, rest." These phrases capture the spirit of "Ping Chang Xin". They highlight the beauty of simply responding to the natural rhythms and needs of one's body and environment, without overcomplicating or resisting. It is a perspective that does not seek extravagance or complexity but finds profound wisdom in life's basic, ordinary functions.

Furthermore, the imagery of leaves falling and flowers blooming reflects the acceptance of nature's rhythms. Just as the leaves fall in autumn and flowers bloom in spring, each following its inherent pattern without interference, the Chan practitioner,

with the "Ping Chang Xin" mindset, allows life to unfold in its natural course. By embodying "Ping Chang Xin", both the naturalist and the Chan practitioner approach life with a sense of simplicity, contentment, and profound respect for the natural rhythms of existence.

In the "Blue Cliff Record", such a naturalistic approach to life can also be seen in many other cases. For instance, the famous Case 6, "Every day is a good day."

Case 6:

云门垂语云：“十五日已前不问汝，十五日已后道将一句来。”

自代云：“日日是好日。”

**Translation:**

*[Master Yunmen instructed his disciples, saying: "I will not ask you how it was before the fifteenth day. Just tell me a sentence about yourself after the fifteenth day". Seeing that the assembly remained silent, he answered on their behalf, "Every day is a good day."]*

The case revolves around Master Yunmen's challenge to his disciples on the fifteenth day. In the lunar calendar, the fifteenth day typically marks the full moon, a transition point in the month. The Master's inquiry hints at probing their awakened understanding of their true nature, a common theme in Zen teachings.

When the assembly remains silent, Master Yunmen provides an answer: "Every day is a good day." This seemingly simple statement carries profound implications related to the essence of "Ping Chang Xin." It captures the heart of "Ping Chang Xin", reflecting an acceptance and appreciation of each day, recognizing the inherent value and completeness in the ordinary moments of daily life. By suggesting that every day, regardless of its events or one's perceptions, is inherently good, Master Yunmen emphasizes the beauty of living in harmony with the natural flow of things.

This naturalistic approach emphasizes not just acceptance but also an appreciation of the beauty and wisdom inherent in the mundane. It is about recognizing that the ultimate truths of existence are not necessarily found in grand revelations but rather in the simple, quiet moments of daily life.

(3) Adopting a non-dualistic attitude towards existence

The above-cited flower also underscores the idea of non-dualism, which is often present in naturalistic thinking. Describing a state where things seem to be both

seen and unseen, heard and unheard, and spoken and unspoken implies a transcendence of conventional dualities. This resonates with the interconnectedness and interdependence that naturalism often recognizes in the web of life and the universe.

Such an idea of non-dualism can also be found in another flower reference, "Zhimen and The Lotus".

Case 21:

僧问智门：“莲花未出水时如何？”

智门云：“莲花。”

僧云：“出水后如何？”

门云：“荷叶。”<sup>6862</sup>

**Translation :**

*[A monk asked Zhimen, "What is the lotus flower before it emerges from the water?"]*

*Zhimen replied, "A lotus flower."*

*The monk asked again, "What about after it emerges from the water?"*

*Zhimen answered, "A lotus leaf."]*

The dialogue between the monk and Master Zhimen challenges conventional perceptions of separateness and invites us to embrace the interconnectedness and impermanence inherent in the natural world. The lotus flower is a powerful symbol, representing the potential and inherent wisdom of all beings. Before emerging from the water, it remains unseen, mirroring the hidden potentials within ourselves and the interconnectedness we share with the environment. By recognizing this interconnectedness, we shift towards a non-dualistic perspective, perceiving reality as an integrated whole rather than isolated entities.

The answers provided by Zhimen—"lotus flower" and "lotus leaf"—demonstrate that distinctions such as "out of the water" and "not out of the water," or past, present, and future, are merely relative concepts. This realization fosters a non-dualistic mindset in which the boundaries between opposites dissolve, enabling us to

---

68 Yuanwu Keqin, *Blue Cliff Record by Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu*, Dazheng New Tripitaka, Vol. 48, p. 213.

perceive the unity and continuity of all things. This naturalistic approach encourages us to let go of clinging to names and images, leading to a deeper understanding of the impermanent nature of existence. By embracing impermanence, we can easily navigate life's changes and align with the natural world's rhythms.

