

THE “INDIRECT MESSAGE” IN KIERKEGAARD AND CHÁN BUDDHISM

ZDENĚK ZACPAL

ABSTRACT: *The article seeks to analyse Kierkegaard’s indirecte Meddelelse, which the author proposes to translate as ‘indirect message’. It attempts to consider and illuminate this concept and its general characteristics, types and cases in Kierkegaard’s work. They are to serve as a baseline for investigations of indirect messages in Buddhism, especially the famous ‘public cases’ (gong-àn / kōan 公案) of the Chán Buddhists. The author tries to specify indirect messages on both sides of the cultural divide in terms of some Western philosophers. Kierkegaard’s theoretical rationale for his indirect message is profound, sophisticated and appropriate to the theoretical investigation of the Chán public cases. Chán representatives do not possess such pertinent tools for the formal analysis of their own or other indirect messages. However, their indirect messages are impressive in their formal diversity; their variety is, unlike Kierkegaard’s counterparts, not limited by orthodox theological residues.*

Keywords: *Chán Buddhism, communicative aims, conventional and conversational implicature, God-man’s messages, gong-àn, humour, immediacy after reflection, indirecte Meddelelse [indirect message], irony, kenshō, Kierkegaard, leap, (non-)dualism, objective thinking and pseudonymous authorship, performatives, perlocution, subjective thinker, true human of no rank*

1. INTRODUCTION

The term *indirecte Meddelelse* is one of the key, central concepts of the Danish thinker *Søren Aabye Kierkegaard*. Thus far this term has usually been translated into English as *indirect communication*. In English, ‘communication’ is a broad concept which can be and often is symmetrical. In Kierkegaard’s work the Danish terms *Meddelelse* and *Communication* each have a different meaning. The term *Communication* is also used by Kierkegaard, but less frequently and plays a more peripheral role. In contrast with the Danish *Communication*, Kierkegaard’s *Meddelelse* means something asymmetric (message giver). In his journals and in *Practice in Christianity*, both of which shall be analysed below, Kierkegaard means by *Meddelelse* a markedly one-sided interaction

ZACPAL, ZDENĚK: translator, writer, and doctoral student of philosophy at Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic. Email: zacpal@email.cz

with a clear difference between the active performer and passive receiver.¹ In some languages this difference can be rendered more easily than in English. However, even in English the vital difference could and should be emphasised. I propose provisionally translating *Meddelelse* as ‘message’ and *Communication* as ‘communication’. ‘Message’ is not fully equivalent to Kierkegaard's *Meddelelse*, but is at least less misleading than the ‘communication’ found in much of the literature.

What does the term *indirecte Meddelelse* [indirect message] mean and how does it differ from *directe Meddelelse* [direct message]? I shall first provide a tentative analytical definition of both terms, independent of Kierkegaardian concepts. A ‘direct message’ is a message whose author or initiator formulates its semantic content (or informative gesture) as identical with its intention; whereas an ‘indirect message’ is one for which its semantic content (or informative gesture) is not used quite in accordance with its intention.

At this point one can provisionally say that in Kierkegaard's work an indirect message seems to serve as a means for the ethical and/or spiritual uplifting of its recipient in a wider sense. Some strivings of this kind can be observed in the Eastern Buddhist tradition.

In this paper, I shall try to compare Kierkegaard's indirect messages with those of Buddhist, especially *Chán* [禪] tradition. Kierkegaard tries to define and characterize his indirect message, its examples and even a sort of what can be called its specific types. Due to his significant theoretical contribution, I shall in the two following sections II. and III. proceed along his theoretical frame. My intention is to try to find in this paper parallels and/or differences between indirect messages and their workings from both sides of the cultural divide.

2. KIERKEGAARD'S GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS INDIRECT MESSAGE

In his 1847 non-pseudonymous *Journal lectures* Kierkegaard discerns in any messaging [*det at meddele*] four factors: 1) object; 2) message-giver [*Meddeleren*]; 3) recipient; and 4) message [*Meddelelsen*].² He classifies direct and indirect messages here and argues that messages of aesthetic, ethical, maieutic and religious and specifically Christian competence or capability are ‘more or less indirect’.³ Especially the ethical should not be imparted in a scholarly or scientific manner: the respective message should be performed in an artistic way as its object is not knowledge but realization.⁴ Kierkegaard mentions a teacher of gymnastics⁵ and a corporal who drills a peasant recruit without explaining anything to him, not instructing him by explaining

¹ Most continuous passages in Kierkegaard's works on a given subject can be found in Kierkegaard (1847, SKS 27, 389-434) and Kierkegaard (1850, SKS 12, 129-146).

² Kierkegaard (1847, SKS 27, 389-434).

³ *Ibid.* (404-406, 433-434).

⁴ *Ibid.* (393-395).

⁵ *Ibid.* (397).

what it means to be a soldier, but by treating him as a soldier.⁶ Kierkegaard even asserts that “all true messages of truth must always begin with an untruth.” He namely suspects that recipients of such a message are in untruth. And, furthermore, “it is impossible to tell the whole truth in one minute or in an even shorter time, it takes longer.” Thus Socrates first pretended his ignorance, sharing initial position with his partners, only gradually dispelling their illusions. So, if the [initial] ‘untruth is not included, then the extraordinary [of the message-giver] does not even remain the extraordinary; it is then taken in vain, becomes a direct superlative in relation to the universal’ – and ‘this is an utterly undialectical classification [*Bestemmelse*] of the extraordinary.’⁷ Kierkegaard here tries to incite deeper reflection in the recipients.

In Kierkegaard’s philosophico-religious treatise *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, its pseudonymous author, ‘Johannes Climacus’, an alleged humorist,⁸ provides the general [but neither entirely distinct nor exhaustive] characteristics of the indirect message. He juxtaposes two modes of thinking. *Objective thinking* [dealing with items of this world with only one reflection] is interested in results, but it is indifferent to the thinking subject as well as to one’s own existence: its message is direct. *Subjective thinking* is more intimately connected with the individuality of the subjective thinker, who is essentially interested in his own personal thinking and existing in it. This subjective thinking has a double reflection: besides the ordinary reflection of the universal, it has another kind of reflection, a reflection of inwardness, of possession, by virtue of which it belongs to the subject and to no one else.⁹ Or, in the words of *Peter Lübcke*, ‘the first reflection includes an understanding of the meaning of the words, and the second concerns our interest in what is being said ... the personal relation between a thinker and his thought content.’¹⁰ The form of the message of a subjective thinker must artistically possess just as much reflection as does he himself, existing in his thinking.¹¹ Attempts at messaging certain convictions directly are here demonstrated as self-contradictory and meaningless.¹²

According to Kierkegaard’s *Practice in Christianity*, signed by ‘Anti-Climacus’,¹³ who should have been an exceptionally saintly Christian, an indirect message can be produced not only by the arts of a message-giver who places qualitative opposites in a unity, making up a dialectical knot that is to be untied by the receiver of the message; but also by/through the relation between the message and the message-giver, if the message-giver is dialectically defined and his own being is based on reflection.¹⁴

⁶ *Ibid.* (391-392, 395, 414).

⁷ 5 sentences Søren Kierkegaards Papirer, Bind IX, (1968, 298-299); this passage is not included in SKS; its English translation can be found in Kierkegaard (2009, 170).

⁸ Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 7, 454).

⁹ 3 sentences *Ibid.* (73-79, 220, 320-328).

¹⁰ Lübcke (1990, 35-36).

¹¹ Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 7, 74).

¹² *Ibid.* (77-79).

¹³ Kierkegaard (SKS 28, 441 – Letter [Brev] 286 from 1849).

¹⁴ Kierkegaard (1850, SKS 12, 137-138).

3. THE INDIRECT MESSAGE IN KIERKEGAARD AND AMONG THE CHÁN BUDDHISTS IN TERMS OF ITS KIERKEGAARDIAN RUDIMENTARY TYPOLOGY

Kierkegaard's not quite distinct definitions does not even give us exact criteria for an unambiguous recognition of which messages, such as e.g. messages of capable scientists, are direct and which are indirect. Still, Kierkegaard's general characteristics of the indirect message mentioned in section II. endorse my first tentative definition from section I. In this section, I shall try to present Kierkegaard's types of his indirect message and find some Buddhist parallels to them.

