

KIERKEGAARD AND INDIRECT COMMUNICATION

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I

There is a well-established tradition among Kierkegaard scholars of feeling embarrassed when discussing the problem of communication. Some, e.g. Hermann Diem¹ and Helmut Fahrenbach², apologise that their academic form is contrary to Kierkegaard's intentions, whereas others, e.g. Jann Holl³ and Gregor Malantschuk⁴, stress that they deliberately ignore the problem of existential understanding.⁵ In this paper I will make no apologies of this kind. Not because I lack the modesty required by the subject, but because I believe apologies of this kind are based upon a fundamental misunderstanding of Kierkegaard's theory of communication. Instead I will try to show that his theory of communication is part of a—fragmentary—philosophy of language that can be discussed in a normal academic and straightforward way. There is a philosophical level at which the distinction between direct and indirect communication can be communicated in a direct way, and it is this level I want to deal with in this paper. Moreover, I intend to criticise what one may call the general trend among Kierkegaard scholars dealing with Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication. Following this general trend it is assumed that according to Kierkegaard there is something in the world which we cannot express in words and understand using a so-called 'direct communication'. The need of an 'indirect communication' is in this way looked upon basically as a *semantic problem*. Very different interpreters have approached Kierkegaard in this way. An existentialist like, e.g. Jaspers gives in his *Psychology of World-Views* (1919) the following 'definition' of 'indirect communication':

Indirect communication means, that man is conscious about the fact, that even when one has the strongest need for clarity and seeks for forms and formula no expression will be satisfactory...⁶

This interpretation is repeated and developed in his *On Truth* (1947), where Jaspers himself gives direct expression to the distinction between direct and indirect communication. The former mode is valid for 'communication of the consciousness as such'⁷, that is, when the content of the communiqué is valid for all men,⁸ and the direct mode is reserved for the expression of existential ideas.⁹ Among interpreters coming from the analytical tradition we find the same attitude expressed by the Swede Lars Bejerholm in his dissertation, *The Dialectic of Communication* (1962):¹⁰

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... the linguistic possibilities of expression are very limited, communication has to occur in another manner than through direct linguistic expression... Instead of this, Søren Kierkegaard discusses the possibility of using language to give incomplete hints about such a thought-content and such relations which cannot be fully expressed through a linguistic description'.¹¹

'A religious content cannot at all be expressed in a palpable phenomenon, in art or in words'.¹²

Most recently, Alastair Hannay (1982),¹³ compares Kierkegaard's theory of indirect communication with Wittgenstein's remarks at the end of the *Tractatus*¹⁴ about ethics and mysticism, both of which are reckoned as being beyond the ken of any language representing states of affairs. Here again, the doctrine of indirect communication is looked upon as an attempt to express the inexpressible, as an attempt to grip with a semantic problem.

In contrast to this tradition I shall argue that the problem of indirect communication is *not* a *semantic* problem at all, but has its origin within the *pragmatic* dimension of language. Semantics deals with the relation of signs to their designata and so to the objects which they may or do denote.¹⁵ In this sense, there is, for Kierkegaard, nothing which cannot be said in a semantically straightforward way. For example, most of the pseudonyms—from Judge William to Anti-Climacus—would agree that the ethical dimension of life includes a world of normative states of affairs¹⁶ which we *can* talk about in a semantically unproblematic way. But that we *can* do it is not the same as saying that we *ought to* do it,¹⁷ and given certain ends, situations could and, in fact, do arise which call for silence, irony, humor, metaphoric and poetic style or other 'indirect' ways of using the language. However, this shift is not provoked by problems within *semantics* but has to do with the *pragmatic* aspect of language concerning the relation between language users and signs.¹⁸ This is, what Kierkegaard's theory of indirect communication is about.

