I am grateful for Professor Yiu-ming Fung’s paper and for enlightening me about the nature and function of the koans in Zen teaching. I especially want to emphasize my agreement with him that we should not think of koans as somehow or other necessarily irrational: “What is irrational is not the koan as a speech act in a non-literal sense, which is of the function of directing mental transformation, but the koan as a speech act in its literal sense”.

Because philosophical discussions are more interesting if disagreements rather than agreements come to the fore, I will concentrate my reply mainly on disagreements. These are about his account of indirect speech acts and his accounts of metaphor. On my account, in an indirect speech act, one performs two speech acts, one which is literally encoded in the meaning of the sentence, and another which is meant by the speaker. I distinguish in short between sentence meaning and speaker meaning. If I understand him correctly, he rejects my account of indirect speech acts on the grounds that only one speech act is performed in the indirect speech act and not two, and therefore he thinks that the sentence uttered must contain what I call the speaker’s meaning. As in my example when the suggestion is, “Let’s go to the movies tonight,” and the reply is “I have to study for an exam,” you have two speech acts that are performed. The primary speech act is to reject the proposal to go to the movies and this is done indirectly by way of the literal secondary speech act of stating that I have to study for an exam. Now, for reasons that are not clear to me, Yiu-ming Fung rejects what I think are obvious points. He thinks that my view of indirect speech acts requires me to hold a view which he attributes to me as a doctrine of “meaning departure”. But I have, as far as I know, never used the term “meaning departure.” What I have said is that the speaker might literally say one thing and mean literally what he says but also mean something else which is not literally contained in the meaning of the sentence but which is implied by its utterance. A rejection of this seems to commit him to the view which I think he in fact holds. He believes that under these circumstances the sentence,
“I have to study for an exam” means “I cannot go to the movies”. In response to this I would want to emphasize that the initial speech act with the literal meaning is indeed performed. The speaker said and meant that he had to study for an exam. And the proof of that is that the response to the literal meaning is always appropriate. The hearer might respond

No, you don’t have to study for an exam. Your exam is not until next week.

On my account the sentence does not have two meanings. It just has its literal meaning. He says the sentence uttered implies “I cannot go to the movies”. But I think that cannot be right. The sentence by itself has no such implication, because it is perfectly consistent to do both: study for an exam and go to the movies. It is not the sentence as such but rather the speaker who implies that he cannot go to the movies and therefore rejects the proposal. But there is no way to say that without postulating two speech acts on the part of the speaker, one encoded in the literal sentence meaning, the second implied by the speaker’s utterance meaning.

This disagreement with Yiu-ming Fung comes out more strongly when he takes a position like Davidson’s on metaphors. He says that live metaphors have only perlocutionary effects, but never convey a propositional content different from the literal meaning. I believe this is wrong. To take obvious examples: Pick up any newspaper and you will find metaphors pretty much throughout and we understand the propositional content that is conveyed in these as different from the literal meaning of the sentence printed. I was in Paris when in the headlines in the papers there were statements like “The European Constitution is now dead”. “The French killed it off”. “It was shot down”. All of those are metaphors. “Shot down” is certainly not a dead metaphor. We would not teach people that when something is voted out, the right way to describe the negative vote literally is to say the proposal was “shot down.” “Dead” in “dead metaphor” is indeed dead; but if I say that the European Constitution is “dead” that is very much a live metaphor. And the proof that there is an actual propositional content conveyed by the metaphorical utterance is that people can debate its content. And the way they might conduct the debate would be to continue to use the metaphorical expressions. They might say, “No, the French election didn’t shoot down your constitution, it didn’t shoot down the European Union, it just shot down this early version of