3.1 KIERKEGAARD'S PSEUDONYMOUS AUTHORSHIP

Many Kierkegaard's texts are written under various pseudonyms. The *wide range of pseudonyms and/or authors and mostly fictional characters* were intended to represent and depict different life-views, 'stages on life's way.'¹⁵ Although he gives them some positive or attractive features and qualities, he reveals indirectly through the texts some clear shortcomings, limitations and contradictions in their life-views, in contrast with [his version of] Christianity, which is according to him able to face life properly.¹⁶ However, through the perspectives of his pseudonymous authors, he also shows such aspects of people and things that could not effectively be shown from Kierkegaard's declared, superior standpoint.

Kierkegaard non-pseudonymously explains that he tried to rid people of the illusion that people in Christendom, in particular in his Denmark, are Christians.¹⁷ Kierkegaard believes that a direct attack here would be counter-productive, only strengthening people in their sensory illusion and provoking indignation.¹⁸ Instead of traditional lecturing, he tries to locate everybody's starting point and begin from the position of each individual.¹⁹ His pseudonymous aesthetic production should have been a trick "to deceive a human being into the truth."²⁰ The religious author thus after gaining the public by his splendid artistic production is slowly bringing forward religiosity.²¹

Use of 'skilful means' [*upāya*] in explaining his dharma is illustrated by the Buddha in his parable of an affluent man in his burning house who himself can easily escape the fire and save his own life; however, his young children are playing inside the house and not knowing what fire is, do not obey his direct order, being unwilling to leave the house. The man promises them that if they run out of the house, in front of it they will

¹⁵ Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 7, 569-573).

¹⁶ This is one of Kierkegaard's main topics, present across his collected works, in his fiction manifest especially in Kierkegaard's works "Enten – Eller" (1843, SKS 3, – the topic of the volume), in "Gjentagelsen" (1843, SKS 4, 92-96) and in "Stadier paa Livets Vei", (SKS 6, 80-171, 369-454).

¹⁷ Kierkegaard (1848, SKS 16, 23-27).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* (25-26).

¹⁹ *Ibid.* (27-29).

²⁰ 'at bedrage et Menneske ind i det Sande' – *Ibid.* (13); see also *Ibid.* (29-32, 35); Kierkegaard (1851, SKS 13, 23-27).

²¹ Kierkegaard (1848, SKS 16, 25-27).

find rare carts with interesting pack animals, plus he promises them further presents. Thanks to this false promise, they escape and save their lives. Buddha's disciple *Śāriputra* then agrees that the man only tried to help his children escape from the disastrous fire and ultimately did not deceive them, even should he renege on his promise and not give them anything.²²

The Buddhists did not develop such a sophisticated system of pseudonymous authorship as Kierkegaard did, yet they did not stick to their own person or ego. Let us mention the charming case of Master Rui Yán (瑞巖) who did not take himself as seriously as Kierkegaard, every day not only playfully addressing himself, "Master!" but also pronouncing instructions to himself aloud and answering them immediately in the affirmative.²³ On the question of why worldly people applying themselves to various sorts of learning fail to obtain the path, *Bodhidharma* answers, "Because they see a self, they do not obtain the path. If they were able to avoid seeing a self, then they would obtain the path. Self means ego..."²⁴ Bodhidharma is able to keep his equanimity even before *Emperor Wǔ of Liáng* (梁武帝): when the Emperor asks the great master, "What is the highest meaning of the holy truths?" Bodhidharma says, "Empty, without holiness." The emperor asks, "Who is facing me?" Bodhidharma replies, "I don't know."²⁵

3.2 IRONIC MESSAGES

According to the young Kierkegaard, *an ironist*, embodied by his admired master Socrates, says in conversation the contrary of what he thinks, in such a way that he says something in a serious way, but he does not think it seriously, or (less often) he says something as a joke and thinks it seriously. The real ironist supposes that his listeners grasp his real intentions and he cherishes this mutual understanding. He does not aspire to property or power: the irony brings him pleasure and also serves as a means for his own liberation. The ironist just maintains a negative independence from everything, leaving none of himself in the scene.²⁶

In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, irony is already regarded as the cultivation of the spirit and posited straight after immediacy, only then professedly 'comes the ethicist, then the humorist, then the religious.'²⁷ The irony emerges by continually joining the particulars of the finite with the ethical infinite requirement and allowing the contradiction to arise.²⁸ At the same time, when an observer meets an ironist, it is advisable for him to be attentive as it is not certain whether or not the ironist is an ethicist; only if an ironist is relating himself to an

²² 4 sentences *Lotus Sutra* (2007, Chapter III, 56-58); see also *The Vimalakīrti Sutra* (2004, Chapter II, 81-84).

²³ *Wú-Mén-Guān*, Case 12.

²⁴ *The Bodhidharma Anthology* (1999, Text no. 5: Record I, 25).

²⁵ *The Blue Cliff Record* (2005, Case 1, p. 1; 碧巖錄/卷第一, 2).

²⁶ 4 sentences Kierkegaard (1841, SKS 1, 286-296).

²⁷ Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 7, 457).

²⁸ *Ibid.* 455.

absolute requirement is he then an ethicist, using irony as one's own incognito.²⁹ Thus the ethicist sets the comical between himself and the world to ensure that he does not become comic in the eyes of the world through naive misunderstanding of his ethical passion. Such an ethicist was Socrates; the pseudonymous Johannes Climacus here confesses shortcomings 'of Magister Kierkegaard' and locates Socrates' position even at 'the border of the religious.'³⁰

One can find many cases of irony in Buddhism, too. *Sakka*, ruler of the gods, invites Buddha's disciple *Mahā Moggallāna* to his sumptuous Vejayanta Palace. To tease Sakka and his subjects a bit, Mahā Moggallāna uses his supernatural power and makes the palace shake and quake; ironically from the viewpoint of the narrator, the astonished lord of the gods is praised by his attendants for having such a good companion in the holy life.³¹ Some *Chán* reports, indeed Wú Mén's (無門) comment that Yún Mén (雲門) – by shouting at Dòng Shān (洞山)– “again shared him infused with explanation”³², appear to make out an even colder irony than the irony typical of Socrates or Kierkegaard.

3.3 HUMOROUS MESSAGES

Humor as characterized in the Postscript is rather specific: it is a boundary-mark between the ethical and the religious: humour is the last stage of existence's interiority before faith, it has already appropriated all of what is essentially Christian, but not yet in a decisive way; humour is still the last terminus a quo in relation to the designation of what is Christian.³³ The humorist even has an essential idea on suffering, being able to comprehend the meaning of suffering in relation to existing, but not otherwise than that suffering (and guilt) are a part and parcel of existing – and then the humorist makes the deceptive turn and revokes the suffering in the form of a jest, weepingly touching the secret of existence in *grief* [*Smerte*], but then, in laughing, returns home.³⁴ In few examples of humorous messages given here, the humorist pronounces excessively general statements or intentionally directs attention to an altogether incidental little annoyance and says that if it were not present he would then be happy.³⁵ The childlike is left to reflect in total consciousness and this together with the cultivation of spirit, and relation to the absolute, produces humour.³⁶ Analogically to an ironist, a humorist can be, in fact, a religious person using humour as their incognito to place a veil between indifferent or sneering people and oneself; in humorist's case in order to guard and protect their own inwardness of suffering and relationship with God.³⁷ Analysing

²⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 455-456; see also Kierkegaard (1847, SKS 27, 397, 402).

³⁰ 2 sentences Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 7, 456-457).

³¹ *Ibid.* (246-247, 502).

³² *Wú-Mén-Guān*, Case 15.

³³ Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 7, 246-247, 502).

³⁴ *Ibid.* (407, 500-504).

³⁵ *Ibid.* (407-410, 500-503).

³⁶ *Ibid.* (500).