In essence, this lotus flower kaon's exploration of non-dualism aligns with the fundamental principles of naturalism. It encourages us to transcend dualistic thinking, embrace interconnectedness, and recognize the ever-evolving nature of the universe. Through this lens, one can develop a profound appreciation for the interconnected web of life and our integral role within it, fostering a more harmonious and authentic relationship with nature.

#### (4) Developing non-attachment Stance to Everything

Case 41:

陸互大夫與南泉禪師語次，陸云：肇法師道，天地與我同根，萬物與我一體，也甚奇怪。南泉指庭前花，召大夫云：時人見此一枝花，如夢相似。

#### **Translation :**

*[When Imperial Counsellor Lu Gen met Chan Master Nanquan, he remarked, "The teachings of Master Zhaofashi are profound. Heaven and earth share the same root; everything is one with me. It is truly marvelous. "Nanquan pointed to a flower in the courtyard and said, "When ordinary people see this single flower, it appears as though in a dream."]*

This flower case, titled "Nanquan and the Flower", offers insight into non-attachment, a central tenet in both Chan Buddhism and religious naturalism. Master Lu's statement, "Heaven and earth share the same root with me, and all things are one with me," speaks of a profound interconnectedness but also indicates a dissolution of the ego, a state of non-attachment from a distinct self. The emphasis on non-attachment in Chan is not merely about detaching from material possessions but also about letting go of the concept of an individual, separate self. This ego-dissolving brings a more profound sense of oneness with the universe, as encapsulated in Lu's words.

While non-attachment might not be directly emphasized in religious naturalism, the focus on the unity of all things in the natural world points towards a

similar idea. It suggests a move away from anthropocentric thinking, encouraging individuals to see themselves not as separate, privileged entities but as part of an interconnected web of life. Nanquan further develops this concept in his interaction with the flower, suggesting that ordinary people see it "as if in a dream." Nanquan hints at the illusory nature of our perceived reality, including the concept of the separate self. The flower, beautiful but transient, serves as a symbol of impermanence - another aspect of non-attachment. By pointing to the flower, Nanquan teaches that our reality is no different from the fleeting existence of this flower - temporary, ever-changing, and dreamlike.

A similar naturalistic philosophy is found somewhere else in the "Blue Cliff Record", for instance, the case related to flowers, titled "The Flower Fence".

僧问云门： "如何是清浄法身？ "

门云： "花药栏。 "

僧云： "便恁么去时如何？ "

门云： "金毛狮子。 "

**Translation:**

*[A monk asked Master Yunmen, "What is the pure Dharma body?"*

*Yunmen replied, "The flower fence."*

*The monk asked, "How about when I end this life?"*

*Yunmen answered, "The golden-haired lion."]*

In the dialogue between a monk and Master Yunmen, we find profound teachings encapsulated in seemingly simple words. The monk's question about the pure Dharma body is met with Yunmen's unexpected response, "The flower fence." This is not a straightforward answer but a symbolic representation that challenges conventional thinking. Yunmen urges the questioner to think beyond traditional frameworks and embrace metaphorical insight by using an everyday object to symbolize something as profound as the Dharma body. It is an invitation to inner exploration, compelling the monk to comprehend the true nature of the Dharma body beyond conceptual understanding. The dialogue teaches non-attachment to specific concepts or definitions, warns against rigid thinking, and emphasizes the importance of direct perception over theoretical understanding.

Another case involving the flower communicates similar messages.

Case 82:

僧问大龙：“色身败坏，如何是坚固法身？”

龙云：“山花开似绵，涧水湛如蓝。”

**Translation:**

*[A monk asked Dalong, "The physical body decays and perishes; how then is the Dharmakaya indestructible?"*

*Dalong replied, "The mountain flowers bloom like cotton, the stream water deep as indigo."]*

The discourse between the monk and Great Master Dalong, viewed through the lens of naturalism, mainly emphasizes the principle of non-attachment.

When the monk inquires about the transitory nature of the physical body versus the eternal Dharmakaya, he is caught in a dualistic perspective, juxtaposing the impermanent with the permanent and seeking clarity in their relationship.

The master's response, invoking images of mountain flowers and stream water, is not merely poetic but is deeply rooted in a naturalistic worldview. The mountain flowers, blooming like cotton, and the stream's waters, deep as indigo, are emblematic of nature's transient yet recurrent phenomena. In its continuous ebb and flow, nature neither clings to its past form nor anticipates its future, but it exists in its present state with equanimity.

