

# Reasonableness of Faith

A Study of Kierkegaard's  
*Philosophical Fragments*

TONY KIM

In *Reasonableness of Faith* Tony Kim gives an account of the nature of the relationship between faith and reason through a study of Søren Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*, which was published under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus. The relationship between faith and reason is problematized by the fact that these ideas essentially occupy different realms of human thought. Kim argues that Climacus contends that there is a historical relation between God and human beings.

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# Chapter I: Reading *Philosophical Fragments*

## The General Problem of Faith and Reason in the *Philosophical Fragments*

The great question concerning the nature of the relation between faith (*fide*) and reason (*ratio*), has always been difficult to answer. Theologians and philosophers alike have attempted to address this complex issue concerning the nature of the relation of faith and reason in various ways, but it remains unresolved. The main reason for the failure, in my view, is due to the fine line that exists between these two different yet somehow overlapping categories of human thought.

First of all, faith and reason operate via the two separate fields of philosophy and theology, making it extremely problematic, if not impossible, to reduce religious faith to any kind of rational knowledge. Nonetheless, some philosophers and theologians consider it necessary to bridge between these two diverging and to some extent converging categories in order to show that all human beings have knowledge of the truth, namely, God.

In this study, I will thus give an account of the nature of the relation between faith and reason made problematic by the fact that these ideas essentially occupy different realms of human thought presented in Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* published under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus. I will argue that in this work Climacus argues that there is a historical relation between God and human beings or between faith and human knowledge.

We also find that, in the course of his discussion, Climacus simultaneously preserves the integrity of faith—as that which cannot be achieved by any rational human thought—and conveys the limitations of human reason in its inability to transcend all of its speculation concerning the transcendent—God.<sup>1</sup> I will try to explore how this particular discussion on the relation between faith and reason is carried out by Climacus in the book as a whole and how reason is historically related to the transcendent.

The main argument we find in *Fragments* is that reason and religious faith are essentially irreconcilable because each has its own root, i.e. humanity and divinity, respectively. Does this mean that human reason for him has no historical relation to the transcendent? In the absolute sense, his answer is no. He repeatedly makes the claim that there is no meaningful

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relation between philosophic reason and religious faith because the former is immanent and the latter a matter of transcendence. Does this mean that Climacus is a fideist—one who does not see any possible reconciliation between faith and reason—due to reason's limitations in identifying the experience of the transcendent? What about those (i.e., Coolidge, Evans, Ferreira, Westphal) who argue that Kierkegaard's/Climacus' metaphysics or philosophy of religion contains a point of contact between transcendence and reason?

Kierkegaard's *Fragments* does not contain clear answers to these questions. However, I will argue that the factual element of the faith-reason relation is evident in Climacus' analysis of his orthodox position with respect to the faith-reason relation. I will argue that, for him, reason performs the work to a certain extent of affirming the existence of the transcendent. I will thus argue that he situates himself as one who acknowledges an absolute distinction between the eternal and the human, and who at the same time does not entirely reject the notion of historical knowledge of God. I will argue that he is somewhere between fideism, which holds to an absolute distinction between faith and reason, and foundationalism, which maintains that every human being has a basic knowledge of the truth—God. I will argue that, even though he completely rejects the humanistic idea of God-human unity in, for instance, the form of an Hegelian synthesis (which I deal with in chapter four of the thesis), he nonetheless affirms that there is a certain kind of transcendental dialectic between the transcendent and reason. For this reason, then, we may argue that Climacus holds that all human affairs are conscious responses to the being and existence of that which can be transcendently thought by the human mind, namely, the eternal (God).

First, unlike traditional foundationalists, who believe that historical knowledge of the eternal has to be proven from experience of the world, Climacus believes that reasonable belief has to be based on transcendental aspects of the human nature—as we will see throughout this study. In keeping with this theme in *Fragments*, and what we hope to discover in this study with respect to the problematic relation between faith and reason, I will thus attempt to determine and explain what Climacus understands the nature of human reason to be, and what type of relation reason has with its religious counterpart, namely, faith. I will discuss the specific issues explored by Climacus in *Fragments* within the general context of the faith-reason problem.

Second, I will address various sub-problems Climacus discusses in *Fragments* in connection with the main problem of the text concerning reason's relation to faith: 1) the problem of the Socratic thought, in which the issue of reason's exaggerated way of defining the concept of philosophic recollection will be discussed in comparison to the Christian doctrines of creation and sin (chapter 2); 2) the problem of the "Absolute Paradox," in which we will discuss Climacus' idea of the "absurdity" of God's historical revelation in the world as an occurrence inconsistent with human logic but nonetheless subject to historical appropriation as such (chapter 3); 3) the problem of "Absolute Reason" in Hegel or Hegelian philosophy and its logical inconsistency in light of the more consistent argument for the religious faith, namely, Christianity, which offers the possibility of both the historical and the transcendent appropriation of the eternal. (chapter 4); and 4) Climacus' view of historical faith in the eternal as reasonable, based on a person's objective (theoretical) and subjective (faith) historical experience (chapter 5).

### **The Importance of Kierkegaard in Accounting for Faith and Reason**

In *Fragments*, Kierkegaard's pseudonymous author Johannes Climacus reflects on the great theme of faith and reason, and the complex and unsettling relation between the two, in light of the idea of transcendence. Because of the unprecedented commitment to philosophical reflection on transcendence and all the issues that flow from it, Kierkegaard can be seen as the one who recaptured the spirit of transcendental reflection in the post-Enlightenment era in a way no other thinker has done. His innovative approach to thinking about transcendence, based on both the objective and subjective experience of the eternal, has played a major role in reestablishing the eternal as an object of human thought.

It has recently been said that since Kant we have been faced with the question of how we should think transcendence. For example, James Faulconer states in his *Transcendence in Philosophy and Religion* that, "Until the modern period, philosophy and religion were generally content to think transcendence without thinking the problematic of transcendence."<sup>2</sup> That is, until Kant the question with respect to the problem of transcendence in philosophy and religion was one of how to think transcendence and not one of ability to do so. However, as Faulconer argues, since Kant (and other idealists of his time and after), all that has changed. According to Faulconer,

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attempts to think transcendence have been put aside since that time.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, he says, what remained for philosophy was simply the duty to keep to the modern Kantian tradition of restricting reason from rationally theologizing and philosophizing transcendence.

If Faulconer's observation is true—which I think it is—then we may argue that Kierkegaard has an important place in modern philosophy. This may be the case for a number of reasons. First, Kierkegaard is one of the foremost thinkers since the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century European idealist period of philosophy to explore the issue of faith and reason from the religious perspective rather than the rational. Second, even as he sought to retain the integrity of faith over against the autonomous force of historical or human reason—which attempted to appropriate transcendence or the transcendent within the bounds of reason alone so prevalent in his time—nonetheless, Kierkegaard did not overlook the significant place of historical reason in philosophy and religion. For example, in a journal he wrote in 1850, after stating that “reason does not comprehend what faith believes,” he writes immediately that “but nevertheless there is something here by which reason becomes determined or is conditioned to honor the faith which it still does not perfectly succeed in grasping.” With respect to the absurdity of the absolute paradox (the Incarnation of God), he writes in the same journal that “The activity of reason is to distinguish the paradox negatively...” since this is what he admits he developed in another pseudonymous work *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*.<sup>4</sup> Concerning the absurdity of the Incarnation of God or other forms of absurdity, he states that one's concept of the absurd is not something so superficial that it cannot be developed. He states that “the concept of the absurd is precisely to grasp the fact that it cannot and must not be grasped.” The absurd, he says, “is a negatively determined concept.” However, he also argues that the concept of the absurd is just as dialectical as any positive one,” for instance, what one has or possesses in the faith of Christianity.<sup>5</sup>

With Kierkegaard, then, we can once more think transcendence—but this time with a twist. This time, Kierkegaard redirects our thinking toward the transcendent with all the limitations of human thought and removes the latter from its once dominant place over cosmic reality. In our study of *Fragments*, we will discover that our historical knowledge of the eternal is something thought and thus something that needs to be accounted for. We will argue in our study that, even though Kierkegaard once again presents faith as the

alternative to the problem of reason's finite thinking, he nonetheless thinks that our concept of the eternal is not superficial or nonsensical. On the contrary, in his view, the concept of the eternal is one that, although negatively presented to our thought, signifies the reality of the concept. Concerning the absolute paradox, he writes:

The *absurd*, the *paradox*, is composed in such a way that reason has no power at all to dissolve it in nonsense and prove that it is nonsense; no, it is a symbol, a riddle, a compounded riddle about which reason must say: I cannot solve it, it cannot be understood, but it does not follow thereby that it is nonsense.<sup>6</sup>

For this reason, then, Kierkegaard's significant place in modern philosophy as a transcendental or ideal thinker must not be limited to his inclination toward fideism, as many seem to do. What we will see in our study is that, despite his denial of a genuine relation between faith and reason, Kierkegaard sees the capability of human thought in depicting the reality of the eternal.

### **The Intention behind *Fragments***

Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* was published in 1844, and it was followed by its sequel the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments*, published in 1866.<sup>7</sup> These works are commonly thought of as being connected by their names and titles.

Traditionally, Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* has been believed to be intended as polemic against Hegel. Some scholars have expressed the view that Kierkegaard called the book *Fragments* to highlight its unsystematic content so as to indicate its role as part of his dispute with Hegel's systematic philosophy. For example, according to a well-known Kierkegaard scholar, Stephen Evans, *Fragments'* poignant title indicates its polemic against Hegel's "system."<sup>8</sup>

A recent development in Kierkegaard research, however, conveys a different conclusion arguing that Kierkegaard did not write *Fragments* as a polemic against Hegel but actually had a Danish theologian, Hans Lassen Martenson, in mind. For example, in his *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, Jon Stewart argues that *Fragments* as a whole is aimed at dealing with some aspects of speculative thought in general and not with Hegel directly, especially the aspect of mediation.<sup>9</sup> Thus, he takes mediation

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as the key theme in *Fragments* by Climacus, discussed not in response to Hegel but as a polemic against a theologian who incorporated the Hegelian concept into theology and used speculative thought in service to religion.

The claim that the *Fragments* ‘was written specifically to battle against mediation [connection between transcendence and immanence]’ will be my point of departure in this chapter [Martenson’s Doctrine of Immanence and Kierkegaard’s Transcendence in *Philosophical Fragments*]. As has been seen previously, the notion of mediation was criticized in both *Either/Or* and *Repetition*, and in both cases the pseudonymous author took a position with respect to the contemporary Danish debate surrounding Hegel’s criticism of the laws of contradiction and excluded middle. Thus, *Philosophical Fragments*, I wish to argue, can be seen as continuation and development of this discussion. Specifically, the work is primarily a polemic against Martenson’s claims for the use of mediation in speculative theology.”<sup>10</sup>

Even though there are a number of references in *Fragments* to Hegel and Hegelians and the tone seems at first glance to point to Hegel as the target, Stewart argues that this was not the intention. Rather, he argues the book is circumscribed within the larger domain of Kierkegaard’s contention with speculative thought, as formulated and advocated primarily by Martenson through incorporating the Hegelian concept of mediation into his own rational theology, which claimed that there was a transition between the human and the divine.<sup>11</sup>

Regardless of whatever position one takes in this debate, what is certain is that Climacus refutes speculative thought that holds that the historical dimension of human knowing allows humans to know “something that cannot be [absolutely] known...It tries to capture discursively or deductively something beyond the sphere of what is knowable” namely, the eternal.<sup>12</sup>

For Climacus, speculative thought cannot accurately grasp the reality of the world. As Jacob Howland explains, philosophical ideality as found in Hegelianism, for Climacus, is inconsistent with the actuality of the world. The reason is that it overlooks the particularity of human life.

Kierkegaard likens the [Hegelian] system to a structure of stone. As such, it is a dead letter—a speech that stands apart from life as it is actually lived...What the Hegelians say are at odds with what they do. It is this situation that Kierkegaard characterizes as ‘the detestable untruth...The truth of philosophy, he implies, cannot be estimated independently of the conduct of the philosopher who espouses it.’<sup>13</sup>



Thus, our study of *Fragments* will discuss speculative reason and its relation to faith, including various sub-issues that are part of this general problem that its pseudonymous author, Johannes Climacus, discusses in the text.

### **The Nature of Each Sub-Problem Addressed in the *Fragments***

In this study, we will first discuss the problem of Socratic philosophy presented in *Fragments*. In *Fragments*, Johannes Climacus introduces the philosophical category of the Socratic as representing the whole category of speculative philosophy. According to him, the Socratic claims that the truth is innate to humans and that this truth can be brought to conscious awareness through the humanistic process of recollection.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, religion (Christianity), says Climacus, is intolerant of such a claim because religion represents something—faith—that is in great contention with the humanistic way of thinking about the ultimate reality, namely, the eternal. The Socratic and religion are distinguished from one another in the way of their distinct identities as separate categories of reflection employed in explaining each concept.

According to Climacus, the categories of thought used in the Socratic to explain ultimate reality simply do not have the definite content that the categories in religious thinking have. That is, the problem in the Socratic method with respect to explaining ultimate reality from the religious viewpoint, according to Climacus, is that it misses the “non-empirical religious content” that it seeks, namely, the truth or the content of the religious, that is, the Christian faith. It is this problem of the absence of the necessary religious content of the non-historical, transcendent faith in the Socratic that Climacus contends is problematic. This point is made clear in the *Fragments* as the reason for the religious idea of faith as opposed to the speculative method of the Socratic (recollection).

This does not mean, however, that Climacus refutes reason as meaningless. He argues that even though reason cannot fully grasp the truth (the eternal), it can nonetheless ideally appropriate the truth. It is his view that the truth is something that is historically knowable within the temporal sphere of human thought. The reason is because humans, he says, are “not outside the truth,” but within the truth according to the Christian faith. This way, Christianity shares the Socratic notion that the truth is innate to humans. What distinguishes Christianity from the Socratic notion with regard to this issue is that Christianity believes that the reason that humans

have the truth is not because they have pre-existed, but because they were created as image bearers of the truth (God). The whole question concerning the Socratic methodology is discussed in chapter two of this book, under the heading “The Truth and the Ideal.”

Second, we will examine the problem of the “Absolute Paradox” namely, the Incarnation of God in the world. In *Fragments*, Climacus argues that the very nature of the problem of the absolute paradox is that it, with its supposed trait of irrationality, collides with human understanding. The absolute paradox—the eternal—that appeared in the world defies human logic; it cannot be comprehended because of its rational absurdity. What human understanding finds to be absurd about the paradox is the idea that the god [Climacus refers to this particular impossible event of the paradox of God’s Incarnation as “the god” in small case letter because it is a part of his hypothetical analysis of Christianity], who is an eternal being, has appeared in the world of space and time at a particular moment in history, that he “has been born and grown up, etc., and that [h]e has become utterly like any other individual man and indistinguishable from any other.”<sup>15</sup> From the perspective of the historical, this is not something that can be digested logically.

First, this distinctly historical occurrence of God’s humanly appearance in the world is, as far as reason is concerned, not an object of immediate perception, at least from the perspective of higher metaphysics. The absolute paradox depicts the idea of an eternal being entering time, arriving at a certain point in history. The idea that something that cannot be has “become” in time thus escapes reason. This historical event, the absolute paradox of the god’s appearance in history, requires asking about the potential sphere from which it emerged into the real world. That is, it requires asking about its origin, which human understanding cannot grasp directly. There are no sure qualities on the basis of which a rational judgment can be made about this occurrence.

Second, no record of precise knowledge would be gained for assessing the innermost reality of the paradox. Therefore, in the end, the paradox really becomes an object of one’s free interpretation. The absolute paradox entails the problem of having to deal with what is closed to rational human experience, namely, the actual historical occurrence of the paradox.

Thus, because human understanding cannot encompass the capacity of the absolute paradox, Climacus engages in a different kind of reflection by which the actuality of this occurrence could be affirmed, despite its peculiar

identity. To achieve this, Climacus says one must enter into the state of the eternal dialectic beyond the world. This eternal dialectic is possible through transcending one's historical existence to the supernatural.

Nonetheless, it is his view that this supernatural occurrence is subject to historical appropriation as a negative concept. That is, with respect to the absolute paradox certain metaphorical judgment can be formed. The content of this particular discussion occupies the chapter three of the thesis.

Third, in our study we will look at the problem of the Hegelian concept of absolute reason as discussed in *Fragments*. We will examine the logical structure of absolute Hegelian reason in detail so as to shed light on the nature of this complex concept. The intention here is to discuss Climacus' critique of the Hegelian concept in detail so that a reader may have a better idea of the meaning of the concept, which in turn will help them to understand the intention behind his critique better. Then, we will examine how this Hegelian concept might challenge the supposed fideism in Climacus.

Hegelian thought is explicitly at the forefront of the criticism of philosophy in *Fragments*. Climacus presents Hegelian philosophy as the foremost proponent of the Socratic-methodology of the absolute idealism or the "absolute method," which, for Climacus, is a major distortion of religious faith in its genuine form. Climacus states that this philosophy turns religious faith into something that is "a difficulty in logic." Hegel or Hegelian philosophy, he says, unites the absolute and the world into a "single" unity. Within this unity, he declares, the human mind completely subsumes religion and transmutes it into temporal existence. Hence, he states, it must be seen as nothing more than a (logical) "tautology," if not an "astounded superstition" that confounds human rationality.<sup>16</sup> In order to see how Climacus carries out this rather daunting task of showing the incompatibility between the Hegelian concept and religion, we will interact with several secondary texts.

We will also argue in this particular discussion of the Hegelian concept of the absolute and Climacus' critique of it that, despite his dislike of Hegelian philosophy, he does not dismiss the idea that one can think about absolute reality, even though one may not be religious. We will show that Climacus' opposition to the Hegelian concept or the latter's philosophy in general is not an exhibition of complete hostility toward reason itself but an attack against the prevailing notion that one can become an abstract thinker like Hegel, that is, produce absurd ideas and then view them as fact held and

advocated by many in his time. I will argue in this chapter that, as hostile as he was toward the Hegelian understanding of the world and religion—as a single unity—Climacus is sympathetic to the idea that one can nonetheless think about the truth (eternal), in keeping with the main argument of this book that faith in the eternal is reasonable.

As we have said, what makes one's knowledge genuine for Climacus is its grounding in the religious aspect and not in human rationality. According to Climacus, human rationality has an indispensable place in human life in providing knowledge and understanding. However, he is quick to point out that human rationality is a limited ability that is unable to provide true knowledge. Thus, our discussion in chapter four will conclude with a claim that there is a double dimension to Climacus' critique: first, the Hegelian concept of the absolute is opposed to the religious principle of the absolute distinction between the god and the human; second, as hostile as he is toward Hegelian philosophy, Climacus does not reject rational thinking completely with respect to the absolute.

Even though the Hegelian idea of the absolute is not exactly the one Climacus has in mind, it is nonetheless something thought through reflection. Indeed, what Climacus sees in the Hegelian version of the absolute is an unacceptable way of constructing their relation. He rejects the "way" in which it is formulated, but not the principle of the subject-object relation itself. For him, we are still able to think about the absolute. We will discuss this issue in chapter four of our study.

Related to the general problem of Hegel's philosophy is Climacus' engrossing occupation with human existence. According to Stephen Evans, Climacus says that a human being is called to exist and the nature of one's existence in the world for him, Evans says, is an "ethical striving" toward moral perfection. This ethical striving is carried out in the temporal structure of the various components of human experience, including morality, which in fact constitutes this activity.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the absorption in Hegel of existence by the absolute dialectic poses a major threat to the primary essence of humankind, namely, its "freedom."

But, it seems that, for Climacus, this freedom is something found in the higher truth of God's divine morality. Therefore, in spite of being the most brilliant method by far by any theoretical standard or comparison, Hegel's philosophy of absolute idealism, from the Climacean point of view, would have succumbed to the great danger because of the assertion of a relation

between the Absolute and the world that is ambiguous. Hegel, Climacus would argue, has done this in the manner of their most arresting fashion of synergy that easily fits the philosophical currents that realized the need to critically reflect the metaphysical possibilities in the most radical nature.

However, viewed through the scrutinizing eyes of the laws of logic, Hegel's own logic has, in a creative way, misled "himself and others and miscast contradiction...that it has the power to produce something,"<sup>18</sup> according to Climacus. For him, Hegel's system cleverly and strategically attempts to bridge the Absolute and the world transcendently through nothing more than humanistic subjective mediation. However, in the end, that results in eliminating God and human beings from what another scholar, Merold Westphal, calls the strange version of hermeneutics in the "epistemic version of the sacred-secular tension."<sup>19</sup> It is a strange version of hermeneutics in the sense that Hegel's system expresses the God-world relation in a form of a synthesis within the domain of human thought without noting the distinction. I will discuss this topic in chapter five of our study.

In the fifth chapter, I will discuss different concepts Climacus presents in *Fragments* regards to the problem of the relation between faith and reason. They include, among other things, coming into existence, religious faith, reasonable belief, objectivity, subjectivity, and moment. To give an example, the concept of coming into existence is relevant to the sustained argument for the reasonableness of faith in the eternal, presenting the reasonableness of the relation between the eternal and the historical in the phenomenon of the absolute paradox of God's appearance in time.

In the occurrence of the absolute paradox, we find that 1) there is a relation between the eternal and the historical, and 2) this relation takes place precisely in the historical. This means that, by virtue of what is presented in the paradox, one can have a reasonable understanding of the eternal in his or her historical existence. I will discuss these concepts to show that each of these concepts presents in its own unique way its relevance to the problem of the eternal and the historical by way of making a case for the truth of humans' historical or ideal access to the eternal.

Over against the problem of the Hegelian concept of the "Absolute Spirit," which deifies the world and humanity, Climacus argues that anything that comes into being is temporal. But, this irreconcilability between time and eternity, says Climacus, is destroyed by God's entering time. Therefore, the final chapter five of this thesis will try to answer the question of how

such a unique phenomenon of God's historical revelation in time could be possible. That is, I will try to discern the nature of such an ambiguous phenomenon of God's revelation in history—how could what is, in essence, eternal ever enter temporality? Included in this chapter are various interpretations by some prominent scholars, such as Alastair Hannay, James Collins and the late Louis Pojman, as well as those of contemporary thinkers such as Jamie Ferreira and Richard Coolidge to help us grasp the meanings of these concepts in Climacus better.

All these concepts are discussed in the context of examining the broader question regarding the problem of absolute irreconcilability and the relative or reasonable reconcilability of faith and reason articulated throughout our study. Ultimately, I wish to illuminate the ways in which these concepts contribute to the thesis that our faith in the eternal is reasonable.

Included in the discussion is the problem of the concept of the will in Climacus. Religious volitionalism or voluntarism, as it is sometimes called, states that religious belief requires an element of choice. Over against the volitionalism imposed on Climacus by a critic, Louis Pojman, I will argue that Climacus is to be understood not as a volitionalist but as someone who does not hold that humans are autonomous with respect to the place of the will in human existence. I will argue that Climacus is a non-volitionalist who, even though he strongly advocates the idea of human freedom, maintains that our freedom is something that is grounded or rooted in God's higher will. I will argue that, for Climacus, the operation of human freedom is always dependent on the higher will of God.

For example, Pojman claims that Climacus must be perceived as a volitionalist who sees religious faith as something essentially active and something that is experienced as a result of a person's own choice. He makes his claim based on his understanding of Climacus' characterization of the human will as an active faculty that claims its own achievement for the religious faith.

Jamie Ferreira gives a different construct of Climacus' perspective on the nature of human freedom. Ferreira sees Climacus as a non-volitionalist who opposes the idea that faith is a cumulative achievement by a person. For Ferreira, the qualitative transition from unbelief to belief is something quite free, neither physically nor rationally forced. Furthermore, Ferreira believes that this freedom could presuppose a stronger freedom involving discontinuity and an arbitrariness that is not indifference. She thus argues

that human choice is “always an interested, contextualized freedom” that may be perceived as being, in some meaningful sense, “no choice” at all. She is apparently arguing that Climacus holds to a compatibilist position between human freedom and divine omnipotence. She argues that Climacus’ idea of the human will in its relation to the divine will is such that it is always necessitated by the higher will of God. The human will is absolutely dependent on God.

At the same time, we will see how Climacus views human freedom of choice as something equally, but relatively, accountable to God; the person’s subjectivity, that is, his or her true freedom (*libertas*) is preserved in his or her total dependence on God. This means that our role as humans, with respect to God or the eternal, is one that is both voluntary—in the sense that it actively takes a step toward God—and involuntary or passive—in the sense that it is completely receptive to the required condition, i.e. faith, necessary for taking the step toward the eternal.

I will discuss these two contrasting views found in Pojman and Ferreira. I will argue that one comes closer than the other to Climacus’ actual position on this rather complex and difficult topic of divine omnipotence and human freedom. I will conclude by saying, that with respect to the problem of humans’ freedom of choice, Climacus thinks that the human will is something that is both (historically or relatively) independent of and (absolutely or religiously) dependent on the higher will of the divine being, namely, God.

In chapter six, I will summarize the previous discussions on the problem of the relation between faith and reason. I will indicate Climacus’ evasion of rationality without depicting him as an irrationalist, since, for him the human mind is capable of making ideal judgments. I will additionally (and briefly) point out the related theological and ethical implications of our study.

### **On Kierkegaard’s Pseudonyms**

According to a recognized Kierkegaard scholar, Arnold B. Come, a good place to begin for getting a proper understanding of the purpose of Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous works would be his *First and Last Declaration*, a work attached to the *Postscript*. In this text, Come explains, Kierkegaard states that, rather than being rooted in any personal peculiarity, his pseudonymous works are hypothetical expressions of the Christian

experience in all of its dynamic variants including the most important variants of suffering and dilemma.<sup>20</sup>

According to Evans, for Kierkegaard/Climacus, suffering indicates the abandonment of the world for the sake of gaining eternity, whereas the term dilemma points to the constant encounter with the struggle between doing good and doing evil within the reality of one's moral limitations, which he calls "heedless morality." He explains the latter as follows:

...that heedlessness in good and evil, in broken-heartedness and hilarity, in despair and arrogance, in suffering and jubilation, and so on, only ideally limited by psychological consistency, which no factually real person within the moral limitations of reality dares permit himself or can want to permit him.<sup>21</sup>

- (1) According to Evans, it seems that, in wanting to speak hypothetically in *Fragments* with no moral restrictions (since *Fragments* is only a project—a thought experiment—as stated by Climacus that is intended to give a discursive investigation of speculative reason and faith) Kierkegaard employs the indirect method of pseudonymous authorship, creating fictional individuals to speak about various religious experiences.<sup>22</sup> He argues that some readers may find it curious to think that fictional characters who are employed to speak pseudonymously for the author have no meaning in themselves and do not merit thoughtful attention by readers. But various places in Kierkegaard's writings, Evans declares, show that this may not be the case after all. He argues that, although Kierkegaard expressed the wish that readers should refer to the pseudonyms and not to the actual author himself when citing from his works,<sup>23</sup> it is logical to think that Kierkegaard's pseudonyms may express his own views.
- (2) Apparently, Kierkegaard wanted his readers to regard the characters of his pseudonymous works first and foremost as independent characters whose views do not belong to any actual individual.
- (3) Kierkegaard states in *First and Last Declaration*: "There is therefore in the pseudonymous books not a single word of my own; I have no opinion about them except as a third party, no knowledge of their meanings except as reader, not the slightest relation to them..."<sup>24</sup> This means that, for all we know, the pseudonyms could be the means through which Kierkegaard expresses his own ideas. In fact, according to a prominent Kierkegaard scholar, Gregor Malantschuk,



the pseudonym, Johannes Climacus, was invented to represent specifically Kierkegaard's own dialectical aspect, who "comes to stand as the leading dialectician" behind the author's works up to *Postscript*.<sup>25</sup>

According to Malantschuk, Kierkegaard, himself, confessed that his pseudonyms perform the works that he would actually have carried out himself. He cites the *Postscript* as an example: "...because step by step, just as I wanted to begin the task of carrying out my resolution by working, there appeared a pseudonymous book that did what I wanted to do."