³⁷ *Ibid.* (458-460).

spiritual meaning of his ironic and humorous attitudes³⁸ the ‘Climacus’ considers ‘the power in the comic’ to be even “an unavoidable legitimation for anyone who is to be regarded as authorized in the world of spirit in our day.”³⁹

If there reside in Kierkegaard’s humour – in contrast to ‘unwomanish’ irony – the concealed pain and sympathy often absent in the colder forms of irony,⁴⁰ some humour exhibited by *Chán* representatives is tough, even savage. Observe the case when Jù Zhī (俱胝) cuts off his servant boy's finger with a knife just because the poor boy clumsily tried to imitate his own raised finger gesture!⁴¹ However, we can also find some kinder examples of *Chán* humour. Shortly before his death, Great Master Mǎ Zǔ (馬祖) was waning but when the head monk asked how he felt he answered simply: “Sun Face Buddha, Moon Face Buddha.”⁴²

3.4 CHRIST’S AND CHRISTIAN INDIRECT MESSAGES

The ‘Anti-Climacus’ in conformity with major part of historical Christendom believes in Christ’s divinity. *Christ, God-man*, is according to him an absolute paradox which can be properly accessed by faith alone; one should, first and foremost, believe in him⁴³ and imitate him.⁴⁴ As the sign of contradiction he cannot be defined clearly and unambiguously – he fulfils the criterion of dialectical designation, all his messages are eo ipso indirect, they even cannot be direct ones.⁴⁵ Thus the saying, “I am God: the Father and I are one’ alone could still have been a direct message. However, if the message-giver is not God but an individual human being just like others, the message contains a contradiction and becomes indirect; ‘it confronts you with a choice: whether you will believe him or not.’⁴⁶ The relevant passages across the *Practice in Christianity* deal primarily with those of the Christ’s statements in which his own status plays some essential role, where he presents his own self in some ambiguous terms. There are omitted such Christ’s messages which look like perfect and beautiful examples of direct message, e.g. many messages of the Sermon on the Mount or the Christ’s simple instructions.⁴⁷ Still, Kierkegaard asserts that in contrast with Christ, Christians can use indirect messages, in the interests of Christianity, at best only as a form of awakening. From his point, other message givers, including his own person, are replaceable; only the Christ’s words are of apodictic import for his ultimate spirituality.⁴⁸

³⁸ *Ibid.* (265-266, 407-410, 453-474, 500-504).

³⁹ *Ibid.* (256).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* (500-502).

⁴¹ Wúmén guān, Case 3.

⁴² “日面佛、月面佛” – see Poceski (2015, 233); see also Blue Cliff Record (2005, Case 3, 18-19; 碧巖錄/卷第三, 6).

⁴³ Kierkegaard (1850, SKS 12, 38-49, 92-93); Kierkegaard (1844, SKS 4, 242-257).

⁴⁴ Kierkegaard (1850, SKS 12, 227-249).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* (129-132, 137-140).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* (137-138).

⁴⁷ Matthew 5:1-7:29.

⁴⁸ 2 sentences Kierkegaard (1848, SKS 21, 50, 79); Kierkegaard (1850, SKS 23, 471-473).

Even if there was something extraordinary about Buddha as early reports of his encounters with his contemporaries testify,⁴⁹ many Buddhists in history, especially those of older traditions and *Chán* movement, have not ascribed to him any form of divinity.⁵⁰ Even Buddha himself recognized the existence of fully enlightened Buddhas with their orders of monks both in the past and in the future.⁵¹

3.5 SOME OTHER INDIRECT MESSAGES IN KIERKEGAARD

Moreover, one can find in historical Kierkegaard some other indirect messages that do not clearly fall into the types he himself characterized to some degree. In his lifetime when our thinker was anxious to win his approbation and to be accepted into the [the Danish Hegelian cultural arbiter of the times] *J. L. Heiberg's circle* of aesthetic and criticism did not shy away from the use of some strategic indirect messages, making these literates later on 'the object of satire'.⁵² When still a student, Kierkegaard used parody as his form of protest against the cheap Hegelian deification of the philosophy by Heiberg and *Martensen*.⁵³ In the notorious *Seducer's Diary*, one can find crafty indirect messages from the character *Johannes the Seducer* to the innocent *Cordelia*, misusing his friend *Edvard*, whose poor performance in his role of suitor was being used to throw the young, inexperienced girl into Johannes' arms.⁵⁴

4. THE INDIRECT MESSAGE IN KIERKEGAARD AND AMONG THE BUDDHISTS IN GENERAL TERMS

In this section, I shall examine formal aspects and workings of Kierkegaard's and the Buddhists' indirect messages to know their similarities and/or differences, not shying away from Western philosophers' suggestions and their terminology.

4.1 TYPES OF DIRECT/INDIRECT MESSAGE ON A FORMAL SCALE

DIRECT MESSAGES

Kierkegaard counts himself a religious author, using the direct message as the highest form of expression.⁵⁵ Manifestly direct are not only Kierkegaard's explicitly Christian works and sermons, but also his not yet explicitly Christian *Upbuilding Discourses*.⁵⁶

Many canonical discourses of the Buddha and some lectures of *Mahāyāna/Chán* masters also essentially appear to be the direct transmission of the doctrine and

⁴⁹ *Majjhima Nikāya* 51 – Kandaraka Sutta.

⁵⁰ See also *Wú-Mén-Guān*, Case 33.

⁵¹ *Majjhima Nikāya* 51 – Kandaraka Sutta.

⁵² Stewart (2003, 57-58).

⁵³ Kierkegaard (1837, SKS 17, 280-297; Garff (2007, 74-86).

⁵⁴ Kierkegaard (1843, SKS 2, 336-365).

⁵⁵ Kierkegaard (1848, SKS 21, 79); Kierkegaard (1850-1851, SKS 24, 114); Kierkegaard (1851, SKS 13, 12-18).

⁵⁶ Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 7, 232).

instructions.⁵⁷ Even some of their spontaneous answers can work as direct messages. Such is the case when *Bodhidharma* both explicitly and graphically calms the mind of his disciple.⁵⁸

INDIRECT MESSAGES: EXTRA-LANGUAGE MESSAGES

Kierkegaard's indirect message is mostly based on natural language, but because of his mentioned teachers instructing some skills [3-7], the use of non-linguistic means is not excluded. Kierkegaard himself does not thematize extra-locutionary acts, but, incidentally, e.g. in his novel *Repetition*, his pseudonymous author 'Constantin Constantius' refers to *Diogenes'* response to the Eleates who denied movement. Diogenes in that case did not counterargue with words: he was just walking back and forth several times to prove his point.⁵⁹

For Buddhists such acts or answers with the non-establishment of words – (*bú-lì-wén-zì*, 不立文字) are far more common. Buddha himself, on one noteworthy occasion, is said to have held up a flower before his listeners.⁶⁰ Mǎ Zǔ was one of first *Chán* masters to practice not only shouting at but also assaulting his disciples; methods such as these have since become not unusual in *Chán* practice. In a version of the story, Shuǐ Liǎo (水潦) asked his master Mǎ Zǔ about the true meaning of Bodhidharma. Mǎ Zǔ ordered him to bow down and immediately kicked him, eo ipso bringing his great awakening. Shuǐ Liǎo appreciated the kick, paid his respects to his master and has allegedly been laughing ever since.⁶¹ Master Lín Jì (臨濟) was a great disciple of such methods,⁶² fond of beating disciples with his stick.⁶³ Whenever anything was asked, Master Jù Zhī would just raise one finger.⁶⁴ Kuí Shān (滙山), instead of answering an invitation to a feast, relaxed his body and lay down.⁶⁵ Another master, Zhào Zhōu (趙州), answered the question, “Does a dog have *Buddha-nature* (*fó-xìng* 佛性)?” with the word-sound *wú* (無), meaning now both ‘No!’ and ‘Woof!’⁶⁶ However, this retort has been ever since serving generations of adepts in their sustained contemplative efforts.