From a naturalistic viewpoint, the blooming mountain flowers, although fleeting, continue to bloom. The streams, though their waters are continually in motion, remain perennial. Their cyclical existence, both transient and continual, reflects nature's non-attachment to any singular form or moment.

In addition, just as the mountain flowers and stream water represent the impermanence of nature, their consistent recurrence signifies an underlying permanence. In this light, the Master's response hints at the non-dual nature of existence, where the impermanent and the permanent are not two distinct realms but facets of the same reality. Nature operates without clinging to its manifestations. The flowers do not mourn their wilting, nor does the stream lament over the water that has passed. A profound non-attachment marks their existence. Similarly, the Dharmakaya,

or the Truth Body, remains indestructible not because it is an eternal entity opposed to the perishable body, but because it embodies the essence of non-attachment, transcending the confines of permanence and impermanence.

In conclusion, the master's response is a potent reminder of the principle of non-attachment found in nature. By pointing to the mountain flowers and stream water, he invites the monk (and us) to recognize the inherent wisdom of nature, which thrives without clinging, illuminating the path to understanding the Dharmakaya's indestructible nature.

#### (5) Emphasizing personal experience in seeking self-realization

In exploring Chan Buddhism, a key emphasis lies in pursuing self-realization through personal experience. In the "Blue Cliff Record", Master Keqin emphasizes the practical aspects of the spiritual journey. Illuminating the essence of Chan lies not in elaborate rituals or external techniques but in the direct engagement with everyday life.

Case 62:

Xuedou's Ode:

看看，古岸何人把钓竿。

云冉冉，水漫漫。明月芦花君自看。

**Translation:**

*[Behold, on the ancient shore, who wields the fishing rod?*

*The drifting clouds, the boundless water, in gentle harmony, nod.*

*Amidst the splendor of the bright moon and cattail flowers' sway,*

*Gaze upon this scene, for it can only be conveyed through your eyes.]*

This ode conveys Chan's emphasis on direct perception and personal experience, encouraging practitioners to transcend reliance on textual interpretations or external authorities. Instead, they are encouraged to engage intimately with the present moment and their inner landscape to gain insights into the nature of reality. Religious naturalism also values personal exploration and direct engagement with the natural world. It invites individuals to seek the sacred in religious texts and dogmas, as well as in the very fabric of nature itself. This approach nurtures a profound appreciation for the interconnectedness of all life and the inherent beauty of the environment. In Chan and religious naturalism, the path towards self-realization is conceived as an

experiential journey. Practitioners are encouraged to seek understanding and meaning by plunging into their immediate, tangible encounters with reality. This immersive and experiential wisdom paves the way for a deeper sense of wonder, reverence, and awe for the cosmos and the vibrant tapestry of life.

Similarly, another case echoes the naturalistic idea of direct perception from one's ordinary life.

Case 50:

僧问云门：“如何是尘尘三昧？”门云：“钵里饭，桶里水。”

**Translation:**

*[A monk asked Yunmen, "How can I realize the dust-mote samadhi?"*

*Yunmen replied, "Rice in the bowl, water in the bucket."]*

In this case, the monk's question is about the profundity of Buddhist teachings, seeking ultimate understanding beyond the worldly realm. However, Master Yunmen's response focuses on the immediacy of everyday life. His message is clear: before embarking on a quest into the depths of Buddhist wisdom, one must fully engage with the present reality symbolized by "rice in the bowl, water in the bucket." Yunmen urges the monk to immerse himself deeply in the fabric of daily existence, actively participating in every moment without obstruction. By embracing the intricacies of everyday life, one can unlock the doors to the samadhi of the mundane and experience profound liberation.

This perspective finds resonance with religious naturalism, which also emphasizes the sacredness of everyday experiences and encourages an intimate connection with the natural world. Rather than seeking transcendence solely in abstract doctrines or otherworldly pursuits, Chan Buddhism and religious naturalism find spiritual depth and insight in ordinary, tangible realities. They cultivate a grounded spirituality that cherishes the mundane as a path to enlightenment, offering a rich, embodied experience of the sacred within daily living.

