

An Investigation into the Logic of Zen Kōans through Mental Spaces

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禅公案のメンタル・スペースとその論理

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to shed light onto the meaning of Zen *kōans*. Firstly, the paper will show that *kōans* work on the same level of communication as conventional language. Secondly, the paper will analyse the *kōan* as a blend of essential and phenomenal points-of-view, concepts, and reality. Thirdly, much of the difference between the enlightened and unenlightened person can be explained by a *mutual cognitive blended space* model. The results show that relevance theory of communication and conceptual blending are useful concepts and tools for understanding Zen and the Zen *kōan*.

Keywords: relevance theory, intention, mental space, conceptual blending, Zen, kōan, mondo

1. Introduction

Zen has long suffered from an image problem as being beyond logic, incomprehensible, or impenetrable. Yet, if carefully thought through Zen and Zen kōans are not the enigma that they are made out to be. There are assumptions made in Zen which may not be obvious or clear at first. They are not conventional since conventional things suggest to understanding by the phenomena alone. Concepts are necessary and are part of the phenomenal world. This paper will bring together concepts from three disparate areas – *pragmatics*, *cognitive linguistics* and *Buddhism*. From pragmatics I shall use concepts from relevance theory, particularly from *Relevance* (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). From cognitive linguistics I shall also use concepts from conceptual blending theory developed in *The Way We Think* (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003). I will apply these concepts to kōans from the *Mumonkan* (Yamada, 1991), an important Zen text used for bringing about enlightenment, Zen's ultimate goal.

2. Concepts

Three main concepts are brought together here, that of *relevance*, *mental spaces* and *Buddhism*. Specifically, the ideas of *intention* and *mutual cognitive environment* from relevance theory, and *input* and *blended spaces* from conceptual blending theory are applied to Zen kōans.

2.1 Relevance theory

The starting point is

(1) “Relevance theory may be seen as an attempt to work out in detail of one of Grice’s central claims: that an essential feature of most human communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is the expression and recognition of intentions.” (Wilson & Sperber, 2006, p. 249)

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where ‘expression’, ‘recognition’ and ‘intention’ are considered the key concepts of the definition. From the outset, relevance theory rejects the pure coding-decoding model of language. Communication is not the unproblematic transfer of information in the manner that digital data is transferred. Human communication is a *high information-loss* and *global* format far from being perfect. This is a merit rather than a demerit. For this means it is more expedient, utilising readily available tools or channels for communication rather than being specialized and limited to a dedicated medium. For this reason, human communication can then be both verbal and/or non-verbal when there is:

- (2) the expression of intentions, and
- (3) the recognition of intentions.

The communication of intentions, following the model Grice (1991), Strawson (1991) and Sperber and Wilson (1995), is:

- (4) to mean something by x , S^1 must intend
 - (a) S 's utterance of x to produce a certain response r in a certain audience, A ;
 - (b) A to recognise S 's intention (a);
 - (c) A 's recognition of S 's intention (a) to function as at least part of A 's reason for A 's response r .

This can be restated (my paraphrase) as,

- (5) S is expecting a certain response r from A to S 's utterance of x .

Why this model works is because expectations are occurring both within the speaker S and audience A . Rather than being passive agents within the environment, sentient beings are simultaneously active in observation and interaction. This mutual observation of being observed is an infinite act of regression. Recognising that this is our characteristic, we recognise also we are different to the non-observing objects in the physical world. We further recognise there is a difference between the *physical* world and the *cognitive* world, even though the cognitive world is a product of the physical one. Not only this, but

- (6) The physical world is shared.

What occurs in the cognitive world of an individual is:

- (7) a fact is *manifest* to an individual at a given time if and only if he is capable at the time of representing it mentally and accepting its representation as true or probably true (Sperber and Wilson, p. 39);

and

- (8) a *cognitive environment* of an individual is a set of facts that are manifest to him (*ibid*).

If everyone has in his own cognitive environment a set of facts manifest to him, then the manifest facts that are common between their cognitive environments is the *mutual cognitive environment*. It is to the *blended space* (see Figure 4 below) that the concept of a mutual cognitive environment is applied. This can be represented as in Figure 1 where the overlapping dark-grey zone is where both participants' cognition agrees.