INDIRECT LINGUISTIC MESSAGES WHICH CAN BE EXPRESSED DIRECTLY

In Buddhism and Kierkegaard we can find cases of diplomatic speech and/or occasional pleasantries. Buddha used indirect messages which could be easily expressed in a direct (and often simpler way), but he preferred the indirect way for mediation as yielding a

⁵⁷ E.g.: *Platform Sutra of Hui Neng* (2000, II, 27-36, *Ibid.*, IV-VI, 41-53); 六祖壇經 (2007: 般若品第二, 定慧品第四, 妙行品第五, 懺悔品第六); *Sheng-Yen* (1982, 11-56).

⁵⁸ *Wú-Mén-Guān*, Case 41.

⁵⁹ Kierkegaard (1843, SKS 4, 9).

⁶⁰ *Wú-Mén-Guān*, Case 6.

⁶¹ Poceski (2015, 54-55).

⁶² *The Blue Cliff Record* (2005, Case 32, p. 202; 碧巖錄/卷第三二, 50).

⁶³ *The Record of Lin Ji* (2009, 5-6 (English), 349-350 (Chinese)).

⁶⁴ *The Blue Cliff Record* (2005, Case 19, p. 123; 碧巖錄/卷第一九, 30).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Case 24, 159; 碧巖錄/卷第二四, 39.

⁶⁶ *Wú-Mén-Guān*, Case 1

greater chance of success. Such was the case when he tried to rescue the (republican) community of Vajjī from the expansive and destructive whims of *Ajātasattu*, king of Magadha, by carefully sculpting his answers to *Vassakāra*, the Prime Minister of Magadha. In response to Vassakāra's questions concerning the possibility of conquering the Vajjī, Buddha in turn questions his beloved disciple *Ānanda*. The Master gradually 'ascertains' from his disciple that the Vajjī are too strong, that they are on the rise and he betrays in the end that it was he himself who has instructed them regarding the very conditions of their rise and strength when he was dwelling in their capital Vesālī.⁶⁷ Flattery and diplomacy sit ill at ease with the informal *Chán* milieu, at least in model records of their mutual encounters. An example of indirect spiritual instruction of this type is the case when the Sixth patriarch Hui Néng (六祖慧能) clarifies for his disciples that it is neither the flag nor the wind, but their mind that is moving.⁶⁸

The young Kierkegaard was prone to ingratiating manners [⁵²], but, to his credit, few philosophers displayed less diplomatic manners than the older Kierkegaard. In his journal *The Instant* he leads an audacious and unprecedented attack upon the practices of the Church of Denmark and its support by the state.⁶⁹

Paul Grice draws attention to the fact that there are "very many inferences and arguments, expressed in natural language" whose terms do not fit into the standard devices of formal logic in the strict sense, "nevertheless they are recognizably valid."⁷⁰ By the term *implicature* Grice means what the speaker suggests or implies with an utterance, but does not express it literally. What is implied, suggested or meant is thus distinct from what is said [implicatum].⁷¹ Implicature can be *conventional*: "In some cases [of the implicature] the conventional meaning of the words used will determine what is implicated, besides helping to determine what is said." So, if somebody says (smugly) "He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave", such a person implicates that "his being brave is a consequence of (follows from) his being an Englishman."⁷² Grice in his article seems to be more interested in some of *nonconventional implicatures*, in particular in implicatures called by him *conversational implicatures*.⁷³ In them, some possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally unsuitable for enabling a maximally effective exchange of information.⁷⁴ If, for example, A is standing by an obviously immobilized car and says B "I am out of petrol", an appropriate and relevant answer of B can be just "There is a garage round the corner," if it is likely that the garage is open and has petrol to sell.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ 3 sentences *Dīgha nikāya* 16 – *The Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*: The mentioned event is interpreted in this way by Ven. Pandita (2011).

⁶⁸ *Wú-Mén-Guān*, Case 29.

⁶⁹ Kierkegaard (1855, SKS 13, 111-418).

⁷⁰ Grice (1991, 23-24).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷² 2 sentences *Ibid.* 25.

⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 26.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 28.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 32.

In the above-mentioned cases of Buddha, Huì Néng and Kierkegaard, the semantic content is not formulated to be entirely identical with its intention. More exact and perhaps less appealing would be in such and similar cases a direct message, but the intention of such instructions here still can be inferred from their linguistic features. As the conventional meaning of the words used determines here what is implicated, these messages are cases of Paul Grice's 'conventional implicature.'^[72]

INDIRECT LINGUISTIC MESSAGES WHICH CANNOT BE EXPRESSED DIRECTLY AND ARE STILL CONSISTENT

The case when Buddha himself, by his well-phrased questions, provoked his disciple *Punna* and prepared him for an ultimately successful propagation of Dhamma among the fierce and rough people of Sunāparanta,⁷⁶ goes beyond mere diplomacy and can already be interpreted at least partly as falling within this type of indirect message that *Chán* masters amply use. When the disciple Dà Méi (大梅) asks, "What is Buddha?", his master Mǎ Zǔ replies, "The mind itself is Buddha."⁷⁷ To the same question from the monk Huì Chāo (慧超) his master Fǎ Yǎn retorted, "You are Huìchāo."⁷⁸ By such replies both masters are helping their disciples rid themselves of their sticking to their current idea of the Buddha. *The very learned priest of the Fén prefecture*, who turned to master Mǎ Zǔ and admitted that he was still uncertain about the meaning and purport of *Chán* teaching, was immediately sent out by the master on the pretext that there were too many people; he came to insight as soon as Mǎ Zǔ called, "Teacher!" and immediately thereafter said, "That's the matter."⁷⁹ Such messages, unlike those in the previous section, cannot be even approximately expressed and (unlike the aforementioned diplomatic means) not even explained in a direct way without losing, as it were, all their appeal. Instead, they just serve as a catalyst to the disciples' awakening.

Some of the indirect messages of Kierkegaard's aforementioned corporal and gymnastics teacher [⁵⁻⁶] as well as manipulative messages used by Kierkegaard's character Johannes the Seducer as a means to charm and ultimately seduce the innocent girl Cordelia⁸⁰ may fall within this group. But now more seriously: Kierkegaard's 'Johannes Climacus' in *Philosophical Fragments* characterizes one way of teaching truth as its recollection, artistically realized by Socrates.⁸¹ Kierkegaard also writes on *maieutics*, notably in connection with his own authorial mission.⁸² However, he does not greatly analyse such cases of maieutic indirect message and Socrates' (way of doing) maieutics which do not contain (much) irony and can be found, for example, in *Laches*,

⁷⁶ *Majjhima Nikāya* 145 – *Punṇovāda Sutta*.

⁷⁷ *Wú-Mén-Guān*, Case 30.

⁷⁸ *The Blue Cliff Record* (2005, Case 7, p. 46; 碧巖錄/卷第七, 13).

⁷⁹ Mario Poceski (2015, 234 (– i.e. *Zōng-jìng-lù* version of the story)).

⁸⁰ Kierkegaard (1843, SKS 2, 338-432).

⁸¹ Kierkegaard (1844, SKS 4, 218-222).

⁸² Kierkegaard (1851, SKS 13, 13-14. See above III. a).

Theaetetus and *Meno*.⁸³ So, the Kierkegaardian essential secret, namely to set another free through such an indirect message which cannot be expressed directly,⁸⁴ cannot yet much be found here; it is to be mainly sought in the next type.

INDIRECT LINGUISTIC MESSAGES WITH SOME INCONSISTENCIES WHICH CANNOT BE EXPRESSED DIRECTLY

This is the Kierkegaard's central type of indirect message used by him in support of spiritual striving. It is manifest in his pseudonymous authorship, in his ironic, humorous and Christian messages, and indeed in those of Christ, as analysed above in Section III. If, however, Socrates' defence before the Athenian court is treated by Kierkegaard as irony, questioning the competence of his judges by his Greek ironist par excellence could be plausibly interpreted as a direct message.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, in almost all Socrates' utterances mentioned by Kierkegaard can be found an evident dialectical knot, tension or contradiction.