Not surprisingly, then, Malantschuk says, when we compare Kierkegaard's fictional works with his actual works, we find that the former confirm this. Many of his pseudonyms share his own views, i.e. the theory of "indirect communication," the notion of the "three stages of life's way," the concept of "existence," the link between religiosity and suffering, and the understanding of Christianity as centering around the absolute paradox of the Incarnation.<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly enough, there is a striking connection between Kierkegaard and Climacus. Many of the concepts discussed by Kierkegaard himself are discussed by Climacus at great length in *Fragments*. For this reason, Evans, for example, argues that this may explain why Kierkegaard had originally intended to publish this particular work under his true name, Søren Kierkegaard.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, because Kierkegaard never asserts that he and Climacus are identical, we cannot say that Climacus' words are precisely the words of Kierkegaard himself. One can only suspect that this may be the case.

Therefore, we will honor Kierkegaard's request and regard the book as containing the thoughts and views of its pseudonymous author, Johannes Climacus, and no one else. This should not entail any conflict even if it may be that some views found in *Fragments* might overlap with those of Kierkegaard, himself, since they may be found in his other non-pseudonymous works. However, for the purpose of precluding any kind of presumptuousness on the part of the present author in respect to this matter, I will refer to Climacus as the author of the book, as initially suggested by Kierkegaard. I will refer to or use the name Kierkegaard only in cases where it is needed.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I do return to this and other related questions in the last chapter of the book. The last chapter (5) reminds the readers of the problems already stated and discussed in the previous chapters, the summary of which is clearly stated in chapter one, and gives my conclusion.

<sup>2</sup> James E. Faulconer, ‘Thinking Transcendence,’ in *Transcendence in Philosophy and Religion*, ed. James E. Faulconer (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, vol. 1, A-E, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1967), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>7</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 109.

<sup>8</sup> C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript: The Religious Philosophy of Johannes Climacus* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International INC., 1983), 14.

<sup>9</sup> Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 337-38.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 338.

<sup>11</sup> For an extensive critique of Stewart's position with respect to Kierkegaard's relationship to Hegel, see Arne Grøn's article entitled: ‘‘Ambiguous and Deeply Differentiated: Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel’’ in *Kierkegaardiana* Vol.23, ed. Dario González, Tonny Aagaard Olesen, and Richard Purkarthofer (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Forlag Copenhagen, 2004), 179-196.

<sup>12</sup> Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations*, 339-40.

<sup>13</sup> Jacob Howland, *Kierkegaard and Socrates: A Study in Philosophy and Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 15.

<sup>14</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 13. Climacus writes: ‘‘We begin with the difficulty: How is one able to seek the truth, since it is indeed equally impossible whether one has it or one does not. The Socratic line of thought in effect annulled the disjunction, since it appeared that basically every human being possesses the truth.’’

<sup>15</sup> Herman Diem, *Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence*, trans. Harold Knight (Edinburg: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), 60.

<sup>16</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 78. n24.

<sup>17</sup> Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, 55.

<sup>18</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 315: ‘‘Universal history exhibits the gradation in the development of that principle whose substantial *purport* is the consciousness of Freedom. The analysis of the successive grades, in their abstract form, belongs to Logic; in their concrete aspect to the Philosophy of Spirit...Here we have only to indicate that Spirit begins with a germ of infinite possibility, but only possibility-containing its substantial existence in an undeveloped form, as the object and goal which it reaches only in its resultant-full reality. In actual existence Progress appears an advancing from the imperfect to the more perfect; but the former must not be understood abstractly as *only* the imperfect, but as something which involves the very opposite of itself-the so-called perfect-as a *germ* or impulse.’’

<sup>19</sup> Merold Westphal, “Hegel, Pannenberg, and Hermeneutics,” *Man and World* 4, no. 3, (August 1971): 276.

<sup>20</sup> A few weeks before his death, Kierkegaard defined the meaning of suffering as “to get rid of this world.” Cf. Arnold B. Come, *Kierkegaard as Theologian* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 11.

<sup>21</sup> Evans, *Kierkegaard’s Fragments and Postscript*, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Gregor Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard’s Concept of Existence*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2003), 44.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>27</sup> Evans, *Kierkegaard’s Fragments and Postscript*, 6. The name, Johannes Climacus, was actually that of a sixth-century monk to whose ethical writings Kierkegaard was much attracted. The monk’s book, *Scala Paradise*, was used for many centuries as a guide to Christian ethics as instruction on pious living, explaining step by step how to practice Christian virtues toward perfect living. See Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard’s Concept of Existence*, 12.



# Chapter II: The Truth and the Ideal

## The General Problem of Faith and Reason in the *Philosophical Fragments*

In this chapter I am going to discuss, in general terms, the problem associated with the question of the relation between faith and reason, namely the problem of the irreconcilability between faith and reason. I will also discuss Climacus' notion that even though any philosophical argument cannot absolutely prove the existence of God—that such a proof is possible only through faith—reason can ideally appropriate the truth (eternal or God) within the temporal realm of human thought. I will explain what Climacus means by God as an actual being and God as an ideal being, and how each meaning corresponds to the problem of faith and reason.

The main problem addressed in *Philosophical Fragments* concerns the combination of speculative philosophy (Socratic) with religion. The speculative philosophy poses the possibility of rationally attaining the eternal. The religious understanding of the truth employs religious ideas of the “moment” and the “leap.” The idea of the moment is an instance in time where one encounters the absolute paradox of God's historical appearance in the world in the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> In this moment one makes an eternal commitment to God through putting his or her faith in the truth of this absolute paradox.

Therefore, we may state that the idea of moment in Climacus indicates a time in which one moves from his or her historical existence in time to a spiritual existence in transcendence. Climacus calls this transition from historical existence to spiritual existence a leap. In this leap one enters the world in which the eternal is experienced. He declares that “by experiencing the divine, one demonstrates the existence of the divine: Anyone who wishes to demonstrate the existence of God...the existence itself emerges from the demonstration by a leap.”<sup>2</sup>

This uncompromising stance by Climacus on the historical nature of the world and human beings is evident from the beginning of the book. There he asks: “Can a historical point of departure be given for an eternal consciousness; how can such a (‘point of departure’) be more than historical interest; can an eternal happiness be built on historical knowledge?”<sup>3</sup> Already in this question we detect Climacus' own position regarding the

relation between rational reason and religious faith: they are irreconcilable. This position is expressed consistently throughout the book.

But at the same time, what we come to learn might be surprising to many: the reasonableness of faith. Climacus has often been perceived as a radical subjectivist who has no sympathy with human reason.<sup>4</sup> But this, we will see, is a misguided interpretation of Climacus.

In *Fragments*, Climacus sets forth two basic ways to view the complex nature of the faith-reason relation concerning the problem of truth: the latter way of reason is that of philosophy, which more or less represents the immanent view of the truth—that the truth is innate in the world and thus to every person; the former way of faith, in contrast to the first, is the belief that the truth lies outside the world of one's existence.<sup>5</sup>

Philosophy offers the way of speculation as the means for arriving at truth. The assumption here is that the truth is in the world, and that it can be brought to the mind of every person through rationally. Here, no particular historical moment of rationalization is of any non-historical significance. Any historical moment of rationalization is only an occasion on which a person comes to know the truth. That is, it does not have any importance for the person other than the fact that it occasions a moment in time to idealize the truth.

But the way of faith, i.e. that of understanding the truth as an eternal externality, denies this rational assumption. Contrary to the philosophic view that says the truth is innate to every human person, the way of faith suggests there is an external reality outside human experience. Because this external reality—the eternal—lies outside the human world, that is, outside the historical realm of human thought, no rational attempt to prove its existence is possible. We cannot make a rational case for the truth.

To demonstrate this problem, Climacus discusses the philosophical meaning of objective historicity in *Fragments*, with respect to the absolute paradox of the god's appearance in time. There, his understanding of the objective and subjective aspects of the paradox are both correlative and opposite to each other. This is true in the sense that the objective side of the paradox, a topic discussed in detail in chapter three, compliments the subjective in constituting the formal or physical quality of the absolute paradox of the Incarnation of God, a central issue in *Fragments*.

Furthermore, the objective and subjective dimensions of the paradox are opposite to each other in that, unlike the objective, the subjective of the

paradox constitutes the informal inner substance of an object. Here, one will find Immanuel Kant's definition of matter and form to be helpful in understanding this unique dialectical—objective and subjective—character of the human thought in Climacus.

According to Kant, the transcendent belongs to the realm beyond the historical as a regulative idea. In his book, *Critique of Pure Reason*, he lays out the mind's epistemological constitution based on his belief that knowledge is made up of two basic components: matter and form. By matter Kant means: "Whatever corresponds to sensation." Matter, says Kant, is the very substance of an object. It derives from the mind's senses or sensory experience which he refers as that which "signifies the *determinable* as such."<sup>6</sup> Kant defines form as the "appearance" of an object. One's knowledge of the appearance of an object is derived from the intellect and is involved in the mind's "actual" knowing the object in all of its "determined" or perceivable characteristics.<sup>7</sup> As such, these two primary components, matter (subjective) and form (objective) make up human knowledge.

Climacus' epistemology also imposes a kind of knowing that bears on both empirical and non-empirical ideal meaning. The ideal meaning of an object for him, however, exceeds the limitations of empirical meaning. The ideal meaning of the eternal, then, is appropriated through a transcendental analysis that discerns the higher meaning of the object. This means that one can ideally appropriate the eternal.

According to Climacus, the philosophical approach alone, however, is not capable of truly believing in the existence of the eternal. This is because the eternal, he says, is "ultimately" the "unknown against which the objective human understanding must collide."<sup>8</sup> It is in this sense that Climacus declares that every historical or rational attempt to demonstrate God's existence inevitably ends in failure. He argues that no rational argument for the existence of the eternal will convince a person of its truth. The truth of the eternal, he says, is something that is determined by the proof of its own being via one's religious belief and beyond rational means.

This means that in Climacus the question concerning God's existence is a non-empirical question, to which philosophy can only give a partial answer. Here I find Kant's transcendental idealism to be a useful comparison to Climacus' own' transcendental or ideal critique of the eternal.

According to Kant, the ideal knowledge requires a different account than the empirical knowledge because idealism imposes knowledge that concerns

objects that cannot be observed. Because idealism attempts at gaining knowledge of objects that are not visibly perceptible, rational categories of the mind that are different from the categories of the empirical are required: transcendental categories.

As we already saw in our previous discussion, Kant declared that the so-called empirical categories of the mind could apply only to objects in what he called the world of the “phenomenal.” It is a world that is constituted in an observable form. On the other hand, Kant claims that our ideal knowledge pertains to the world of the “noumenal,” that is, to the objects of the outer world. Hence, it requires higher categories that exceed the limitations of the empirical categories, namely, transcendental categories.

However, the mind, he claims, does not have the transcendental categories capable of knowing the objects of the noumenal world. For this reason, he concludes that the world of the noumenal is beyond human knowing. This is not to say that Kant does not believe that the actual noumenal world exists. Kant clearly states that the world of the noumenal truly exists because the mind has an ideal knowledge of its existence. What do not exist, Kant says, are the rational categories necessary for the mind to discern the objects of the noumenal world.

In a similar way, Climacus claims that our access to the knowledge of objects of the world of the eternal is completely blocked. Apparently, Climacus adopts the Kantian idea that, in order for one to obtain knowledge of an object, the object first has to be subject to one’s historical experience. In other words, he believes that in order for one to have the knowledge of an object, there has to be “conformity of thought and being.”<sup>9</sup> However, for Climacus, the so-called noumenal objects of the supersensible world never subject themselves to humans’ historical experience. Consequently, they remain forever beyond human consciousness. This way, Climacus’ transcendental critique plays an important role: it dichotomizes the two worlds of the historical and the eternal, restricting human knowing to the objects of the historical world and blocking its access to knowing the objects of the eternal world, even though the mind, he says, knows that this eternal world exists.<sup>10</sup>

According to Ronald Green, like Kant, Climacus argues that human knowing with respect to the eternal is completely blocked; it is incapable of transcending the historical. Green argues that, for Climacus, human knowing has an innate tendency to go beyond its permissible limits.<sup>11</sup> Climacus’ idea



that humans have transcendental abilities, an idea I endorse, then, strongly supports our claim that, for Climacus, humans have a natural propensity to think beyond the historical about transcendence, even though they are barred from their concrete knowing of it. Thus, in spite of his inclination toward fideism, Climacus acknowledges that humans are capable of transcendental reflection with respect to the higher world of the eternal. We will discuss this topic in more detail in chapter five.

In the next section, we will 1) see how Climacus defends the principle of the old faith-reason or eternal-historical dichotomy, by critiquing Spinoza as a flawed example of a traditional proof of God's existence; 2) and argue that Climacus' critique of Spinoza from the eternal perspective of faith does not reject rationalism altogether, that what he rejects is the idea that one can arrive at truth simply through thinking.

### **The Indemonstrability of God: The Case of Spinoza**

According to Climacus, God is always an ideal or transcendental concept.<sup>12</sup> But to the religious, he claims, God is an actual being who truly exists. This distinction is crucial in forming the epistemic foundation on which all of the historical-eternal distinctions will be made.<sup>13</sup>

In making this point, Climacus uses the example of Socrates claiming that Socrates, in spite of his great reputation as a man of profound self-understanding, was nonetheless unsuccessful in discovering the truth. This failure, he explains, is the great irony we detect in Socrates. Climacus' view of Socrates was that he was a person of superior knowledge. His great admiration was based on the understanding that Socrates was deeply aware that he could not clearly articulate the profound truth of the finite condition of human thinking with respect to his ideal world.

Nonetheless, Climacus notes that Socrates' world was a world of higher understanding than the one of sheer empirical content. His world of ideas was one of higher transcendental reflection, which could not simply be dispensed with because of lack of evidence for it.<sup>14</sup> His problem was that he could not ascertain its true existence. Hence, we see that philosophers were engaging in idealist speculation about transcendence long before Kant. For Socrates in particular, the idea of God's existence, despite all its theoretical achievements (i.e., cosmological, ontological, teleological etc.), could only remain speculation at best and non-being at worst. His "theory of recollection" is a claim that one could know truth in a speculative way in this

world without expressing it in a concrete manner. According to Climacus, Socrates had an intuition of the truth that explains the world and human life, even though this is different from giving an actual justification of one's view of the truth.

Climacus view is that human beings cannot just rely on the basis of the theoretically pre-determined conceptions of transcendent objects. The reason is that, unless these objects are genuinely justified of their existence—even though the assumption may be theoretically valid—these objects can only remain uncertain.

In *Fragments*, a case which he uses as an example of a flawed argument for the existence of God is the case of Spinoza. There he argues that Spinoza's error was that his concept of God could not be made actual. He argues that the case of the proof of God's existence as present in Spinoza only measures up to the standard of "theory of degrees of knowledge."<sup>15</sup> Let me explain.

According to Climacus, the Spinozian concept of God lacks the distinction between transcendence and immanence. A footnote in the third chapter of the *Fragments* opens: "...Spinoza, who, by immersing himself in the concept of God, aims to bring being [*Vaeren*] out of it by means of thought, but, please note, not as an accidental quality but as a qualification of essence."<sup>16</sup> This is the profundity in Spinoza."<sup>17</sup> In trying to show how Spinoza does this, Climacus quotes a passage from the *Principia Philosophiae Cartesianae, Pars I, Propositio VII, Lemma I*. It reads:

In proportion as a thing is by its own nature more perfect, it entails a greater and more necessary existence; and, conversely, in proportion as a thing entails by its own nature a more necessary existence, the more perfect it is].<sup>18</sup>

The idea that Climacus is trying to describe here in Spinoza is the idea that the rationalistic assumption, the notion of something being perfect or necessary by implication, must indicate the existence of something more perfect or necessary. That is to say, for Spinoza, one must by implication think that a being more perfect or necessary exists behind every perfect or necessary being. And the more perfect a being is, the more essence it has.<sup>19</sup>

But as Climacus states, this argument, as logical as it may sound, is not a legitimate argument for God's existence. For what he calls the "distinction between factual being and ideal being" is still lacking in this argument. As he mentions in the above passage, this is an argument that "aims to bring being

out [necessity and perfection] from thought” through the immanent principles. Again, the quote from Spinoza’s *Principia Philosophiae Cartesiana*: “In proportion as a thing is more perfect, it entails a greater and more necessary existence” and vice versa. That is to say, in this argument Climacus detects the lack of genuine support for God’s being. It only has a being [*Vaeren*] predicated on the immanent principle of quantitative gradation (i.e., degree of perfection, being and so on.) instead of a being assessed as a qualitatively distinct entity. Consequently, Climacus’ apparent conclusion would be that such a concept of being (God), as formulated in the *Principia Philosophiae Cartesiana*, is a philosophical concept that lacks an actual content of the eternal.

In contrast to the Spinozian concept of being, Climacus thinks it is imperative to sustain the determinant character of the transcendent, if we wish to maintain the distinction between being (God) and the world, and thus prevent reason from self-determining being. For him, the way to do this is nothing less than to counter-characterize the world’s existence within its immanent horizon of the physical, i.e. in the unqualified manner of dialectically—in distinction from being—transposing it to the realm of the historical. One must be aware from the outset that preserving the being-world distinction as such firmly requires retaining the distinction in one’s theoretical endeavor rather than moving it, in which case one can only end up presenting a false concept in which there is no absolute other, as is the case with the Spinozian concept of being.

The actual and the ideal, Climacus argues, belong to separate categories of human thought: eternal and historical. Therefore, they require different ways of thinking, since the actual being depicts the eternal concept and the ideal being depicts a philosophical concept. Consciousness of this fundamental difference between the actual and the ideal—preserving they belong to separate categories of thought—would apparently lead to a different conclusion from Spinoza’s, namely, that they are non-complementary.<sup>20</sup>

The idea of thinking eternally must be taken in the qualified sense of thinking the truth as such from the perspective of reconciliation between reason and being. In contrast, thinking ideally about being or God, as it is with Spinoza, is to be understood as thinking from the perspective of there being no reconciliation between reason and being. For Climacus, to think actually about being, that is, as an eternal being, is to think about its eternal

essence. On the other hand, to think ideally about being is to conceive it as a mere idea. As he illustrates in *Fragments*:

Factual being is indifferent to the differentiation of all essence-determinants, and everything that exists participates without petty jealousy in being and participates just as much. It is quite true that ideally the situation is different. *But as soon as I speak ideally about being, I am speaking no longer about being but about essence.*<sup>21</sup>

What Climacus states here is that one's understanding of being or God differs depending on which approach one takes. If one takes the historical approach, as, for instance, Spinoza does, then being must be conceived as an object of historical thinking. However, if one takes the opposite approach to the eternal, then, being is here conceived as an object of eternal or supernatural thinking, as, for instance, in Christianity. What he apparently indicates is that being's eternal identity as such, in truth, is beyond all historical understanding.

God's being as such, Climacus argues, is his own essence (eternal) and can never be expressed determinately. Because God is eternal in essence his being, that is, his existence, must be expressed in equally eternal terms, namely, in faith. The fact of his true existence is neither an object of empirical thought nor can one arrive at this conclusion purely on the basis of human endeavor. The only way to determine his existence is through faith by virtue of a leap from one's historical existence to life in faith. Thus, all of the past and future proofs of God's existence, he would argue, are meaningless tasks that never arrive at the truth.

The idea in Climacus that one can only arrive at the truth only if one makes the leap from his or her historical existence to life in faith conveys the fact that this transition from the historical to the eternal is not something that can be unconditionally posited or presented in one's historical existence as an ultimate universal factum. That is it is not an alternative that can be deduced on the basis of intuitive or transcendental analysis in any shape or form. For him, such a rational proof of God's existence has always been at the very core of the problematic methodologies carried out in the rationalistic tradition in philosophy. Rationalistic philosophy, as he depicts it, repeatedly commits the error of predicating God's existence on speculative grounds, without realizing that the proof of his existence must be demonstrated on the non-speculative ground of transcendent or religious belief.

His eternal approach to truth, however, does not entail a complete rejection of rational thought. For clarity's sake, what he opposes from the eternal point of view is the idea that one can arrive at the truth simply by thinking. However, he is not against acknowledging that there is a form of dialectic between truth and thinking. In some incomprehensible way, there is some mutually pre-fixed condition at work that allows interaction between the eternal and human. He makes space for the reasonableness of the existence of God in human thought, based on a person's dialectical experience of the eternal in the person's historical existence in the world.

The main evidence for this argument can be seen in the question, which I once again quote from the title page of *Fragments*: "Can a historical point of departure be given for an eternal consciousness; how can such a point of departure be of more than 'historical interest'; can an eternal happiness be built on 'historical knowledge'?" Even though the main reason that Climacus asks this question is to show his uncompromising stance on the historical nature of the world and human existence, it is not to discard historical claim for the eternal. The comparison between eternal consciousness and historical interest, as well as that between eternal happiness and historical knowledge, is the key to unraveling what really underlies how he makes the comparisons. There is no word or statement anywhere in the text that would allow one to think that the comparison aims at refuting the historical claim for the eternal, that the words historical knowledge and historical interest here defy the possibility of historically gaining knowledge of the eternal. To the contrary, I would argue that these words are used too specifically, not so much to discredit historical knowing or thinking about the eternal, but only to depict their quantitative nature in comparison to the qualitative knowing or thinking about the eternal by a religious person. In other words, the comparisons are concerned with the difference between the historical and eternal knowledge of the transcendent, and not at positing one over against the other, that is, at crediting eternal knowledge and totally discrediting the historical.

Further proof of this argument can be found in the beginning of chapter one of *Fragments* under "Thought-Project." There Climacus begins the chapter with the question: "Can the truth be learned?" He then gives his exposition of the Socratic principle of recollection, in which he argues that this principle assumes the truth to be something that can be recollected of. It states that a person already has the truth but is unaware of it. However, he or she may become aware of it or remember it again through recollecting it. He

writes: “[T]he ignorant person merely needs to be reminded in order, by himself, to call to mind what he knows. The truth is not introduced into him but was in him.”<sup>22</sup>

However, he rejects this idea because it is inconsistent. The argument is simple: How can one recollect something he never knew? And how could one even attempt to know something that he does not know what it is he is trying to know? The point here is that it must be presupposed that the truth is already in the person. Thus, when Climacus alludes to Socrates’ famous proposition in Plato’s *Meno*, his point is that, after having thought through this idea, the only conclusion Socrates could demonstrate logically is that all human souls pre-existed. The proposition and the demonstration are given below, respectively:

[A] person cannot possibly seek what he knows [thus when he seeks the truth, it has to be that he or she is only trying to recollect], and, just as impossibly, he cannot seek what he does not know, for what he knows he cannot seek, since he knows it, and what he does not know he cannot seek, because, after all, he does not even know what he is supposed to seek.<sup>23</sup>

Socrates elaborates on this idea [that truth is not introduced but already resided in a person] and in it the Greek pathos is in fact concentrated, since it becomes a demonstration for the immortality of the—retrogressively, please not—or a demonstration for the pre-existence of the soul.<sup>24</sup>

What follows soon after these texts is what could be thought of as a Climacus’ (intended or unintended) corollary argument to the Socratic demonstration for the doctrine of recollection that is given immediately prior to this text. Two pages later, he makes this assertion: “My relation to Socrates cannot concern me with regard to my eternal happiness, for this is given retrogressively in the possession of the truth that I had from the beginning without knowing it.” He continues:

If I were to imagine myself meeting Socrates, Prodicus, or the maidservant in another life, there again none of them would be more than an occasion, as Socrates intrepidly expresses it by saying that even in the underworld he would only ask questions, for the ultimate idea in all questioning is that the person asked must himself possess the truth and acquire it by himself. The temporal point of departure is nothing, because in the same moment I discover that I have known the truth from eternity without knowing it, in the same instant that moment is hidden in the eternal, assimilated into it in such a way that I, so to speak, still cannot find it even if I were

to look for it, because there is no Here and no There, but only an *ubique et nusquam* [everywhere and nowhere].<sup>25</sup>

He succinctly makes a point here that seems to be, to a certain extent, in agreement with Socratic teaching, namely, that the truth is a recollection of what one already possessed within oneself from the beginning, as is clear in the above quotes from *Fragments*. It differs from Socratic teaching in that, for Climacus, the origin of the truth in humanity derives not from the Greek belief in the immortality of the soul but from the Christian doctrine of creation and sin. He writes:

Now, inasmuch as the learner exists [*er til*], he is indeed created, and, accordingly, God must have given him the condition for understanding the truth (for otherwise he previously would have been merely animal, and that teacher who gave him the condition along with the truth would make him a human being for the first time). But insofar as the moment is to have decisive significance (and if this is not assumed, then we do in fact remain with the Socratic), he must lack the condition, consequently be deprived of it. This cannot have been due to an act of the god (for this is a contradiction) or to an accident (for it is a contradiction that something inferior would be able to vanquish something superior); it must therefore have been due to himself...The untruth [a person who is deprived of the condition to know the truth], then, is not merely [purely or absolutely] outside the truth but is polemical against the truth, which is expressed by saying that he himself has forfeited and is forfeiting the condition. The teacher, then, is the god himself, who, acting as the occasion prompts the learner to be reminded that he is untruth and is that through one's own fault—what can we call it? Let us call it sin.<sup>26</sup>

There are two important points in this passage. First, when a person is created he is given both the truth and the condition for knowing the truth. Second, sin has deprived both. However, these are not what make this text significant for the purpose of the present writer. What makes it significant is that here he makes what one could call the underpinning assertion for his theological take on historical or general knowledge of God, i.e. that one is “not outside the truth” but “only polemically” against it. This is not to be interpreted as his view of reason as having an independent place in its relation to faith, that somehow it alone is able to have the truth if it really wanted to if it ceased to be opposed to it. Rather, it is to be understood in the context in which he is making an analogical comparison to the Socratic understanding of the truth as recollection, namely, that even though in one's historical existence he or she does not live with the condition for knowing

the truth, nonetheless the person still lives with a certain kind of knowledge of religious truth of God's existence.

### Religious Faith as Proof of God's Existence

However that may be, God's existence is something that normally has to be supported by concrete evidence. At least, this would be the case from the point of view of natural thinking, which always demands evidence for theoretical claims about the non-objective. However, no such evidence can be offered for God's existence. This is because the proof of God's existence transcends all ideas and concepts of the finitude.

For example, the hypothetical case of viewing the world from the eternal perspective of faith as created by God, although it may show all of the possible signs of such a possibility and that one may to a certain extent concede that this might be the case, and that it may even be reasonable to believe the claim, its truth would still remain a fact that was not absolutely certainty. This is because any and every proposition—including the one "God exists"—if it is to be absolutely certain, must offer a concrete analysis and meet the requirement of perceptual demonstrability.