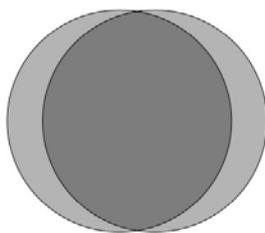


Figure 1 – mutual cognitive environment

2.2 Conceptual blending theory

Conceptual blending theory or blending theory is a model from cognitive linguistics used to show how concepts are represented within the mind. The basic diagram is

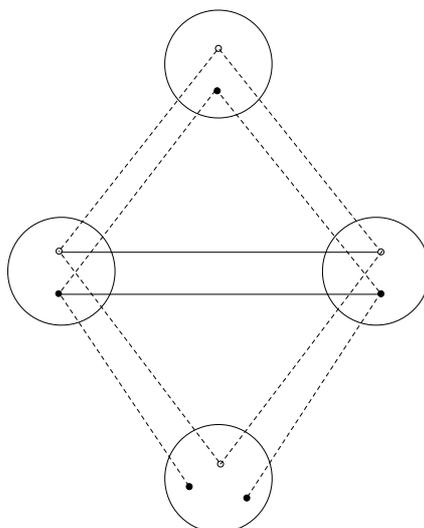


Figure 2 – basic diagram of mental spaces

where there are at least four “spaces” in Figure 3: input spaces (spaces 1 and 2); a generic space (space 3), and; a blended space (space 4).

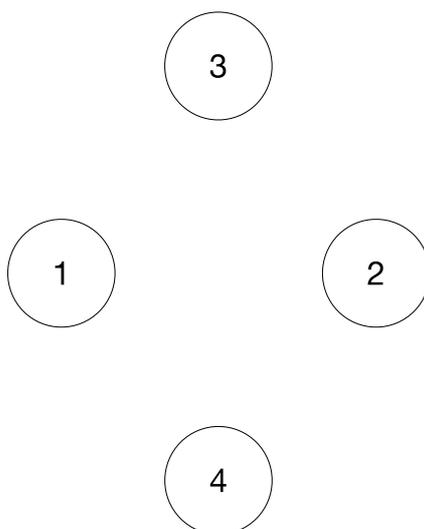


Figure 3 – mental spaces

The contents of the *input spaces* (spaces 1 and 2) are from two separate domains. The generic space (space 3) is where the contents are mapped directly from the input spaces. It is not a realistic or possible mapping as such, but it contains *all* the contents from the input spaces. The *blended space* (space 4) is where *selective* content from the input spaces are combined to form an *emergent structure*² that allows an utterance to be conceptually feasible.

2.3 Buddhism

The basis of all schools of Buddhism is that of the teaching of historical Buddha. The basic claim is that he discovered the truth and had taught that others can know the truth also. What he taught was the Four Noble Truths (Rahula, 1974), that of

1. suffering (*dukkha*),
2. the origin of suffering,
3. the cessation of suffering, and
4. the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

Suffering is one of the three marks of existence (*trilakshana*). The other two are *impermanence* (*anitya*) and *non-self* (*anatman*). The Dhammapada says

- (9) All conditioned things are impermanent
- (10) All conditioned things are suffering
- (11) All dhammas are without self (1974, p. 57)

It should be noted that the above formulation suggests that conditioned things (*samskṛta*) are marked by impermanence, suffering and non-self (Nanamoli & Bodhi, 1995, pp. 55–56), but unconditioned things (*asamskṛta*) are only marked by non-self (see end of this section). No affirmation is given to whether unconditioned things are permanent or suffering, suggesting that because of the lack of a self that they cannot, by default, be permanent or suffer in any way.

Table 1 – Conditioned and unconditioned things

<i>Unconditioned</i>	<i>Conditioned</i>
(permanent?)	Impermanent
(un-suffering?)	Suffering
Non-self	Non-self
Essential	Phenomenal
Absolute	Relative

This leads to the suggestion that non-self must extend to all phenomena, that is, everything is empty (*sunyata*), as it is formulated in *The Heart Sutra*

- (12) Form is emptiness; Emptiness is form³.

This is the basis of for Zen Buddhism and all Mahayana schools of Buddhism, where the Absolute⁴ Truth (*paramartha*) is beyond permanence and suffering (Walshe, 1995, p. 31). To see Absolute Truth is to be enlightened (*nirvana*). The kōan, then, is an aid to this goal. Below are three descriptions of the kōan.