This type of indirect message was also used, if less centrally, by the *Chán* masters. Master Zhào Zhōu asks a monk who is eager to be instructed whether he has eaten his bowl of rice. After the monk's confirmation the master exhorts him to clean his bowl and just by this inconsistency removes the monk's conceit about his partial results.⁸⁶ Master Wǔ Zǔ (五祖) appeals to his disciples to greet an enlightened man neither by words nor by silence – and then asks them how, in fact, they would greet him.⁸⁷ Master Xiāng Yán (香巖) asks his disciples how a man, hanging on a tree by his mouth high above the ground and lacking support for his hands and legs, should reply to another man on the ground asking him about the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West.⁸⁸ A nicer case: A monk asked Dà Lóng (大龍), "The physical body rots away: what is the hard and fast body of reality?" Dà Lóng replied, "The mountain flowers bloom like brocade, the valley streams are brimming blue as indigo."⁸⁹

In both the previous and this type of indirect message we already have Paul Grice's *conversational implicature* as it depends on features of the conversational situation or context and not just on the conventional meanings of the words used.⁹⁰ Briefly, in the words of Paul Grice, "the implicature is not carried by what is said, but only by the saying of what is said, or by *putting it that way*."⁹¹

4.2 INDIRECT MESSAGES AND CONVENTIONS

⁸³ See Kierkegaard (1844, SKS 4, 218-223); Socrates' maieutics without irony is not only practiced by him in many dialogues, but is also characterized, for example, in *Laches* 187e-188a; *Theaetetus* 150c or *Meno* 85c-d.

⁸⁴ Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 7, 74-75, 79-80).

⁸⁵ Kierkegaard (1841, SKS 1, 141); *The Apology of Socrates*, 40e-41a.

⁸⁶ *Wú-Mèn-Guān*, Case 7.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* Case 36.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Case 5.

⁸⁹ *The Blue Cliff Record* (2005, Case 82, p. 449; 碧巖錄/卷第八二, 107).

⁹⁰ Cohen (2008, 1).

⁹¹ Grice (1991, 39).

John Langshaw Austin directs attention at *performative utterances* or *performatives*⁹² which are viewed not according to whether they are ‘true’ or ‘false’, but according to their functioning: they can work in a ‘happy’ or ‘unhappy’ way.⁹³ Austin tries to set up a scheme of the necessary conditions for the smooth or happy functioning of the performatives:

- “A1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,
- A2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.
- B1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and
- B2) completely.”
- G1) Participants must really intend to conduct themselves in accordance of the procedure “and further
- G2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.”⁹⁴

The types and/or cases of Kierkegaard’s indirect message, however they are primarily assigned to functioning, they never meet all these six criteria; they disrupt at least one of them in each case. Kierkegaard’s highly creative original authorship appears to sin even against rule A1. Even if the cases or examples of Kierkegaard’s indirect message comply with rule A1, they disrupt at least one of other rules A2–G2: In his defence before the Athenian Court of Justice [i.e. still within a conventional procedure] Socrates by refusing recognition competence of his judges [⁸⁵] is breaking rule A2. Through his general epistemological ignorance and uncertainty vis-à-vis established state religious practice⁹⁵ Socrates breaks rule G2. Through his inadequate attitudes and proposal for his own punishment⁹⁶ he breaks rules G1 and G2 on proper and subsequent thoughts, feelings and conduct in accordance with established procedure. A humorist [³³⁻³⁶] who sighs sympathetically together with an unhappy neighbour and immediately adds some triviality⁹⁷ breaks rules B1 and B2. Christ breaks the laws of his land broadly and deeply, from G1 – by his unusual payment of tax – to his violation even of all A2– G2 before the Sanhedrin and *Pilate*.⁹⁸

Chán masters often disrupt the smooth functioning of conventional performatives, i.e. even rules A1 and A2, by their notoriously unconventional behaviour. When Fù Xī (傅翁 called Mahāsattva Fu) was authorized to expound the Diamond Cutter Scripture to Emperor Wǔ of Liáng, Fù instead shook the desk once and then got down off the seat, thus violating the rules of the imperial court, responding to Austin’s rules B1 and

⁹² Austin (1962, 6).

⁹³ *Ibid.* (12-14).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* the table of the reproduced Austin’s rules is on (14-15).

⁹⁵ Kierkegaard (1841, SKS 1, 216-226).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* (144); The Apology of Socrates, 35e-38b.

⁹⁷ Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 7, 407-408, 503).

⁹⁸ Kierkegaard (1850, SKS 12, 81-147).

B2. It did not help that Master Zhì (志) immediately tried to explain to the uncomprehending emperor that the Fù had [just in this way] expounded the scripture.⁹⁹ When Lín Jì arrived at Bodhidharma's memorial tower, he bothered to pay proper homage neither to Buddha nor Bodhidharma, thus breaking rules G1 and probably G2.¹⁰⁰

Thus Austin's rules can be applied to the cases of Kierkegaardian and *Chán* Buddhist indirect messages rather negatively, except for those cases which are so clearly creative that they completely fail to fit into Austin's ready-made conventional framework.

Still, *Chán* masters and abbots, admired by so many non-conformist Western intellectuals, often used to be obliging to their religious establishments and imperial authorities.¹⁰¹

Far from that, at the end of his life, Kierkegaard was imploring in God's name and by all that was holy that each individual flee the pecuniary-minded priests, "these odious ones" whose business was to prevent one "from becoming attentive to what true Christianity is ..."¹⁰² The 'priest' should be, 'Christianly' stopped analogically as the thief should be stopped in a civic sense. People should shout at priests as one shouts at thieves "until no priest will have been seen any longer."¹⁰³ Kierkegaard's exhortations were aimed at the very existence of the traditional church.

4.3 HOW INDIRECT MESSAGES CAN AFFECT PEOPLE

As authors of messages intentionally formulate semantic content as different from its intention, Kierkegaard's and *Chán* indirect messages eo ipso cannot be given only by Austin's locution, i.e. by the 'performance of act of saying something'; nor by his illocution, i.e. by the 'performance of the act in saying something.' These indirect messages are given first and foremost by the production of possible 'consequential effects' of saying [or writing] upon the listeners or readers, i.e. by Austin's *perlocution*, the meaning and direction of which in individual cases is in tension with and greatly differs from the respective illocution.¹⁰⁴ This scheme obviously cannot be applied to their extra-locutionary messages.

These indirect messages are original and unconventional, and the listeners or readers must find their own way to their encrypted cores, the success or failure of which can hardly be calculated beforehand. Kierkegaard admits that their acceptance depends on the will of their recipient; it is at least possible to make the recipient attentive.¹⁰⁵ Still, in a wider context, Kierkegaard's indirect messages should have ultimately

⁹⁹ 2 sentences *The Blue Cliff Record* (2005, Case 67, p. 376; 碧巖錄/卷第六七, 89-90).

¹⁰⁰ *The Record of Lin Ji* (2009, 47, Chinese text 363).

¹⁰¹ See *The Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations* (2006, Fascicle I, 4-26 and elsewhere).

¹⁰² Kierkegaard (1855, SKS 13, 410-411).

¹⁰³ 2 sentences *Ibid.*, (387).

¹⁰⁴ 2 sentences Austin (1962, 94-120).

¹⁰⁵ Kierkegaard (1848, SKS 16, 32).

communicative aims.¹⁰⁶ *Chán* masters do not use to explain indirect messages of their own or of their colleagues so much; at least they spoon-feed their audience and readers with explanations to a lesser degree than Kierkegaard did across his opus.

4.4 HOW ONE CAN ATTAIN PROFICIENCY IN THE USE OF INDIRECT MESSAGES?

The Danish thinker, like Socrates, but unlike many other philosophers, did not lack social brilliance and wit; he was able to perform indirect messages at table or in society in a conscious and intentional, but, at the same time, fairly spontaneous way. Also Kierkegaardian performers are endowed with some skills, with spiritual or ethical virtues; their personalities are to be accomplished in some way or other.