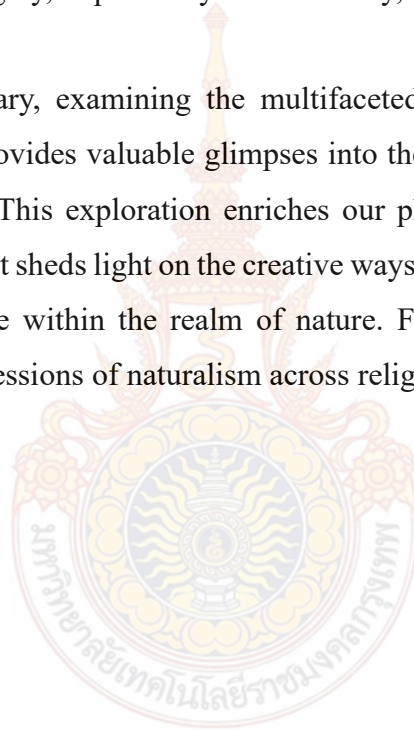
**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the in-depth analysis of flower symbolism in the "Blue Cliff Record" provides illuminating glimpses into the naturalistic essence of Chan Buddhism. The prominence of floral imagery reflects Chan's adept use of nature as an artistic device to express profound insights and guide spiritual cultivation.

Several core naturalistic principles are evident through the symbolism, including embracing natural rhythms, simplicity, non-duality, impermanence, and non-attachment. The text beautifully conveys Chan's emphasis on direct personal experience over conceptual knowledge in realizing self-nature. Clear resonances exist between these facets of Chan naturalism and the central tenets of religious naturalism.

While similarities arise from their reverence for nature, differences also emerge from Chan's unique historical development and its adaptation of Buddhist thought within Chinese culture. The "Blue Cliff Record" exemplifies how Chan employs natural imagery, expedient yet evocatively, to gesture toward truths beyond language.

In summary, examining the multifaceted symbolism of flowers in this seminal Chan text provides valuable glimpses into the sophistication and adaptability of Chan naturalism. This exploration enriches our philosophical appreciation of the "Blue Cliff Record". It sheds light on the creative ways in which Chan Buddhism brings spiritual ideals to life within the realm of nature. Further research can continue to uncover diverse expressions of naturalism across religious and cultural boundaries.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Review of Major Findings

The intersection of religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism, as explored through the lens of the "Blue Cliff Record", has been a captivating study area. This research has unearthed several findings that deserve detailed acknowledgment:

##### (1) Deep Philosophical Synergies

The journey began with realizing intricate philosophical connections between religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism. Both frameworks, albeit emerging from different historical epochs and cultural paradigms, converge on fundamental philosophical notions. Their intertwined roots underscore a shared ethos that emphasizes the harmonious relationship among humanity, spirituality, and the natural world.

##### (2) Natural Symbolism in the "Blue Cliff Record"

The "Blue Cliff Record" is not merely a text but a treasure trove of symbolism. The way it harnesses natural imagery is not just a stylistic choice but a deliberate act to convey profound truths. This research uncovered how this text masterfully employs natural motifs as metaphors, drawing parallels between the observable world and intricate facets of Chan thought and religious naturalism.

##### (3) Unraveling the Floral Motifs

An in-depth foray into the text's floral imagery was incredibly enlightening. Beyond the aesthetic, the recurrent floral motifs signify pivotal naturalistic doctrines. They champion themes such as embracing the natural rhythms of life, the interconnectedness of all beings (non-duality), life's inevitable ephemerality (impermanence), the wisdom of non-attachment, and the value of seeking self-awareness through personal experience.

##### (4) Cultural Adaptations and Nuances

While the reverence for nature serves as a common thread, the research also spotlighted distinctions, particularly in how Chan Buddhism internalized and

adapted Buddhist teachings within the rich tapestry of Chinese culture. While maintaining the essence, this adaptation introduced unique cultural flavors and nuances, creating a version of Buddhism that resonates deeply with Chinese philosophical traditions.

#### (5) Diverse Approaches to Science, Scriptures, and Practices

The traditions' rapport with science and rationality emerged as a key area of exploration. While religious naturalism often harmonizes with scientific understanding, Chan Buddhism takes a more experiential approach, emphasizing personal enlightenment. Furthermore, how each tradition relates to its scriptures and practices delineates its unique spiritual landscapes, reflecting different paths to similar spiritual destinations.