- (13) "... literally, 'public notice'; the Chinese kung-an originally meant a legal case constituting a precedent. In Zen a koan is a phrase from a sutra or teaching on Zen realisation, an episode from the life of an ancient master; a mondo or a hossen ... whatever the source, *each point to the nature of ultimate reality.*" (Deiner, Fischer-Schreiber, & Ehrhard, 1991)

(14) “... when used properly, koans are credited with helping students *break down the barriers to enlightenment* that the rational habits of the mind erect, and with instilling a profound understanding of Buddhism and its goals at a direct, experiential level. ... breakthrough to a new level of understanding.” (Keown, 2008)

(15) “The entrance into Zen is the grasping of one’s essential nature. It is absolutely impossible, however, to come to a clear understanding of our essential nature by any intellectual or philosophical method. It is accomplished only by the experience of self-realisation through zazen (meditation) And *the koans used in Zen can be seen through only when looked at from the essential point of view*. Therefore to the person whose enlightened eye has not been opened, Zen koans seem impractical, illogical, and against common sense. Once the enlightened eye has opened, however, all koans express natural matters and relate the most obvious of realities.” (Yamada, 1991, p. xxiii)

Note that each kōan has the same identical singular aim (emphasis in *italics* are mine). A collection of koans, then, has the intention of bringing about *multiple times* the seeing into the essential nature (Absolute Truth), that is, that all things conditioned (the phenomenal world) and unconditioned (the essential world) are without self (empty, *shunyata*). This is done via dialogues which show the discrepancy between the essential and phenomenal point-of-views. One input space can therefore represent the **essential point-of-view** (space 1), while the other can represent the **phenomenal point-of-view** (space 2). The blended space and its emergent structure are therefore the kōan (space 4) in the form of a blended space.

3. Mumonkan

Mumonkan (無門關) was written in 1228 by Mumon Ekai (無門慧開, 1183-1260), a Chinese Ch’an master. It is a collection of forty-eight kōans based upon anecdotes from Buddhist sutras, or (more often) stories of Zen masters teaching realization. Each kōan (or case) is accompanied by a comment (commentary) and a poem (verse) by Mumon. The comment elaborates upon the kōan, and the poem further elaborates upon both the kōan and comment. Case 45 shown here is a short example from the Mumonkan (Senzaki and Reys, 2000):

(16)

Hoen said: ‘The past and future Buddhas both are his servants. Who is he?’

Mumon’s comment: If you realize clearly who he is, it is as if you met your own father on a busy street. There is no need to ask anyone whether or not your recognition is true.

Do not fight with another’s bow and arrow.

Do not ride another’s horse.

Do not discuss another’s faults.

Do not interfere with another’s work.

The kōan can, like this case, be as short as a single line, or sometimes up to two-pages long. The comments as well can be extensive. The poem, however, is always short, being no more than four lines three to seven Chinese characters long per line (魚返, 2013). The focus is the kōan, and not the comment or poem. However, since the comment and poem will give us clues to the meaning of the kōan at hand, they may be referred to help interpret the meaning of a kōan. The above case was quoted to show form only and will not be analysed here.

Following examples from Sperber and Wilson’s *Relevance* we shall analyse four “ways of communication” – *implicature, uncoded communication, contradiction* and *failed communication*. These were identified from their description and are in no way all-inclusive. Other ways of communicating most certainly exist and may be worth exploring in future research.

3.1 Implicature

In discussing how communication works, Sperber and Wilson showed that meaning and form do not necessarily match, that the form of a prompt or its response may be understood from context and/or intention alone. The example given is

- (17) Peter: What do you intend to do today?
 (18) Mary: I have a terrible headache. (1995, p. 56)

The prompt (17) asks a very direct question of the content of Mary's work plan for the day. The response is open to many possible answers, from writing a paper to playing tennis, all depending on who Peter and Mary are and what the context is. But her response (18) being about a condition rather than an action suggests *she is not planning to do much* by rationale of her having a terrible headache. A more direct (and less natural) response would have been

- (19) Nothing.

Compared to (18) lost is the efficiency of the response of (19). To be sure this is exactly what she intends to do, but it lacks a reason. Rather than stating the reason Mary goes straight to the cause of the action. Response (18) may be indirect but it is efficient (and unmarked) since the reason for intention is something participants in communication want first before the intention itself.

Zen "never says anything too plainly" (Wang, 2000) but neither does it try to be clever. Rather it communicates the essential truth in an indirect implied manner when no other way is available to it.