Kierkegaard's formula by which he characterizes faith, namely *immediacy after reflection* [*Umiddelbarheden efter Reflexionen*],¹⁰⁷ is at the same time characteristic of the way of *Chán* representatives. *Chán* masters discussed various topics, many read sūtras and other texts (nevertheless, even the illiterate Hui Néng¹⁰⁸ was able to become one of supreme representatives of the movement). However, spiritual practice of *Chán* practitioners is going beyond ordinary discussions and even beyond mere *samādhi* [concentration, unification of mind, withdrawal from the conventional world, dissolving distinction between self and other, subject and object]. It must shatter the *samādhi* to achieve *kenshō* – the selfless self breaking back into the conventional world. This self is seeing the things of the world now just as empty objects; ‘it again thinks in differentiated categories and feels attachment, but now with insight into their emptiness.’¹⁰⁹ Bodhidharma believes that “comprehension means not engendering thought in relation to things, not engendering covetousness for things, and not engendering defilements in connection with things.”¹¹⁰ At least when performing their famous indirect messages, the state of their enlightened mind can be described as *no-mind, no-thought* (*wú-xīn* 無心; *wú-niàn* 無念), characterized as the state that enables the person to respond to the flow of all thoughts and things.¹¹¹

Kierkegaard's author ‘Vigilius Haufniensis’ explains that ‘in the sphere of historical freedom ... one must not forget that the new comes about by a *leap* [*Springet*].’¹¹² The leap neither has been nor can be explained by any science.¹¹³ Against his own era, Kierkegaard insists on the need for each individual to take the leap [out of the general levelling] by herself, by himself; nobody can help such an individual directly.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁶ Kierkegaard (1851, SKS 13, 13-17).

¹⁰⁷ Kierkegaard (1847-1848, SKS 20, 363-364).

¹⁰⁸ Platform Sutra of Hui Neng (2000) I, pp. 17-22; 六祖壇經: 自序品第一.

¹⁰⁹ 3 sentences Hori (2006), 119-120.

¹¹⁰ The Bodhidharma Anthology (1999) Text no. 5: Record I, 28.

¹¹¹ Platform Sutra of Hui Neng (2000, II, 33; 六祖壇經: 般若品第二).

¹¹² Kierkegaard (1844, SKS 4, 388).

¹¹³ *Ibid.* (365-366)

¹¹⁴ Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 8, 102-103).

However, “*Chán* enlightenment was not realized as the experience of an individual, but only in the situational expression of buddha-nature in the drama of day-to-day life. For *Chán*, enlightenment was not just a possibility for all beings but necessarily realized with them.”¹¹⁵ Without being accompanied by some bright master withdrawn from worldly affairs, the medicine of Mahāyāna dharma would be, in the words of Master Zhì Gōng (誌公), ‘taken in vain.’¹¹⁶ Kierkegaard, often meditating alone, just enjoyed positive yet brief personal relationships with at least two friendly and inspiring philosophy professors, *Sibbern* and *Møller*,¹¹⁷ not dwelling long-term with any living spiritual master to whom he would have looked up. In contrast, famous *Chán* representatives use to remain in intimate relationships with their masters even for decades. Moreover, Kierkegaard did not undergo, unlike Buddhists monks, any long meditational training vital to their path of spiritual progress.

4.5 AIM OF INDIRECT MESSAGES

Kierkegaard’s leap [¹¹²⁻¹¹⁴] is directed into the arms of the Deity. One thus learns to help oneself, learns to love all others just as much as oneself.¹¹⁸ Anyway, for Kierkegaard’s ideal Christian, ‘Anti-Climacus’, “in the strictest sense the admirer [of Christ] is indeed not the true Christian; only the imitator is that.”¹¹⁹ In contrast, the *Chán* Buddhists do not use to imitate anybody. Huáng Bò (黃檗) proclaims that “true Nature is Mind; the Mind is Buddha; the Buddha is Dharma. ... One should not use the Mind to seek Mind, the Buddha to seek Buddha, nor the Dharma to seek Dharma. Therefore, Dharma students should suddenly realize no-mind and suddenly attain stillness and silence. Stirring thoughts is wrong, but using the Mind to transmit Mind is right. Be careful not to search outside yourself. If you consider the Mind to be outside yourself, it is the same as mistaking a thief for your own son.”¹²⁰

The declared aim of many Buddhists is enlightenment, *nirvāṇa*, *nibbāna* or *niè-pán* (涅槃).¹²¹ Milestones on the spiritual path of the *Chán* form of Buddhism – that use to be incited by masterly indirect messages – include *tuō* (脫 – *taking off, emancipation*);¹²² *xǐng* (省 – *insight*);¹²³ *wù* (悟 – *becoming aware, realization*);¹²⁴ *lǐng-wù* (領悟 – *understanding, comprehension*);¹²⁵ *dà-wù* (大悟 – *becoming aware*,

¹¹⁵ 2 sentences Hershock (2005, 71)

¹¹⁶ *The Dharma of Mind Transmission* (p. 25; 傳心法要, paragraph 32)

¹¹⁷ Garff (2007, 50, 86-95); Thielst (1994, 48-52. Kierkegaard's inspiring professors were Frederik Christian Sibbern (1785-1872) and Poul Martin Møller (1794-1838).

¹¹⁸ 2 sentences Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 8, 103-104).

¹¹⁹ Kierkegaard (1850, SKS 12, 249)

¹²⁰ 6 sentences *The Dharma of Mind Transmission* (p. 8; 傳心法要, paragraph 4)

¹²¹ E.g. *The Dharma of Mind Transmission* (p. 7; 傳心法要, paragraph 4); *Wú-Mén-Guān*, Case 48.

¹²² *Wú-Mén-Guān*, Case 2.

¹²³ *Ibid.* Case 7; Poceski (2015, 234).

¹²⁴ *Wú-Mén-Guān*, Case 4.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* Case 3.

illumination, enlightenment);¹²⁶ *dùn-wù* (顿悟 – *illumination, sudden realization, enlightenment in a flash*).¹²⁷ Some Cáo-Dòng school (曹洞宗) masters use to practice ‘de-emphasis on enlightenment as a sudden and crucial moment of experience’;¹²⁸ and its modern Japanese representative, Shunryu Suzuki, explained that “it’s not that *satori* [Japanese term for awakening, comprehension, understanding] is unimportant, but it’s not the part of *Zen* that needs to be stressed.”¹²⁹ Even the radical master Lín Jì instructed his monks as follows: “Just be ordinary – put on your clothes, eat your food, and pass the time doing nothing.”¹³⁰

Indirect messages are essential for bringing Kierkegaard’s individual to a higher stage; and Kierkegaard’s spiritual path for his lonely individual is more explicitly articulated than the paths of many *Chán* masters. “Becoming a Christian is to be taken as a final *telos* that cannot be realized ... at one go”; “none of the standpoints on which an individual finds himself offers him the necessary conditions of a further step, even if such standpoints are the necessary conditions of further steps.”¹³¹ Chinese schools tend “to discount experiential results in favour of the socially demonstrated effects of Buddhist practice.” They aim at ‘meeting situations without obstruction.’¹³²

5. DISCUSSION: INDIRECT MESSAGES AND THE WAYS TO LIBERATION

In his *Journal* Kierkegaard remarks that he would like to see some other perspicacious author who would redouble the thought in existence and thus evade a self-deception.¹³³ This requirement is satisfactorily realized among Buddhists: many of them have redoubled the ideas of their sutra studies in everyday life. Lín Jì's *true human of no rank* (*wú-wèi-zhēn-rén* 無位真人)¹³⁴ does not act even literally on behalf of any religious authority. Time and again, Kierkegaard also assures the readers that he acts on behalf neither of any ecclesiastical nor even Christian authority but just demonstrates what New Testament Christianity means.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, Kierkegaard does not dispose quite freely of all the cornerstones of mainstream orthodox form of Christianity.

On the other hand, Master Lín Jì was exhorting his disciples: “Followers of the Way, if you want insight into dharma as it is, just don’t be taken in by the deluded

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* Cases 2, 15, 23; *The Record of Lin Ji* (2009, 43 (English), 361 (Chinese)); Poceski (2015, 54-55).

¹²⁷ *Wú-Mén-Guān*, Case 19.

¹²⁸ Historical Dictionary of Chan Buddhism (56).

¹²⁹ Suzuki (1995, 9).