Kierkegaard develops the theory in a number of texts, and while I cannot agree with those (e.g. Torsten Bohlin,¹⁹ Aage Henriksen,²⁰ Emanuel Hirsch²¹ and Valter Lindström²²) who accuse him of selfcontradiction, it is a well known fact that he is equivocal in his way of talking about indirect communication. It is also wrong, as Lars Bejerholm states it, to say that the words 'indirect communication' only function as a 'term of honour'²³ with no definite content at all²⁴, although it might be more suitable to look upon Kierkegaard's indirect communication as a *theme* rather than a *theory*. I accept that, but I will not discuss it further here. Instead I will concentrate on the pragmatic problems connected with indirect communication to be found in the three main sources of Kierkegaard's treatment of the matter in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846),²⁵ Kierkegaard's notes in the *Papers* about 'The Ethical and the Ethical-Religious Dialectic of Communication' (1847)²⁶ and Anti-Climacus' concentrated analysis in *Training in Christianity* (1850).²⁷

II

Let us start with Anti-Climacus' account of normal indirect communication between two human beings:

Indirect communication can be produced by the art of reduplicating the communication. This art consists in reducing oneself, the communicator, to nobody, something purely objective, and then incessantly composing qualitative opposites into unity. This is what some of the pseudonyms are accustomed to call "double reflection". An example of such indirect communication is, so to compose jest and earnest that the composition is a dialectical knot—and with this to be nobody. If anyone is to profit by this sort of communication, he must himself undo the knot for himself. Another example is, to bring defence and attack in such a unity that none can say directly whether one is attacking or defending, so that both the most zealous partisans of the cause and its bitterest enemies can regard one as an ally—and with this to be nobody, an absentee, an objective something, not a personal man.²⁸

Using indirect communication the speaker is '... composing qualitative opposites into unity', i.e. he is producing a contradiction. Anti-Climacus gives two examples: 'to compose jest and earnest' and 'to bring defence and attack together'. In both cases the assertion, the doing or talking, is withdrawn. The speaker is doing this to create a specific effect: He wants to put the hearer in such a position that if he wants '... to profit by this sort of communication, he must himself undo the knot for himself', i.e. he must *decide* for himself whether he wants to accept the one or the other side of the contradiction. It is the decision of the listener, which is the main thing. Language and communication are only means of opening the listener's mind to the fact that he is a human being who has to decide for himself. If this effect could be achieved in another way, we could dispense with language and communication altogether. Using the terminology of Austin, we might therefore say that the Kierkegaardian term 'indirect communication' applies to certain *speech acts*, or, more specifically, it applies to certain *perlocutionary acts*²⁹ intending to produce a specific *perlocutionary effect*, namely the effect of listeners making a decision. Of course, we can never be sure that this effect will be achieved. Kierkegaard insists that we cannot *force* a person to *decide*. Our provocation can never function as a sufficient cause of the decision. It is always possible that the listener will ignore the possibility of making a choice. He is free to look upon the communication as an interesting text or speech quite capable of being put into a biographic framework. Many Kierkegaard scholars have done just this with Kierkegaard's writings. But from the speaker's point of view, nothing more than provocation is possible for, I repeat, one person cannot choose for another. The most one can do is to make it more difficult for someone else not to choose.

If this interpretation is correct, the distinction between 'indirect' and 'direct' modes of speech is, in effect, a distinction between some special, perlocutionary speech acts and all the rest. That is, we may use language to perform many kinds of *locutionary*, *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary acts*³⁰ and still communicate directly in the Kierkegaard sense. As Anti-Climacus puts it, the direct

communication ‘.begs and beseeches.’ the listener, ‘impresses upon his heart the importance of it, warns and threatens, etc.’.³¹ In other words, direct communication is not bound to the act of asserting, but covers a lot of other speech-acts as well: The (pseudo)hegelian rattling off of a philosophical lesson (a pure *locutionary act*), the acts of giving orders, to beg and beseech, to threaten and to warn someone (*illocutionary acts*) and the interprise of trying to move somebody’s heart or to persuade him (*perlocutionary acts*) and so on. Only the very specific perlocutionary acts of a speaker trying to bring a listener to the point of decision is in the indirect mode.