- (20)
 A monk asked in all earnestness, "What is the meaning of the patriarch coming from the West?"
 Joshū said, "The oak tree in the garden." (Yamada, 1991, p. 177)

In the previous section is mentioned already that there are two input spaces in Zen dialogues – the *essential* and *phenomenal*. The monk, unenlightened, had asked in earnest Joshū, an enlightened Zen master, what is the essential truth of Zen that the patriarch (Bodhidharma) had brought with him to China from the Indian subcontinent. Joshū replied, "The oak tree in the garden," which is a response on the phenomenal level. An oak tree in the garden does not seem to be an appropriate answer to a deeply philosophical question. But we can only *assume* that the answer is correct since this collection *purports* to bring the reader to enlightenment⁵. Therefore, the master's response is assumed to reveal the essential truth. In this way, we must question what the relationship between the essential and phenomenal truths is. In Section 2.1 I had discussed *mutual cognitive environment* where both participants have an amount of mutual understanding. This can be represented as in Figure 4 where all the elements from the input spaces are within the overlapping blended space. But this is not always necessarily the case. If and only if both participants understanding mutually – that is if both participants understand the essential truth – then all elements will fall within the mutual blended space (dark-grey area) as in Figure 4. This is the purpose of the kōan and the proposed representation of it. The problem, however, is that the collection was never meant for "preaching to the converted" but rather to transform the unenlightened being into an enlightened being, that is, to see the absolute truth. We must assume that at least two "readers" (Joshū and Mumon) must have understood that the answer had indeed been one that revealed the essential truth, as in Figure 2. But because the unenlightened reader does not understand the essential, the meaning is lost to him or her. From the unenlightened point-of-view we can represent non-understanding as in Figure 5 where some of elements lie outside the essential blended space in question⁶. But why were these exact words used? And why are they considered relevant and coherent? For example, the response (21) would not be relevant to the question.

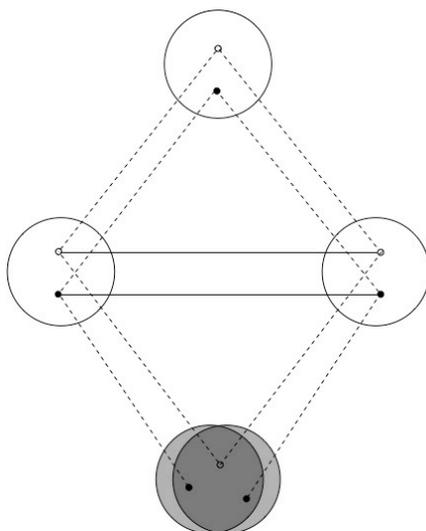


Figure 4 –blended space (mutual cognitive environment)

(21) The oak tree in David's backyard.

Perhaps just as the monk had asked Joshū the question Joshū happened to see the oak tree in the garden. In this sense the response still had relevance to the phenomenal reality. To be sure, a response like (21) would have been completely nonsensical to the monk since it does not correspond to Joshū or the monk's mutual cognitive environment. Whereas the response in (20) still has relevance to them both it must be stressed it did not in their essential reality, hence the configuration in Figure 5.

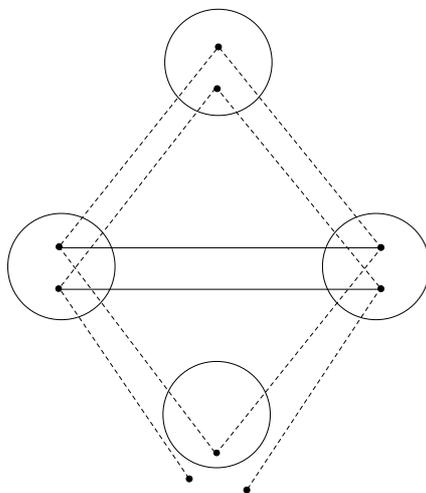


Figure 5 – “The oak tree in the garden.”

3.2 Uncoded communication

Communication need not be in words. In the animal kingdom animals mark their territory with scent or signs in the form of scratches. In human society we use images and music. Consider another example from Sperber and Wilson.

(22)

[...] Peter asks Mary,

“How are you feeling today?”