¹³⁰ *The Record of Lin Ji* (2009, 238).

¹³¹ Marek (2010, 99).

¹³² 2 sentences Hershock (2005, 143).

¹³³ Kierkegaard (1846-1847, SKS 20, 119).

¹³⁴ *The Record of Lin Ji* (2009, 129).

¹³⁵ E.g. Kierkegaard (1851, SKS 13, 19); Kierkegaard (1855, SKS 13, 115-117); Kierkegaard (1855, SKS 13, 404-411).

views of others. Whatever you encounter, either within or without, slay it at once. On meeting a buddha slay the buddha, on meeting a patriarch slay the patriarch, on meeting an arhat slay the arhat, on meeting your parents slay your parents, on meeting your kinsman slay your kinsman, and you attain emancipation. By not cleaving to things, you freely pass through.”¹³⁶ ... “What is dharma? ‘Dharma’ is the dharma of mind. Mind is without form; it pervades the ten directions and is manifesting its activity right before your very eyes. But because people lack sufficient faith [in this] they turn to names and phrases, attempting to grasp the buddhadharma through written words. They’re as far away as heaven from earth!”¹³⁷ Furthermore, Huáng Bò promises that “in the complete absence of views about emptiness, the true Dharmakāya appears. Emptiness and Dharmakāya are not different. Sentient beings and Buddhas are not different. Birth and death and Nirvāṇa are not different. Kleśa and Bodhi are not different. That alone which is beyond all form is Buddha.”¹³⁸

In some respects Kierkegaard is even requiring use of the indirect message: “As soon as truth, the essential truth, can be assumed to be known by everyone, appropriation and inwardness must be worked for, and here can be worked only in an indirect form. The position of the apostle is something else, for he must proclaim the truth which is unknown, and therefore a direct message can always have its validity temporarily.”¹³⁹ And a ‘higher’ religious, non-pseudonymous production permeates also Kierkegaard’s entire opus from the very beginning to a position of dominance at the end.¹⁴⁰ If Kierkegaard is so ingeniously, ‘maieutically’ using in his ‘aesthetic productivity’ indirect message, he proclaims that it must end in a direct message.¹⁴¹ And if he even criticises the impact of [traditional Christian] dogmas which ultimately safeguard a human “against all that which with just some truth could be called the Christian model,”¹⁴² he sticks to the dogmatic concept of God-man [44-48] and unlike the Buddhists recognizes concept and gravity of the sin as *sine qua non of Christianity*.¹⁴³

Buddha himself counts his teachings and activities just as provisional means for attaining nirvāṇa and compares them to a raft which is for crossing over, not clinging to; a primitive raft for escaping a perilous shore and no longer needed when one reaches the other, safer side.¹⁴⁴ The non-dogmatic *Chán* masters have developed the means in their original ways. Using often some forms of indirect message, they, unlike Kierkegaard, neither elaborate nor propagate any concept of *the subjective thinker*.¹⁴⁵ Lín Jì is dismissive of such coordinates: “Outside there is no dharma; inside, there is

¹³⁶ 4 sentences *The Record of Lin Ji* (2009, 236).

¹³⁷ 5 sentences *Ibid.* (180).

¹³⁸ 6 sentences *The Dharma of Mind Transmission* (p. 7; 傳心法要, paragraph 4).

¹³⁹ 2 sentences Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 7, 221).

¹⁴⁰ Kierkegaard (1851, SKS 13, 12-19).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* (13)

¹⁴² Kierkegaard (1855, SKS 13, 232)

¹⁴³ Kierkegaard (1850, SKS 12, 80).

¹⁴⁴ *Majjhima Nikāya 22 – Alagaddūpama Sutta*.

¹⁴⁵ Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 7, 73-92).

nothing to be obtained. ... Don't continue [thoughts] that have already arisen and don't let those that haven't yet arisen be aroused."¹⁴⁶

If one might find in Kierkegaard's work any anti-dualist moments [plurality of pseudonyms, opinions, the attitudes of his characters], basic opposites remain between his spheres of the Divine [covering Christ] and this world: "What is the Christianity of the New Testament? It is the suffering truth. In this mediocre, miserable, sinful, evil, ungodly world – this is the Christian doctrine – the truth must suffer; Christianity is the suffering truth because it is the truth and is in this world."¹⁴⁷ The author, perhaps most strikingly in the culmination of his 'Anti-Climacus' 'Sickness Unto Death', is stuck in his dualism of sin and faith so much that he overlooks the complexity of the world. His rhetoric whitewashes or excludes other possibilities for spiritual growth (e.g. other ways of using reason on one's spiritual path, or psychoanalytical treatments), thus blocking analytical capacities of an inexperienced reader.¹⁴⁸

The *Chán* famous public cases called in Chinese *gong-àn*, 公案 and known more broadly as the Japanese *kōan*, which use to have the form of indirect message, can, at the beginning, oppose the mind as object is opposing the subject. "But when the *kōan* has overwhelmed the mind so that it is no longer the object but the seeking subject itself, subject and object are no longer two." The practitioner thus "realizes, i.e., cognitively understands, the *kōan*."¹⁴⁹ The *non-duality* [*bù-èr*, 不二] of *Chán* masters, the origins of which we can find already in some of their Indian precursors,¹⁵⁰ "as such, does not annihilate differences, but instead suspends the reification and absoluteness of all dualistic distinctions." Many Buddhists' "perspective transcends all fixed conventional opposites or dualistic distinctions, since they are not absolute, but relative, not independent of each other, but mutually conditioned and involved."¹⁵¹ More properly than Kierkegaard these masters reflect the flux in which things and beings find themselves; they resist the temptations to make good and bad, to make distinctions and barriers between things, between beings.

"*Chán* masters may agree with Kierkegaard on one thing: that indirect communication is what makes communication an art."¹⁵² Non-fixing on things and concepts enables a rich variety of indirect messages, manifest in their formal diversity. Among *Chán* Buddhists we can find and enjoy indirect messages on a greater scale: also many of them without words as well as many formally coherent indirect messages which cannot directly be pronounced. Despite the young Kierkegaard's assurance that "most interesting people are those who lack any comparative,"¹⁵³ despite his oft-reiterated conviction that Christianity is not a doctrine, but an 'existence-message'¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁶ 2 sentences 向外無法、內亦不可得。 – *The Record of Lin Ji* (2009, 238).

¹⁴⁷ 3 sentences Kierkegaard (1855, SKS 13, 383).

¹⁴⁸ 2 sentences Kierkegaard (1849, SKS 11, 189-242).

¹⁴⁹ 3 sentences Hori (2006, 121).

¹⁵⁰ *The Vimalakīrti Sutra* (2004, Chapter IX, 135-148).

¹⁵¹ 2 sentences Youru Wang (2017, 174).

¹⁵² Youru Wang (2000, II a).

¹⁵³ Kierkegaard (1836-1838, SKS 18, 96).

¹⁵⁴ Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 7, 348, 508, 513, 518; 552); Kierkegaard (1849-1850, SKS 22, 354-355).

and even an ‘existence-contradiction,’¹⁵⁵ Kierkegaard’s deep-rooted convictions limit him in a free-wheeling indirect message performance.

In any case, Kierkegaard’s voluminous writings, with his tremendous analytical and conceptual work, are – as a counterpart to the historical mass *Chán* movement – impressive by virtue of having been written by a single author in his short lifetime. Kierkegaard’s attempts at a definition of his indirect message are a little woolly, nevertheless one is able to recognize at least some of its cases and even its types or species performed, mentioned or analysed both in his work and elsewhere. If Western historical users of indirect message (Socrates, Jesus, Lessing, German romantics, the authors of philosophical dialogues, novelists and other artists) have played key roles in humanity’s spiritual and intellectual development, Kierkegaard, not concealing his own debt to them, has through his concepts contributed to our better understanding of them as well as of the Buddhists. Indirect message, in turn, has not been the subject of sufficient reflection. Quite a few twentieth-century Western philosophers have developed concepts or ideas appropriate to investigations of Kierkegaard and Buddhists, yet often sculpted for purposes very different from their spiritual strivings. Love and a stern attitude to one’s human neighbours mutually oscillate in both Buddhism and Kierkegaard’s work. *Chán* hints and actions manifest an even more intuitive and constructively negative tendency; but they endeavour to dispose of conceptual barriers in a more sustained way than did Kierkegaard.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Ladislav Benyovszky, Karen Gammelgaard, Ladislav Hejdánek, James Hill, Jiří Holba, Filip Karfík, Petr Kolář, Petr Kořátko, Roman Králik, Jakub Marek, Josef Moural, Ľubica Obuchová, Jaroslav Peregrin, Miroslav Petříček and Michael Pockley for their generous help. I am grateful to the two anonymous reviewers of *Comparative Philosophy* for their helpful comments and suggestions.