This methodical analysis of the "Blue Cliff Record" has painted a vivid tableau of religious naturalism's imprint within this iconic Chan oeuvre. The findings unravel the text's nuanced layers and spotlight the "Blue Cliff Record" as a masterful tapestry of religious naturalism, affirming its pivotal role in elucidating the complexities and beauty of Chan's philosophical discourse.

## 5.2 Revisiting Objectives and Contributions

The study set a clear, comprehensive, and ambitious objective: to investigate and delineate the connections and distinctions between religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism, with explicit focus on the insights derived from the "Blue Cliff Record." This aim was not merely academic but represented a profound exploration into philosophical traditions that bridge Eastern and Western thought.

The objectives were systematically and methodically addressed through a multi-tiered approach, including historical analysis, philosophical inquiry, textual examination, and comparative analysis.

**Philosophical Similarities:** The research uncovered profound philosophical similarities between religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism, a revelation that extends far beyond superficial comparisons. By delving into the core principles of both traditions, the study revealed shared values, including reverence for nature, a focus on experiential wisdom, and an interconnected worldview that

acknowledges the seamless relationship among humanity, nature, and the cosmos. This discovery opened up a fascinating line of investigation that challenges conventional dichotomies between Eastern and Western thought. It also provided fresh insights into how seemingly distinct philosophical traditions can converge unexpectedly.

**Detailed Examination of the "Blue Cliff Record":** The study's contribution to understanding the "Blue Cliff Record" is significant. By conducting a detailed examination of this iconic text, the research shed light on its historical context, literary structure, thematic richness, and philosophical depth. This exploration illuminated the central thoughts and ideas that have shaped Chinese Chan Buddhism and provided an invaluable resource for scholars, practitioners, and enthusiasts alike. The study unveiled layers of meaning that resonate with the principles of religious naturalism by deciphering the text's symbolic language, metaphorical expressions, and allegorical teachings.

**Textual Analysis and Manifestation of Religious Naturalism:** Lastly, the research transcended mere theoretical discourse by engaging in a meticulous textual analysis that unraveled how religious naturalism manifests in the "Blue Cliff Record." This aspect of the study involved dissecting specific cases, interpreting nuanced philosophical insights, and unearthing the delicate interplay between naturalistic philosophy and Chan teachings. This process required a keen analytical eye and a deep understanding of both traditions. The findings shed light on the multifaceted reflections of naturalistic philosophy that transcend cultural and temporal boundaries. They added a new dimension to our understanding of religious naturalism, showcasing its flexibility, diversity, and profound connection with other spiritual traditions.

The cumulative effect of these contributions has resulted in a rich, comprehensive, and illuminating study that offers scholars and general readers a new perspective on religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism. It has woven a tapestry that connects disparate threads of human thought, providing a nuanced understanding of the human experience within the vast landscape of philosophical traditions. The research is a testament to the possibility of dialogue, mutual understanding, and shared wisdom across different cultures and epochs. It encourages us to look beyond the apparent differences and find common ground in our shared quest for truth, meaning, and enlightenment.

### 5.3 Additional Findings

As the study progressed, additional insights and subtleties emerged, complementing and enriching the primary objectives. These findings were not merely supplementary but unfolded a more nuanced understanding of the subject matter, revealing contrasts and convergences that had not been initially anticipated.

**Orientation Towards Nature:** The relationship with nature is a cornerstone for Western religious naturalism and Chan thought. However, the study revealed subtle yet profound differences in how each tradition approaches this relationship. Western religious naturalism, while embracing the beauty and complexity of nature, often approaches it through the prism of science. The intention is to decipher the underlying laws and mechanisms, seeking an objective understanding that aligns with scientific principles. Chan thought, on the other hand, embodies a more contemplative and spiritual connection with nature. Rather than analyzing natural phenomena, it perceives them as direct expressions of deeper truths and ultimate reality. The natural world is not a subject to be dissected but a living manifestation of wisdom, a source of insights that transcends rational explanation. This distinction opens up a broader dialogue about how different cultural and philosophical frameworks shape our perceptions and interactions with the natural world.