The distinction between this very specific perlocutionary speech-act and all the others is a distinction made within the *pragmatic* dimension of language. It is not a *semantic* distinction at all. On the contrary: it presupposes the existence of a semantic level in which thoughts (or better: senses) can be expressed in such a way that will allow us to speak about entities and states of affairs. Without this semantic content it would be impossible to generate contradictions, indeed, without the same semantic content it would be impossible for Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms to present the different descriptions and evaluations of the world, which he wants us to choose between. It is not the other way round. It is not because there is something unspeakable in the world that we need a special kind of speech-act. Within the Kierkegaard universe most of the pseudonyms presuppose a *cognitivistic* and *realistic*³² semantics which makes it possible to connect truth-values to sentences expressing propositions about normal states of affairs, values, and religious matters.

In his notes in the *Journals* about ‘The Ethical and the Ethical-Religious Dialectic of Communications’ Kierkegaard confirms this interpretation. A direct communication has four elements:

- (1) The object [‘Gjenstanden’]
- (2) The speaker [‘Meddeleren’]
- (3) The Listener [‘Modtageren’]
- (4) The message [‘Meddelelsen’], i.e. the semantic thought-content of what is said during the communication.³³

With indirect communications about *ethical matters*, the object is cancelled out.³⁴ At first sight this seems to contradict my interpretation, but closer scrutiny of Kierkegaard’s argumentation prove otherwise. In ethics, the object is cancelled out because everyone already ‘knows’ what is right and wrong, and so there is simply nothing left to teach. We may, therefore, cancel both the speaker as a speaker and the listener as a pupil. Only the individual’s own relation to God and God’s demands remains. That is, we do not cancel the object because there is no object, we cancel it because everyone ‘knows’ about it inasmuch as everyone ‘knows’ the ethical way of life.³⁵ And given the universality of this knowledge, it would be pointless to spell it out. Of course we *could* do but it is not what we *ought* to do. Instead, we ought to take the object and the message about it as a given and pass from the *semantic* to the *pragmatic* level of speech, so as to concentrate on the pragmatic task of motivating the listener to do what he knows to be his duty. However, in moving from one level to another, we neither destroy nor abandon

the semantic. On the contrary: we presuppose it in our pragmatic, perlocutionary speech-acts. This is even more obvious when we turn from the *ethical* (which is already known) to the *ethical-religious*, where 'a little communication of knowledge' is needed.³⁶ In other words, the semantic thought-content of ethical-religious language has to be taught man before we can demand that people live in accordance with it. Whereas being a human being seems to be enough for Kierkegaard to insure a 'knowledge' of our *ethical* duties, *religion* has to be taught. But in both cases the understanding of a semantic thought-content of the existential demands is a necessary condition for every existential communication.

Let us now return to Anti-Climacus. He identifies the act of 'composing qualitative opposites into unity' with 'what some of the pseudonyms are accustomed to call "double reflection"'.³⁷ One of these pseudonyms is Climacus. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* he introduces some important distinctions:

The form of communication is something else than its expression. When the thought has got its right expression in the word, which is achieved in the first reflection, then there is the second reflection, that has to do with the relation between the communication and the communicator and is an expression of the existent communicators own relation to the idea.³⁸

In this passage Climacus presents a fragment of a philosophy of language. The capacity for speech is a complex gift that breaks the immediate unity of man, experience and object. And it is this complexity, that prompts Climacus to speak about 'reflection'. The so-called 'first reflection' introduces words with a 'thought'-content, i.e. words with a semantic sense, through which man can speak and communicate about the entities in the world. In modern terminology, we might say that the 'first reflection' has to do with language as a *syntactic-semantic* unity of *words* (signs) and *thought-contents* (semantic senses). This unity makes it possible for language to refer to and express something about the entities in the world, so that man at the *pragmatic* level, by relating himself to the signs, will be able to *understand* and *use* the signs in his communication with other men. On this basis, we have the 'second reflection', which adds a new dimension to the pragmatic level of language. The second reflection, 'has to do with the relation between the communication and the communicator and is an expression of the existent communicator's own relation to the idea'.³⁹ The first reflection includes an *understanding* of the meaning of the words, and the second concerns our *interest* in what is being said. Taking these two levels of reflection together, one may ask whether a sentence with a specific propositional content is true, and as far as language speaks about man and what he ought to do, we may *decide* for ourselves whether we will follow the demands or reject them. When our interest is engaged in these two ways, and we want to engage the interest of others as well, we reach the level of *double-reflection*. As Climacus puts it, the 'first form' of this reflection 'is the cunning [mode of speech] . . . that the subjects do not run together in objectivity'.⁴⁰ That is, double-reflection is a special case of the second mode of reflection, and it contrasts with the so-called 'objective thinking', which corresponds to the direct mode of speech within the second reflection. Objective thinking and the direct mode of expression pertain to questions of impersonal or