However, for Climacus, the possibility of displaying the objective evidence of something, to the point of offering the proof, only applies to objects that are perceptual in nature. When it comes to offering proof for something that is of non-perceptual quality, such as, metaphysical or religious propositional claims of God's creation or existence, he argues that a higher form of proof, other than the sheer concrete, is needed, namely, faith. He states concerning this in *Fragments*:

God's works only the god can do. Quite correct. But, then, what are the god's works? The works from which I want to demonstrate his existence do not immediately and directly exist, not at all. Or are the wisdom in nature and the goodness or wisdom in Governance right in front of our noses? Do we not encounter the most terrible spiritual trials here, and is it ever possible to be finished with all these trials? But I still do not demonstrate God's existence from such an order of things, and even if I began, I would never finish and also would be obliged continually to live *in suspenso* lest something so terrible happen that my fragment of demonstration would be ruined.<sup>27</sup>

But, for him the lack of concrete evidence for God's creation or his existence does not exhaust all of the possibilities for its existence. As he



would certainly argue, there is a sure way that leads one to the genuine knowledge of eternal being. What he has in mind here is something that derives from one's intimate experience with the eternal in one's religious existence: faith.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, for Climacus, the question of God's existence is a question that cannot be asked in order to gain an absolutely certain answer in one's purely historical attitude. Because even though one may ask this question objectively, its answer does not come in such a manner. Because the absolute truth of God's being or existence is immune from one's historical experience—not subject to being an object of accidental proof or any other historical way of proof. The only way that it can be proven is via letting go of the demonstration and believing in non-accidental eternal way, namely, the way of transcendent or religious faith. As he explains:

And how does the existence of the god emerge from the demonstration? Does it happen straightway? Is it not here as it is with the Cartesian dolls? As soon as I let go of the doll, it stands on its head. As soon as I let go of it—consequently, I have to let go of it. So also with the demonstration—so long as I am holding on to the demonstration (that is continue to be one who is demonstrating), the existence does not emerge, if for no other reason than that I am in the process of demonstrating it, but when I let go of the demonstration, the existence is there.<sup>29</sup>

As we have discussed in this section, in Climacus reason and faith are two separate means of arriving at truth. If reason gives us the historical or general knowledge of God without absolute certainty, then faith serves as the sure means to knowing God's existence. Having said this, we will now explore further the meaning of the historical or relative knowledge of God that one has in the world. We will do this by exploring the meaning of what we may refer to as the subjective in Climacus.

We employ the term subjective to denote the view in Climacus that one's historical or general experience of the eternal in one's historical existence is connected to one's inner longing or search for the truth. This meaning of the subjective is scattered throughout in the text of *Fragments* in various forms of human emotion, such as "passion," "love," "unhappiness" and so on. Its full meaning, however, is introduced only in the sequel to *Fragments*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Fragments*. Thus, in the next section of our study on the subjective, we will make several references to the *Postscript* so that we may provide a clear understanding of the idea as depicted in *Fragments*.

### The Subjective in Climacus

For Climacus, one's experience of the world derives from the very root of one's inner or subjective being. For him, this subjective being is the foundation for the validity of all one's objective experiences. Climacus writes concerning the subjective in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*: "[H]ere is such a definition of truth: an objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation process of the most passionate inwardness is truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual."<sup>30</sup>

For Climacus, the question concerning the truth was never ultimately about the truth as objectively perceived. It was about an individual's relation to it. It was about how an existing person inwardly relates to the truth as found in Christianity: "The objective issue, then, would be 'about' Christianity."<sup>31</sup> The subjective issue is about the individual's relation to Christianity. Simply stated: How can I, Johannes Climacus, share the happiness that Christianity promises? The issue pertains to me alone."<sup>32</sup>

Regarding this statement by Climacus in the *Postscript*, Arthur Murphy states in his *On Kierkegaard's Claim That 'Truth Is Subjectivity'*:

The point of Kierkegaard's discussion of 'truth,' I take it, is to offer a justification of faith, in his special sense of 'faith,' by showing that the believer is 'in the truth' subjectively in his groundless affirmation of what is rationally absurd, because this affirmation both brings him into the right relation to 'the truth' on which his eternal happiness depends and 'potentiates' his inwardness in existing to the highest degree.<sup>33</sup>

A believer is in the truth not by virtue of certain grounds by which the person believes, in which case the issue of faith is an objective matter. Rather, a person is in the truth because his or her inwardness is in the truth; the person is in the truth because he or she has formed an "inward relationship" with the truth.<sup>34</sup>

This relationship is such that one's whole inward existence is involved in it, and not just his or her cognitive existence. According to Climacus, "Objectively we consider only the matter at issue, subjectively on the inwardness." To its greatest degree, this inward "how" is the passion of the eternal, and the passion of the eternal, he says, is the truth. It is the passion for God, the expression he conveys in light of what is otherwise an abstract being or other in philosophy.

The subjective or subjectivity in Climacus, then, is the passion for the eternal. The subjective becomes the truth in the sense that it is one's inward passion for the eternal that denotes one's whole existing or existential religious status in faith (In Climacus, the term truth is equivalent to the word [religious faith].<sup>35</sup> Thus for him, the truth is consigned to one's personality; it is not an objective matter that can be conceptually determined; rather, it is a general "way" of life, that is, "how" one lives.<sup>36</sup>

This is not to say, however, that human intellect or cognition does not have its place in human life in relation to the eternal. In fact, as we have already seen in a previous section, Climacus asserts that one lives with a certain kind of knowledge of God in one's finite existence in the world. But this knowledge is a limited knowledge that does not fully grasp the truth of God's existence. Because he believes that one's true knowledge of God's existence is something that is achieved inwardly—contrary to the objective way of intellectually or cognitively appropriating this truth—Climacus argues that this truth is achieved subjectively or in one's inner faith in God's existence.

The truth has been an object of speculative reflection throughout history. In the rational pursuit of the truth, one only asks about the truth without any concern about one's relation with the truth one is seeking. As Climacus explains:

The inquiring speculating, knowing subject accordingly asks about the truth but not about the subjective truth, the truth of appropriation. Accordingly, the inquiring subject is indeed interested but is not infinitely, personally, impassionedly interested in his relation to this truth concerning his own happiness.<sup>37</sup>

But in the subjective one's primary concern is that one achieves an actual relation with the truth he or she is seeking. One's intellectual or rational pursuit of the truth must be seen as an indication that in one's historical existence, the person is capable of seeing the world as a conjoined universal structure and envisions the eternal category of the truth, sought as a result of transcendently being aware of the possibility of the eternal.

According to Climacus, the rationalistic way of generally thinking about the eternal comes about as a result of having objectified the eternal in the non-subjective realm of speculative thinking. Yet, here in the non-subjective realm of speculative thinking, one cannot escape being aware of the subjective nature of thinking ideally or transcendently. That is, each time

one thinks about an object—be it the world, God, or whatever—one cannot help asking the question about the how of the object, i.e. how a thing is what it is. This how question concerning how a thing is what it is originates from one's inner curiosity. It asks about subjective meaning of an object—how an object is what it is. The objective question asks what an object is in how it is visibly perceived by an observing subject. It is not curious about its meaning. This means that asking for the meaning of an (any)object is a subjective issue. That is to say, asking about the meaning of an object beyond its visible form is an existential or subjective matter, the answer of which impacts how one lives.

For Climacus, an object is something that is in essence ideally structured so that one always asks the question of how an object is. In other words, in thinking about an object in general, one becomes aware of or curious about the *a priori* meaning of the object. I will discuss this idea of the *a priori* in thinking in the next section, which is vital to providing a proper interpretation of Climacus' thinking in *Fragments* in relation to our view that he is a thinker who stands between being a fideist and a foundationalist, i.e. one who believes that there is an inseparable dichotomy between faith and reason, but also one who believes that there is a form of historical relation between them to a certain degree, since he claims that the untruth (God's sinful creature) "is not outside the truth"—our very thesis.

We will develop this argument in *Fragments*—that one lives with a certain kind of historical or dialectical knowledge of the eternal in one's finite existence in the world—thus his acknowledgment that human knowing is ideally structured—in the following section of this chapter. We will do this in the hope of bringing clarity to the ways in which human knowing in its ideal or *a priori* structure relates to the eternal.

Climacus thinks that one's ideal or *a priori* nature of human knowledge regarding all objects (physical and metaphysical) is the essential epistemological condition employed in thinking about the things in and of this world. According to Climacus, this *a priori* structure of human knowledge is what makes our transcendental analysis of all that exists in the world and beyond, such as the eternal, possible. According to Climacus, the very epistemological structure of human knowing or knowledge—as constituted by the *a priori* capacity—reveals our idea or knowledge of the eternal. It is this epistemological capacity that points to the fact that human

knowing or thinking is girded by something higher than itself, namely, the eternal.

Because he believes that human knowing is something that is girded by the eternal, it is his view that human knowing as such is always reflective or aware of the eternal. Not surprisingly then, this notion, i.e. that human knowing is bound to the eternal, is a pivotal matter in Climacus' understanding of Christianity. It is so in the sense that, even as he acknowledges the value of human thinking with respect to the eternal, he does to the extent that he believes it is related to the Christian faith's historically condition-less core—its principle of revelation—and derives from it.

We have argued in this section that Climacus argues for the truth of the historical relation between the eternal and human thinking. We have done this by showing that, in what we suppose to be his argument for the reasonableness of faith in the text, he acknowledges a certain form of subjective historical relation between the eternal and human thinking. We have argued this in the context of understanding his statement in the text, i.e. that one can know of God's existence in one's historical existence in the world, since he or she (the untruth) is not outside the truth. We have supported our claim for the historical relation between the eternal and human thinking in this section of the chapter by arguing that it is Climacus' view that human knowing as such is constituted in such a way that it is reflective or conscious of its ideal or *a priori* nature that points to the reality of the eternal.

Thus, in what follows, we will attempt to describe what may be called his transcendental critique of the eternal, based on our understanding of the supposed fact in Climacus, that human knowing is constituted in such a way that in its ideal, *a priori* or transcendental structure, it is aware of the reality of the absolute other.

In our attempt to mark out our understanding of Climacus' transcendental critique, we will discuss Edmund Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology as an example that, similar to what we believe Climacus does in *Fragments*, depicts the reality or possibility of the absolute other. The reason for employing the philosophy of Husserl, who lived after Kierkegaard/Climacus, as an example is because he too, like Climacus, analyzed the relation between thinking and the eternal—just as we believe Climacus does in *Fragments*—and contributes much to our analysis of the

Climacean transcendental critique of the eternal by providing important analytical insights into the complex relation between the eternal and reason. His argument, as we argue is the case with Climacus, is that human subjects never exist without the awareness or consciousness of the absolute other.

We will thus use Husserl's transcendental analysis of the absolute other in our discussion of the eternal-historical relation in Climacus to clarify what we believe is his understanding of this complex relation between the eternal and the historical. After we have given a sufficient description of Husserl's transcendental critique of the absolute other, with our explanation of those significant elements in his transcendental thought—which will hopefully serve our purpose of giving clarification to our own treatment of Climacus' version of the transcendental critique—we will show how he (Climacus) goes a step further than Husserl and connects human consciousness or thinking with the actual other, namely, the eternal.

### **An Analysis of the Climacean Transcendental Critique in *Fragments***

Climacus argues in *Fragments* that if one wishes to achieve a higher understanding of the human world, the person has to hold all that is historical in nature in suspension. That is, by “separating the self from the world that surrounds it,” one becomes capable of relating to the external world of his or her subjective experience.

According to Climacus, the subjective way in which one relates to the external world has to do with the validity of one's inner knowledge or passion for the eternal. Therefore, the objective meaning of all of our historical experiences in the world, says Climacus, is true only with reference to the eternal world.

However, from the historical perspective, we see that Climacus' account of the *concept* of the eternal is limited: it does not fully grasp the eternal in its true meaning. That is, in such an endeavor by historical or rational reasoning the eternal does not become an object of understanding. Climacus holds that the eternal is not subject to human knowing in any historical way. For if we have any knowledge of the eternal, he argues, it is through an understanding of it as that which does not yield data concerning itself, since it exceeds the power of the categories of human understanding. Climacus argues that human thought—because it is limited to the historical—could never by itself arrive at knowledge of the eternal as such. We have no access to its truth. Our claim for transcendence, strictly from the historical point of

view, at best can be based only on one's *a priori* cognition of it. In this sense we can call Climacus a true Kantian.<sup>38</sup>

Nonetheless, Climacus offers a non-objective account that explains the fact that non-objective human knowledge of the eternal is absolutely certain. But, before we discuss this, further clarification of Climacus' transcendental critique is needed.

Therefore, we will now turn to Husserl. The point we should keep in mind as we compare Husserl to Climacus is the relevance of Husserl's philosophy in terms of its emphasis on the relation between subjectivity (ideal) and objectivity (empirical or scientific) and his significant discovery that human beings are always conscious of transcendence. This is because Climacus also anchors his view of philosophy on these points. But, as we will see, Climacus also uses these points to show the inadequacy of philosophy and to move further in the direction of exploring the reality of transcendent or eternal being.

Edmund Husserl (the founder of modern phenomenology) approached the problem of philosophy (understanding the world from a historical point of view) with the idea for a new kind of science that would objectify the world's natural dynamic experiences, namely, phenomenology.<sup>39</sup> That is, he wanted to do philosophy as a science (*Wissenschaft*) and therefore developed a method that would guarantee that its outcomes fulfilled scientific standards. He introduced the term "epoche," with respect to these objective experiences. The term epoche means that one should suspend his or her "naturalistic attitude"—his or her preconceived notions of consciousness—and let the consciousness approach the things themselves. According to Husserl, what remains after the epoche is one's pure consciousness. In pure consciousness, one is aware of his or her mental activities, including the awareness of what he or she experiences. He held that in the aftermath of the epoche, a person is left with pure consciousness in which the person is conscious of being aware of his or her mental activities and historical experiences.

Husserl defined epoche as a kind of abstinence from one's objective experience of the objective, calling it an act of suspending one's theoretical judgments in order to determine the inner structure of the human mind. He argued that epoche is a way of determining the inner structure of one's mental consciousness. This pursuit, he held, is achieved through the endeavor of defining the meaning of one's psychological experience of the

world in an ideal way by letting the world as such be defined by one's experience. This experience, he argued, requires that we let the world reveal itself to the consciousness. This is carried out, according to Husserl, through one's natural experience of what he called the "life-world" (*Lebenswelt*).<sup>40</sup>

In Husserl, the life-world designates the world "as lived" (*erlebt*) prior to one's reflective representation of it. This life-world, says Husserl, "...comprises the sum of man's involvement in every day affairs: his knowledge, interpretation, response, and organization of his experience."<sup>41</sup> According to Husserl, this exists prior to one's theoretical analysis of these affairs; there is what he called a "pre-scientific" domain in human experience of the life-world. It is from this domain that one's everyday activities arise.<sup>42</sup>

Husserl's aim here can be characterized as locating or discovering a single universal principle or truth of the world and human experience. Of course, according to Husserl, all knowledge had to follow the structure of how human consciousness can know reality. By theoretically examining human consciousness, which in his view always functions in a world full of meanings and pre-judgments, Husserl believed that he could find this single truth about the world and our existence in it.

Here, in asking this question about the universal foundation of human experience, Husserl points to the theoretical necessity of founding a person's objective experience of the life-world. We see this in how he argues that here we first have to interpret the structure of the relationship between the life-world and the condition for the possibility of the human knowledge of the life-world as constituted in the person's subjectivity. He contended this was to be done through an analysis of the transcendental sources of human consciousness—the human ego. According to Husserl,

In this world, we are objects among objects in the sense of the life-world, namely, as being here and there, in the plain certainty of experience, before anything that is established scientifically, whether in physiology, psychology, or sociology. On the other hand, we are subjects for this world, namely, as the ego-subjects experiencing it, contemplating it, valuing it, related to it purposefully...<sup>43</sup>

Husserl holds that human beings are both objects and subjects. They are objects in the sense that they are concrete entities in and part of the physical world. But they are also subjects who reflect on their being and experiences in the world. Husserl declares that, as subjects, human beings are conscious of themselves, contemplate and appropriate certain truths they obtain from



things and their experiences. They relate to the things of this world, such as politics, technology, education, and people. For example, Husserl would contend that human beings protest to social and political corruptions, give to charities involved in inventing high-tech medical equipment that can treat people with certain physical conditions, provide free lectures and seminars to the public, and mourn the loss of loved ones. They learn new skills in order to provide benevolent service to others.

At the basic level, however, one's knowledge of the world cannot be found in either objective or subjective experiences of surrounding reality. It must rise beyond the world of everyday life where one's experience is limited to the objective and the subjective. Ironically, however, Husserl's prerequisite of deepening one's knowledge—with respect to the reality of the surrounding world—is the precedence of the subjective over the objective. This subjective side of our being, he argues, transcends our objectivity in that it exceeds our immediate objective concerns (i.e., giving time and energy to caring for someone at the cost objectively speaking, of sacrificing time with one's spouse and children, and one's work). According to Husserl, this is precisely the point: humans are subjects who relate to occurrences in the world, and this subjectivity exceeds mere objectivity.

Husserl accepts the idea that not only do we relate to occurrence in the world, but we do so often at the cost of losing a portion of our own life. For Husserl, this proves that human beings have two aspects: the objective and the subjective. And, as a result, we relate to the world in these two ways. In Husserl's view, this is because human beings' experience of the world basically derives from their dual experience of the linked inner *a priori* aspect of consciousness and physical objects. The philosophical analysis of human consciousness shows that it approaches what we could call the theoretical *a priori* dimensions of physical objects, including humans and occurrences of life experiences.<sup>44</sup> But in this process of analysis one becomes conscious of his or her subjectivity, through which "the world is experienced, appears, is judged about, valued, etc."<sup>45</sup>

Through this analysis of human consciousness, Husserl discovered that human subjectivity is a "pre-conceptual" experience of all that is in the world prior to all empirical thinking. It "unifies" all scientific knowledge<sup>46</sup> and is what he calls "the world of bare, pre-conceptual perception and memory" of a person; the world of "bare intuition," referring to it in his *Cartesian Meditations* as the "primordial world" or the "sphere of own-ness." It is the

world that is itself experienced, primordially or centrally and is thus able to be experienced by the person in abstraction.<sup>47</sup> As a result of this discovery, Husserl reconsiders the life-world by way of a profound reflection on the question concerning what the experiential ground of science might be, that is what the true essence of science might be.<sup>48</sup>

For him, the source of the problem lies in the fact that there is unity within one's experience of the life-world. He perceived this unity as that in which "a thoroughly uniform, continuous, internally coherent world is experienced."<sup>49</sup> Husserl noted that this metaphysical or transcendental deduction of the life-world entails, for him, a deduction of human subjectivity in its pure form of intuition. According to Husserl, all scientific knowledge is based on this metaphysical or transcendental deduction.

Thus we can conclude that his transcendental analysis was motivated largely by questions concerning the foundation of all sciences. His analysis was originally motivated by the problems related to the foundation of mathematics and logic. However, it eventually led to becoming a universal theory of knowledge.<sup>50</sup> With respect to the method of his analysis, Husserl conceived it as an "analysis of pure consciousness." He contended that, by virtue of this analysis, the subjective foundation of all sciences (natural and human) could be presented. He believed that this analysis could yield solutions to the question regarding the unity and organization of the sciences.

For Husserl, this particular question regarding the subjective foundation of the sciences concerned the idea of the unity and inner structure of the world to which all sciences pointed.<sup>51</sup> Hence, he believed that the question concerning the subjective foundation of sciences was one about the possibility of a single universal science that holds all sciences together. In turn, this question is further developed in Husserl into a "problem of Being and truth."<sup>52</sup> Consequently, what he called the life-world—the world of daily human affairs—comes to indicate a new problem that transcends the questions concerning the theory of science. It is the problem of founding that which grounds and transcends all scientific praxis. Here is a short description of his approach of inquiry:

To traverse the path which leads from mute, concept-less experience and its universal inter-weavings; first to typical, vague, primary universality, which is sufficient in everyday life, and thence to the genuine and true concepts, such as genuine science must presuppose them to be.<sup>53</sup>

Ironically, contrary to what he first held with respect to the life-world, we see a shift in perspective in the above passage. Apparently, Husserl first held that the life-world had an objective-scientific meaning. However, we see above that his idea about the life-world as an objective being changes to something requiring description in an ideal way.

This change from seeing the world in an objective-scientific manner to seeing as requiring higher or deeper “experiential ground” caused Husserl to return to “simple” or “pure” pre-conceptual (i.e., pre-linguistic, pre-predicative) experience that is “pure in all its modes of perception, memory, etc.”<sup>54</sup> He stated that this ideal or metaphysical world of pure or simple experience, in which all sciences might be found, was “prior to all empirical thinking.”<sup>55</sup> Within this world, said Husserl, “...every predicating, theorizing activity, like every other activity which leads the object of experience with any novel sense whatsoever remains disengaged.”<sup>56</sup> Husserl referred to this life-world as the “unhistorical” world of reflection.

Over the course of time, however, Husserl’s definition of the life-world, which provided a foundation for the objectivity of our life-world experience, shifted.<sup>57</sup> Incidentally, at this point in Husserl’s thought, the experience that ultimately bears the sciences is no longer the mute, pre-conceptual intuition.<sup>58</sup> Instead, it is the experience of what he called the “actually present” [*aktuell*] concrete historical world (with all its cultural elements, its concepts and sciences).<sup>59</sup>

We can understand Husserl’s reference to the actual present [*aktuell*] concrete world and the pre-conceptual intuition as a correction of a one-sided methodological approach from the perspective of the philosophy of science. In his view, the basis of human sciences could not be a mute, pre-conceptual experience. For Husserl, only a real participation in the concrete world of culture or history could constitute such a basis. On the other hand, Husserl also perceived the problem of objective science as not only a problem about the theory of science but also as a problem of its relevance; that is, the relevance of the objective sciences to concrete, historical life.<sup>60</sup>

According to Husserl, an *a priori* science of the life-world, that is, an ideal reflection of the life-world as such, can still be achieved independently of one’s transcendental-subjective interests. That is, science is still possible on the basis of one’s experience of the life-world prior to having ideal reflections of it.<sup>61</sup> Husserl’s problem, however, was that this kind of ontology of the life-world constituted on natural grounds—outside the transcendental

horizon (context) of interests—was, at the end, unable to apprehend the sense of being or truth that is part of the life-world.

Thus, we see here that Husserl is confronted with an epistemological dilemma. On the one hand, Husserl strengthened the empirical understanding of the life-world in which the objective sciences and historical culture are based immanently in the world. On the other hand, he acknowledged the indispensable sense of universal being as the ultimate ground of all science and human culture. In fact, according to Husserl, it was only by thus acknowledging the possibility of a further epistemological/metaphysical reality beyond the empirical that this dilemma could be resolved. That is, the final clarification with respect to this epistemological dilemma that Husserl encountered in his philosophy was made possible for him through his subjective experience of thinking about the (possible) transcendent.

According to Husserl, in transcendental subjectivity “the world comes to pass as the world constantly existing for us”<sup>62</sup> Only in this way, Husserl said “can we study what the world is, as the basic validity [*Bodengeltung*] of natural life in all of its projects and conducts, and correlatively what natural life and its subjectivity ultimately are, i.e., purely as the subjectivity that functions there as the consummator of validity.”<sup>63</sup> For Husserl, the transcendental epoche and reduction were crucial methodological requisites for studying natural or historical life. For this reason he envisioned the possibility of the transcendent.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that his analysis of the epistemological structure of human consciousness presupposes an idea of metaphysical being or truth, Husserl does not view it as real. Rather than actualizing this metaphysical possibility through some form of a logically spurious scheme, (i.e. Plato’s Idea of the Good, Descartes’ “divine deceiver paradox,” Kant’s *noumenal*, and so on) Husserl leaves this possibility open as an empty space to be filled. That is, he leaves unanswered the question how one’s openness to the object can be affirmed. Without arriving at the truth of the object—the transcendent—beyond speculative knowledge of it, Husserl’s metaphysical possibility (of being) points to an empty space that, on further analysis, could beget content. That is, he leaves the world—reconstructed—as an object of no true correlation with the self.

From Husserl’s perspective concerning the experience of the life-world—as that which is transcendently subjective but no content-filled—we can now clarify Climacus’ argument. Years before Husserl introduced his

concept of subjectivity Climacus held that the human self was a “relation that relates itself to itself.”<sup>64</sup> He further declared that “by separating the self from the world that surrounds it, reflection grants the self its proper identity.”<sup>65</sup> That is, in separating one’s self from the objective world, the person becomes capable of consciously relating to the higher spiritual or eternal world. Thus, with respect to the kind of relation that exists between the objective and the subjective, Climacus argued that the objective could only have meaning with reference to transcendence beyond the empirical. That is, Climacus viewed the relation between the objective and the subjective as follows: the logical deduction of the objective experience of the world is found in the higher subjective world of the spiritual.

According to Climacus, the objectivity of a person’s experience of the world is established as, to use Husserl’s terms, “an accomplishment in the subjectivity of the life of consciousness” by means of belief in the transcendent being.<sup>66</sup> To put it theologically, the objectivity of one’s experience of the world as God’s revelation is achieved through one’s inner commitment of faith. In this commitment the person abandons the objective-historical world in order to gain the world of the eternal. In short, “[t]hrough radical interiority and self-emptying we come into contact with the face of God.” Therefore, we can conclude that, for Climacus, being or becoming subjective means altogether abandoning the universe with all of its historical dynamics altogether and gaining the eternal world of Spirit.<sup>67</sup>

This, however, did not entail abandoning science. Climacus held that science was an appropriate means for obtaining knowledge. In fact, he held the sciences in high regard for their specialized interests and research. For example, Climacus did not object to the findings in the various areas of scientific disciplines (i.e. physics, biology, sociology and so on.) and acknowledged the importance of their objectivity and discoveries. Yet what Climacus found problematic was science’s attempt to view the world in a factual way. Climacus understood that scientists’ view of the world was empirically driven. According to him, scientists saw the world as nothing more than a mere sum of physical objects and thus applied scientific methodologies to their empirical pursuits. He viewed science as being concerned with studying the world with regard to facts, i.e. seeking to attain facts about the world’s natural laws, the relations between objects and so on. He believed that science’s main purpose was to discover a certain meaning

of the world which is impossible as long as no attention is given to qualities of life that surpass the possibilities of strictly scientific research.

According to E.D. Klempe, for this reason we can say that Climacus thought that no historical certainty about the world as such could be achieved [empirically].<sup>68</sup> Klempe correctly argues that Climacus understood that human reflection—in all of its scientific activity—could not satisfy the human passion for the eternal [sense of universal Being and truth for Husserl]. For Climacus, Klempe states, scientific reason does not engage in spiritual affairs. It may be an appropriate tool for achieving facts about the world but not for achieving subjectivity. Thus we can say that Climacus saw how reason falls short of reaching the ideal (the eternal) sought. Thus, he goes a step further and declares that one's access to subjectivity—in which the human passion for the eternal is satisfied—is to be achieved via what he called "eminent passion" otherwise known as true or religious faith.

Climacus declares that if one wants to have the truth, he or she must ascend into the eternal world of spirit that lies beyond the objective world of scientific reflection and culture. This is because scientific thinking about the world poses a problem for Climacus because of its limits on thought. In the following passage, Climacus describes thinking in relation to the eternal.

The frontier that is continually arrived at is the absolute different. But it is the absolutely different in which there is no distinguishing mark. Defined as the absolutely different, it seems to be at the point of being disclosed, but not so, because the understanding cannot even think the absolutely different. It consequently thinks the difference in itself, which it thinks by itself. It cannot absolutely transcend itself and therefore thinks as above itself only the sublimity (idea) that it thinks by itself.<sup>69</sup>

The "absolutely different" in the above passage is the eternal. This world, according to Climacus, remains an uncertain non-objectivity for historical reflection. According to Climacus, although reason could reflect on the meaning of the world, it could not penetrate the horizon of its transcendental thinking. This horizon of human thought restricts thinking to the historical. Nevertheless, Climacus declared one could actually cross this horizon if one wished and experience the eternal. He held that by putting one's subjective faith in the eternal he or she could transcend the horizon of transcendental thinking. According to Climacus, historical or objective thinking is at best limited to its sense or idea of the eternal.