**Language and Expression:** A striking contrast was also observed in language and modes of expression. Western religious naturalism often employs clear, analytical, and precise language, aiming for clarity and logical coherence. Its discourse articulates complex concepts in accessible terms, aligning with the rationalist tradition. Chan Buddhism, in contrast, revels in the enigmatic, employing paradoxes, koans, metaphors, and poetic expressions. These are not mere literary devices but profound pedagogical tools designed to challenge conventional thought and point beyond the limitations of reason. The Chan tradition recognizes that some truths evade logical explanation and must be grasped through a different mode of knowing. This finding illuminates a rich diversity in how truths are conveyed and apprehended, reflecting a broader spectrum of human cognition and experience.

**Approach to Knowledge and Understanding:** The study further

examined how these traditions pursue knowledge and understanding, uncovering yet another layer of differentiation. Western religious naturalism typically prioritizes reason, logic, and empirical evidence, aiming to construct a coherent worldview that integrates spiritual insights with scientific understanding. In contrast, Chan Buddhism strongly emphasizes intuitive wisdom, experiential understanding, and direct realization of truth. Rather than building a conceptual framework, it encourages a direct and unmediated encounter with reality. This approach values the immediacy of experience, the spontaneity of insight, and the unconditioned mind that sees without filters or preconceptions. It represents a radical departure from conventional epistemology, inviting us to reconsider what we mean by knowledge, understanding, and truth.

These additional findings weave a more complex and intricate narrative, highlighting the richness and diversity of thought between Western religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism. They challenge simplistic binaries and encourage a more empathetic and multifaceted engagement with philosophical traditions. The contrasts and commonalities unveiled in this study deepen our understanding of these traditions and prompt us to reflect on the underlying assumptions, values, and paradigms that shape our worldviews. By laying bare these distinctions and resonances, the research offers a profound exploration into the tapestry of human thought, bridging gaps, fostering dialogue, and inspiring a deeper appreciation for the complexity and beauty of our intellectual heritage.

This study has unearthed a profound connection between religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism, as evidenced by the "Blue Cliff Record". Despite their separation by culture, history, and context, these two traditions are bound by philosophical principles that emphasize a seamless relationship among humans, nature, and the cosmos. This research emphasizes the rich dialogue between religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism, highlighting the beautiful interplay between the mundane and the profound. The study's significance extends to understanding the value of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary dialogue and recognizing the shared insights and unique distinctions between these philosophical traditions. It also acknowledges the complexity and challenges of interpreting ancient texts, as well as the broad scope of the studied traditions. Future research may delve deeper into these aspects and foster

more dialogue between Eastern and Western philosophies.

## 5.4 Conclusion

The implications of this research extend far and wide, enriching both Western and Eastern philosophical traditions. By exploring and contrasting the tenets of religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism, the study uncovers subtle alignments and distinctions that provide a more nuanced and multifaceted view of these schools of thought. This is not just an academic exercise but an endeavor that builds a bridge between philosophies often seen as separate or opposed. This bridge connects and facilitates a deeper understanding of how similar questions and themes are addressed across different cultural and intellectual contexts.

By reflecting on these intricate comparisons and convergences, the study extends beyond theoretical explorations and paves the way for practical dialogues. These dialogues have the potential to foster deeper connections, mutual respect, and shared insights across diverse cultures and traditions. Examining these philosophies does not merely involve comparing and contrasting but also reveals the possibility of synthesis and mutual enrichment. It recognizes that the wisdom of the East and the West can be complementary, opening doors to new insights neither tradition could achieve in isolation.

The study's unexpected findings, such as the intricate balance between reason and intuition within these traditions, further enrich the exploration. Rather than settling for easy categorizations, the research delves into the layers and paradoxes that make these philosophies both challenging and rewarding to study. These findings stimulate fresh interpretations and provide novel perspectives on how religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism may interact and influence contemporary thought. The insights derived from this study are not confined to the historical or doctrinal realm but resonate with our ongoing quest for meaning, wisdom, and understanding in a complex world.

Additionally, the research does more than answer questions—it raises new ones, sparking curiosity and setting the stage for further exploration. Unresolved questions and areas for future investigation have emerged, such as how these traditions

may shape contemporary practices, attitudes, and values. This encourages continued scholarly pursuit and promises to keep the dialogue alive and evolving. As this study reveals, the interplay between religious naturalism and Chan Buddhism offers a fertile ground for diverse inquiries, ranging from ethical considerations to psychological impacts, from cultural expressions to social implementations.