objective truth; or again, they look to the correspondence relation between thought and reality, but never to the personal relation between a thinker and his thought content. To be concerned about that relation is to enter into the province of subjectivity, of interest. In short, it would be to be on a pragmatic level of language that is totally occupied with the question of deciding what to do and how it is possible to bring others to the same point of making a decision of their own.

To summarise, we have a multi-dimensional *pragmatic* level of language that includes the following:

- (1) The pure locutionary act of uttering of words learned by heart.
- (2) The understanding of what is said.
- (3) Inquiry into the question of the truth-value of a sentence, which makes it possible to perform an illocutionary act like asserting something.
- (4) The interested decision, wherein the individual applies what is understood and accepted to his life, and attempts to bring others to the same point, knowing full well that one person can never force another to decide.

With interested decision (point 4), comes 'double reflection', which both Climacus and Anti-Climacus agree to look upon as the first form of 'indirect speech'. It is the cunning mode of speech (Climacus), the composing of qualitative opposites into unity (Anti-Climacus), or as Kierkegaard writes in the Journals: 'To make it doubtful what you absolutely want—that is what maieutic is about'.⁴¹ One may interpret Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms as an instance of this indirect method, and so doing we can read them all as though they were pressing the question: is it better to be a Christian or to live aesthetically? The pseudonymous Kierkegaard offers no existential solution to this question, anymore than he offers an explicit existential teleology. He only presents us with a fan of existential possibilities contrasted with one another, so 'if anyone is to profit by this sort of communication, he must himself undo the knot for himself'.⁴² This is an indication that we have to decide for ourselves, and not expect any substantial, existential lesson from Kierkegaard's writings. This, however, does not mean that Kierkegaard himself did not have a specific—religious—doctrine that he wanted us to confirm.⁴³ To the contrary, our confirmation of the religious way of life was the main perlocutionary effect he wanted to achieve. But because confirmation is a kind of decision, Kierkegaard thought he had to use the indirect 'cunning mode of speech' and thereby force us either to say yes or no—hoping to get the positive answer.

In addition to the indirect way of speech, Anti-Climacus also mentions another and more decisive way of interrupting a direct communication:

But indirect communication can be brought about also in another way, by the relation between the communication and the communicator. Whereas in the former case the communicator was left out of account, here he is a factor, but (be it noted) with a negative reflection . . .

When one says directly, 'I am God; the father and I are one' that is direct communication. But when he who says it is an individual man, quite like other men, then this communication is not just perfectly direct; for it is not perfectly clear and

direct that an individual man should be God—although what he says is perfectly direct. By reason of the communicator the communication contains a contradiction, it becomes indirect communication, it puts to thee a choice, whether thou will believe him or not.⁴⁴