Mary responds by pulling a bottle of aspirin out of her bag and showing it to him. Her behaviour is not coded: there is no rule or convention which says that displaying a bottle of aspirin means that one is not feeling well. Similarly, her behaviour affords only the weakest kind of direct evidence about her feelings: maybe she always carries a bottle of aspirin in her bag. On the other hand, it is strong evidence of her intention to inform Peter that she does not feel well. Because her behaviour enables Peter to recognise her intention, Mary successfully communicates with him, and does so without the use of any code. (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, pp. 25–26)

Mary's gesture itself in response to Peter's prompt suggests to him that she has a headache. Again, the response is relevant to the exchange. Mary could have answered with

(23) I have a headache.

From the question, we must assume that this is an ongoing problem for Mary because the question was not

(24) How are you?

Following Bolinger (1977) we will accept that a difference in form means a difference in meaning, at least for *conventional* communication. So, a more appropriate response to (22) would have been

(25) I still have a headache.

If Mary had responded to (24) with the bottle-showing gesture Peter may have had to expend more time and energy to deduce the meaning. So, it seems the exchange in (22) is perhaps the best response in view of the form of the question and situation.

But a response, even though it may match the form, it may not match the meaning. Consider the following kōan.

(26)

Whatever he was asked about Zen, Master Gutei simply stuck up one finger.

He had a boy attendant whom a visitor asked, "What kind of teaching does your master give?"

The boy held up one finger too. Hearing this, Gutei cut off the boy's finger with a knife. As the boy ran away, screaming with pain, Gutei called to him. When the boy turned his head, Gutei stuck up one finger. The boy was suddenly enlightened.

When Gutei was about to die, he said to the assembled monks, "I received this one-finger Zen from Tenryū. I've used it all my life but have not exhausted it." Having said this, he entered nirvana. (Yamada, 1991, p. 23)

Even though the boy's gesture is identical to Gutei's gesture to the same question it does not reveal the same truth, that is, the meaning is different. This can be represented by Figure 6.

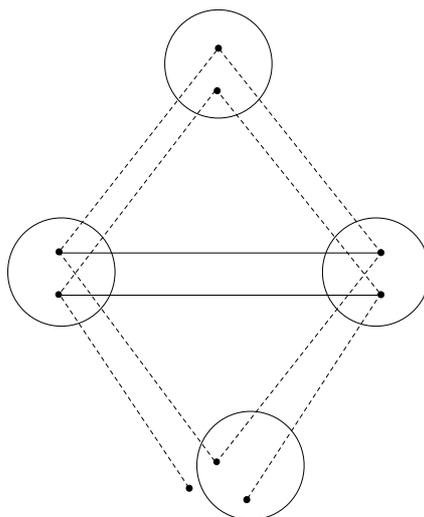


Figure 6 – the boy’s raised finger response

In other words, the response misses the mark. This problem of matching response without matching meaning can be easily understood via the very existence of the book “The Sound of the One Hand” (Hoffmann, 1975) a translation of *Gendai Sōjizen Hyōron* (現代相似禅評論) first published in Japanese in 1916. It purports to give the verbal answers to many of the kōans that had been in use in the late-nineteenth early-twentieth century. It is quite possible for me (or anyone else) to mimic the master’s gesture or verbal response by using this book but not actually express the essential truth. Mumon warns us in the commentary

(27)

The enlightenment of Gutei and the boy have nothing to do with the tip of a finger. If you realise this, Tenryū, Gutei, the boy and you yourself are all run through with one skewer.

Mumon here is suggesting that form is irrelevant, or at least, not attached to the meaning. Only the meaning needs to be transmitted by any means possible. The same logic and understanding can be applied to the ‘oak tree’ kōan, or for that matter any kōan. The truth expressed by Joshū has nothing to do with the oak tree in the garden.

3.3 Contradiction

We return here to coded communication as in Section 3.1. Rather than implying something via a seemingly unrelated thing, a contradictory response is also possible.

(28)

A: Are you angry?

B: No, I’m not angry. I’m not angry, at all! (original)

The contradiction implies the opposite, that the responder is angry. Commonly, this is called sarcasm.

(29)

A monk asked in all earnestness, “Does a dog have Buddha nature or not?”

Joshū said, “mu!” (Yamada, Case 1, p11)

‘Mu’ literally means ‘no’. But in Buddhism it is taught that all things have Buddha Nature (*Buddhata*). So Joshū was contradicting an obvious truth. However, from the previous two examples we also know that forms (in

essential communication) do not necessarily equate to meaning, that is, the form no matter what form it takes, points to a specific meaning. The problem occurs when the unenlightened interpreter views the text from the conventional point of view.