REFERENCES

PRIMARY SOURCES

(In addition to the classics, such as the Bible and Plato’s dialogues)

Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter [SKS] (1997-2013) Edited by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Johnny Kondrup, Karsten Kynde, Tonny Aagaard Olesen and Steen Tullberg, Graphics by Karen-Margrethe Österlin (28 volumes) (G.E.C. Gads Forlag, København, ISBN 978-87-993510-4-6) <<http://sks.dk/forside/indhold.asp>>.

Note: these almost complete works of the thinker contain many works Kierkegaard

¹⁵⁵ Kierkegaard (1846, SKS 7, 348).

published during his lifetime (almost all items in SKS 1-14), but also some his works published posthumously his journals and letters (SKS 15-28). They indicate the dates of original publications of Kierkegaard's works or the dates of his Journal smaller works and some other entries. Here below, I refer to the quoted titles:

- Kierkegaard, Søren (1841) *Om Begrebet Ironi*, SKS 1: 59-357.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1843) *Enten-Eller I*, SKS 2: 5-432; *Enten – Eller II*, SKS 3: 5-332.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1843) *Gjentagelsen*, SKS 4: 5-96.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1844) *Philosophiske Smuler*, SKS 4: 211-306.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1844) *Begrebet Angest*, SKS 4: 307-461.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1845) *Stadier paa Livets Vei*, SKS 6: 5-454.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1846) *Afsluttende Uvidenskabelig Efterskrift*, SKS 7: 5-573.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1846) *En literair Anmeldelse*, SKS 8: 5-106.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1849) *Sygdommen til Døden*, SKS 11, 113-242.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1850) *Indøvelse i Christendom*, SKS 12: 5-253.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1851) *Om min Forfatter-Virksomhed*, SKS 13: 5-27.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1855) *Dette skal siges; saa være det da sagt*, SKS 13: 111-124.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1855) *Øieblikket nr. 1-10*, SKS 13: 125-168, 183-317, 341-418.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1848) *Synspunktet for min Forfatter-Virksomhed*, SKS 16: 5-106.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1837) *Journalen DD*, SKS 17, 213-297
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1836-1838) *Journalen FF*, SKS 18, 75-116.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1846-1847) *Journalen NB*, SKS 20, 5-129.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1847-1848) *Journalen NB4*, SKS 20, 283-366.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1848) *Journalen NB6* SKS 21, 5-69
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1848) *Journalen NB7*, SKS 21, 73-139.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1849-1850) *Journalen NB14*, SKS 22, 339-435
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1850) *Journalen NB20*, SKS 23, 387-487.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1850-1851) *Journalen NB22*, SKS 24, 101-199.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1847), *Papir 364-371*, »Den etiske og den etisk-religieuse Meddelelses Dialektik«, SKS 27: 389-434.
 Kierkegaard, Søren (1849) *Brev 1-318*, SKS 28, 5-489.
Søren Kierkegaards Papirer (1968), Second Expanded Edition by Niels Thulstrup, Bind IX (15. 5. 1848 - 2. 1. 1849) (København: Gyldendal).
 Kierkegaard, Søren, *The Book on Adler*, Edited and Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (2009) (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

PĀLI CANON:

- The Long Discourses of the Buddha* ((1987) 1995): A Translation of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, translated from the Pali by Maurice Walshe, Boston: Wisdom Publications.
The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (1995): A New Translation of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, translated from the Pali by Bhikku Ñāṇamoli & Bhikku Bodhi (Boston: Wisdom Publications).
 Ven. Pandita (2011), "The Buddha and the Magadha-Vajji war", *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 18: 123-128 (Cheltenham: University of Gloucestershire).

- The Lotus Sutra* (2007) (Taishō Volume 9, Number 262), translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva by Tsugunari Kubo and Akira Yuyama (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research).
- The Vimalakīrti Sutra* (2004) (Taishō Volume 14, Number 475), translated from the Chinese by John McRae (pp. 55-181), in: BDK English Tripitaka 20-I, 26-I (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research).
- The Bodhidharma Anthology: The Earliest Records of Zen* (1999), by Jeffrey L. Broughton, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press).
- The Record of Lin Ji*, 《臨濟慧照禪師語錄》 (2009), translation and Commentary by Ruth Fuller Sasaki, edited by Thomas Yūhō Kirchner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press).
- Poceski, Mario (2015), *The Records of Ma Zu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature* (Oxford University Press).
- The Blue Cliff Record* 《碧巖錄:佛果圓悟禪師碧巖錄》 (2005), translated by Thomas Cleary and J. C. Cleary, Taishō classics Vol. 48, No. 2003 (Boston & London: Shambhala) <http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/BDLM/sutra/chi_pdf/sutra19/T48n2003.pdf>.
- Wu-Men-Hui-Kai / Wú-Mén-Huì-Kāi* 《無門慧開》, *Wú-Mén-Guān* 《無門關》 <<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zen/mumonkan.htm>>.
- The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (2000), translated from the Chinese of Zongbao (Taishō Volume 48, Number 2008) by John R. McRae (Berkeley CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research).
- 《六祖壇經》 (2007) <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/23844/23844-0.txt>>
- 《傳心法要: 黃蘗山斷際禪師著, 唐河東裴休集并序》
- 《黃蘗斷際禪師宛陵錄》 <<http://www.book.bfn.org/books/0853.htm>>.
- The Dharma of Mind Transmission: Zen Teachings of Huang-po*, by Dharma Master Lok To. <<https://terebess.hu/zen/Huangbo-LokTo.pdf>>.
- The Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations* (2006), translated from the Chinese by Shohei Ichimura (Taishō Volume 48, Number 2025) (Berkeley CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research).

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Austin, John Langshaw (1962), *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press).
- Cohen, Marc (2008), *Grice: "Logic and Conversation"*, <<https://faculty.washington.edu/smcohen/453/GriceLogicDisplay.pdf>>.
- Garff, Joakim (2007), *Kierkegaard: A Biography*, translated by Bruce H. Kirmmse, (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Grice, Paul, "Logic and Conversation", in: Grice, Paul (1991) *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), 22-40
- Hershock, Peter D. (2005), *Chan Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press).

- Hori, Victor Sogen (2006), "The Nature of the Rinzai (Linji) Koan Practice", in *Sitting with Koans: essential writings on zen koan introspection*, edited by John Daido Looi (Boston: Wisdom Publications), 117-130.
- Lübcke, Peter (1990), "Kierkegaard and Indirect Communication", in: *History of European Ideas* 12.1: 31-40.
- Marek, Jakub (2010), *Kierkegaard. Nepřímý prorok existence: Filosofickoantropologická studie Kierkegaardova obrazu lidství* (Praha : Togga).
- Sheng-Yen (1982), *Getting the Buddha Mind*, Edited by Ernest Heau (New York: Dharma Drum Publications).
- Stewart, Jon (2003), *Kierkegaard's relations to Hegel Reconsidered* (Cambridge University Press).
- Suzuki, Shunryu (1995), *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (New York: Weatherhill).
- Thielst, Peter (1994), *Livet forstås baglæns, men må leves forlæns* (København: Gyldendal).
- Wang, Youru (2017), *Historical Dictionary of Chan Buddhism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield).
- (2000), "The Pragmatics of 'Never Tell Too Plainly: Indirect communication in Chan Buddhism'", *Asian Philosophy* 10.1: 7-31