When a normal man speaks about existential matters, he has three pragmatic possibilities. He may speak in an objective way overlooking the problem of reduplication. Or, he may reduplicate the message in his own life (like, e.g., Judge William) and speak directly in the voice of a demand. Or finally, he may use the method of double-reflection (as Kierkegaard did himself most of the time). In a similar way, God the Father has, according to Anti-Climacus, the possibility of speaking directly to creation about himself. But with the God-man things have changed. Christ cannot communicate directly to man about his status as God, for he cannot claim, 'I am God', without self-contradiction. But what kind of contradiction? Not a *semantic* one. Within the framework of Kierkegaard's authorship it is not a semantic contradiction to talk about the existence of God, and from God's own point of view at least, it is not a contradiction to speak about the God-man. No the contradiction we have takes place at the *pragmatic* level in what might be termed a '*performative inconsistency*'. We know about this kind of inconsistency from other areas too. For instance, if a man, X, were to say, 'I don't exist', there would be no contradiction in the semantic sense. In this case, the truth-conditions (and thereby the semantic sense) of 'I don't exist' are identical with the truth-conditions of 'X does not exist', and inasmuch as this sentence does not involve a semantic contradiction, 'I don't exist' is not a semantic contradiction either. But 'I don't exist' is most certainly a performative inconsistency. If, for another instance, I were to announce, 'I am the man who is present incognito', it would not be a semantic contradiction because it is possible for me to be somewhere incognito. But it would be a performative inconsistency to the extent that my performing the speech-act would cancel what I was talking about. It is the same with the God-man talking about himself. To be the God-man *is* to be something which man cannot be recognised in any straightforward way, so we can be sure that anyone who tries to prove he is the God-man, is *eo ipso* not the God-man. Thus, the God-man must communicate indirectly, and it is imperative that we acknowledge this in speaking about him. So, if the God-man exists, it is not a contradiction in the semantic sense to say 'the God-man exists'. Neither is it a contradiction to say it, if he does not exist, because then it is just plain false. But this does not change the fact that it is impossible for us to understand how the God-man is not a semantic contradiction, hence it is impossible for us to recognise anyone directly as both God and man. When a Christian refers to Christ as the God-man, he has to believe *both* that Christ is the God-man, *and* that it is within the power of God to resolve the *apparent* semantic contradiction. For man it is just a mystery. Therefore the God-man is the last and most powerful sign of God as unlimited possibility, a sign which by its very structure puts me in a situation where I have to decide by myself: do I believe in Christ, or do I reject him as a *contradictio in adjecto*? In faith I believe the semantic contradiction to be solved; in rejecting Christ as the God-man, I claim that the dogmas of Christianity contradict each other. Because the apparent contradiction, that Christ is both God and man, can only be solved in faith, it

would be a performative inconsistency if some man tried to convince me in a direct way that he was the God-man. Therefore, Christ qua God-man has to reveal himself indirectly and by so doing compell us either to believe or to be offended.

IV

Given this interpretation of the two basic kinds of indirect communication, it should be clear why I find it unproblematic to speak directly about the distinction between direct and indirect modes of language. The indirect method is only needed in those cases where we intend to produce a very specific perlocutionary effect, namely, a decision. This does not in any way destroy the possibility of reflecting directly and philosophically about the structure of such a speech-act as opposed to other speech-acts. I could, of course, speak indirectly about indirect communication, that is, if I had the intention of forcing someone to decide for himself whether or not he would use this way of talking. This might in fact be a very sophisticated way of introducing the Socratic mode of speech. But such an attempt would presuppose—as Kierkegaard shows in his Journals—that both the speaker and the listener are already aware of the distinction between direct and indirect modes of language. It is a necessary condition for all kinds of indirect language that we already have a knowledge of the possibilities about which we are going to decide. By using indirect communication, Kierkegaard presupposes that his reader has this knowledge, and he would concede that if it were absent, we would have to establish it as the basis of decision. In my opinion many of the philosophical distinctions that Kierkegaard took for granted, e.g. the distinction between direct and indirect communication, the human self and nature, time and eternity, soul and body, the limited and the unlimited and so on, no longer (if ever) belong to our cultural horizon. It is, therefore, on Kierkegaard's own premisses, a task to reintroduce them in a direct discussion with Kierkegaard. To make a contribution to this endeavour has been my task in this paper.

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NOTES

1. Hermann Diem, *Die Existenzdialektik von Sören Kierkegaard* (Zollikon-Zürich, 1950).
2. Helmut Fahrenbach, *Kierkegaards existenzdialektische Ethik* (Frankfurt, 1968), p. 5.
3. Jan Holl, *Kierkegaards Konzeption des Selbst* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1972), p. 1.
4. Gregor Malantschuk, *Dialektik og eksistens hos Søren Kierkegaard* (København, 1968), p. 7.
5. Danish: 'Tilegnelsens problem'.
6. Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Berlin/Heidelberg/ New York, 1971, 6th edition), p. 378: 'Indirekte Mitteilung heißt, daß bei stärkstem