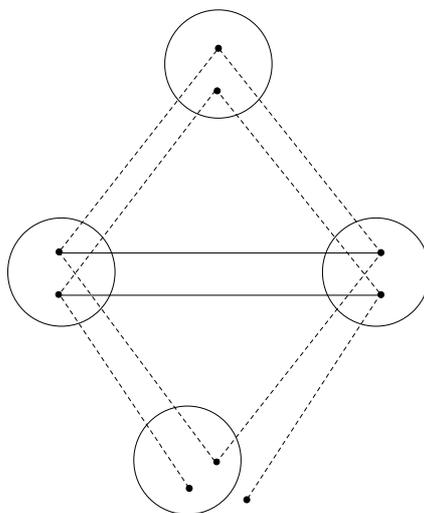


Figure 7 – ‘Mu!’

At once the unenlightened perspective wants to believe it is within the essential perspective. Nonetheless, the unenlightened will take it to be as in Figure 7. The enlightened person will believe there is a separation between the essential and phenomenal. But as we have quoted in (12) the essential and phenomenal are identical.

3.4 failed communication

Consider the following situation. For various reasons the prompter does not want to directly ask from the responder his or her request. In some way, either verbal and non-verbal, he or she may hint at what is desired.

(30)

Suppose, for instance, that Mary wants Peter to mend her broken hair-drier but does not want to ask him openly. What she does is begin to take her hair-drier to pieces and leave the pieces lying around as if she were in the process of mending it. [...] She does expect him to be clever enough to work out that this is a staging intended to inform him of the fact that she needs some help with her hair-drier. (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, p. 31)

This is again like (22) where the request is uncoded. But this time it is not a *state* but a *process*. While this example is uncoded the next *kōan* is coded but the failure in communication between prompter and responder is the same.

(31)

When Tōzan came to Unmon for instruction, Unmon asked, “Where have you come from?” Tōzan said, “From Sado.” Unmon said, “Where were you during the summer retreat?” Tōzan, “At Hōzu Monastery, south of the lake.” Unmon said, “When did you leave?” Tōzan said, “On the twenty-fifth of August.” Unmon said, “I spare you sixty blows.”

The next day Tōzan came up to Unmon and asked, “Yesterday you spared me sixty blows though I deserved them. I beg you, sir, where was I at fault?” Unmon said, “Oh, you ricebag! Have you been wondering about like that, now west of the river, now south of the lake?” At this, Tōzan had great realization. (Yamada, p. 74)

The exchange begins with questions *seemingly* about the phenomenal reality, but they are not. Zen masters are always interested in your spiritual rather than your phenomenal state of mind. So, the questions in *dokusan*⁷ (private interview with the master) are always about essential truths, not phenomenal truths. Mumon's commentary and verse will give us more clues as to what this had all meant.

(32)

MUMON'S COMMENTARY

At that time, if Unmon had given Tōzan the essential food of Zen and awakened him to active Zen spirit, his family gate would not have become so desolate. Tōzan struggled with himself in agony all through the night and at daybreak came to Unmon again. Unmon gave him a further push to break through. Although Tōzan attained realization immediately, he still could not be called bright. Now, I ask you, does Tōzan deserve sixty blows with the stick or not? If he does, then all the trees, grasses thickets, and groves should be beaten. If you say he does not, then Unmon is telling a lie. If you grasp this clearly, you are breathing through one mouth with Tōzan.

THE VERSE

*The lion has a puzzling way of teaching its cubs:
The cubs crouch, leap and spring back swiftly;
Unintentionally, he gave a checkmate again,
The first arrow was light, but the second went deep.*

Mumon's comments after the questions were a push, not to Tōzan but to us, the reader. Mumon asks, does he deserve sixty blows. The answer would seem to be 'yes'. By Unmon *saying* he will spare Tōzan sixty blows he had "beaten" him *verbally*, and perhaps even more severely than physical blows. In this way, Unmon had already flogged *everyone* and *everything* with his words. To deny the necessity of the punishment is to see everything from the phenomenal perspective only (Figure 8).

Yamada (p. 76) points out that the same answers that Tōzan gave could have well been given even by an enlightened person. But that other characteristics would have indicated one's enlightened state of mind. Clearly, Tōzan's state of mind could only respond on a purely phenomenal level, even though he after the first encounter understood (by his reaction) the questions from Unmon were coming from a different perspective.