### **Summary of the Differences between Husserl and Climacus**

In the following we will summarize briefly what we have discussed with respect to Husserl and Climacus. First, we must note that there are points that converge in Husserl and Climacus.

First, both Husserl and Climacus acknowledged the innate sense of the transcendent truth that is present in every human person—a sense of unity and being and truth for Husserl and passion for the eternal in Climacus. By virtue of these experiences, both philosophers strengthen the need of transcendental analysis to satisfy these experiences.

Second, the methods they employ are similar, with both using the method of suspending the naturalistic (Husserl) or historical (Climacus) worldview and giving consideration to the metaphysical possibility of the transcendent truth.

Yet there is a point at which these two diverge: Husserl returns to the world of objective experience and grounds human subjectivity within the empirical, whereas Climacus takes the leap from the natural world and finds his place in the world of the eternal. We will mention and briefly explain three basic points on which two thinkers not only converge but also diverge.

Let us look at Husserl first 1) One's experience of the world is made possible by presupposition-less intentionality ("directed to," "about," or "of a being"). This experience of the world led him to see that objective thought rests on what he called the deeper accomplishments (understanding) of human thought or consciousness. 2) This concept of intentionality served as the basic essence of human consciousness in its activities of judging and deducing the world.<sup>70</sup> However, these deeper-level accomplishments of thought, experienced by virtue of one's objective experience of the world, are shaped by arbitrary and spontaneous intentionality. Apparently, this intentionality is essentially neutral producing neither a specific historical nor metaphysical meaning. For this reason, we can say that Husserl's definition of human consciousness is deceptive in character: it fails to concentrate on the possibility of transcendent other as the source of human subjectivity. It negates such a possibility and directs itself to employing the subjective experience of the world to validate the mind's empirical structure. 3) As a result, Husserl's analysis of subjectivity creates a gap between one's subjectivity (subjective experience of the transcendent) and the transcendent.

Let us now turn to Climacus 1) Contrary to Husserl, the Christian view, according to Climacus, is that the interest of human consciousness or passion

(intentionality for Husserl) is shaped by a being or eternal reality—God. By abandoning the idea of neutrality (Husserl) within the metaphysical experience of transcendence, Climacus relates human existence to the reality of the eternal being. 2) Therefore, from the Christian point of view, the subjectivity in Climacus indicates the truth of the existence of the eternal. 3) Henceforth, contrary to Husserl’s indefinite solution for human subjectivity, Climacus’ concept of subjectivity, from the Christian point of view, is not neutral and empty of content but something that can be characterized as having real eternal substance by virtue of the real relation that exists between the human subject and the eternal subject. This includes not just the intelligible experience of human intentionality with regard to all that has come into existence but also the aesthetic, moral and religious experience.

Hence, in Christianity, the objectivity of deeper accomplishment, in all of its dynamic forms, demonstrates experientially the existence of the eternal. That is to say, we can argue that in Climacus’ view of Christianity, human consciousness in all its dynamic forms is presented in a preliminary fashion. Climacus held that the very epistemological significance of human consciousness in all of its dynamics is that it indicates God’s existence implicitly.

In this chapter, I have discussed the nature of the essential problem involved in the faith-reason relation by examining the meanings of Climacus’ understanding of the eternal from the perspective of Christianity as both an actual being and an ideal being and how each meaning fits into the religious and philosophical category of the eternal, respectively. In this regard, I have argued that the knowledge of the eternal in one’s subjective experience of the world is not fully given, according to Climacus’ account of Christianity, until the moment of his or her radical transition (leap) from the historical experience of the world to the religious experience of it. What is at the center of this possible transition, the Absolute Paradox, will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Climacus says in the *Fragments*: “A moment...must have a special name. Let us call it: *the fullness of time*,” 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>3</sup> This quote is found in the title page of Kierkegaard’s *Philosophical Fragments*. Louis Pojman suggests rephrasing Climacus’ first question to: “Can history [historical facts] be a



['basis'] for faith in the eternal?" See Louis Pojman, *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1999), 165.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Emmanuel Levinas once said: "Kierkegaard (for Levinas) rehabilitated subjectivity—the unique, the singular—with incomparable strength. But in protesting against the absorption of subjectivity...he bequeathed to the history of philosophy an exhibitionistic, immodest subjectivity...that completely naked subjectivity that, in its desire to avoid losing itself in the universal, rejects all form." Emmanuel Levinas, "A Propose of Kierkegaard Vivant," in *Authority and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and His Pseudonym*, vol. 1 of *Søren Kierkegaard: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, ed. Daniel W. Conway with K. E. Gover (London: Routledge, 2002), 113-14.

<sup>5</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Inc., 1996), 327.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 39.

<sup>9</sup> See the section called "Points of Contact" in Ronald M. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 80.

<sup>10</sup> It is interesting how some scholars, despite the seeming evidence of Climacus' anti-Hegelian tendency and the transcendental subjectivity laid out in the *Fragments*, based on the contradiction between the absolute (eternal) and the historical on the religious ground of the revelation (absolute paradox), often think that Climacus/Kierkegaard does not show himself to be a transcendentalist. For example, Mark Dooley disagrees with those who argue that Climacus (Kierkegaard for Dooley) displays a strong neo-Kantian tendency (i.e., Ronald Green, Christopher Norris etc.) putting him in the same category with the deconstructionists, particularly Derrida. He argues that, "neither author commits himself to a strong transcendental position in either philosophy or ethics." "Both are true Hegelians," he argues, "insofar as they propound a view of identity that is predicated upon being-with-others in context, and also insofar as they each consider that dialectical, dialogical, and contextual setting as being the framework," only, "in which ethical obligation arises." This interpretation could be, in the light of what Climacus asserts about the relativity of the historical against the absolute nature of the eternal depicted in the *Fragments*, which stands above and beyond the historical, a misreading. Climacus seems rather clear about how the historical can only be a point of departure for obtaining the eternal and not for the interest of the merely historical. See *Fragments* 109 for this particular claim by Climacus, and for his general discussion on this matter see 99-110.

<sup>11</sup> Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant*, 77.

<sup>12</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 41.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, Socrates, in Plato's *Phaedo*, says to Simmias: "If, as we are forever repeating, beauty, and good, and the other ideas really exist, and if we refer all the objects of sensible perception of these ideas which were formerly ours, and which we find to be ours still...then just as they exist, our souls must have existed before ever we were born." Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. F.J. Church (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1983), 25.

<sup>15</sup> The reason for Climacus' discussion of Spinoza seems to be that in a way Spinoza for Climacus was a fulfillment of Socrates' idealistic imagination, that truth resided in humanity when he asserts that human mind was "a part of the infinite intellect of God," that our adequate knowledge of Him "is an eternal aspect of that infinite intellect." See Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 762.

<sup>16</sup> Climacus gives various examples to prove his point on the impossibility of proving God's existence as either actual or ideal being. One example he gives is the example of trying to prove the existence of a stone, which is impossible since in proving its being one must go from the evidence of its existence to concluding its existence and not vice versa. The same is for proving the existence of a criminal or the works of a famous general. Proving the existence of God is no less different. The demonstration of its existence must go from its evidence of being to the conclusion of its existence, says Climacus. Yet what seems different in the case of proving God's existence, according to Climacus, is that there is an absolute relation of difference between God and his work (creation). This means that even if one was certain of God's existence, no evidence of this fact may ever be present to the demonstrator since God is only an essence and no "being" or "reality." In saying God is an essence and no being or reality, the author does not mean it has no being. What he is saying is that God's essence is such that his nature (essence) and his being (existence) are one. God's nature and qualities are such that they simultaneously comprise one essence, a concept that cannot bear the qualities of actual being. God is not a name, therefore, says Climacus, which can be attributed to some being or reality of temporal nature; rather, God is a concept for which no temporal name can be fixed. It is in this sense, then, in which the author exhorts the cry that God's "*essentia involvit existentiam*." God is an ideal concept, and not an actual being in the sense that God is no temporal being or reality. Therefore, the only means by which to prove God's existence must be through the reality of his creation. But, does the creation immediately bear his marks? Not at all, the author replies. Just as the works of the famous general will not prove that those works belong to the general, God's works of creation will also not prove that they are his works. Even if the whole earth is filled with his wisdom and goodness—perceiving all wisdom and goodness in it—they will still not prove to be God's work.

<sup>17</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 41.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. Climacus sums it up as: "the more it is, the more it is."

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.: "With regard to factual being to speak of more or less being is meaningless. A fly, when it is, has just as much being as the god; with regard to factual being, the stupid comment I write here has just as much being as Spinoza's profundity, for the Hamlet dialectic, to be or not to be, applies to factual being."

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>28</sup> I will discuss this matter in more detail in the following section: “The Concept of the Subjective in Climacus.

<sup>29</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 42-43.

<sup>30</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 182.

<sup>31</sup> Emphasis mine.

<sup>32</sup> Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 17.

<sup>33</sup> Arthur E. Murphy, “On Kierkegaard’s Claim That ‘Truth Is Subjectivity,’” in *Essays on Kierkegaard*, ed. Jerry H. Gill (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Company, 1969), 94.

<sup>34</sup> Murphy, “On Kierkegaard’s Claim,” 96.

<sup>35</sup> Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 178.

<sup>36</sup> I am reminded here of Jesus’ words in John’s Gospel in 14:6; “I am the way...”

<sup>37</sup> Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 21.

<sup>38</sup> For this reason, we can say that an experience of transcendence by virtue of one’s *a priori* concept of it is in a sense or partially something that is empirically experienced in a person. For an intriguing argument on this idea, see the Preface (Second Edition) section in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, especially 23-5.

<sup>39</sup> I mention Husserl solely for the reason of setting a perspective for evaluating of Climacus’ view on the subjective.

<sup>40</sup> Rudolf Bernet, Iso Kern, Eduard Marbach, *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 217.

<sup>41</sup> Maurice Natanson, *Edmund Husserl: Philosopher of Infinite Task* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 127.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>43</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 104-05.

<sup>44</sup> In Husserl, the human understanding has two functions: It has the function of interpreting itself in a strictly self-reflecting way, which he calls an “explicit self-reflection”; and it also has the function of ruling itself, in the way of giving meaning to the world. See Husserl, *The Crisis of European Science*, 103-04.

<sup>45</sup> Husserl, *The Crisis*, 317.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 20. For example, in his lectures on the “Phenomenological Psychology” in 1925, Husserl declared the following: “We go from [what] in our mind [are] the questionable concept ‘nature’ and ‘spirit,’ as concepts defining the provinces of [certain] sciences, back to the world situated prior to all sciences and their theoretical intentions as a world of pre-historic intuition.”

<sup>49</sup> Bernet, Kern, Marbach, *Husserlian Phenomenology*, 221. Later, he added this to the manuscript: “[Y]es, as a world of the presently actual [aktuell] life in which the world-experiencing and world theorizing life is enclosed.”<sup>49</sup> In his lectures, “Introduction to Phenomenology” (1926-27), after implementing an “epoche in respect to all science” and

“radical meditation on the sense of that which is situated prior to all sciences as the universal ground of experience” upon which science builds, Husserl stated the following:

On the other hand, for us cultivated Europeans, the sciences are nevertheless there, a constituent of our multifarious world of culture, just as are our art, our scientific technology, etc. Albeit we may leave their validity unengaged, albeit we may place them in question, they are for us coexistent matters of fact [Mit-Tatsachen] in the world of experience in which we live. Whether they are clear or unclear, fully valid or invalid, the sciences, like all product of human work, be they good or bad, belong to the make-up of the world as a world of pure experience.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 124-25.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Husserl, *The Crisis*, 173.

<sup>62</sup> Bernet, Kern, Marbach, *Husserlian Phenomenology*, 228.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition For Upbuilding and Awakening*, ed. and trans. Howard V Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 14.

<sup>65</sup> Here I am quoting from Paul Cruysberghs’ “Must Reflection Be Stopped? Can It Be Stopped?” in *Immediacy and Reflections in Kierkegaard’s Thought*, ed. P. Cruysberghs, J. Taelis, and K. Verstrynge (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>66</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures of Transcendental Logic*, Collected Works, ed. Rudolf Bernet, trans. Anthony J. Steinbock (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 31.

<sup>67</sup> Michael R. Michau, “Suspensions,” 3, <http://www.sorenkierkegaard.nl/artikelen/Engles/104.Kierkegaard-and-Husserl.pdf>. (accessed March 15, 2010).

<sup>68</sup> E.D. Klemke, *Studies in Philosophy of Kierkegaard* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 3.

<sup>69</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 44-5.

<sup>70</sup> Husserl, *Analysis*, 31-32.

# Chapter III: The Absolute Paradox

## The Paradox of God's Appearance in the World

Here we will explore the underlying rationale of the absolute paradox discussed in *Fragments* in order to show that, even though Climacus asserts that the absolute paradox contradicts human reason because of its irrational claim for the eternal in time, he nonetheless sees that the paradox has a certain objective aspect that is subject to human understanding. He sees an ability in human understanding to appropriate the paradox ideally as the truth of God-incarnate. This is different from saying that one is able to appropriate the paradox completely as the truth of the God-man event with absolute certainty, which, he argues, is possible only for those who have faith. Nonetheless, he contends in *Fragments* that a person in his or her historical existence can intellectually engage in a relation with the paradox with the assumption that it is the true event in which God descended to the human world. Thus, we will argue that it is Climacus' view that the failure to accept the paradox absolutely in one's historical existence is not because it is not subject to reason's intellectual appropriation, but because of polemics against that paradox, as we already have seen from our discussion in chapter two of our thesis. We will argue that Climacus' view is that a person's unbelief in the paradox is due to his or her unwillingness to believe, not because the claim about the paradox is untrue. We will support our argument by providing credible textual evidence for it.

As we saw in our previous discussion on the subjective in Climacus in chapter two, he holds that the subjective has religious significance. There we argued that, for Climacus, the subjective means one's inward relation to the truth—the eternal. What we will discuss in this chapter is the fact that, although one's absolute belief in the eternal or the paradox requires faith, it nonetheless has an intellectual aspect that is subject to human thought.

It is our view that Climacus feels that there is no more reason to exclude religion from philosophical thinking than there is to include it. Therefore, we can argue, as far as the paradox is concerned, that this cognitive aspect of the paradox can be assessed theoretically in terms of what it claims to be—the eternal in time.<sup>1</sup>

As we saw in *Fragments*, Climacus introduces the general concepts of reason and faith as belonging to the different categories of philosophy and religion respectively.<sup>2</sup> This was the focus of our discussions in the last two

chapters of the thesis. In *Fragments Climacus* refers to Christian knowing as having an eternal substance, arguing that philosophy, in contrast, does not possess the same eternal substance because philosophy is the cognitive exercise of the mind and not faith. This eternal substance, which he claims is contained in faith, sets the believer apart from those who do not have faith. Faith in the eternal, therefore, distinguishes the individual from those whose thinking only yields the abstract meaning of the truth found in philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

According to Hendrik M. Vroom, this religious notion of God does not fit consistently into what has become the Greek heritage of knowing by reasoning and defining. Vroom states that in many religious epistemologies religious insights have cognitive and moral aspects and are interwoven with feelings/moods. He argues that, in order to appropriate such insights, people have to undergo a kind of paradigm shift and be open to aspects of the world other than the empirical and material ones.

In what is often called the Greek heritage of Western philosophy, Vroom argues, the cognitive elements have been abstracted from this analysis as if they alone could provide an objective solution to the problem of truth without the elements of personal involvement and change. According to Vroom, the difference between the religious idea of the eternal or divine—be it Brahman, *shunyata* or Yahweh—and what has become the classical concept of God in rationalist philosophy and atheist critique is that the religious ideas remain related to spiritual practice, while in conceptual analysis the meanings of the religious terms are separated from their classical textual and ritual sources. In religion, says Vroom, the obstacles that stand in the way of the real knowledge of truth have to be “overcome on the path to deeper understanding.” According to Vroom, this is characteristic of most classical religious epistemologies.<sup>4</sup> If one accepts this analysis, one can conclude that religion implies a profoundly different meaning of the truth than the one found in rational philosophical analysis.

Having said this and being in agreement with Vroom’s analysis on the difference between religion and philosophy—with respect to their different meanings of the truth—the question we now raise is: Does this mean we ought to conclude that there is no connection between rational knowing and religious knowing? Our answer is that a connection between these two types of knowing does exist. That is, there is connection between the eternal (in general), or the paradox (in particular) and human knowing.

In the section “The Absolute Paradox” in *Fragments*, Climacus explains the cognitive concept of the paradox (the God-man event) using two basic premises. The first is that the ideal approach to properly discerning the paradox as the God-man event fails to grasp its claim absolutely. The second is that this ideal approach to the God-man event never completely comes in contact with the resolution sought, i.e. the truth. The reason, he explains, is that such an ideal approach to the paradox does not presuppose its existence absolutely.

The argument he gives here, however, is not to refute the existing relation between the paradox and human knowing. To the contrary: he apparently gives this argument in order to demonstrate the validity for our objective or ideal appropriation of the paradox as a true event. After asserting that human understanding is a paradoxical passion constantly reaching for the unknown (the eternal) and colliding with it, thus unable to demonstrate its existence, he claims that this unknown nonetheless is present to the understanding. This is because, even though the understanding is incapable of proving its existence—for its existence does not present itself in such a way that it gives direct and immediate proof—it presupposes or believes its existence ideally. This unknown, the eternal or the paradox, is present to the understanding because the understanding already presupposes its existence when it strives for the unknown.

One example he provides to illustrate this point in *Fragments* is that of seeing a stone. He contends that one cannot prove that an object seen is a stone without ideally having believed or presupposed that the object is a stone. This is what he states: “I never reason in conclusion to existence, but I reason in conclusion from existence. For example, I do not demonstrate that a stone exists but that something which exists is a stone.”<sup>5</sup> He gives a similar example in the same text: “The court of law does not demonstrate that a criminal exists but that the accused, who does indeed exist, is a criminal.”<sup>6</sup> His point is that when one sees an object or a person as a particular object or a person he or she does so because he or she has a concept or a certain understanding of what he or she sees. By the same token, when one seeks the truth, she does so with an *a priori* concept or knowledge of what she seeks. Otherwise, we would fall prey to the Socratic tautology: one cannot seek what he does not know he seeks.

Here we go back again to the example Climacus uses in the beginning of *Fragments* in his attempt to show that human beings live with a certain

concept or knowledge/understanding of their creator, since he claims that they are not outside the truth in spite of having been deprived of the condition of knowing the truth as a result of sin. There, we saw how he uses the example of the Socratic principle of recollection to make the assertion analogically that in Christianity the same truth holds, namely, that human beings are conscious of the truth. The difference between the views concerning how humans know the truth is that the Socratic principle emphasizes the idea of the immortality of the soul whereas Christianity stresses the idea of creation. We argued that Climacus' point was that, even though the origin of the truth is different in these two views, they nonetheless share the belief that human beings are conscious of the truth. This, then, is precisely the same argument we find in Climacus in the two examples given above of seeing a stone and the calling someone a criminal. Naming them would be possible only if one already has a concept or understanding of them.

This would mean that, even with regard to the question if the existence of eternal or the paradox can be proven, the answer would be no in the absolute sense. According to Climacus, this is because belief in the eternal requires, from the distinctly Christian point of view, a higher form of knowing, faith. However, this means that in one's historical existence one already has a certain intellectually appropriated understanding of the eternal, as we have argued. According to Climacus, Christianity holds that human beings are not outside the truth, i.e. they are always conscious of it. And because for Christianity this truth is the eternal divine who created the world and entered into history in order to redeem his creation, it is this being, he would argue, of which all of us are conscious in our historical existence. Therefore we hold that he makes the case for objectivity in human knowing with regard to the eternal. His view is that all of us in the mode of historical existence live with a certain pre-understanding of God.

Again, to give another example of this in the text, Climacus argues that, if one does not believe or presuppose that a great monarch has performed certain works, at most one can only point to different possibilities concerning the person who performed the works. The argument is simple: one could never show any correlation between an individual and that individual's work without first believing that the person to whom the work belongs actually existed. Is it possible to prove that a painting is the work of an artist if we think that the artist has never existed? For instance, if we doubt that Andy



Warhol ever lived, is there any point in discussing if he had done the famous portrait of Marilyn Monroe made by this artist? The answer is no. By the same token, if Climacus has not lived, why would we think that *Fragments* is his work? Using Napoleon as an example, he explains this point as follows:

If one wanted to demonstrate Napoleon's existence from his works, would it not be most curious, since his existence certainly explains the works but the works do not demonstrate his existence unless I have already in advance interpreted the word "his" in such a way as to have assumed that he exists...If I call the works Napoleon's works, then the demonstration is superfluous, since I have already mentioned his name. If I ignore this, I can never demonstrate from the works that they are Napoleon's but demonstrate (purely ideally) that such works are the works of a great general etc.<sup>7</sup>

We could therefore argue that Climacus' position with regard to all of the philosophical arguments for God's existence have a certain *a priori* understanding that such a being really exists. The question if they can reach the final conclusion that God exists solely via logical reasoning is another matter, and the answer, for Climacus, is inevitably no. As Robert Perkins correctly points out, there are two things to remember with respect to Climacus. First, he finds all rational proofs for God's existence to be "logically objectionable." To support this point, Perkins cites Climacus: "[I]f the god does not exist...it would be impossible to prove it."<sup>8</sup> He states that, for Climacus, the proof of any correlation between a person and the person's work depends on the proof of the evidence of the person's existence. Therefore, if God exists, then those who believe will account for their faith but cannot give concrete proof for his existence.

Second, Perkins says that Climacus also finds rational proofs for God's existence to be "religiously objectionable." Perkins explains that Climacus' claim that "if one attempts to prove the existence of God, one only proves what a wise man he is" is the same kind of rhetoric that refutes the idea that God's existence can be rationally proven. Such proofs do not reach beyond the finite historical realities that we perceive as proving God's existence; they are historical data that do not infer a sum total of God's work. What proves his existence (absolutely) is not a theoretical assumption, but rather a concrete belief; all rational arguments of God's existence simply beg the question (even though they are conscious of his existence) since they do not provide absolute proof. Below is Climacus' own view of the matter:

The works from which I want to demonstrate his existence do not immediately and directly exist, not at all. Or are the wisdom in nature and the goodness or wisdom in governance right in front of our noses? For do we not encounter the most terrible spiritual trials, here, and is it possible to be finished with all these trials? But I still do not demonstrate God's existence from such an order of things, and even if I began, I would never finish...Therefore, from what works do I demonstrate it? From the works regarded ideally—that is, as they do not appear directly and immediately...I have presupposed the ideality, have presupposed that I will succeed in accomplishing it, but what else is that but presupposing that the god exists and actually beginning with trust in him..."<sup>9</sup>

To put it in another way, all of our rational claims for God's existence, such as a cosmological argument supported by billions of existing galaxies or a teleological argument backed by one's fervent passion for the truth remain unproven propositions because they do not yield objective proof. Every philosophical inquiry into God's existence faces the eminent difficulty: It fails to reach what it originally sought to reach, namely the absolute proof of God's being. But he would also be quick to argue that these philosophical inquiries are pursued because these inquiries are based on the ideal assumption that God truly exists. In the next section, we will discuss the objectivity of the paradox. Our intention is to continue to argue for the objectivity of the eternal in human knowing. We will do this by exploring the objective aspect of the paradox for human knowing that is discussed in *Fragments* by providing the textual proof for our argument from this text.

### **The Objectivity of the Paradox**

As we have said, the basic problem discussed in *Philosophical Fragments* is the problem of transcendence or the eternal in religion and philosophy. Climacus distinguishes between religious knowing and philosophical knowing with respect to the eternal. However, we have argued that this distinction between religious knowing and philosophical knowing is not one-sided. That is, his purpose in making this distinction is not solely to note the difference between faith and reason but also to note reason's ability to deduce the eternal objectively.

Let us first look at the distinction between faith and reason: Speaking from the religious point of view, a Kierkegaard scholar, Herman Diem correctly states that the problem of philosophy with respect to knowing the truth is that it relies completely on the ability of historical reason.

Consequently, he argues, philosophy confines itself to the realm of the historical, instead of being open to the possibility of transcendence.<sup>10</sup> In religion (Christianity), he says, our historical reason enters the world of transcendence and discovers the truth, the eternal. In religion one enters the world of the transcendent being—God—through one’s belief in the most shocking event in human history, namely, God’s appearance in the world.

The problem, according to Diem, is that our historical mind rejects this absolute paradox as something that is logically absurd and contradictory. It objects to it, rather than accepting it.<sup>11</sup> He argues that the human mind finds it absurd and contradictory that the “...eternal truth has come to be in time, that God has appeared on the place of history,” and that he “has been born and grown up, etc., that He has become utterly like any other individual man and indistinguishable from any other.”<sup>12</sup> To the historical mind, the idea of God’s historical appearance, therefore, is conceived as an absurdity and contradiction of the greatest concentration and magnitude, Diem says, and one that which we cannot logically entertain as an event that can be rationally assimilated into our thinking.

As Diem correctly states, Climacus’ view of the paradox is that it separates itself infinitely from the thought of a historical person insofar as it allows no humanistic attempt to “acquire something really firm...” about the event.<sup>13</sup> According to Diem, Climacus argues that grappling with God’s appearance in the world requires incorporating into the discussion what he calls the dialectic of determination.<sup>14</sup> Diem uses this phrase to denote the Climacean concept of one’s eternal religious relation to the eternal. In this relation, one moves in his or her understanding of the paradox from unbelief to belief. Because of its incomparably superior nature to other ordinary events, the paradox of God’s appearance in the world demands a different kind of reflection to reveal its peculiar identity. According to Climacus, this different reflection of the paradox of God-in-time is possible if one considers this superior event outside the limits of historical thinking. As he declares: “With respect to the historical [Incarnation], it holds true that it cannot become historical for immediate sensation or cognition.”<sup>15</sup> What one needs here is to find a way to distinguish the means for comprehending the absolute paradox from the general way in which one may normally understand an ordinary object.

A way to distinguish the paradox of God-in-time from other ordinary objects, then, is what Climacus calls the way of “eminent” or true faith in the

paradox. This true faith is different from ordinary faith in that the former—true faith—can move from uncertainty to certainty regarding the event. According to Climacus, this form of true faith can resolve the paradox of God-in-time because it responds to the paradox in full certainty about it.<sup>16</sup> In other words, one responds in faith to the paradox, thereby resolving the prolonged collision one experienced when he or she was under the dominance of historical reason. In the dialectic of determination, one comes to believe fully in the paradox as God's historical revelation in time. It resolves the paradox's problem of logical contradiction by transcending the perplexity of the paradox's eternal-historical structure, thereby achieving the understanding of the paradox as a historical occurrence.

However, as we already have noted, Climacus believes that a certain kind of correlation exists between the human knowing and the eternal in general or the paradox in particular. He argues that one can come to know or believe in the paradox only if there is a correlation between them. We argued in chapter two that it is Climacus' view that one's concept of an object cannot deceive (*à la Descartes*). This means that when a person perceives an object (i.e. a star, the paradox and so on.) the reality of the object is objectively revealed to the person through either his or her sensation or cognition. This means that, with regard to the paradox, there must be a correlation between one's knowing and the paradox. That is, from the objective point of view, the paradox as such (an object) must be subject to the thought's historical appropriation. It must be subject to one's objective measuring as a historical identity with certain historical features.