- Klarhedsdrange und allem Suchen nach Formen und Formeln kein Ausdruck zureichend ist und der Mensch sich dessen bewußt wird, ...'
7. 'eine Mitteilung des Bewußtseins überhaupt'.
 8. Karl Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit* (München, 1947), pp. 648–49, 761.
 9. Karl Jaspers, *ibid.*, p. 760.
 10. Lars Bejerholm, *Meddelelsens dialektik* (Stockholm, 1962), pp. 31, 68–69, 71, 87, 91–92, 101–2.
 11. Lars Bejerholm, *ibid.*, p. 69: '... är språkets uttrycksmöjligheter starkt begränsade, måste kommunikationen ske på annat sätt än via det direkt språkliga uttrycket. I stället diskuterer SK möjligheten av att via språket ge ofullständiga antydningar om sådant tankeinhåll och sådana förhållanden, som ej fullt uttömmande kan uttryckas i en språklig beskrivning.'
 12. Lars Bejerholm, *ibid.*, pp. 91–92: 'Religiöst innehåll kan överhuvud ej uttryckas i påtagliga fenomen, i konstverk eller ord.'
 13. Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard* (London/Boston/Melbourne and Henley, 1982), pp. 146–56.
 14. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (London, 1922), 6.421 and 7.
 15. Charles Morris, *Writings on the General Theory of Signs* (The Hague/Paris, 1971), 35.
 16. See my article, 'An Analytical Interpretation of Kierkegaard as Moral Philosopher', to be published in *Kierkegaard Conferences*, Vol. II, *Kierkegaard at Sunderland: International Conference on Søren Kierkegaard held at Sunderland Polytechnic, England 7–9 July 1986*, C.A. Reitzel, Copenhagen.
 17. As Anton Hügli correctly states it in a splendid essay: 'Gibt es Dinge, die sich nicht mitteilen lassen? Kierkegaard und die Nicht-Mittelbarkeits-These', in A. Cortese and N. Thulstrup (editors), *Liber Academicæ Kierkegaardensis*, Tom. II–IV (København/Milano, 1982), p. 79.
 18. Charles Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
 19. Torsten Bohlin, *Søren Kierkegaards etiske åskadning med særskild hänsyn til begreppet 'den enskilde'* (Stockholm 1918), pp. 72 ff.
 20. Aage Henriksen, *Methods and Results of Kierkegaard Studies in Scandinavia* (København, 1951), p. 9.
 21. Emanuel Hirsch, *Kierkegaard Studien* (Gütersloh, 1933), vol. 2, pp. 133 ff (= 735 ff).
 22. Valter Lindström, *Stadiernas teleologi* (Lund/København, 1943), pp. 179 f.
 23. Swedish: 'honnörsterm'.
 24. Lars Bejerholm, *op. cit.*, pp. 208–9.
 25. Søren Kierkegaard, *Samlede Værker* (København, 1901–6), vol. 7, pp. 55–62. In what follows I use the abbreviation 'SV.' for this edition of Kierkegaard's collected works.
 26. Niels Thulstrup, ed., *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, (København, 1968–70), Vol. VIII–2, B 79–89, pp. 141–190. In what follows I use the abbreviation 'Pap.' for this edition of Kierkegaard's Journals.
 27. Søren Kierkegaard, *SV.*, Vol. 12, pp. 115–134.
 28. Søren Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton 1972, 3rd edition), pp. 132–33. Danish original in: *SV.*, Vol. 12, p. 124: "Den indirekte Meddelelse kan være en Meddelelsens Kunst i at fordoble Meddelelsen. Kunsten bestaar saa netop i, at gjøre sig selv, Meddelelsen, til Ingen, reent objectiv, og saa uafbrudt at sætte qualitative Modsætninger i Eenhed. Dette er hvad nogle Pseudonymer pleie at kalde Meddelelsens Dobbelt-Reflexion. Det er f.Ex. indirekte Meddelelse: at sætte Spøg og Alvor saaledes sammen, at Sæmmensætningen er en dialektisk Knude-og saa selv at være Ingen. Vil Nogen have med den Art Meddelelse at