### **5.5 Suggestions for Further Research**

Building on the foundation laid by this exploration, several avenues for future investigation promise to further enrich our collective understanding. Firstly, an in-depth examination of lesser-known philosophical traditions and religious practices could offer fresh perspectives and insights, shedding light on overlooked wisdom that complements and challenges current paradigms. Such a study would broaden the academic discourse and celebrate the richness of human diversity in thought and spirituality.

Secondly, engaging with contemporary issues through the lens of comparative religion and philosophy could provide meaningful contributions to pressing global challenges. Topics such as environmental ethics, social justice, and the search for peace could benefit immensely from the insights gathered in this study. By applying ancient wisdom to modern dilemmas, we can find innovative solutions that are effective and respectful of diverse viewpoints.

Moreover, the development of educational materials and programs that draw on the findings of this research may inspire the next generation to adopt a more inclusive and empathetic approach to learning about the world. Encouraging young minds to appreciate the value of diverse perspectives from an early age paves the way for a future where dialogue and understanding triumph over division and discord.

Lastly, further research should explore the psychological and sociological effects of engaging with multiple religious and philosophical traditions. Understanding how these interactions influence individuals' worldviews, values, and behaviors offers valuable insights into the role of education in shaping a more harmonious society.

In sum, the journey does not end here. It is merely the beginning of a broader, more inclusive conversation about what it means to be human and how we can

live together in a diverse world. By continuing to explore, question, and connect, we can build on the work done and venture further into the vast landscape of human thought and spirituality.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### **Books and Chapters:**

- Crosby, Donald A. *A Religion of Nature*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.
- Crosby, Donald A., and Jerome A. Stone, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Naturalism*. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Crosby, Donald A. *The Thou of Nature: Religious Naturalism and Reverence for Sentient Life*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013.
- Danto, Arthur C. Naturalism. In *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards, 448-50. New York: Macmillan, 1967.
- Ferguson, Andy. *Zen's Chinese Heritage: The Masters and Their Teachings*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011.
- Flanagan, Owen. *Varieties of Naturalism*. In *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, edited by Philip Clayton and Zachary Simpson, 430-52. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Foster, Nelson, and Ueda Shizuteru. *Entangling Vines: A Classic Collection of Zen Koans*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013.
- Goodenough, Ursula. *The Sacred Depths of Nature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Heine, Steven. *Chan Rhetoric of Uncertainty in the Blue Cliff Record: Sharpening a Sword at the Dragon Gate*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Heine, Steven, and Dale S. Wright, eds. *Zen Classics: Formative Texts in the History of Zen Buddhism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- James, Simon P. *Zen Buddhism and Environmental Ethics*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Kopp, Sheldon B. *The Pilgrimage of Psychotherapy Patients*. New York: Bantam Books, 1976.
- Lacey, A. *Naturalism*. In *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, edited by Ted Honderich, 604-05. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1986.
- Loyal, Rue. *Nature is Enough: Religious Naturalism and the Meaning of Life*. Albany:

- State University of New York Press, 2012.
- Loyal Rue. *Religion is Not About God: How Spiritual Traditions Nurture Our Biological Nature and What to Expect When They Fail*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005.
- Miller, Gregory. *The True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dōgen's Three Hundred Kōans*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2005.
- Norton-Smith, Thomas. "One Shawnee's Reflections on Religious Naturalism." In *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Naturalism*, edited by Donald A. Crosby and Jerome A. Stone, 33-43. New York: Routledge, 2020.
- Pan, Guiming. *Chinese Zen Thought History*. Beijing: China Today Press, 1992.
- Raymo, Chet. *When God Is Gone, Everything Is Holy: The Making of a Religious Naturalist*. Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2008.
- Reps, Paul and Nyogen Senzaki. *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones: A Collection of Zen and Pre-Zen Writings*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1998.
- Shibayama, Zenkei. *Flower Does Not Talk: Zen Essays*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2012.
- Stone, Jerome A. *Religious Naturalism Today: The Rebirth of a Forgotten Alternative*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.
- Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro. *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*. New York: Grove Press, 1964.
- Yinshun. *History of Chinese Zen Buddhism*. Nanchang: Jiangxi People's Publishing House, 1999.
- Yuanwu Keqin. *Blue Cliff Record by Chan Master Foguo Yuanwu*, in *Dazheng New Tripitaka*, Vol. 48.