Generally speaking, in philosophy, there are two ways of thinking about transcendence dialectically: empirically and ideally. In the following section we will define these two ways of reflecting on the eternal with the intention of showing that in both these ways of thinking dialectically about the transcendence, there is a correlation between knowing and the object of knowing, namely, transcendence.

### **The Empirical and Ideal Dialectic in Philosophy**

First, the empirical dialectic can be defined as the historical mind knowing transcendence in a scientific way. It defines the concept of transcendence as something that is part of one's perception of reality. In the empirical dialectic, one understands that there is no transcendence in the sense claimed in metaphysics or religion. In the domain of the empirical

dialectic, one treats the idea of transcendence as being part of one's physical experience of the world, thus not requiring any metaphysical or religious explanation for its experience.

Second, the ideal type of dialectic can be defined as conceiving transcendence as a true "ideality," as a true concept. We can define the ideal dialectic, then, as a metaphysical reflection on transcendence in which one is able to elucidate its ideal trait(s) that conform to the person's concept or understanding of it.

Our purpose behind mentioning these two types of historical ways of thinking about transcendence is to point out that, from the Climacean point of view, the fact that they have engaged in the dialectic says that they have a certain presupposition of the existence of the eternal prior to engaging in the dialectic. This is so even though neither the empirical nor the ideal reflection on the transcendence is capable in the strictest sense of arriving at the final solution of belief since this is only possible through faith.

The empirical dialectic fails to achieve the final resolution concerning the paradox as God-in-time because seeing the paradox as such—the God-event in history—requires one to believe it. From the perspective of Christianity, the ideal dialectic or mental reflection on the paradox cannot arrive at a final answer concerning the truth of the event because, despite its higher reflective attitude than that of the empirical, it nonetheless lacks the ability to grasp the reality of the event by going beyond the historical. Thus, both forms of the historical dialectic fail to achieve the answer for what one has subjectively conceived to be the truth, namely, transcendence. However, it is Climacus' view that the ideality of the transcendence is conceived in both the empirical and the ideal reflections on transcendence. The only difference here between what occurs in the empirical and ideal dialectics is the way in which this concept is interpreted to suit the interests of an individual. If the person is an empiricist, he will interpret transcendence as part of the world, which is an empirical reality. If a person is an idealist, then he will take the ideal or metaphysical approach to explaining the concept as an object of ideal appropriation or understanding. Between these two concepts of transcendence, Climacus considers the ideal approach because, in his view, the ideal reflection achieves closer proximity to transcendence than the empirical one does. Nonetheless, for him, both the ideal and empirical approaches to transcendence remain historical pursuits employing the mind's natural concepts that are prevented from crossing over the

historical boundaries of human thinking to overcome the paradox. Yet the paradox remains a fact despite of its contradictory nature:

With respect to the directly historical [the absolute paradox], it holds true that it cannot become historical for immediate sensation or cognition. But that historical fact (the content of our poem [the paradox-God's revelation in the world]) has a unique quality in that it is not direct historical fact but a fact based upon a self-contradiction."<sup>17</sup>

For that reason, the absolute paradox does not completely yield itself to either the empirical or the ideal reflection. That is, the paradox of God's appearance in the world cannot be fully resolved by the means of either empirical or metaphysical reflection. In the end, it requires faith.

When one thinks about the paradox of the God-in-time, the person is perplexed by its absurdity; the person sees only the logical absurdity of the event. In the case of perceiving historical objects, such as a tree, person, time and so on the meaning of these objects can be acquired historically by a person. But there is a problem with the absolute paradox; there are no direct means for grasping this alien reality. The paradox does not offer any background of potential and decisive fixed steps by which it has come to be. In other words, it has no historical precedent in the natural world. That means that the paradox cannot be of natural origin. However, we are familiar with the notion that one's perception of an object reveals certain qualities through which one can form a metaphorical judgment about the object. This is precisely the case with Climacus. He would argue that even though the paradox transcends the mind's ability to appropriate the event fully as a true occurrence, it is objective enough to permit our historical or intellectual appropriation of it.

Thus, the question concerning the paradox at this point for him is not so much if the paradox is true, but if human understanding has the ability to assent to its superior claim. His answer is: yes. It is his view that, even though one's historical understanding is not equipped to understand the properties of the non-historical or transcendent order fully as such, it is nonetheless capable of appropriating the event due to the fact that the truth is not beyond human knowledge. We do not question Climacus' final perspective on the problem of the paradox as understood from the historical point of view, namely, that to achieve the understanding of the paradox one needs to view it from the external perspective of the eternal. As we saw in

our previous discussions, Climacus' general solution to the paradox is to escape from perceiving the event in a historical way as an irrational occurrence. Being aware of the finite limits of philosophical thinking, Climacus declares that the solution Christianity distinctly offers is that one must view the paradox from the higher transcendent perspective over against the historically motivated schemes of either the empirical or the ideal appropriation which does not provide the true knowledge of the paradox as the eternal.

The problem, he argues, is that the human mind is not able to believe in the paradox. It is confined to the historical world of finite thinking; therefore its thinking is thinking in time. Our historical reason, Climacus says, "cannot dare to make any sortie beyond this limit"<sup>18</sup> by means of neither the *via negationis* nor the *via eminentia*. This means that historical reason cannot provide the solution to the perplexity of the paradox. When the understanding collides with the paradox, this means two things. First, the Socratic imagination of the truth is completely shattered; that is, the idea that the truth can be discovered through the historical process of recollection is no longer credible. Second, a different approach to understanding the paradox emerges, namely, understanding the paradox from its own perspective as something that which has to be understood by faith. That is, the paradox has to be understood as an object of transcendent faith that separates itself from all other approaches. In the words of Hermann Deuser, the paradox, as "the polemical Christology (of God in history)," separates itself "from literally all other approaches: from the religious and societal approaches of contemporary 'Christendom,' as well as from the intellectual trends of historical or speculative academic theology."<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the paradox must give the solution to the perplexed historical mind. What is the solution? Faith!

However, his critique of reason does not exclude at any point reason's objective appropriation of the paradox. As we saw, he believes that there is a theoretical correlation between human knowing and the paradox that one could believe its claim to be God-in-time through the perception of the event all of its historical features, such as, fulfilled prophecies, testimonies, miracles and so on. What further strengthens his argument for the objectivity of the paradox in *Fragments* is his argument for the profundity of humans' existential condition set within the frame of passionately seeking the truth.

According to Climacus, since ideas and concepts clearly exist in human thought, and since they pass through perception, understanding and so on and reveal certain truths about the world, he argues that these ideas and concepts are not the whole of one's existence but simply aspects of it. This means that human existence or an individual as such is not susceptible to rational schematization;<sup>20</sup> human existence and thought remain separate for Climacus. Moreover, contrary to Hegel and Hegelians, Climacus gives priority to human existence over the human thought. According to Stephen Evans, this is because a human person, for Climacus, is "first and foremost an exister," a fact that regrettably can be easily forgotten in the world of ideas.<sup>21</sup>

Defining human existence in a single term of consciousness, as some philosophers do, can be extremely problematic for Climacus in that such a narrow perception of human existence does injustice to the breadth of that existence with all of its contrasting differences. As, for example, Stanley Cavell rightly asserts, human existence is not merely a matter for theoretical reflection; it could never be wholly susceptible to what Kant and Hegel respectively called "transcendental logic" and "logic."<sup>22</sup> Climacus holds that the question of human existence is wholly a matter of existential and religious inquiry.

This problem is raised as a result of one's existential experience of the inadequacy and perplexity of the self. As Stephen Evans rightly notes, the answer is that it is accountable by virtue of the fact that our experience of the eternal in our historical existence is a human experience of the eternal as such. He asserts that humans experience the need for eternal fulfillment passionately as human beings and not as mere minds or those who view human nature in such way that they are first and foremost thinking beings. Climacus' view, on the other hand, is that a human being is a passionate being at the deepest level who longs for the eternal outside of the temporal world. Evans writes:

The issue of man's relationship to ideas possesses existential, even religious significance. This is best seen if we examine the thinkers he (Climacus) is most interested in, Socrates/Plato and Hegel. In the Platonic dialogues Socrates' intellectual quest for conceptual understanding clearly possess religious significance. In discovering the Forms, Plato thinks man discovers eternity and at the same time relax his own true character. The abstract thought, Reason, is the most adequate means of grasping the Absolute, which Hegel identified with the object of



traditional religious worship. The individual who embarks upon reflective process therefore takes the path that leads to his own personal fulfillment.<sup>23</sup>

According to Evans, Climacus' understanding of human existence surpasses the limits of human reason in scope, with its broader experience in the subjective. For this reason, the subjectivity of human experience should always have the upper hand over the objectivity of human thought. Nevertheless, objective knowledge depends on those with whom one interacts in the world. It is in this social interaction that one discovers the so called objective knowledge of the world. However, according to Climacus, objective knowledge discovered through social interaction with others is acquired through subjective reflection. That is Climacus holds that one's objective knowledge depends on subjective reflection. And, according to Climacus, this subjective reflection is possible because of one's *a priori* knowledge. This *a priori* knowledge, which serves as the epistemological condition in metaphysics and theology, according to Climacus, is the foundational basis for one's transcendental reflection. What we have here, then, is the continuous dialectic of objectivity and subjectivity in human existence. This dialectic, as it unfolds, reveals what is basic between the historical and the eternal: tension, which is created by God in all human beings.

In this chapter, I have examined the underlying meaning of the absolute paradox. I have done this to show how Climacus uses the meaning of this concept as a solution to the problem of transcendence by explaining and comparing the meanings of the religious dialectic and the historical or natural dialectic. I have argued that, in the case of the religious dialectic, we can give an account of religious faith in the transcendent being, i.e. God, as an actual reality, whereas in the case of the historical-dialect, we do not have this legitimacy of religious faith but only an intellectual idea of it. I have also argued that in the cases of historical dialectic, i.e. empirical and ideal, even though they are not sufficient means to reveal the transcendent fully, they nonetheless show that there is objectivity in human knowing with regard to the transcendent.

In the next chapter, we will explore the illegitimacy of religious faith in the ideal dialectic further. We will bring to focus one particular thinker who overall represents this particular sphere of thought, i.e. Hegel, by explaining and incorporating Hegelian philosophy into the general discussion concerning religion and philosophy. We will thus be able to give a detailed

discussion of the underlying structure of the Hegelian concept of absolute reason so that we may have a better understanding of the essence of Climacus' own critique of Hegelian philosophy which is both positive and negative in nature.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For instance, Stephen Evans says that just the title, *Philosophical Fragments*, should indicate that it is "polemically directed toward the speculative philosophy of Hegel and even more specifically at the Danish followers of Hegel." He asserts that: "Hegel's philosophy was characterized by the claim to have raised philosophy to the level of 'science' by making it 'systematic.' Hence in the universe of Hegelian discourse 'philosophy,' 'system,' and 'science' were synonyms." And, by calling his book *Fragments* Climacus "made his attitude toward this movement and this usage perfectly clear." Evans, *Fragments and Postscript*, 17-18. Another, less direct, reference to such an implication comes from Gregor Malantschuk. According to Malantschuk, Climacus' calling the absolute paradox of the concept of the Incarnation a "Metaphysical Caprice" probably indicates that, "Climacus had Hegel's philosophy in mind, since in his very attempt to clarify the issue of the Incarnation by speculation Hegel completely distanced himself from reality." Gregor Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Concept of Existence*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2003), 221.

<sup>2</sup> "Can a historical point of departure be given for an eternal consciousness; how can such a point of departure be of more than historical interest; can an eternal happiness be built on historical knowledge?" Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> For different meanings of truth, see Henk. M. Vroom, *Religions and the Truth: Philosophical reflections and Perspectives*, (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 307-320.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 305.

<sup>5</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 40.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 40-41.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Perkins, *Søren Kierkegaard* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), 14.

<sup>9</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 41-44.

<sup>10</sup> Diem, *Kierkegaard's Dialectic*, 60.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> I am borrowing this phrase from Herman Diem's "The Dialectic of Existence." Here the term determination we are using in reference to Climacus does not denote the idea of sheer freedom apart from some "other." For example, it does not have the meaning we would find, for instance, in the existential philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, where the fundamental aim or choice of one's way of being is to be acted out in the midst of existing and relating to the world and not in some state separate of the self and the world. See Betty Cannon, *Sartre &*

*Psychoanalysis: An Existential Challenge to Clinical Metatheory* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 4. Rather, it comes close to the Augustinian notion of freedom, which says that, despite the fact that freedom is a legitimate constitution of one's existence, it nonetheless is something relative and inferior to the higher freedom or will of God which ultimately governs all of one's choices and actions. See Augustine, "Freedom of Will," *The Experience of Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Kolak and Raymond Martine (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 150. For my discussion on freedom and divine attributes, see chapter five in the sections "The Leap" and "The Will."

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 87.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>19</sup> Hermann Deuser, "Religious Dialectics and Christology," *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 378-79.

<sup>20</sup> Of course, some scholars would admit with no hesitation that Climacus' focused emphasis on the whole diverse character of human nature here is most likely directed against Hegel's absolute system, which unfortunately reduces human identity to sheer consciousness. This topic will be further taken up later in the discussion of Hegel.

<sup>21</sup> Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, 120.

<sup>22</sup> Stanley Cavell, "Kierkegaard's 'On Authority and Revelation'" *Søren Kierkegaard: Critical Assessment of Leading Philosophers*, ed. Daniel Conway with K.E. Gover (London: Routledge, 2002), 41.

<sup>23</sup> Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, 120.



# Chapter IV: Existence and Absolute Knowledge

## Climacus and the Case of Hegelian Philosophy

In this chapter, we will explore the two polarizing views of Climacus and Hegelian on the nature of the divine-human relation. We will thus look at this relation between the divine and human in detail. This chapter will be completed by a summary of our discussion in which I will argue for the reasonableness of faith in Climacus by stating that Climacus' rejecting Hegelian philosophy is not for its philosophical formulation per se but for its misinterpretation of the relation between the eternal and the historical. I will argue that Climacus' critique aims not at rejecting the rational essence of Hegelian philosophy but at rejecting its methodology of constructing the God-world relation in a historical way.

From the Climacean perspective, the problem—with respect to the nature of the divine-human relation in Climacus and Hegelian philosophy—is expressed in terms of how each thinker views the underlying structure and defines the meaning of human consciousness. A close examination of these views sheds light on the distinction between historical reason and religious faith, the meaning of which is different in Climacus and Hegelianism. This discussion will contribute to the whole of my argument, which centers on the reasonableness of faith in *Fragments*, in the way that it will explore the essential difference between the concepts of the eternal and the historical as laid out in Climacus and Hegelian philosophy in this work. I will do this by giving my own account of the essential difference between the eternal and historical in Climacus' account and in Hegelian thought based on my reading of *Fragments* and the texts of other authors such as Dupré, Forster, and De Boer.

My overall intention here is to show that, by giving a philosophical analysis of Hegelian system, an account given by Climacus in the *Fragments*, that the singular merit of Climacus or Climacean philosophical framework is that, as an alternative to Hegelian philosophy, it is more convincing than Hegelian idealism on the nature of the relation between the transcendent and the world.

In *Fragments*, Climacus refers to Hegelianism as something that obscures such a distinction. Climacus states here that Hegelian philosophy obscures the eternal structure of religion (Christianity) with its all-subsuming

logic. This is done, claims Climacus, via discounting the transcendent nature of God's appearance in the world, something that is the most extraordinary facet of the Christian religion.

From Climacus' perspective, this apparent paradox of God-in-time cannot be resolved through human reason. This paradox is essentially contrary to the historical mind; it is alien to human understanding.<sup>1</sup> A great example of the logical objection to the paradox appears in this passage on the antithesis between human understanding and the paradox:

When the understanding cannot get the paradox into its head, this did not have its origin in the understanding but in the paradox itself, which was paradoxical enough to have the effrontery to call the understanding a clod and a dunce who at best can say "yes" and "no" to the same thing...<sup>2</sup>

In this passage, Climacus states that the paradox transcends human understanding. This superior nature of the paradox over human understanding would, for him, make any historical attempt to unite the transcendent and the world a mockery of the transcendent. Yet, he says, this is what many idealists have done. The primary example is Hegelian idealism.

In the past, human knowledge was often defined objectively in scientific terms. For example, realists examined the meaning of the world via certain scientific fields (i.e., mathematics, physics, chemistry and so on), and their results were empirically based. However these realists overlooked the fact that objectivity is just one fraction of the mind's broad epistemological domain, and objective facts about the world are not free from reliance on non-objective principles.

In fact, from the idealists' point of view, objective facts always rest on non-objective pre-assumptions. That is like the rest of us, those who endorse the objective view depend "upon the immediate experience of the surrounding world." They depend for their knowledge on the people with whom they live in the world, the circumstances in their and others' lives, and the places in the world and the institutions to which they belong.

It is in these circumstances that one finds an objective knowledge of the world. Objective knowledge, apart from its content—objective particulars— involves reflection that calls for a non-objective or subjective explanation for their objectivity.<sup>3</sup> Particular knowledge is based on reflection that is subjective in nature. In Climacus, this subjective approach to knowing about

the world takes on a religious character. For him, what achieves the genuine knowledge of the truth is faith.

For example, in chapter two we saw how Husserl ignored the essential difference between transcendence and the world in favor of the idea of a neutrally positioned intentionality in human consciousness.<sup>4</sup> Climacus insists that philosophy alone can never achieve this faith. Yet many philosophers at the time of Kierkegaard/Climacus attempted to unify the transcendent and the world philosophically. In *Fragments* Climacus alludes to Hegelian philosophy as an attempt to harmonize the transcendent and the world into unity but fails since they do not truly speak about the true transcendent. In this chapter, we will examine the nature of Hegelian philosophy more closely in the context of Climacus' own view of the relation between transcendence and the world.

In his *The Phenomenology of Mind* Hegel "takes the reader through all the worlds of experience, personal and impersonal, individual and generic, intellectual and emotional, moral and political, aesthetic and religious," until, in the end, he concludes with the knowledge that brings all other knowledge from the previous stages together. This knowledge that encompasses all knowledge from previous stages is what Hegel calls "Absolute Knowledge,"<sup>5</sup> which subsumes all other forms of divine and human knowledge. Hegel describes his book, *The phenomenology of Mind* as "The Science of the Experience of Consciousness." Hegel covers all and sundry in this science.

But, this consciousness does not achieve its aim at the beginning, i.e. that of comprehending all experiences in its absolute understanding. In order to achieve the full consciousness that philosophical analysis and reasoning will produce, this consciousness goes through different stages in order to realize that it is absolute over all others, including religion.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, religion in Hegelian philosophy is a part of the whole unfolding process of the absolute mind in history. That is to say, in Hegelian philosophy religion is a part of history that will in the end be overcome by reason.

Hence, what we commonly think of as being proper religious statements (i.e. I believe in God, God exists and so on) could not be religious statements *par excellence* for Hegel but only factual statements. That is, any religious statement cannot be taken as a true proposition unless it provides an objective justification. Unless a religious statement is justified scientifically in some way, which Hegelian philosophy deems absolutely necessary for all religious statements, these statements can only remain groundless. Thus, the

only way to justify religious statements, the work in which Hegel shows great interest, is through objectively or scientifically uniting religion with the world.

For Climacus, the Hegelian displays characteristic drawbacks: one is epistemological and the other metaphysical. In his view, the epistemological problem is that the transcendent-world relation in Hegelian approach is theologically defective because it reduces the singularity of transcendence to sameness with the world. It fails to single out the nerve of the paradox—God’s revelation—and rejects its guidance to knowledge, the idea that is at the core of Climacus’ own epistemological thinking. This is because Hegelian epistemology excludes the discussion of the paradox as that which transcends reason and finite reality. The transcendent-world relation of the Hegelian project simply remains an undifferentiated unity, irrespective of their non-deducibility in any form of human reflection.

The metaphysical drawback is that the epistemological component in Hegelian project falls outside the principle of “the law of non-contradiction.” The logic behind the Hegelian idea of the truth is that it is both transcendent and immanent. Hegelian logic takes itself beyond faith to something he sees as better and higher than religion, namely, objective or scientific knowledge. Let us examine these drawbacks.

In the course of our examination, we will interact with several scholars so as to reflect properly the nature of the complex Hegelian system, in order to get a better grip on Climacus’ own, yet no less complex philosophy concerning the subject-object relation. We will do this so that we can argue clearly for Climacus position that any and every philosophical system deriving from the rationalist tradition cannot prove the true content of the eternal.

### **Hegel’s Absolute Idealism: Looking into Its Epistemological Tenets and Metaphysical Implications**

In recent years, many and various attempts have been made in Hegel scholarship to shift Hegelian philosophy from its traditional place in metaphysics to epistemology so that Hegel’s philosophy otherwise known as “Absolute Idealism” can be saved. As I will show, Climacus rejects the absolute idealism of Hegel or Hegelian philosophy because it unifies transcendence and immanence into an undifferentiated singularity. Climacus stresses that the relation between transcendence and immanence does not



equal to the ordinary relation between subject and objects, because there is an infinite difference between them. This raises the question with which we will deal now as to how scholars view the Hegelian attempt to connect God and the world differently. Our intent is not to focus on giving an analysis of Hegelian thought, but rather to clarify the nature of Climacus' rejection of it. I will do this to show the unconvincing nature of the Hegelian argument regarding the relation between transcendence and immanence from Climacean point of view and how Hegelian connection between God and the world cannot escape Climacus' critique.

According to Karin De Boer, the attempts to move Hegel's philosophy, from its traditional place in metaphysics to epistemology were pursued as a result of Hegel's perceived connection to Kant's critical philosophy. In her view, one of the people who greatly influenced this turn in Hegelian scholarship was Robert Pippin. She writes:

Over the past few decades many attempts have been made to defend Hegel's philosophy against those who denounce it as crypto-theological, dogmatic metaphysics. This was done first of all by foregrounding Hegel's indebtedness to Kant, that is, by interpreting speculative science as a radicalization of Kant's critical project. This emphasis on Hegel's Kantian roots has resulted in a shift from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* to the *Science of Logic*. Robert Pippin's *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness* can be considered as having made one of the most influential contributions to this shift.<sup>7</sup>

De Boer maintains that "Pippin's 'non-metaphysical' interpretation of Hegel rightly contends that the *Science of Logic* does not pertain to a reality existing independently of thought." Rather, it pertains, De Boer claims, to "...thought's attempt to determine a priori what can be a possible thought of anything at all."<sup>8</sup> De Boer expresses a happy sympathy toward Pippin's view; she is sympathetic toward Pippin for properly grasping Hegel's philosophy in this respect, for De Boer believes that Hegel's connection to Kant's critical philosophy is essential. But, at this crucial juncture, where Pippin sees an epistemological relation between Hegel and Kant, De Boer states that he overlooks something extremely critical: how Hegel views the Kantian notion of self-consciousness.

According to De Boer, in thinking that the dialectical unity of self-consciousness frames the "original source of Hegel's hermetic claim about thought's self-determination," Pippin misses two important facts. First, he fails to note that, for Hegel, Kant's idea of self-consciousness is nothing

more than a concrete mirroring of pure concepts. Secondly, Pippin does not see that Kant's philosophy does not, as does Hegel's, eliminate the possibility of critical ontology;<sup>9</sup> it does not eliminate the possibility of metaphysics as Hegel believes.

De Boer asserts that Pippin rightly defends Hegel from his empiricist critics by resituating him in the critical camp of Kant. Unfortunately, however, De Boer states that Pippin does so at the cost of "sacrificing the question as to the possibility of ontology," a living question that is pivotal for both Kant and Hegel.<sup>10</sup> In other words, Pippin overlooks Hegel's failure to understand properly the metaphysical openness in Kant's transcendental philosophy. That is, Hegel turns Kant's philosophy into something purely scientific, where the self-consciousness permits no reference to the absolute other.

We have hit on an important issue. De Boer points out that, as a result of this focus, Hegel's scientific philosophy becomes a "rejection of the traditional Judeo-Christian conception of God." It rejects the idea of God as being wholly transcendent of, that is, wholly distinct and independent from, the human and natural sphere.<sup>11</sup> That is, Hegel's philosophy rejects the traditional idea of God as a transcendent being replacing it with the concept that is rooted in natural consciousness. The way in which Hegel does this is explained by another well-known critic, Louis Dupré:

Once the mind has overcome the opposition between itself and the object-out-there in the early stages of consciousness, it gradually synthesizes the two essential functions of knowledge: on the one hand to regard the object of consciousness as its own (*das Seinige*), and on the other hand, to project it into an ontic reality where it has more than a purely mental existence (*das Seiende*). It is a representation (*Vorstellung*).<sup>12</sup>

Here, he argues, Hegel asserts that the mind intuitively synthesizes itself and the absolute and becomes *eo ipso* transposed into a singular temporality.<sup>13</sup> After the synthesis, however, intuition is presented in such a way that it no longer belongs to temporality alone. It no longer belongs exclusively to the sense intuition but becomes a "free" temporality.<sup>14</sup> Dupré indicates that how the mind internalizes this new temporality is seen in Hegel's first stage of the representation of consciousness, which he calls "recollection" (*Erinnerung*). This recollection denotes both the meaning of temporality and the meaning

of internalization in Hegel. The way in which this recollection works is also explained by Dupré. He writes:

At first recollection of the intuition the intellect posits the content of feeling in its inwardness, in its own space and its own time. Thus it is an image freed from its first immediacy and its abstract isolation from others...The image is no longer completely determined as the intuition and it is deliberately or accidentally, isolated from the external place, time and immediate connection in which the intuition occurred. The image, taken for itself is transitional and the intellect is, in the form of attention, its time and space, its when and where.<sup>15</sup>

One way in which Hegel's or the Hegelian concept of recollection—as explained in this passage—can be understood is by considering how one chooses intuitions or associations to which he or she decides to pay attention. These recollected intuitions become idealized and detached from their original connections, attaining a certain universal form in representing other similar experiences.

However, the Hegelian system encounters a problem in this process of recollection; the idealized intuitions of human consciousness, although successive and connected, are not logically coherent. The intuitions of human consciousness are fulfilled or actualized in time, but these temporal intuitions are also bound to the timeless essence of the Absolute.<sup>16</sup> “In the recollection, the singular intuition is assumed into a representation with a universal content in spite of the non-sensible character of the intuition, with the form of the synthetic content remaining still singular.”<sup>17</sup>

According to another Hegel scholar, Michael Forster, Hegel's natural concept of recollection raises two difficult questions that must be answered. First, how is one to explain this theory of God and His relation to the world as being *de facto* God and the world simultaneously? That is “[H]ow exactly we are supposed to construe the (rather elegant) theory of the nature of God and his relation to man encapsulated in the two senses of the doctrine that the absolute is not only substance but also subject.”<sup>18</sup> How is the Absolute to be discerned as both a physical and metaphysical subject equally and at once? Second, Forster points out that the first problem leaves us with the task of choosing between the two theories of the “partially transcendent” and the “naturalistic” readings of Hegel.<sup>19</sup>

The very dilemma that we have in Hegel or Hegelian philosophy, according to Forster (as well as Dupré and Climacus), is that of identifying the divine and the world as two separate and yet one single being,

simultaneously. This, then, naturally raises a question: Does Hegel or Hegelian philosophy identify the divine as a transcendent being partially by preserving the identity of the divine as a transcendent being; or does its way of identifying the divine with the world deprive the divine of transcendence? With respect to the theory of the partially transcendent, the temporal sphere of the world belongs to God as God's essence, but in other aspects God transcends the temporal sphere. In the case of the naturalistic reading, God is identified directly with the world.<sup>20</sup> According to Forster, because of the nature of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, one has to choose the naturalistic reading.