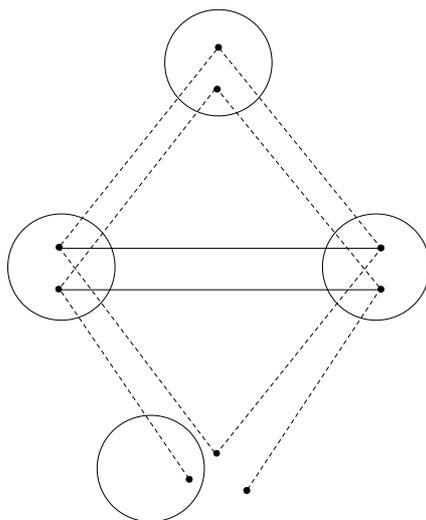


Figure 8 – “I spare you sixty blows.”

3.5 Summary discussion

It has been suggested, rightly so, that Zen kōans follow the rules of communication (坂井, 2012). And in Section 3, we have seen that it is possible to match Zen dialogues to communication strategies through identifying the intentions of a koan. The basic goal or intention of Buddhism is to transform the unenlightened person into an enlightened one. And we have shown that kōans embody this same goal. The unenlightened person is someone who sees the world from only the conditioned, phenomenal perspective, and the enlightened person sees the world from *both* the conditioned and unconditioned perspective (see Table 1). As in Figure 4 I have represented the enlightened perspective as the overlapping space in the *mutual cognitive environment* in the blended space. The overlapping blended space includes elements from both the essential and phenomenal inputs. However, when the perspectives of the enlightened and unenlightened person do not overlap, as in Figures 5~8, there is a difference in the number of elements included from each input space. This represents a difference in perspectives.

In the ‘oak tree in the garden’ kōan the unenlightened person sees not only the phenomenal object of tree in the garden as not only unrelated to the problem but also the absence of essential qualities. The question put forward was an essential one. The answer is an essential one as well. But the interpreter sees only the phenomenal (Figure 5). Given the answer in ‘Gutei’s one finger’ the boy believes he sees in it the embodiment of the essential reality but in his mind, it remains a phenomenal one (Figure 6). In Case 1 the answer ‘mu!’ is conceptually close to the essential reality but it is surprising because it contradicts all that The Buddha taught. We are drawn into the essential quality because it is so “close to the bone”, so familiar. Yet, it is far away because the now the phenomenal is missing from the equation (Figure 7). In Figure 8 we see that the responder completely misses the absolute, thinking all along that the prompter wanted only phenomenal replies. Not only did Unmon “hook” him once but three times, and every time he released him.

In short, the enlightened perspective always has all the elements from the essential and phenomenal input spaces within his understanding, and the unenlightened perspective has at least one element missing from it. But when the unenlightened “wraps” his understanding around all the necessary elements he is no longer unenlightened but has become enlightened.

4. Conclusion

There are three points to this study. Firstly, it is to show that Zen works in the same way communicatively as specified and described by relevance theory. A kōan is not a dialogue with random and unrelated prompts and responses, but it has been shown here to follow ideas of *relevance* and *intention*. They may be specific to the Zen discourse community but nonetheless the Zen kōan works in the exact same way as conventional communication. A kōan follows a logic, albeit an unconventional one. Secondly, to understand a kōan is to see that it must include properties and elements from both the *essential* and *phenomenal* inputs as a form of conceptual blend. Whether this is directly *composed* from actual elements mentioned in a kōan or else *completed* by background knowledge or semantic frames from the input spaces. This then is *elaborated* by simulation. Thirdly, we can describe the ongoing processes in a kōan between the enlightened and unenlightened mind by fusing the concept of a *mutual cognitive environment* with conceptual blending theory to create a *mutual cognitive blended space* model (Figure 4).

One extra point that comes out of this study is that we may have to rethink our traditional understanding of the linguistic sign. The fixed relationship of the Saussurean signifier and signified has been called question by the way Zen and kōans use language. From the four kōan examples I have been able to show that perhaps each of the *signifiers* is in fact pointing to a single *signified*. Form does not guarantee meaning as shown in 1) the kōans, 2) the existence of *cheat-sheets* like *The Sound of One Hand*, and 3) stories like *Zen in the Art of Archery*⁸ (Herrigel, 1985). This unusual outcome may say something of this particular signified and nothing more. I am not saying that other signifiers must work in the same way but that for this case at least this is not true. It may also be highlighting clearly that this relationship of the sign is a social convention rather than a natural phenomenon if being “natural” is in any way possible at all.