- gjøre, maa han selv ved sig selv løse Knuden. Eller, at bringe Forsvar og Angreb i Eenhed saaledes, at Ingen ligefrem kan sige, om man angriber eller forsvarer, saa den ivrigste Tilhænger af Sagen og den arrigste Fjende, begge kan synes at se en Allieret i En—og saa selv at være Ingen, en Fraværende, et objectivt Noget, intet personligt Menneske.’
29. John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford/New York, 1982, 7th edition), pp. 94–108.
 30. John Langshaw Austin, *ibid.*
 31. Søren Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, translated by W. Lowrie, Princeton 1972, p. 140. *SV.*, Vol. 12, p. 130: ‘...den ligefremme Meddelelse...beder og besværges ham, den lægger ham Sagens Vigtighed ret paa Hjerte, formaner, truer o.s.v.’.
 32. Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (London, 1973).
 33. Søren Kierkegaard, *Pap.* VIII–2, B 83, p. 158; B 89, p. 188.
 34. Søren Kierkegaard, *Pap.* VIII–2, B 81, p. 149.
 35. It is not quite clear what Kierkegaard means by saying that we ‘know’ the content of ethical rules. Louis Pojman interprets this knowledge as an epistemic state, in which we, by means of passionate subjectivity, have an intuition of the existence of God and of the content of ethical rules [Louis P. Pojman, *The Logic of Subjectivity* (Alabama, 1984), pp. 68, 80, 102, 115 and 132]. Against this interpretation I suggest that we read ‘know’ as *understand*. That is, every man has an understanding of ethical and religious language, but man may still be in doubt, as to whether the assertions of this language are true or not. Man will never get to *know* this in the strict sense of ‘knowing’. Instead man must either believe and obey what he understands to be his duty—or abandon accepting what he understands. But whether or not Louis Pojman’s or my interpretation is correct, a semantic level of ethical speech is given.
 36. Søren Kierkegaard, *Pap.* VIII–2, B 82, pp. 156–57; compare pp. 159 and 167.
 37. Compare note 28.
 38. Søren Kierkegaard, *SV.*, vol. 7, pp. 58–59: ‘Meddelelsens Form er noget Andet end Meddelelsens Udtryk. Naar Tanken har faaet sit rette Udtryk i Ordet, hvilket naaes ved den første Reflexion, saa kommer den anden Reflexion, der betræffer Meddelelsens eget Forhold til Meddeleren og gjengiver den eksisterende Meddelers eget Forhold til Ideen.’
 39. Compare note 38.
 40. Søren Kierkegaard, *SV.*, vol. 7, p. 60: ‘... , og dens første Form er netop det Underfundige, at Subjectiviteterne maa holdes gudeligt ud fra hinanden, og ikke løbe skjærende sammen i Objectivitet.’
 41. Søren Kierkegaard, *Pap.*, vol. IX, A 234, p. 131.
 42. Compare note 28.
 43. I therefore disagree with, e.g., Louis Mackey’s interpretation in his *Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet* (Philadelphia, 1971).
 44. Søren Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton 1972, 3rd edition), pp. 133–34. Danish original in: *SV.*, Vol. 12, p. 125: ‘Men den indirecte Meddelelse kan ogsaa fremkomme paa en anden Maade, ved Forholdet mellem Meddelelsen og Meddeleren; her er altsaa Meddeleren med, medens han i første Tilfælde var udeladt, dog vel at mærke ved en negativ Reflection. ... Naar en siger ligefrem: jeg er Gud, Faderen og jeg ere Eet, saa er det ligefrem Meddelelse. Men naar nu Den, der siger det, Meddeleren, er det enkelte Menneske, et enkelt Menneske ganske som andre, saa er denne Meddelelse ikke just ganske ligefrem; thi det er ikke just ganske ligefrem, at et enkelt Menneske skulde være Gud—medens det han siger er ganske ligefremt. Meddelelsen indeholder ved Meddeleren en Modsigelse, den bliver indirecte Meddelelse, den sætter dig et Valg: om du vil troe ham eller ikke.’