Dupré argues that in this book Hegel identifies the mind with its psychological conditions that are expressed in physical behavior. Thus, in applying this idea to the object of the divine mind, one could conclude that God's "divine mind or self with its psychological conditions" would be "identical with its physical expression in the human and natural sphere."<sup>21</sup>

The ultimate consequence of this Hegelian contrivance, then, is none other than the elimination of the divine-world distinction. In contrast to the Judeo-Christian tradition, which distinguishes between the divine and the world, the Hegelian account of divine knowledge denotes the combined meanings of a mediated knowledge that is expressed externally to be taught, received, revealed and so on and something that is also expressed internally as "mechanically produced and placed within human beings."<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, the knowledge of the divine we find in Hegel or Hegelian philosophy turns out to be a false knowledge of the Christian knowledge of God that does not clearly indicate the absolute divine-human distinction. Instead, what we are exploring is an indication of the character of *philosophy, which speculates* the truth about the divine-human *relation as a singular entity*. Therefore, if anything, this Hegelian methodology represents the Socratic scheme that places religious truth within human reason; it attempts to define the world as existing in all of its particulars, which human thought runs through and encompasses.<sup>23</sup>

Climacus could not thus perceive the Hegelian concept of the divine and human in such a form in any other way than as a "natural synthesis." This is because the concept explicitly identifies the Hegelian project as a scientific understanding of the divine-world relation. As we have stated, from the Climacean point of view, the motive behind the Hegelian system of absolute idealism cannot be seen in any other way than as intending to achieve

objective knowledge about the world and human consciousness. The Hegelian system claims that it has gained objective insight into the various realms of human experience. Included in this insight is the objective or scientific understanding of the divine-world relation. However, this way of understanding of the divine-world relation is problematic for Climacus. For Climacus, in religion the relation between God and the world has to be essentially determined by their absolute distinction. However, this view of the relation between God and the world is a naturalistic one; the divine loses its character of absolute distinction from the world.

### **The Problem of Hegelian Philosophy's Elimination of the Transcendent**

We now come to another matter regarding Hegelian philosophy that is problematic from Climacus' point of view. We will discuss this point as a part of our general analysis of Hegelian philosophy, which we addressed at the beginning of this chapter as being an indefensible speculative system that attempts to unify transcendence and the world into a single undifferentiated entity. We do this for the same reason, i.e. to show how Climacus sees the failure of the Hegelian attempt to unify the divine and the world as overlooking the relation of basic distinction between God and the world.

In our study so far, we saw that, in Hegel, the problem of objectifying the transcendent occurs in such a way that one's subjective interest in the transcendent is defined on the basis of one's historical understanding of it. One's conceptual picture of the universe becomes such that "God and the world are one reality, and not two." That is, "the developing world of nature and finite spirit is an unfolding of Absolute Spirit itself." From the perspective of Climacus or Climacean philosophy, in Hegel the world is formed out of God's own essence in his historical self-advancing process; this thinking abnegates God's divine transcendence.

This elimination of the transcendent in Hegel or Hegelian philosophy is problematic for Climacus for two basic reasons. First, as was already discussed, for Climacus or from the Climacean perspective, the elimination of the transcendent ultimately results in the extirpation of the God of Christianity. Second, the Hegelian analysis of the scientific universe undermines a profound human dimension, namely, the experience of one's self in relation with other human beings and general affairs of the world. Its

objective analysis of the world relinquishes the most unique quality of every human person, namely, existence or freedom.

According to Climacus, the problem of the Hegelian synthesis is that it ignores human freedom, which is at the core of Climacus' anthropology as the very foundation of human existence. Although one always exists in the world of flight and precariousness, and constantly walks "the razor edge between...finitude and responsibility," people have what an existentialist theologian John Macquarrie calls unbounded freedom, which characterizes the existence of one's infinite passion for or toward the transcendent.<sup>24</sup>

We saw above that philosophy occupies an important place in religion for Climacus; it asks crucial and often critical questions relating to various topics in epistemology and metaphysics. But this does not mean that Climacus does not understand the different methods used by philosophy and theology. Although there are some parallels between philosophy and theology, in terms of their cognitive exercises, Climacus acknowledges that a theologian, unlike a philosopher, operates within a different epistemological framework; a theologian bases his thought on different ontological grounds with respect to the transcendent.

This religious framework, Climacus says, is what is essentially missing in Hegelian philosophy. In removing the principle of contradiction between the eternal and the world, Hegelian philosophy denies the ontological difference between theology and philosophy. And, consequently, it cannot acknowledge that there is an eternal content in theology (faith) that is not present in philosophy.<sup>25</sup> The problem that Climacus sees in Hegelian philosophy is that it bases religion on an abstract synthetic construction of the transcendent and the natural world. This removes the quality of true transcendence that Climacus thinks is essential in religion or for doing theology.

Some have argued that Hegel's act of positing a scientific concept of religion is an attempt to link religion to modernity, while trying to clarify the nature of religion at the deepest level and not just imitate the modern way of understanding it.<sup>26</sup> This may be true. However, the bottom line for Climacus or Climacean argument is that in the Hegelian concept of the Absolute, the otherness of God is eliminated. Here God is a transcendent being only within the proclivity of the natural mind. The scientific concept of the Absolute found in Hegelian philosophy is "modeled on a certain understanding of self-transcendent being." According to one scholar, William Desmond, Hegel's

Absolute can be described as follows: it is a being in which the mind or Spirit unjustly “surpasses an initial indefiniteness, that others itself, determines itself as other to its initial indefiniteness.”<sup>27</sup> At a deeper level, the otherness in Hegel is identical with the self, which is why he cannot account for the otherness of the other. Hegel’s scientific concept of the Absolute, Desmond rightly says, is something of an irreverent scheme of “thought’s erotic opening to the transcendent being” beyond the limits of thought. Hegel’s concept transmutes God and the world into a clever synergy of logical tautology that in reality does not exist.

Climacus objects to the Hegelian synthesizing of God and world. Nevertheless he concedes that there is something transcendent, something sacred, in all of us. This inwardness is the field of passion. Passion “is the driving force of a life lived in touch” with this sacred.<sup>28</sup> According to Climacus, it is because human beings live with this sense of the sacred that makes life what it is, with all of its qualifying meanings and value. The philosophical description in Hegelian philosophy is one in which the world’s relation to the other is neutralized, even though what makes this Hegelian attempt to synthesize God and world possible in the first place is the inward experience of the sacred at the deepest level. Climacus, however, describes the world in dialectical relation with the sacred eternal.<sup>29</sup> Unlike Hegelian philosophy, which comprehends the world in a purely intellectual way and thus eviscerates morality and freedom, Climacus emphasizes experiences as those that are determined by the sacred nature of the relation humans have with the eternal other—God.

The first basic problem—concerning the nature of the divine-human relation we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—then raises for Climacus the question of the historical concept of the eternal in Hegelian philosophy with respect to how this concept reduces the eternal to an absolute immanent being. For Climacus, the God that this philosophy presents is not the true divine being who is absolutely different and distinct from the world. Rather, this God is used in a historical scheme of unifying the divine and the world scientifically through the misidentified means of the world’s history.

From another Climacean perspective, this historical scheme would be something that is carried out in a way similar to what Dale M. Schlitte calls the “dialectic of Trinitarian self-revelation speculatively interpreted as self-positing subject and philosophically reformulated as absolute reconciling

Spirit.”<sup>30</sup> Schlitte argues correctly that, in Hegelian philosophy, God-in-time, which is “the greatest possible, the infinite qualitative remove from being God, and therefore profoundest cognition” in Christianity is only an occasion within the unfolding history that depicts the greater aim of natural salvation of the world.<sup>31</sup> Thus, it poses a problem regarding the eternal, i.e. that the idea of the eternal is determined by the measure of the historical human understanding. God as depicted in Hegelian idealism is only that which is formulated via the self’s transcendental nature and ability to transcend the world’s historical order. Although it would be more than just “the determined sequences of natural causation or the capricious variations and occurrences of the natural world,” God’s appearance in history as depicted in Hegelian philosophy would still be an idea based on the undifferentiated unity of the eternal and the world, and not something eternal that Climacus or Christianity would have it, is part of the divine task of redeeming the world from its partial and ambiguous nature.<sup>32</sup> The Hegelian move toward concretizing the eternal in a worldly form through a scientific approach in theological terms clearly denies the free act of God in its disclosure of God’s prophetic communication in Jesus and the theological value of patience in waiting for the final disclosure of history’s end in the *parousia*, the coming of God’s kingdom in history. The Hegelian concept of the world in its natural form as such shows that the world is founded on historical sequences of causes and effects.

The Hegelian concept of the world depicts human beings as caught in this worldly system of cause and effect and their wish to be freed from this complex historical flux. This deliverance, then, is carried out through the means of the self’s transcendental capacity for the eternal spirit, rising toward the world of pure being, an idea similar to those held by classical and the neo-classical idealists.<sup>33</sup> In their historical existence human beings certainly experience the eternal. Furthermore, their individual existence is driven by the infinite passion for the eternal—due to which one’s being is always one of trepidation—for which their ultimate task in life is to satisfy their yearning to reconcile their existence with the eternal. However, such reconciliation with the eternal is possible, for Climacus, only if one makes the leap from historical existence to the higher realm of the eternal.

For Climacus, the Hegelian formulation of the Absolute remains a concept that has been “volatilized and diffused in its heavenward emigration.” Strictly speaking, we find no “heavenward emigration” in the



formulation. If anything, it can be seen as a psychological scientific journey that begins and ends in history.

In contrast, Climacus sees world history only as a byproduct of one's existence, and it does not have precedence over the human individual. Over against the Hegelian claim, Climacus holds that the historical enters existence through its higher capacity for freedom, the issue that is central to his philosophy of existence as transcending history. He explains in *Postscript*:

In the world-historical, an essential role is played by factors of another kind, different from the ethical-dialectical: namely, the accidental circumstances, that play of forces in which the reshaping totality of historical life absorbs the individual's action in order to transform it into something different that does not directly belong to him...Spoiled by constant association with world history, people want the momentous and only that, are concerned only with the accidental, the world-historical outcome, instead of being concerned with the essential, the innermost, freedom, the ethical.<sup>34</sup>

The Hegelian treatment of freedom in a negative context clearly violates the eminent place accorded by Climacus to one's existence over history. According to a contemporary Kierkegaard scholar, George Pattison, Climacus/Kierkegaard would object to Hegel and the Hegelians' negative treatment of existence that constitutes the world "as a system of purely formal relationships from which nothing can be inferred concerning any existing states of affairs and which are valid in themselves no matter what states of affairs may actually hold in the world."<sup>35</sup> This statement is extremely fitting, given that, for Climacus, it is ultimately an ethical individual, and not history, who affects the world with all of his or her achievements. Pattison explains, concerning the ethical nature of every human individual that apprehends one's moral vocation in the world, that:

[E]thics and the ethical, by being the essential stronghold of individual existence, have an irrefutable claim upon every existing individual, an irrefutable claim of such a nature that whatever a person achieves in the world, even the most amazing thing, is nevertheless dubious if he himself has not been ethically clear when he chose and has not made his choice ethically clear to himself.<sup>36</sup>

Malantschuk conveys a similar view, claiming that Climacus cannot see the world as created or annulled in such a way as Hegel or his philosophy depicts. The world, for Climacus, Malantschuk says, is ultimately a place in

which humans live and have their being, living out their concrete existence in the realm of transcendental freedom. One's freedom in the world constantly permeates one's physical existence, making one ever conscious of the presence of the eternal in spiritual existence.<sup>37</sup> As Climacus himself contends in *Postscript*:

If a logical system [of Hegel] is to be constructed, it is especially necessary to take care not to include in it anything which is subject to the dialectic of existence, that is, which 'is' in the sense of existing or as having existed and not as simply being.<sup>38</sup>

### Summary

In chapter four, we examined the two polarizing views of Climacus and Hegelian philosophy on the meaning of the divine-human relation. The Hegelian definition of this relation is that the absolute force of reason subsumes history, in which the divine is subsumed by reason. Climacus' critique of Hegelian concept of reason is such a way absolutizes itself to the measure that it swallows up all that is in the world, including religion, transcending the eternal.

However, even though Hegelian philosophy transmutes God and the world into a historical synergy and presents a conceptualized relation of the two in which the law of logic does not apply, and thus misses their lawful distinction—and for him this is problematic—his main concern is not with its reasoning as such. Rather, the problem of the Hegelian concept with respect to the divine and the world is the way in which their relation is constructed as such, as historically synergized. Climacus does not eliminate the possibility of thinking about the relation between the eternal and the world, but with how it is conceived.

According to a twentieth century Hegel scholar, Richard Kroner, Hegel was the first modern philosopher to attribute to human sense experience the status of "the original type of all experience of knowledge," and to exclusively investigate its relation to human experience of the world.<sup>39</sup> According to Kroner, the full importance of the experience of the world, in terms of humans' immediate awareness of it was first recognized and became highly admired in Europe during the Romantic period. It was during this period, he explains, that Hegel first called attention to the broad scope and the important meaning of human experience, with the purpose of achieving scientific inquiry about the world and human consciousness. Kroner asserts

correctly that Hegel claimed that he had gained philosophical insight into all of the spheres of human experience, based on his sense experience of the world.<sup>40</sup> Yet, to hold to Hegel or Hegelians' romantic understanding of the world would, for Climacus, be to view the world as a banal hypothetical reality.

Nevertheless, although Hegelian philosophy has produced what, for Climacus, would be a hypothetical concept of the actual subject-object relation in their absolute distinction, this concept is nonetheless based on the self-understanding of the subject-object relation that cannot be simply dismissed as unwarranted. For Climacus, the Hegelian concept of the subject-object relation in a form of hypothetical nature would imply that it resulted from the actual experience of the eternal subject. For Climacus, the concept has its roots in one's historical experience of the eternal.

As we already have argued, in *Fragments* we can state that its Pseudonymous author, Johannes Climacus, apparently asserts that there is a dialectical connection or point of contact between reason and the eternal. This connection, however, is not an absolute connection; this, for Climacus, does not exist. The connection here is one that is relative one in which there is a general knowledge or understanding of the eternal although it cannot be proven. We saw above in the chapter two of our analysis of Husserl's transcendental system, how Husserl asserts intentionality in human consciousness and the formulation of Climacus' point of the eternal in human subjectivity or passion. Even as Climacus argues against Hegelian philosophy in *Fragments*, he does not reject categorically the possibility of a certain kind(s) of historical point of contact between reason and the eternal. As Habib Malik, in his *Receiving Søren Kierkegaard*, rightly points out, Climacus' (Kierkegaard for Malik) understanding of the relation between faith and reason is not one in which there is complete disharmony. According to Malik, Climacus, even as he rejects the idea of total harmony between faith and reason, nonetheless does not insert "an unbridgeable chasm as with Tertullian's *credo quia absurdum*."<sup>41</sup>

As we also have seen in our own study, Climacus' concept of faith and its relation to reason does not completely discount the possibility of bridging the gap between them. On the contrary, Climacus would acknowledge that there is an eternal element in every human being, and as a result every person exists in connection with and relates to the eternal—both epistemologically and existentially.

A matter that is intrinsically connected to this problem—as we discussed above with regard to the eternal-world relation—is the question that Climacus raises on the significance of the concrete place of human existence in the world over against the Hegelian method of neutralizing the world in relation to the eternal. What is crucially at stake here for Climacus—should one accept the Hegelian understanding of the eternal-world relation—is the loss of freedom in human existence. Freedom, Climacus says, is the essential mark of every individual. As such, it has priority over the Hegelian concept of historical necessity or determination.

For Climacus, this freedom is not to be understood as having an exclusive character outside of God's divine attribute of omnipotence or sovereignty, as we saw in chapter three. Therefore, in the next chapter of our investigation, we will examine the meaning of freedom in Climacus. Obtaining a clear understanding of freedom in Climacus will help us to understand his position with respect to this topic better, namely, as one who not only absolutely singularizes the category of the eternal from reason but also conflates them as historically coexisting for an individual.

Prior to this discussion on freedom we will explore some concepts that Climacus treats in *Fragments* (i.e., coming into existence, religious and reasonable faith, moment, leap and so on). We will do this in order to strengthen our view of Climacus as a paradoxical thinker who historically bridges what is otherwise the absolute gap between God and the world by the means of reasonableness of human thinking with respect to the eternal.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 86-7. Here, in regard to divine revelation Climacus writes: "What has been said here applies to the directly historical, whose contradiction is only that it has come into existence." In the footnote to this statement he writes: "Here the word 'contradiction' must not be taken in the volatilized sense into which Hegel has misled himself and others and miscast contradiction itself—namely, that it has the power to produce something."

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 53.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Kroner, *Culture and Faith* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 19.

<sup>4</sup> See this discussion on "The Concept of Subjectivity" in this thesis 28-59.

<sup>5</sup> Kroner, *Culture and Faith*, 19-20.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>7</sup> Karin De Boer, "The Dissolving Force of the Concept: Hegel's Ontological Logic," *The Review of Metaphysics* 57 (June 2004): 787.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 788.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 789.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid..

<sup>12</sup> Louis Dupré, “Religion as Representation,” in *The Legacy of Hegel: Proceedings of the Marquette Hegel Symposium 1970*, ed. J. J. O. Malley, K. W. Algozin etc. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 139.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>18</sup> Michael N. Forster, *Hegel’s Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1998), 197.

<sup>19</sup> Dupré, “Religion as Representation,” 141.

<sup>20</sup> Forster, *Hegel’s Idea*, 196.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>22</sup> Peter C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures of the Philosophy of Religion*, 115.

<sup>23</sup> Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel’s Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 16.

<sup>24</sup> John Macquarrie, *Studies in Christian Existentialism: Lectures and Essays by John Macquarrie* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), 7.

<sup>25</sup> Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 304-05.

<sup>26</sup> William Desmond, “Hegel’s God, Transcendence, and the Counterfeit Doubles: A Figure of Dialectical Equivocity,” *The Owl of Minerva: Journal of Hegel Society of America* 36, no. 2 (2005): 92.

<sup>27</sup> Desmond, *Hegel’s God: A Counterfeit Double?* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited Gower House, 2003), 6.

<sup>28</sup> Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard’s Critique of Reason and Society* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), 46. Westphal actually uses the term “idea” instead of “sacred”, arguing that these two terms are interchangeable in Kierkegaard/Climacus.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>30</sup> Dale M. Schlitte, *Hegel’s Trinitarian Claim: A Critical Reflection* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), 11.

<sup>31</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 127.

<sup>32</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: Human Destiny* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1964), 2: 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 11-14. According to Niebuhr, in the classical tradition, Plato believed that the true lover of knowledge always strove toward becoming immersed in “the higher principle of pure abstraction free to contemplate and aspire to the knowledge of the unknown. In the neo-classical tradition, Plotinus declared that, though we find not so much the rational principle of soul, there is, still, “the power of self-consciousness which contemplates itself until it is united

and becomes identified with the ‘Authentic Being’ of the final ‘Good.’” In both cases, the concept of the Absolute Good or Being was depicted as the immutable underlying essence of the mutable universe. Furthermore, human understanding was the force that would make it possible for them to ascend into the world of the Absolute.

<sup>34</sup> Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 135.

<sup>35</sup> George Pattison, *The Philosophy of Kierkegaard* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 14.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>37</sup> Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard’s Concept*, 18.

<sup>38</sup> Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 109.

<sup>39</sup> Kroner, *Culture and Faith*, 19.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Malik C. Habib, *Receiving Søren Kierkegaard: The Early Impact and Transmission of His Thought* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 173.

# Chapter V: The Relation between Faith and Reason

## The Distinction between Faith (Eternal) and Reason (Historical)

We began this study by citing the main problem in *Philosophical Fragments*: Climacus' assertion that faith and reason are irreconcilable. Given this main thematic structure of the text, we have contended that he evidently argues for the objectivity of the eternal. Thus the title of this book: The reasonableness of faith. To support this argument, we have presented a number of instances in the text where he advocates the objectivity of the truth—God.

In chapter two of our study, we referred to a number of places in the text that support our thesis. One such instance is where he states that human beings are not outside the truth, i.e. they are still within the truth in spite of the fact that, as a result of sin, they have been deprived of the condition of being able to know the truth. He showed this by demonstrating the similarity between the Socratic principle of recollection and the Christian doctrines of creation and sin; both principles declare that truth is innate to human beings.

In chapter three we gave our argument for the objectivity of the eternal in *Fragments* by stating that Climacus argues for the objectivity of the absolute paradox, God-in-time. There we said that the paradox reveals itself in all its historical features (i.e. prophecies, miracles and so on) to the human understanding so that the latter can comprehend its identity as the eternal cognitively. We gave textual evidence from chapter three of *Fragments* to support our argument for the objectivity of the eternal in general and the paradox in particular. We said that in chapter three Climacus gives what we may call his argument for the *a priori* understanding of the eternal, which is that one can “never reason in conclusion to existence but reason its existence to conclusion.” That is, one can never conceive of an object if the object as such does not exist; one can only conceive an object because an object exists. In the encounter with the paradox, one conceives of its objectivity, namely, the eternal. But it is conceived of as a paradox. In other words, in the encounter one appropriates the paradox in its historically contradictory being, the God-in-time.

In chapter four, we presented our argument for the objectivity of the eternal by using Hegelian philosophy as an example. In *Fragments*, Climacus refers to Hegel, and Hegelian philosophy in *Fragments* as something to be refuted. He asserts that Hegel attempts to objectify the eternal through the method of absolute philosophy by uniting God and the world in a form of human consciousness, an attempt that consequently naturalizes the eternal. Whether his critique is aimed at Hegel or at a particular Danish theologian (Martenson)—as Jon Stewart argues—who was utilizing Hegelian philosophy for theology lies outside the boundaries of our discussion. Here we will only explore how this particular system of thought attempts to define the eternal in purely theoretical terms in contrast to how Christianity understands the eternal.

Here in chapter five we will argue that Climacus sees faith as reasonable. We will thus assert that while it is correct to characterize Climacus in a fideistic way as someone who sees no qualitative relation between faith and reason, it is also true that he views reason as capable of objectively appropriating the eternal, and thus acknowledging its existence. In order to strengthen our argument—for the reasonableness of faith or the objectivity of the eternal—we will examine the meaning of certain concepts Climacus introduces in *Fragments*. The first concept we will discuss is that of “Coming into Existence.”

### **“Coming into Existence”**

What Climacus calls the concept of “coming into existence” is quite relevant to our discussion on the relation between faith and reason in *Fragments*. It depicts and reaffirms our argument for the relation between human thinking and the eternal.

The problem of faith and reason in *Fragments* is cogently explicated by Climacus in a section called “Interlude.” There Climacus introduces this concept for the first time. Its basic meaning is that any thing that comes into existence is temporal in nature. He defines this concept as “change,” in the sense that what comes into being is a transition from non-being. This temporal transition from non-being to being indicates that being has its origin in the world.

He also explains that this meaning of coming into existence is a concept that is much abused. He states that in Hegelian philosophy, for instance, this temporal concept equated with “necessity.” In contrast to the temporal



meaning contained in the concept of coming into existence, necessity makes the “non-historical” equivalent in meaning to the eternal. Climacus notes that Hegel or Hegelian philosophy confuses these two concepts. For that reason, he asserts that: “It is the perfection of the eternal to have no history, and of all that is, only the eternal has absolutely no history”<sup>1</sup> His position is that contrary to coming into existence, which denotes the temporal meaning of anything that has come into being from non-being, necessity is based on the ontological status of a being that is not subject to change. As he argues:

Can the necessary come into existence? Coming into existence is a change, but since the necessary is always related to itself and is related to itself in the same way, it cannot be changed at all. Precisely by coming into existence, everything that comes into existence demonstrates that it is not necessary, for the only thing that cannot come into existence is the necessary, because [the idea of the necessary indicates that the] necessary *is*.<sup>2</sup>

He argues that because “All coming into existence occurs in freedom,” it cannot exist “by necessity.”<sup>3</sup> Because all temporal beings are contingent beings, they are simply effects of a particular cause. In other words, they are not self-existent beings. The concept of coming into existence thus indicates everything that is not eternal.

According to Climacus, the idea of the historical (coming into existence) denotes successive moments of transition in time. For that reason, Climacus eliminates any kind of understanding of the past as necessary because any past occurrence, he argues, is historical or temporal in nature. For example, for him, a person’s knowledge of the historical record of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is something that can be viewed only from a distance. It is something that is remembered in the present but only as a possible occurrence that could only have taken place two thousand years ago. Accordingly, the truth or falsity of this past occurrence of God’s presence in time depends on if a person will chooses to believe or disbelieve the historical record of its occurrence.

To illustrate, a person could become sure of the truth of a past event by examining certain evidence that supplies sufficient coherence and consistency to convince the person to believe that that event occurred (i.e. we can learn about the murder of innocent Jews by the Nazis through the media). Of course we are talking here about believing in the ordinary sense. Here all of the existential faculties (i.e. epistemological, metaphysical, moral,

social and so) are employed to provide the person with certainty concerning the event within the existential constitution of the corresponding relation between the past event and the person's belief in the actuality of that event. But if the person has not actually witnessed the event (as it occurred at the time it did), that person is vulnerable to believing that this event may not have occurred after all. This means that the single occurrence of the paradox of God's historical revelation in time—our issue at hand—cannot escape this form of doubt either. Consequently, the historical cannot coincide with the eternal. However, Climacus also acknowledges that a particular event in history defied this rational principle and came to mark the entrance of the eternal into time: God's appearance in the world. How can God, who is eternal, ever enter the temporal world of time? *Fragments* does not give an apt explanation for this question. What it gives is the declaration that the event of God's divine revelation in the world did occur and, as such, does not conform to human understanding.

How does Climacus deal with the paradox of the historical occurrence of God's revelation in the world—the very core of his argument? He does it by taking the theological approach that separates and maintains the identity of the eternal and the world, and by maintaining the historical strength of human reason that is capable of relating itself to the eternal.

In chapter four we showed how the Hegelian system of absolute idealism attempted to unite the eternal and the world univocally. We saw that the result of that was that the distinction between the eternal and the world was transformed into a single natural eternal-historical relation.<sup>4</sup> We saw how that distinction was so thoroughly undermined that there could no longer be any distinction between the two. Consequently, the eternal and the world made the one and the same being. For that reason, we saw that Climacus vehemently objected to the Hegelian concept of the eternal-world relation because it confused the categories of the eternal (necessary) and the historical (coming into existence). This is the argument he gives:

What has been said here [of Hegelian philosophy] applies to the directly historical, whose contradiction is only that it has come into existence, whose contradiction is only that of coming into existence, for here again one must not be deluded into thinking that it would be easier to understand that something has come into existence after it has come into existence than before it has come into existence. Anyone who thinks this still does not understand that it has come into existence; he has only the sensation and the cognitive immediacy of the present, which do not contain the coming into existence.<sup>5</sup>

In the above text we see how Climacus objects to the Hegelian concept of necessity because necessity then becomes transformed into something historical. For Climacus, the concept of necessity originally denotes the idea of unchangeableness, over against Hegel's idea that something acquires permanency in the process of the world's historical development. He writes:

What has happened has happened and cannot be undone; thus it cannot be changed. Is this unchangeableness the unchangeableness of necessity? The unchangeableness of the past has been brought about change, by the change of coming into existence, but unchangeableness such as that does not exclude all change, since it has not excluded this one.<sup>6</sup>

For this reason, the historical occurrence of God's revelation in time, for example, cannot be viewed in terms of the Hegelian scheme. Because of his eternal essence, God must maintain transcendent identity that is separate from the historical world.