Notes

¹ The shorthand is as follows: *S* (speaker); *A* (audience); *x* (utterance of the speaker); *r* (response by the audience).

² The emergent structure is usually illustrated with a rectangular box inside the blended space (space 4). I have dispensed with it for clarity.

³ Chinese/Japanese 「色即是空。空即是色」 where 色 is ‘form’ and 空 is ‘emptiness’. These terms are Buddhist terminologies beyond their conventional meaning.

⁴ The terms ‘absolute’ and ‘essential’ are used interchangeably in this paper.

⁵ The assumption here is no different to the assumption used in relevance theory. A kōan collection is a work that states that it intends to help bring you to enlightenment. The reader (audience) must accept this on face-value even if he or she has not yet gained enlightenment.

⁶ For visual clarity, I will use a single circle for the blended space *to represent the essential point-of-view* so that elements that lie outside the circle are of the phenomenal point-of-view.

⁷ “**dokusan** (Jap.) In Japanese Zen (and Chinese Ch’an) Buddhism, a private audience with one’s master in order to allow him or her to evaluate one’s (spiritual) progress.” (Keown, p.80)

⁸ Towards the end of this book the author attempted to “cheat” by releasing an arrow from a bow through natural slippage from tension on the string against his fingers. The master rebuked him for this deception, leading to the impressive final demonstration by the master.

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Appendix: Examples from texts

	<i>Sperber and Wilson (1995)</i>	<i>Yamada (1991)</i>
<i>Implicature</i>	Peter: What do you intend to do today? Mary: I have a terrible headache. (p. 56)	A monk asked Joshū in all earnestness, “What is the meaning of the patriarch’s coming from the West?” Joshū said, “The oak tree in the garden.” (p. 177)
<i>Uncoded Communication</i>	For example, Peter asks Mary, “How are you feeling today?” Mary responds by pulling a bottle of aspirin out of her bag and showing it to him. Her behaviour is not coded: there is no rule or convention which says that displaying a bottle of aspirin means that one is not feeling well. Similarly, her behaviour affords only the weakest kind of direct evidence about her feelings: maybe she always carries a bottle of aspirin in her bag. On the other hand, it is strong evidence of her intention to inform Peter that she does not feel well. Because her behaviour enables Peter to recognise her intention, Mary successfully communicates with him, and does so without the use of any code. (pp. 25-6)	Whatever he was asked about Zen, Master Gutei simply stuck up one finger. He had a boy attendant whom a visitor asked, “What kind of teaching does your master give?” The boy held up one finger too. Hearing this, Gutei cut off the boy’s finger with a knife. As the boy ran away, screaming with pain, Gutei called to him. When the boy turned his head, Gutei stuck up one finger. The boy was suddenly enlightened. When Gutei was about to die, he said to the assembled monks, “I received this one-finger Zen from Tenryū. I’ve used it all my life but have not exhausted it.” Having said this, he entered nirvana. (p. 23)
<i>Contradiction/ illogical</i>	Are you angry? No, I’m not angry. I’m not angry, whatsoever. (original)	A monk asked in all earnestness, “Does a dog have Buddha nature or not?” Joshū said, “mu!” (p. 11)
<i>Failed Communicative Intention</i>	Suppose, for instance, that Mary wants Peter to mend her broken hair-drier, but does not want to ask him openly. What she does is begin to take her hair-drier to pieces and leave the pieces lying around as if she were in the process of mending it. [...] She does expect him to be clever enough to work out that this is a staging intended to inform him of the fact that she needs some help with her hair-drier. (p. 30)	When Tōzan came to Unmon for instruction, Unmon asked, “Where have you come from?” Tōzan said, “From Sado.” Unmon said, “Where were you during the summer retreat?” Tōzan, “At Hōzu Monastery, south of the lake.” Unmon said, “When did you leave?” Tōzan said, “On the twenty-fifth of August.” Unmon said, “I spare you sixty blows.” The next day Tōzan came up to Unmon and asked, “Yesterday you spared me sixty blows though I deserved them. I beg you, sir, where was I at fault?” Unmon said, “Oh, you ricebag! Have you been wondering about like that, now west of the river, now south of the lake?” At this, Tōzan had great realization. (p. 74)