### **Translated Books:**

- Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*. N.p.: N.p., N.d.
- Sekida, Katsuki, trans. *Two Zen Classics: The Gateless Gate and the Blue Cliff Records*. Boston: Shambhala, 2005.
- White, Carol W. *Religious Naturalism*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.

**Book Review:**

Wilson, Bruce M. *Philosophy East and West* 29, no. 2 (1979): 249-251.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1398566>.

**Journal Articles:**

Capra, Rudi. "Go Trampling on Vairocana's Head! Role and Functions of Irony in the Blue Cliff Record." *Dao* 19 (2020): 601-618.

Capra, Rudi. "Scolding the Buddhas, Abusing the Patriarchs: An Outlook on the Subversive Hermeneutics of Chan, through Case Four of the Blue Cliff Record." In *Critique, Subversion, and Chinese Philosophy: Sociopolitical, Conceptual, and Methodological Challenges*, edited by Hans Georg Moeller and Andrew K. Whitehead, 77-86. London; New York, 2021.

Chen, Hongbing. "Ecological and Environmental Protection and the Expansion of Buddhist Vegan View." *The Wutai Mountain Study* (2009): 59-63.

Forrest, Jay N. "Buddhism and Religious Naturalism." In *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Naturalism*, edited by Donald A. Crosby and Jerome A. Stone, 197-208. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Kaza, Stephanie. "Zen Buddhist Perspectives on Religious Naturalism." In *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Naturalism*, edited by Donald A. Crosby and Jerome A. Stone, 212-224. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Liu, Dongshan. "Test the Buddhist Idea of 'Spiritual Environmental Protection'." *Journal of Fuzhou University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)* (2004): 3.

Mao, He. "A Brief Discussion on Ecological Care and Environmental Protection in Buddhist Culture." In Collection of *Hanshan Temple Culture Forum*, 2009.

Mei, Cong Zhao. "Analysis of Buddhist Teachings and the Relationship between Buddhist Lifestyle and Environmental Protection." *Journal of Chongqing University of Science and Technology (Social Science Edition)* (2008): 4.

Ouyang, Yizhang. "On the Symbol of Flowers in Biyan Collection—From the Perspective of Dramatic Tension and Montage." *Buddhist Research Collection—Buddha and Flower* (1994).

Pang, Xiangyun. "Start with the Grass, and Follow the Flowers to"—Lao Zhuang

- Concept and Literary Purport in Zen School." *Appreciation of Famous Works: Academic Edition* (2005): 7.
- Sharf, Robert H. "What Do Nanquan and Schrödinger Have against Cats?" *Representations* 144 (2018): 154-165.
- Tseng, Ming-Yu. "Symbolic Discourse: Mystical Writing as Anti-Language." *Language and Literature* 6, no. 3 (1997): 181-195.
- Wei, Jianzhong. "Hermeneutic Interpretation of Biyan Lu." *Journal of Yichun College*, 2012.
- Wu, Yansheng. "The Symbol System of Zen Case." *Journal of Shaanxi Normal University* 3, 2002.
- Xiao, Zhenzhen. "On Modern Environmental Protection." *Zhejiang Journal* (2011).
- Zhang, Weizhen. "A Preliminary Study on Ecological Protection Thoughts and Practice and Its Modern Value of Buddhism." *Xijiang Moon* (2013): 7.
- Zhou, Yukai. "Chan Etymology of Song Dynasty Poetic Terminology." *Research on Literary Theory* 6 (1998): 7.
- Zhu, Caifang. "The Hermeneutics of Chan Buddhism: Reading Koans from the Blue Cliff Record." *Asian Philosophy* 21, no. 4 (2011): 373-393.

#### **Dissertations:**

- Capra, R. "The Game of Chan - A Cross-Cultural Analysis of the Role of Irony in the Blue Cliff Record." PhD diss., University College Cork, 2019.
- Li, Wenbing. "Zen Thought and Aesthetic Significance of Biyanlu." PhD diss., Sichuan Normal University, 2010.
- Nichols, Ryan. "Natural Philosophy and Its Limits in the Scottish Enlightenment." PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2007.

#### **Dictionaries:**

- Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary*, 6th ed. The Commercial Press and Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Wood, Ernest. *Zen Dictionary*. New York: Open Road Media, 2019.