The theological significance of the concept of necessity in its relation to history is that, from the point of view of philosophical idealism, God's revelation in the world is "an-occurrence-made-necessary." Second, God cannot, for that matter, be free from the confines of this dialectical necessity.<sup>7</sup> According to Climacus, the paradox of such a sort cannot be historically plausible in philosophic idealism—it dismisses the character of the paradox' eternal-historical union. It is not that the Hegelian system rejects the idea of God's revelation in history, his free act of penetrating time from eternity. What it rejects is the view that such a religious event should be viewed as above reason. Religion is an element within the system of reason. Religion is a part of dialectical self-movement of the absolute Spirit. As a dialectically immature dimension of human consciousness, religion is overcome by the "immediacy" of insight to which the absolute Spirit develops. Hegelian philosophy makes religion subordinate to reason.<sup>8</sup>

Evidently, for Hegel, religion is inferior to reason. It is the task of philosophy and not religion to help a person arrive at his or her final destiny. Religion or faith is not dependent on grace; religion is not "the work of God's own performance, brought about as a result of the 'decision of God's gracious and almighty will fixed in eternity'" through the "Mediator by whom salvation had to be earned."<sup>9</sup> This would only be the case for Christianity.

From the Christian perspective, the problem in Hegelian philosophy is that God's historical revelation is defined from a purely historical standpoint, thereby failing to recognize the supernatural character to the occurrence. Whereas Hegel takes a natural idealist position on the paradox of God's divine revelation as something that is subordinate to human reason, Climacus' account of the paradox from the religious standpoint is such that God's revelation in the world must be characterized in both eternal and historical terms (divine and human) and not deprived of its distinction from the historical world through being placed in a philosophical scheme. What the paradox requires is that one understand it through faith and not through some sort of historical disclosure. Climacus takes issue with the Hegelian system because of its historical interpretation of faith and the fact that it makes faith inferior to reason. Climacus' own interpretation is that faith as generally conveyed in Hegelianism is nothing other than what Jon Stewart calls a "conceptual necessity" in history. Thus, some explanation about these two types of belief (religious and historical) is needed.

### **Religious Faith *versus* Historical Belief**

Climacus discusses the first meaning of faith in the context of Hegelian philosophy, which states that all that occurs in history does so by necessity. But over against this doctrine Climacus states that any historical event occurs by a certain natural form of "freely acting cause," in terms of its important distinction between necessity and changeableness.<sup>10</sup> Of course, the idea of a freely acting cause of change for Climacus does not apply, for Climacus, to anything that exists physically in terms of position, figure, color, and so on; instead, it applies to that in which "something hitherto merely possible is translated into reality [actuality]."<sup>11</sup> This particular notion of change, then, is what he means by the concept of coming into existence.

The act of something coming into existence proves its non-necessary character, as far as Climacus is concerned.<sup>12</sup> For that reason, any existence that has come into being could be claimed as a change that has occurred in freedom.<sup>13</sup> It is something structurally historical: "Everything that has come into existence is *eo ipso* historical, for even if no further historical predicate can be applied to it, the crucial predicate of the historical can still be predicated, namely, that it has come into existence."<sup>14</sup>

What makes him arrive at this conclusion concerning the historical change of coming into existence is his "historical-ideal perspective" as an

observing subject. He argues that an observing subject is curious about the concept of change as well as aware that the meaning of what exists cannot be determined simply on the basis of its observable traits. According to Climacus, every coming into existence invariably raises the inevitable question for the subject: how has the change taken place beyond what can be observed? Every change of coming into existence, says Climacus, invokes interest in the observer about the very philosophical construal of the way in which the change has occurred. Thus, he argues that the meaning of change calls for conceptual modification in one's thinking.

Unfortunately, however, one's knowledge of a historical change always remains uncertain to a person. This is not because there is a quantitative time gap between the observer and what is observed. Rather, it is because an observer is uncertain about the answer to the how question of the change. That is, an observer is uncertain about the basis (source) and cause of a change. Climacus asserts that no change occurs outside time. Every change, he states, takes place within time. When a change is observed, an observer is moved by the "wonderousness" of the act "developed in the deepest self-reflection."<sup>15</sup> Climacus would have no difficulty calling this passive experience of being moved by wonder a kind of belief. This experience evokes the question of the meaning or concept of the experience (wonder) outside the world of empirical observation. But this question, according to Climacus, always remains unanswered, having achieved no self-evident reality of the meaning or concept of the experience.<sup>16</sup> One's self-reflecting experience of wonder about a change, even though it always remains a matter of perplexity, is what he would call a kind of belief in the unknown source and the cause of the experience.

The implication here is obvious: there is a correspondence between an object and a subject in that the subject is aware of the legitimacy of the how question with respect to an existing object. The person conceives of the object without actually knowing it. Climacus would define the paradox of the Incarnation as the event that validates its claim by its consistent demonstration of empirical proof (i.e., various miracles, such as the incident of Jesus walking on water, turning water into wine, or raising the dead). He would argue that this event evokes wonder or belief even in a person who may not know the actual meaning of the event or how it can exist.

This particular meaning of wonder is discussed in *Fragments* in connection with the experience of perceiving a star. According to Climacus,

when a person feels awe when observing a star, he or she becomes absorbed in wonder about seeing how this particular object has come into existence. When a person sees this object, he or she questions its meaning: How did it come to be? However, once the person begins to reflect on its existence, to think about how this object came into being, the object becomes uncertain to the person: “When the perceiver sees a star, the star becomes dubious for him the moment he seeks to become aware that it has come into existence. It is just as if reflection removed the star from his senses.”<sup>17</sup> Climacus declares that once the person begins to think about its existence the object (star) becomes a mystery to one’s understanding. It is perplexing in the sense that this object becomes both a certainty and an uncertainty. It is a certainty to the extent that it exists but an uncertainty in the sense that it offers no knowledge about how it came to be. As much as the one who sees the object is certain of its being, this certainty also includes the uncertainty of how this object ever came into existence.

This dual character of an object’s certainty and uncertainty causes one both to acknowledge and deny the relation between the perceived and the ideal dimensions of the object.<sup>18</sup> On the one hand, one might think that Climacus is dividing thinking into two realms, the sensory and the ideal, and is using the category of the perceived to explain the ideal constitution of the object symbolically. On the other hand, it may seem that Climacus views the perceived and the ideal as equal. Whatever the case may be, what is apparent is that an object’s dual aspect of certainty and uncertainty is unique. It is unique in the sense that it acknowledges the conceptual dimension of the object without the certitude of the meaning of this dimension. Climacus writes: “This is precisely the nature of belief...continually present as the nullified in the certitude is the belief the incertitude that in every way corresponds to the uncertainty of coming into existence.”<sup>19</sup>

This, then, is the kind of description Climacus gives of the paradox in *Fragments*. He argues that one can identify the paradox as what it is—the paradox—but not understand how the event takes place.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, with respect to the paradox, the illusiveness of this event is that one does not know how it has come to be. That is, one has questions about the *meaning* of its existence; its meaning is uncertain. As we have already argued, the problem with the paradox is not that it does not exist but, rather, how the event occurs in time. But, because one can never be sure about the actuality of the event, Climacus believes that one’s belief in the paradox is always

emerging from one's inward being, one's subjectivity. It must emerge from one's internal being even if sufficient proof of the event does not exist. As Alastair Hannay rightly asserts, for Climacus:

This certainty (the kind which “emerges out of [the] uncertainty”) could not be self-deception; for the systematic absence of the sort of information needed to acquire the impression that such a revision was needed means that any state of mind corresponding to the facts being so or not so *has* to originate in the subject rather than the object. In this case, therefore, that the explanation of one's subsequently believing something should be that one had chosen to do so is not an irrational thought, nor the corresponding project of deciding to believe an incoherent one. On the contrary, it is a requirement of one very central kind of belief, the kind most naturally associated with faith as acceptance of the truth of a proposition in the absence of sufficient reason.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, with respect to how the paradox comes to be we may argue that Climacus maintains that belief in the paradox is reasonable, even though it cannot be concretely proven. Climacus asserts the reasonableness of the paradox based on its claim about itself as God Incarnate. He does so even though the historical particularity of the paradox does not itself provide the necessary evidence for its identity. Thus the problem thus for Climacus is not the actual occurrence of the paradox, i.e. the question of whether it actually occurred. Rather, the problem for him is how the paradox came into existence, which is a question to which no final answer can be given.

### **Objectivity and Subjectivity in Climacus**

Some disagree with our view that Climacus is a thinker who believes that our faith in the eternal or the paradox is reasonable. For instance, a critic, Caleb Miller, argues that Climacus (Kierkegaard in Miller's view) is a subjectivist who has an incorrect understanding of religious faith as purely an inward experience. Miller is following another critic, Robert Adams, who expresses that what is commonly known as Climacus' (Kierkegaard's in Adams' view) notion of objective knowledge as approximation is incorrect. According to Adams and Miller, Climacus dispenses with objective reasoning about faith completely. They argue that, for Climacus, objectivity is “an approximation” and, as such, is “essentially incommensurable with an infinite personal interest in an eternal happiness.”<sup>22</sup>

According to Miller the objective dimension of faith does not have concrete significance in Climacus since it is something always subjective. Miller agrees with Climacus that, when it comes to thinking, faith is ultimately about one's inward experience of the eternal and therefore transcends reason. Faith, Miller declares, is all about taking the risk of believing or accepting in the face of all doubt disbelief. He goes on to say faith is one's inward commitment to accepting an irrational idea (i.e., God's existence and revelation).

However, Miller believes that there is still some significance to how a person may think objectively about a proposition or an object that gives no proper ground for its being. But such an idea of objective significance of human reason in its relation to faith, he says, is absent in Climacus. Miller contends that "objective reasoning in support of a [religious] claim is reasoning which would be taken by virtually all rational persons who understand it, to confirm the claim in question."<sup>23</sup> This idea, Miller says, is missing in Climacus. According to Miller, the evidence and practical significance of one's historical knowledge of an object or event have an assisting role in determining one's commitment to believing an uncertain proposition or idea, such as God's existence. This practical significance of one's historical knowledge with respect to the eternal, Miller says, is nowhere to be found in Climacus.

However, Miller's assumption is quite misguided. He is incorrect in viewing Climacus as an irrationalist who does not think that one can think about an object or an event that gives no sufficient evidence, such as God's existence. Let me elaborate.

The argument made by Miller and others against Climacus is apparently caused by Climacus' unique account of human subjectivity. The latter's understanding of human subjectivity can seem, at first glance, to cast doubt on the significant role of human reason in objectively discerning objects that do not provide immediate evidence of themselves. For that reason, from the perspective of Miller and those who hold this view, the objectivity of human reason is completely subsumed by subjectivity in Climacus. To Miller and others, Climacus' idea of one's infinite personal interest (in the eternal) indicates a complete absence of objectivity substance in human thinking with respect to everything that lacks immediate proof. For example, they see Climacus as condemning objectivity of human thought as nonsense and



intruding on subjectivity because of his firm claim that human subjectivity is the only epistemological basis of religious knowledge.

However, the argument made by Miller and others does not do full justice to the true meaning of subjectivity in Climacus, since his argument only describes a half of what the idea (subjectivity) actually stands for. Here is why. According to another commentator, Richard Coolidge, Climacus' concept of subjectivity expresses a meaning called "subjective ontology."<sup>24</sup> Subjective ontology, he says, is an "anti-essentialist" rejection of ontology. What does that mean? It means that what we may call Climacus' existential analysis of human subjectivity is something that is structured within a subtle but explicit ontology of the human self that is constituted by "the objective moral and religious content," which is frequently overlooked by critics.

The validity of Coolidge's argument is confirmed by the fact that Climacus situates human subjectivity within one's whole existence which consists of both objective and subjective dimensions, a fact that is often overlooked by his critics. In chapter two of our study, we argued that, according to Climacus, the question concerning truth is not about the truth as objectively achieved but about how one relates to it as a person. This means that Climacus asserts that one's objective belief with respect to an object is always an act of subjective passion that involves the person's whole being and not just his or her cognitive knowing [*Erkiendelse*] *per se*.<sup>25</sup> One's reasonable knowledge of the eternal, for instance, is always a form of knowing achieved in a way that is not strictly cognitive.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, Miller and others' viewing Climacus as depriving objectivity lies in that they overlook the meaning of the subjective as including objectivity.

### **The Concept of the "Offense"**

But to return to the question initially raised: What about the particularity of the historical event of God coming into time? That is, how is one to resolve the ambivalence of God's historical revelation in the world?

First, Climacus suggests that the essence of this phenomenon is not one in which what is *prima facie* eternal in essence has *eo ipso* become a historical being, that is, God transforming his eternal essence into historical being. Rather, the nature of the event, he explains, is such that the eternal God "has been" in time, and therefore sustains the idea of the "qualitative infinite distinction" of the eternal. In God's divine-human revelation, his eternal

essence is not compromised. In God's divine-human revelation, he remains both God and human.

Second, for Climacus, this "qualitative infinite" hermeneutic concerning the eternal plays an important role in grounding two relevant theoretical implications: 1) God's coming into time is purely a matter of faith and not of reason; 2) this event is one in which God is simply "planting himself in human life" as opposed to transforming himself.<sup>27</sup> It is an occurrence in which God "assumes" humanity. That is God's divine revelation is not a spontaneous act of something simply happening to the deity; instead, it is an active "accomplishment" of some kind by the deity.<sup>28</sup> In this paradox, two different ideas about God's deity and humanity intertwine and simultaneously express themselves in the form of being and essence.

How is this possible? How is it possible that God who is eternal can simultaneously possess and not possess the attribute of time and space? Climacus has already defined the nature of the eternal and the historical as being mutually exclusive categories of existence. He has defined the eternal as the necessary and the historical as change, which clearly exhibits his firm belief in their absolute qualitative distinction. However, the way of the historical existence of the eternal God in the world is that is has both eternal and historical aspects. God's divine revelation is an event that has taken place in time. However, this paradoxical occurrence of God's appearance in the world does not share in the historical, solely, since the eternal God is the very subject in the occurrence. God's divine revelation shares to neither the eternal nor the natural, solely, but constantly remains an ambivalent synthesis of the eternal and the historical in a single finite moment.

Here the categorical difference between the eternal and historical in God's revelation is maintained in the single moment of the paradox. The single moment of the absolute paradox of God's existence in time eliminates "at once" all logical possibilities that cannot grasp its eternal-historical unity historically. It also eliminates any possible stimuli that may arouse the mind to reach beyond the breadth and extent of its historical limits. Apparently, for Climacus this means that there is an independent dimension to the paradox that alludes neither to the eternal nor the historical. This, then, is what he means by the paradox having a unique aspect, i.e. that it conveys dual aspects of the eternal and the historical. Climacus' claim that no human effort can help to understand it succeeds here. By nature, the paradox

transcends all human reasoning; it transcends human rationality that derides historical or rational contradictions.

In chapter two we saw how Climacus argues for the irreconcilability between faith and rationality which are the two distinct categories of human thought. This is what we have precisely in the paradox. We have two different traits of the eternal and historical. That is why we saw, in chapter three, how Climacus also placed himself in strong opposition to the Hegelian attempt to absolutize reason by combining the eternal and the world to form an absolute single existence. According to Climacus, Hegel attempted to reconcile the eternal and the world and thus to overcome the irrationality of the paradox. But, he did it by distorting faith in its genuine eternal form.

On the finite objective side of the paradox, its transcendent or eternal side denotes reason's "limit" (*Graendsen*) and the paradox as the "unknown" (*Ubekjendte*) that transcends reason's limit. In the paradox we encounter something that transcends reason, something that cannot be mapped out according to the criteria of reason's rationality. The eternal is independent of human thought and criteria altogether. In connection with this I wish to argue two important points.

First, with respect to his claim that there is an unknown side to the paradox, namely the eternal, Climacus asserts that the human understanding persists in attempting to penetrate the eternal side of the paradox in an effort to comprehend it, despite falling short of fully grasping it. He declares that we do this to gain a historical grasp of the paradox within reason's agreeable parameters. Because of our need to comprehend the paradox fully, Climacus declares that we seek objective comprehension of the paradox as though the paradox is subject to our objective analysis. From the perspective of reason, the historical nature of the paradox could lead to its being judged according to reason's criteria of historical examination. However, the independently eternal aspect of the paradox and its historical unity with time revealed in the paradox implies its irrational character. Indeed, the paradox has a historical side, but it is also united with the eternal and therefore cannot be subject to a historical resolution proper. On the one hand, the paradox is absolutely distinct from the historical, but on the other it is completely identical to it.

Second, by substantiating the concept of the paradox as a moral and religious event, namely, God's purpose of divine redemption in the world, Climacus widens the understanding of the paradox as determining our moral or religious standing with the eternal. For Climacus, the relation with the

paradox is grounded in one's moral standing with the eternal. As Hannay notes, it is determined on the basis of how one would react to the event, either as God's revelation of salvation or as sheer irrationality.<sup>29</sup> For Climacus, believing or not believing the revelation of God depends on the person's will. One's act of characterizing the paradox, Climacus says, is not based solely on the person's cognitive knowledge or understanding of it but is determined on the basis of whether the person will or will not believe the event.<sup>30</sup>

A historical subject who seeks religious truth and finds that he or she is referred to the eternal that is beyond the criteria of thought's rational objectivity—that this requires a moral conversion of a person in order to understand the paradox—has to abandon the objective criteria. To attain the true understanding of the paradox, one has to put aside his or her historical mind set. Should the person ignore the requirement to abandon historical criteria, the person will only end up thinking about it continually in a roundabout way, helplessly trying to overcome the paradox rationally.

Now the inevitable question arises as to what criteria are needed to offset the collision between the understanding and the paradox. If the paradox does not conform to the normal criteria of rationality how can it be proved that the paradox makes sense and that it is not something that is just arbitrary to those who believe? To discover these criteria, we begin with an explanation of a unique concept in Climacus that assists his explanation: "offense." We will see how this unique concept helps us to see how Climacus escapes the objection that the paradox is arbitrary.

According to Climacus, there are two ways to respond to the paradox: one is to come to terms with the paradox and thus form a satisfactory understanding, and the second is to abandon the paradox because of its absurdity. The first way means accepting the paradox for what it is, namely a paradox. Accepting of the paradox, however, is not done arbitrarily. According to Climacus, the act of accepting the paradox requires one's willing choice.

The second way likewise indicates a choice to refuse to reach a "mutual understanding" between the understanding and the paradox. In this second way the mind enters into an unhappy relation with the paradox, offended by its absurdity.<sup>31</sup> The offense is what Climacus calls the mind's unhappy relation with the paradox.

He calls one's unhappy relation with the paradox a "wounded suffering," in which human understanding is forced to criticize the paradox for its absurdity.<sup>32</sup> Here Climacus provides a metaphor of "unhappy love." According to Climacus, no matter how one tries to exploit the paradox, the result is always suffering. He says that attempts at reconciling the paradox with the understanding always end in the torment of the self.<sup>33</sup>

No matter if the offended one is sitting crushed and staring almost like a beggar at the paradox petrifying in his suffering, or even if he arms himself with mockery and aims the arrows of his wit as if from a distance—he is nevertheless suffering and is not at a distance. No matter if the offense came and took the last crumb of comfort and joy from the offended one or if it made him strong—offense is nevertheless a suffering. It has struggled with the stronger, and his posture of vigor has a physical analogy to that of someone with a broken back.<sup>34</sup>

Climacus argues that the paradox is stronger than the understanding. He declares that human understanding responds to the paradox with a vigorous struggle, like "someone with a broken back."<sup>35</sup> This vigorous struggle between the understanding and the paradox implies an external trigger. It is his view that the understanding's offense or suffering indicates an existence of a higher cause that surpasses the ability of the understanding to overcome its struggle. Because of the paradox's superiority to the understanding, anyone who rejects the paradox—whether by actively condemning it or passively becoming indifferent to it—always suffers defeat. This is because the understanding believes it has the power to overcome the absurdity of its superior opponent; that is, it thinks it has the upper hand over the paradox.

Two things are in play here. First, a person's belief about the paradox that the understanding forms on its own behalf falls outside the person's rational limits. Such an understanding could not be the true expression of a case in which one experiences the paradox as a direct offense. Second, one's response is to isolate oneself from the suffering because one is too proud to acknowledge the correctness of the paradox. After all, is it not part of human nature to caricature another when one is offended but unable to find actual faults in the person?<sup>36</sup> Climacus believes it is possible that even when one rejects the paradox, one can perceive its correctness.

This rejection scenario applies to Climacus' depiction of the collision between the understanding and the paradox as something that offends the understanding; it is by nature inimical to the truth, namely, the paradox. He asserts, as we have already discussed, that this offense does not stem from

the incorrectness of the paradox itself. Rather, it is the product of the understanding's own ignorance and pride, one's being inimical to the truth. In chapter two we saw that the reason that he argues that one does not believe the paradox, even though one is able to appropriate it ideally, is simply because the person refuses to believe. It is not that the paradox (Incarnation) is something unbelievable; rather, it is because the subject who encounters it does not will to believe even though it can be believed.

### **The “Moment” and the “Condition”**

The paradox's offense to the understanding arises in what Climacus calls the “moment.” According to Climacus, “everything...revolves” around the moment.<sup>37</sup> The moment, Climacus says, is the center of all human affairs in the world. For example, when Climacus states that the understanding is offended by the paradox he means that the understanding is offended by the moment of the God's historical unity with the world that is revealed in the paradox. If the paradox is true and what essentially constitutes it is the moment of unity between eternity and time, then the offense of the understanding by the paradox may also be called a misunderstanding of the moment. This is because the moment denotes an exact “abbreviated form” of the paradox.

He understands the moment as something that indicates that God who is eternal has entered the world of time. Thus, it cannot be seen as something simply historical but as both historical and eternal. On the one hand, the elusiveness of the moment of the paradox defies reason's rationale in the sense that it leaves no possibility for the reason's practical grasp of the moment. On the other hand, there is nothing wrong in treating the moment as a historical occurrence. The paradox thus possesses two singularly different dimensions of the eternal and the historical:

A moment such as this is unique. To be sure, it is short and temporal, as the moment is; it is passing, as the moment is, past, as the moment is in the next moment, and yet it is decisive, and yet it is filled with the eternal.<sup>38</sup>

This means that the paradox's historical dimension situates the paradox in time, and the moment's eternal dimension places the paradox beyond the historical, even as the moment employs time to situate itself in the historical. Because the eternal moment of the paradox escapes its historical dimension,

Climacus argues that the place of the one who observes it has no relevance. Whether one is a direct or indirect witness of the event is of no significance for Climacus when it comes to believing the paradox. The bottom line for him is whether one wills or does not will to believe.

According to Climacus, the true knowledge of the paradox does not lend itself to historical understanding. The understanding is capable of simply objectifying the occurrence through understanding it historically. The true or religious knowledge of the paradox as God's divine revelation in time is achieved by virtue of one's faith. Faith is therefore the ultimate condition for transcending one's merely historical understanding of the paradox.

By the term condition Climacus means a conscious state of one's religious faith. However, because this faith occurs in time it can have historical significance. This condition, which is transcendent in nature, derives from the eternal that is outside the world of time:

Now if the learner<sup>39</sup> is in the untruth, the teacher must bring it to him, but not only that. Along with it, he must provide him with the condition for understanding it...The teacher, then, is the god who gives the condition and gives the truth.<sup>40</sup>

The more staggering fact for Climacus concerning the moment is that in receiving the condition one transcends the historical world to become engaged in the supernatural experience of believing the paradox. That is the moment contains the two contradictory and yet accommodating categories—eternal and historical—of human experience.

That the god once and for all has given man the condition is the eternal Socratic presupposition, which does not clash inimically with time but is incommensurable with the categories of temporality. But the contradiction is that he receives the condition in the moment, and, since it is a condition for the understanding of eternal truth, it is *eo ipso* the eternal condition.<sup>41</sup>

That is, even as one experiences faith in a historical moment in time, the source of faith is nonetheless the eternal. That is why Climacus excludes consent to any immanent option as the ultimate source of this condition. He rejects the idea that the meaning of the condition can be found out in the realm of one's historical existence, since the condition derives from the eternal deity outside time. He would, however, acknowledge that the non-objectivity of the condition of moment is, to a certain extent, subject to historical interpretation and acceptance. This is because he believes that what

impels a person toward accepting the condition is a “kind of hermeneutic presupposition” that is contained within one’s inner soul.<sup>42</sup>

### **Passion, Existence, and Faith**

Our discussion in the previous section focused on the meaning of the historical manifestation of the paradox of the God-in-time, and the trans-historical content and source of the religious condition of faith by virtue of which one believes the paradox. Now we raise a new question: what role does an individual play in the process of coming to faith?<sup>43</sup> The answer to this question will hopefully allow us to determine the individual’s place in his or her relation to faith better. In this section we will discuss three separate topics of passion, existence, and faith. We will do this so that we may analyze the interaction between these aspects of human experience better, which will help us to determine the way in which coming to faith occurs generally.

Since Climacus does not discuss only the problem of the truth but also about how a person comes to discover a way to relate to the truth, the question naturally arises as to what role an individual plays in achieving faith in the paradox. In the following section we deal with the problem of how one engages the paradox historically.

According to Climacus, the solution to the problem involved in one’s engagement with the paradox can be found in none other than the very fundamental features of the paradox, itself, namely the qualities of the historical-eternal content of the paradox and the religious source of the paradox outside the historical. The latter characteristic of the paradox, namely, the eternal quality of the paradox’s religious origin, indicates for the person the fact that one who comes to believe the paradox authentically can never claim that faith is his or her own achievement.

This is because one’s true faith in the paradox cannot be attributed to the person engaged in the process. Faith is possible only through acquiescence to the contradiction of the paradox: thus its source is outside one’s historical rationality. According to Climacus, the person does not at any point in achieving faith in the paradox comprehend the contradiction of the paradox through reason alone. Therefore, the individual’s action does not qualify as being explicit. By explicit Climacus does not mean that faith derives from person’s prior condition of knowing the truth, either through recollection



(Socratic) or through creation (Christianity). Rather faith has its root in God himself, who, Climacus asserts, is its very source.

We already made this point in chapter two where we gave our analysis of transcendence in Husserl and Climacus. There, in our comparison between these two thinkers, we asserted that Husserl's transcendental description of the subjective experience of the other could not be qualified as the truth since the individual's abiding subjectivity in the historical could not fully portray the other's true being. As a result, Husserl's experience of the other eventually ends up being the other without content.

In contrast to Husserl's concept of the other—a being without content—we saw how Climacus offers the alternative of faith, which, for him, is the proper means to experiencing the true being of the eternal. Contrary to the Husserlian idea of the other—formulated on the basis of a presuppositionless or neutral concept of intentionality—we saw how Climacus' interest or passion is shaped by the precise being of the eternal reality, God of Christianity. He declares that the given necessity of the radical constitution of the paradox in the historical moment “cannot become historical for immediate sensation or cognition.” Nevertheless, Climacus asserts that this paradoxical moment of God's historical revelation in time “is a historical fact,” meaning that it is subject to our historical ideal appropriation. That is, one may have a relation with the paradox as such in his or her historical existence.<sup>44</sup>

But the historical faith in the paradox as such has to occur here in a totally new way for one to have a relation with the event. It has to be thought of as a kind of belief that is possible in one's historical experience of the paradox. Climacus argues that the paradox can be appropriated in two different ways: historically (faith as reasonable) and religiously (faith as transcendent). This is what he writes:

“[T]hat historical fact (content of our poem) is a historical fact, and only for faith. Here, faith is first taken in its direct and ordinary meaning [belief] as the relationship to the historical; but, secondly, faith must be taken in the wholly eminent sense, such that this word can appear but once, that is, many times but in only one relationship.”<sup>45</sup>

The clause “faith is first taken in its direct and ordinary meaning” means precisely that one's faith in the paradox (“content of our poem”) is possible through one's historical experience of it—that the person can objectify the

event as such in one's historical existence. "[O]ne relationship" refers to the relationship in which the paradox of God's appearance in time is non-objectively understood in the eternal or transcendent sense.<sup>46</sup> Here the paradox occurs instantly in the moment of unity between the eternal and the historical. For that reason, we may argue that, inasmuch as the question concerning the paradox as such is an important question to raise and answer, what is more important for him would be the question if a person would or come to fully believe completely in the paradox as God's special revelation. At the heart of the matter, Climacus says, is the question if one would come to believe fully in the event in the face of one's metaphysical uncertainties and moral misgivings. As he declares, "It is not a question here of the truth of it but of assenting to god's coming into existence, whereby the god's eternal essence is inflected into the dialectical qualifications of coming into existence."<sup>47</sup>

In Climacus, "assenting" to the paradox means going beyond the historical. And the criteria that is needed in assenting to the paradox beyond the historical is nothing less than what he already referred to as one's true faith in God that overcomes the rational contradiction of the event.

According to Climacus, one's assent to the paradox when the paradox offers no immediate cognition of its transcendent identity requires an explicit modification of one's existence from the historical to the eternal. This modification that takes place in the person—so that the person believes in the paradox despite the fact that it contradicts reason—takes place as a result of God's divine influence on the person that unites the person's inner passion to enable the formation of the "unity of the infinitude and the finitude" in that person. He writes:

How does the individual synthesize the eternal and the temporal by reduplicating timeless ideals in time? The answer revolves around the concept of passion: "Only momentarily can the single individual exister be a unity of the infinitude and finitude which transcends existence. This moment is the insistent of passion. In passion the existing subject is made infinite in the eternity of imagination and yet is also most definitely himself."<sup>48</sup>

Climacus thus indicates the synthesis or unity of the eternal and the historical, which enables a person to believe in the paradox as God's divine revelation in the world in one's eternal passion (faith). This eternal passion

or faith produces “a unity of the infinite and the finite” that raises the person from time to eternity.<sup>49</sup>

Consequently, Climacus does not believe that one has a natural capacity for belief in God’s existence in his or her historical existence. He does not subscribe to this idea anywhere in the text. For example, he does not advocate any kind of natural theology that maintains that humans’ have a natural capacity for faith. This would require some sort of an innate ability in all of us that can arrive at the ultimate truth on its own, unaided by God’s divine influence. As we have repeatedly stated, he is strongly opposed to such an idea. However, he does see that there is a dialectical relation with the eternal in one’s historical existence. It occurs in such a way that one is able to intellectually appropriate or experience the eternal in his or her finite capacity. What this dialectical relation in one’s historical existence indicates for him is that: 1) the eternal (God) exists; and 2) that this qualified dialectical experience of the eternal may set the stage for one’s transition to the next higher stage of religious existence of faith. As Harvey Smith eloquently puts it, for Climacus (Smith uses the name Kierkegaard instead of Climacus), one’s existence “was to prepare the way for Christianity. Its task was to start man out on his way, a way that would lead eventually to the celestial city.”<sup>50</sup>

Climacus’ holds that in his or her humanly existence in the world a person reflects both the world and heaven. In the passion of faith, the person grasps both the secular and the sacred worlds without going out of his or her historical existence. As Merold Westphal properly puts it, according to Climacus “it is the passion [in all of us] that grows out of the conviction ‘that there is something sacred’.” This passion, he says, is not to be identified as an “earthly eros.” Even though this passion is something provisional, he argues, that it is a person’s “highest idea” or ideal.<sup>51</sup> That is, in passion a historical individual responds properly to the possibility of the eternal and finds happiness in this worldly life.

It has sometimes been said that, in giving his account of faith in the *Fragments* Climacus describes the nature of faith without describing the experience of faith. For example, James Collins in his famous *The Mind of Kierkegaard* illustrates this point. He writes:

All of Kierkegaard’s inquiries into the meaning and deepening of existence come to focus in his reflections on the Incarnation, our act of faith, and its influence over our way of living. But he allows “Johannes Climacus” merely to suggest that our

existence is radically modified by faith, rather than witness personally to what it means to live in a Christian way.<sup>52</sup>

Here, Collins's critique of Climacus as a theoretician who does not explore an in-depth meaning of faith as it is lived out in a person's religious life is based on his view (though not specifically mentioned by Collins) that Climacus gives a rather broad account of existence and historicity. This, Collins says, is due to the fact that the conveyed project of *Fragments* is to provide a narrow discussion on the matter concerning the nature of the eternal-historical relationship between God and the world philosophically without giving a detailed account of the particular themes of existence and the world separately.

He states that Climacus performs the task of clarifying the general problem of the God-world relation in order to understand the meaning of their relation without providing meticulous sketches of its particulars.<sup>53</sup> Collins suggests there are two ways by which Climacus does this: 1) By narrowing the idea of human existence to the historical, Climacus limits our knowledge of human existence strictly to its relation to belief; that is, he limits human life strictly to its relation to the paradox.<sup>54</sup> 2) By sharply distinguishing between ordinary historical occurrences and the extraordinary historical event of the paradox, he grants a special place to the paradox by situating the event as something that cannot be normally grasped by human understanding.<sup>55</sup>

Collins argues that Climacus wishes to show what is needed in bridging the eternal and the historical through the non-ordinary way of faith. As such, Collins states that Climacus distinguishes between the paradox and all other events in history. Faith in Climacus, Collins states, distinguishes the paradox and all other historical events in time in such a way that all that is historical is viewed as insignificant. That is to say, Climacus' view has no eye for the "meaningless triviality" of our existence in the world.<sup>56</sup>

There is some warrant to Collins' critique. First Climacus does limit human knowing in a sense to its intrinsic connection with the historical. Second, he also affirms in *Fragments* that the paradox is something that cannot be grasped simply via means of human knowledge or reasoning. He thus distinguishes the paradox from all other ordinary events in life as something that is superior in nature. And, it is apparently true that the theme of the paradox takes up a major part of the text.

However, what Collins overlooks is that *Fragments* is not intended to give an existential exposition of human life as such. Rather, its primary aim is to give an experimental theoretical analysis of two very different ways of thinking about the truth, namely, historically (philosophy) and eternally or transcendently (Christianity). As we have already mentioned, what the text aims for is to give a critical observation of speculative thought from the perspective of Christianity. That is why the text lacks the practical content of existence for which Collins criticizes it. The text intends to be a critical examination of certain aspects of speculative thinking.

However, his silence on this matter should not mean that Climacus takes the theme of human existence lightly. In fact, it is precisely the opposite. Collins fails to note the implications that Climacus makes concerning certain terms or concepts such as untruth, doubt, dialectical passion in the text, all of which speak profoundly of the unhappy nature of human life in the historical sphere outside the relation with the eternal. This is precisely the reason why he emphasizes the paradox so strongly. His abiding argument is that the only way one can achieve happiness in one's life is through the reconciled unity with the paradox. He distinguishes between ordinary historical events and the extraordinary historical event of the paradox to make a point that what stands between these two qualitatively different spheres of existence is what may unite the two so that any finite person can achieve a happy life in the world, namely, faith. The reason that he stresses so much on the paradox and faith is that for him one's happiness in life lies in accepting the claim of the extraordinary event of God's Incarnation in the world and that this is possible only through believing that event. He writes:

The unity [between a person and the paradox] is brought about by an ascent. The god would then draw the learner [the person] up toward himself, exalt him, divert him with joy lasting a thousand years. [L]et the learner forget the misunderstanding in his tumult of joy. Yes, the learner would perhaps be very much inclined to consider himself blissfully happy because of this.<sup>57</sup>

According to Climacus, faith must be taken not only as simply historical but also as trans-historical in order to show that it must be “eternally understood.”<sup>58</sup> This is because, whenever someone makes the paradox an object of faith, he or she repeats the eternal-historical dialectical qualification of “the god coming into existence.” This dialectical qualification of “the god coming into existence” then denotes the dual qualifications of the eternal and

historical character of the paradox. Thus, it serves as the point of contact with the eternal reality of God's existence in one's finite existence. Because the paradox is subject to its historical appropriation, the eternal significance of the paradox extends to and is very much present in the world of human existence as a historical reality. What actualizes the presence of the divine is one's authentic belief. Thus, even though, as Collins correctly argues, the particulars of human existence are not specifically sketched out specifically in *Fragments*, Collins does not see the importance of the general exposition of human existence in relation to what ultimately holds the answer to human happiness, namely, the paradox. In Climacus, faith thus pertains to both the eternal and the historical world. It pertains to a person's eternal and historical experience of the world from the perspective of the higher truth, in which the person achieves their (otherwise unconnected) unity. As Collins correctly asserts, in Climacus life as such in the world without faith may be thought of as a meaningless triviality. However, a much focus of *Fragments* is given to providing the possibility of an eternal pathos of joy and contentment in life as declared in Christianity through our reconciliation with the one who appeared in the world—the god.

Unlike skeptics, like Hume and Kant before him, Climacus provides us with a possible religious explanation for our existence with a vast and firm philosophical understanding of the world beyond the mere historical. It is true that, because one's life in the eternal can only be achieved through faith, he claims that faith is something gratuitous rather than meritorious. According to Climacus, the Christian doctrine of salvation is such that it cannot be achieved in the world of historical existence, alone, neither in nature nor in oneself or other human beings. Otherwise, it would contradict the very fundamental idea that faith is gift, as Christianity supposes.

However, this does not mean that he believes that the arena of historical existence cannot be the location of obtaining faith. In fact, it is precisely in the historical that the person achieves the ascent into the higher world of faith. Climacus holds that, without the relation with the paradox, a person does not accord any value to oneself or to the world in the ultimate sense. For him, life is meaningless unless it serves the alleged purpose of believing the paradox. Thus, Climacus' trivialization of historical existence (as Collins critically pointed out to be the case) seems only to magnify the importance of achieving the necessary unity between the individual and the paradox. Even as he treats the life of faith as dismissing temporal-historical existence by

seeing ordinary life as something trivial—that human life is such that it alone holds no meaning or value for a person—we must remember that Climacus’ rather trivial way of viewing one’s finite life as such nonetheless must be contextualized: it has to be seen as communicating the importance of founding the truth (the god) in one’s historical existence. In this sense, he would claim that human existence bears an important meaning, as trivial as that life in itself may be.

In this section, we have argued that, for Climacus, a person’s true happiness in the world—as a result of having found the meaning of life—depends inevitably on yielding to the passion to commit him- or herself to the paradox in faith. Because one’s life or existence in the world of finite existence by itself can only be viewed as a “meaningless triviality” outside faith in the paradox, Climacus argues that faith in the paradox is central to achieving happiness in the world. However, we have also said that human life or existence as such is important insofar as its relation to the paradox is concerned. It depicts its own limits in transcending the extraordinary event of the paradox in spite of the fact that it is capable of objectively or ideally appropriating the occurrence. In the following section, we will explore two significant features that constitute human existence in the historical: the leap and the will. We will examine how Climacus uses the interplay of these two essential features of existence to break through the aggressive and indomitable stance of the paradox in the human encounter.

### **The Leap**

In the previous section we saw the importance of the role of faith in accepting the historically ambiguous character of the absolute paradox of God-in-time for the well-being of one’s existence. We observed how Climacus connected the true meaning of human existence to seeing and believing the paradox of God’s revelation in time. We also argued that the meaning of existence in the world is important in Climacus. This is because historical existence includes the possibility of appropriating the eternal, the paradox. Thus, our argument was that in Climacus faith is reasonable or that one can intellectually or ideally appropriate the transcendence.

We will attempt in the following section to relate faith to two important themes discussed in *Fragments*, our clear understanding of which is essential to making sense of Climacus’ point about the reasonableness of faith in one’s historical existence within the general context of our faith-reason argument.

They are the will and the leap. Knowing the meaning of these two significant concepts introduced and discussed in *Fragments* will help us to gain correct insight into how one comes to be reconciled with the eternal in his or her existence.

His argument runs like this. Human beings exist at the crossroad of God's divine omnipotence and their own free will. His conclusion is that the human will is responsible for all of humans' historical and religious life choices.

For example, according to Climacus, what ultimately enables a person to have faith in God's existence through believing the paradox is not what is commonly believed by many, namely, the person's own will. Climacus holds that when a person comprehends and accepts the paradox, he or she believes as a result of being influenced by the external source: God.

We discover in *Fragments*, at least indirectly, that Climacus includes the theme of human freedom or free will. In it, he seems to suggest that God's divine omnipotence is the very foundation of human will by the fact that God is the omnipotent creator of the world. However, he would also argue that when God created the world, he made humans as free beings. For this reason, God's divine omnipotence, Climacus would argue, does not and should not imply that God made humans to be mere puppets. Rather, he would argue that God refrains from asserting dominance over our free will.

His argument would run something like this. Men and women are created beings, who exist in the physical world of the historical, but their nature as human beings is not fixed. Human nature is such that it consists of possibilities, which are the result of human choices. As a result, human history is a strand of free determinations of choices made by human beings. This means that the human beings as "freely acting causes" are not constrained by the dominance of their divine creator over their every action.

However, despite the fact that Climacus is aware that humans are free, he is also aware that human freedom as such is something relative compared to the absolute freedom of the creator, who, Climacus says, is the "absolutely freely acting cause" that has the power over human will.<sup>59</sup> Even though one may conceive of human history as a strand of free determinations and choices by humans, it can only be understood as a relative process. On one level, it is a process that is ultimately determined by historical (human) beings and scientific conditions (history). However, on another level, it is determined by the higher will of the creator who stands above these



historical beings and conditions. It thus reflects the finitude of the human will. Climacus holds that humans may express their higher transcendental interest in the higher truth of the eternal in the place of their historical existence. Yet they remain finite beings who must always exist under the power of God's higher will and interest over their existence.

However, despite the fact that Christianity holds that human beings live under the higher will of their divine creator, God, Climacus does not dismiss the idea that humans are nonetheless free beings who not only possess the capacity to make free choices but are also capable of transcending their finite existence to express their higher interests in the eternal possibilities, such as God's existence.

As we have seen in our previous section, Climacus asserts that human happiness is possible through achieving one's unity with the paradox. He also argues that, for a person to believe in the paradox, he or she first must arrive at the theoretical-existential juncture where the possibility of the eternal has become a reasonable acceptable possibility for that person in his or her historical existence.<sup>60</sup> This, we argued, is an idea that he admits is possible in all cases of human life.

In *Fragments* Climacus states that humans eventually expand their historical understanding of the world to seek its eternal foundation that would underscore human freedom in the exteriority of the human experience of life. And, as he does with human reflection, Climacus also directs our understanding of the human will toward seeing it as something that operates on the objectivity of the eternal, that is on one's ideal experience of the eternal in his or her historical existence. What results from this experience is one's possible leap from the person's historical existence to life in eternal existence.

Although it is often mentioned and discussed in *Fragments*, it is not until the third chapter in the book that the concept of "leap" receives considerable treatment. As Jamie Ferreira aptly summarizes:

The first three chapters of *Fragments* can be seen as an example of repetition, of spiraling action in which we circle back to what seems to be the same place, yet with at least one different coordinate. The presentation of a genuine alternative to the Socratic model of the way things are offered first in the speculative abstractness of a "Thought-Project" (Chapter I), with the focus on teachers, conditions, and truth, and is then taken up in a "Poetical Venture" (Chapter II), which explores the concreteness of lovers, suffering, and lilies. Climacus then begins a third version (in Chapter III) of the non-Socratic alternative, elaborating the theme of the unknown

through metaphysical musings on paradox, from Socratic to absolute; the emphasis on the passion of thought and the analogy with erotic love echo both of the earlier dimensions of that story (as does the subtitle, “Metaphysical Caprice”). It is here that Climacus brings in the leap as part of the discussion of how the limits of the theoretical require and exemplify the notion of a qualitative transition.<sup>61</sup>

The idea of the leap or qualitative transition, as it is also called, is first presented in *Fragments* in the context of Climacus’ estimation of the all too common philosophical attempts to demonstrate God’s existence. Climacus connects this idea to the unique concept that he introduces as an indication of philosophy’s limits in providing proof of God’s existence. It is the concept of “letting go.”

As we have previously seen, Climacus rejects all rational proofs for the existence of the divine being. He believes that what is actually demonstrated in these proofs is only the concept and not the true reality of God’s being.<sup>62</sup> In the language of logic, in order for God’s existence to be true, the proposition “God exists” has to contain the truth of its conclusion in it already. In order to avoid the law of fallacy, the proposition “God exists” must contain both the truth of its premises and its conclusion in the way that the premises are imbued with the ideas of the conclusion. However, the so-called rational proofs of God’s existence, as Climacus would argue, are conditional factors, and for that reason conclusions do not follow from the premises. The reason that that is so is because in logic the proposition “God exists” is a cognitive statement rooted in the natural process of thinking without any connection to God’s actual being.

According to Climacus, the actual being, God, reveals himself under the condition in which a person has let go of his or her theoretical demonstrations as useless. As a result, the substance of the divine being is grasped. This, he says, happens when one makes the leap from the historical. He asks: “[H]ow does the existence of the god emerge from the demonstration?” His response: “I have to let go [*jeg slipper*] of it.” He writes:

So long as I am holding on to the demonstration (that is, continue to be one who is demonstrating), the existence does not emerge, if for no other reason than that I am in the process of demonstrating it, but when I let go of the demonstration, the existence is there.<sup>63</sup>

What should be noted about the concept of letting go as expressed by Climacus is that this concept does not indicate the absolute certainty of God's existence. This is because the point at which a person abandons his or her confidence in the rational proofs for God's existence is the point at which the person has not yet taken the leap from his or her natural life. Climacus does not convey the idea here that every person has some form of historical knowledge by virtue of which one can make the transition from the historical to the eternal easily.<sup>64</sup> On the contrary, he holds that the concept of letting go of the rational possibilities to proving God's existence points to the case of their incompatibility with the adequacy of the conclusive evidence found in the case of one's true faith in God. As we have seen throughout this study, Climacus strongly undermines the philosophical idea of human reason's adequacy in attaining the universal truth about the world. He opposes any form of philosophical optimism that asserts that it can by itself arrive at the truth. What he strongly advocates in the place of the idea for reason's adequacy is the religious mandate that is able to move a person from life in the historical to life in the eternal.

For example, according to Ferreira, the religious mandate of taking the leap from the historical to the eternal offered by Climacus as a better mandate over against philosophical or human reason—with respect to discovering the truth—has to be treated as a new and dominant category of the theoretical threshold for the human understanding. Ferreira asserts that this religious mandate also widens the possibility of understanding one's act of leap as not only something qualitative—since it, at the moment of the act, separates the world of the historical from that of the eternal—but also as “non-volitional” since it is an act that is carried out under the higher power of God's own will.<sup>65</sup> Climacus holds that one's faith in God or his existence, as demonstrated in the act of taking the leap from historical existence, must always be seen as gift from the divine giver (God) to a person. Therefore, he would argue that one's act of taking the leap must also be seen as an act that is carried out, ultimately, by the force of God's divine power over against the contrary view that sees the act as one's autonomous choice independent of God's influence. In order for us to properly address Climacus' account of the human will properly, we should investigate the very structure of the transitional process in which the leap takes place.

What we know at this point about the leap into the eternal existence is its requirement of letting go of reason's demonstrations for the proof of God's

existence. This, says Climacus, is the primary condition the person has to fulfill in order to achieve actual faith in the truth of God's being. According to Climacus, how one performs this act, i.e. taking the leap, is by willing to believe, and thus making the transition from the historical to the eternal.<sup>66</sup> As a result of this transformative occurrence, an internal change occurs within one in terms of going from unbelief to belief in the eternal.

The leap or qualitative transition from the historical to the eternal, as is the case in Climacus, occurs as the person's dialectical understanding of the eternal is transformed by the divine force of God's higher will and raised to the reality of true reflection whereby the eternal being (God) reveals the ultimate distance between itself and the historical world. The person's experience of the dialectical gap between the historical and the eternal—resulting from taking the leap as such—then, occurs as a result of transcending the understanding's collision with the paradox that had previously remained indomitable to one's reason.

According to Climacus, a person's qualitative leap from the historical to the eternal takes place in a moment of time. In that moment a person, by virtue of his or her leap, ventures into the world of the unknown. In the moment one leaps into the unknown from one's familiar existence in the world. Here, the person makes the concession to what once lacked in the person for making this strong transition, i.e. faith. In this sense we may view the act of taking the leap from the historical to the eternal as having something of a blind character. This is because one makes the leap compelled by the sheer inner passion for the eternal rather than based on some concrete evidence. Here, the motive behind one's act of leap is to actualize the vague possibility of the truth of God's existence, which always remains unknown until the moment the person believes.

In chapter two, we discussed the Husserlian and the Climacean transcendental analysis with respect to the relation between the subjectivity and objectivity. There, we asserted that what we discover in Husserl's own thinking on subjectivity—one's experience of the other—remains an abstract pure intentionality. Consequently, the object (other) becomes an abstract phenomenon; the pure other that one experiences has no particularities because one's experience of the other, Husserl argues, is portrayed on the basis of a presupposition-less intentionality which is the basic essence of human consciousness. As a result, he showed the opening of human subjectivity toward the other that is experienced, but does not have content.

Nevertheless, he did show that human intentionality as such presupposes openness. But, it is an unfulfilled opening between human subjectivity and the other.

In contrast to Husserl or Husselian analysis of the other, in which the other depends on neutral human subjectivity, Climacus goes a step further. He presents the idea of knowing the true relation between the self and the other, the eternal subject, and this idea implies the possibility of the objective appropriation of the other in the world by applying the abstract Husserlian experience to the inward retraction via coming to terms with the paradox.<sup>67</sup> Here, in believing the paradox, the prior uncertainty regarding the eternal is transformed into the certainty of the event.

In having actualized this belief, the person has leaped over what Hannay calls a “logical gap,” which infinitely separates the two worlds of the historical and the eternal.<sup>68</sup> According to Hannay:

The leap is the logical distance between any accumulation of true empirical, or “historical,” statements and the necessary or the eternal truths of reason. To say that there is a leap is, first of all, to claim concerning any (even infinite) set of statements of one logical class that they cannot provide an adequate logical ground for statements of another. The leap is, in this sense, what is often referred to as a logical “gap.”<sup>69</sup>

For Climacus, the concept of the leap as a logical gap—existing between the two infinitely separated worlds of the historical and the eternal—stands “between the contingency of all that history can tell us, and the absolute or unconditional certainty required by religious faith.”<sup>70</sup> From the historical point of view, this logical gap between the historical and the eternal indicates that logic always has to with the quantitative since its character abides within its temporal constitution. Logic is never adequate to truly represent the real category of statements of the eternal. For example, as Hannay states:

The idea of a logical gap is that of the impossibility of there ever being enough, so that given even (*per possible*) every possible true statement of the one class, the possibility remains not only that any particular statement in the other class is false, but even that there are no true referring statements in that class.<sup>71</sup>

This logical gap in Climacus, then borders the two worlds of the historical and the eternal dialectically. An increase on one side of the gap (i.e., the historical), regardless of how many facts, statements or concepts it

produces, will never be enough to transcend the given order of the historical-eternal difference. A person's access to the eternal in the historical is achieved only through the person's decisive act of overcoming the gap by making the qualitative transition from the world of time to the world of eternal existence.

From the theoretical point of view, the leap from the historical to the eternal existence can be thought of as a genuine acceptance of a given proposition concerning a thing or a state of affair on the basis of something other than concrete evidence. Apart from showing such evidence, a proposition lacking proof, such as, "God exists" becomes a true proposition for that person by virtue of having made the qualitative transition. After the transition, the paradox's own claim for its eternal origin becomes justified apart from any possible evidence that can be given in support of its claim.

The question, however, that is really at the core of our discussion on the will is if Climacus should be seen as a volitionalist who ascribes complete freedom to human beings in all their choices, including the choice of faith. Or should be seen as someone who stresses the importance of fully acknowledging God's divine or higher influence on all our acts of making choices, especially with respect to our religious choices (i.e., believing in God's existence), as a constraining and leading force. This question is important for our general discussion on the reasonableness of faith. It will serve our purpose of trying to use this theme as a basis for further investigation of the faith-reason issue in *Fragments*. Thus, we will try to answer this question by examining the two opposing views of volitionalism and non-volitionalism, each of which interprets Climacus' view on the will in *Fragments* in its own way. We will try to determine which position shows the interplay between the divine and human agency in the acts of making choices in Climacus.

In the following section we will discuss the theme of the will in Climacus. We will contend that Climacus must be seen as a non-volitionalist who does not subscribe to a view of human volition as autonomous but gives a proper view of the human will as both relatively free and acting under the higher force of the divine will.

### **The Will**

Ferreira is a proponent of the view that Climacus is a non-volitionalist. Ferreira gives a strong case for the view that the common view of Climacus

(Kierkegaard for Ferreira) as a volitionalist is incorrect. Her argument against that view is as follows:

Because Climacus emphasizes so strongly his rejection of the quantitative transition that comes cumulatively or automatically, the leap has come to be treated all too often by commentators as if it were an intentional, purposeful, deliberate, self-conscious, or reflective act of will or volition, through which the agent selects from a variety of alternative options. The leap is seen as something we still have to do (to bridge a gap) after we have appreciated the options. The result is a volitionalist reading that interprets the claim that the leap is a category of decision along the lines of radical discontinuity and even arbitrariness, on the model of a decision to do something when all the alternatives are able to be formulated independently of our attraction to them. In this way, attention to the leap as decision has diverted attention from other ways in which the leap could be seen as decisive.<sup>72</sup>

Ferreira's view that Climacus is a non-volitionalist is taken from her interpretation of Climacus' remark in the *Postscript* where Climacus says that "the leap is the category of decision." According to Ferreira, Climacus makes this statement to contrast the concept of the leap as a qualitative achievement with the "Munchausen" leap that relies on brute will power. In the Munchausen leap, says Ferreira, "One closes one's eyes, grabs oneself by the neck and then one stands on the other side."<sup>73</sup> She argues that in contrasting these two different leaps, Climacus "is taking pains to preclude a misunderstanding of the leap as serious as that of supposing it to be a cumulative achievement." She argues that he is "opposing himself to such a caricature of the leap (regardless of where the person ends up) as a deliberate act of will power, as much as to the caricature of the leap that becomes easier because one inches oneself up to it gradually."<sup>74</sup> In contrast, she says, what Climacus sees in the leap is "a transition that is 'qualitative' and a 'break in immanence'." It is true, she declares, that Climacus often uses freedom and acts of will as appositives and contrasts the acts of the will with necessity. However, she asserts that neither needs to be thought of as suggesting that the change must be brought about by "a brute act of willpower."<sup>75</sup>

In opposition to viewing Climacus' position as one involving such a brute act of will power, which she claims is a misconception of Climacus' view, Ferreira offers an alternative: the "threshold concept." This concept is an existential condition that is not expressed in terms of gradation or degrees. Such a meaning (of the threshold), she says, is often extracted from the concept to reinforce the case for Climacus as a volitionalist.

One example Ferreira gives in support of her position concerning the threshold concept—which she calls a radical break in immanence—is that of water getting hotter and hotter but not gradually boiling. Water, she argues, does not boil until it reaches a “critical threshold” where it begins to boil. That is there is a radical break between where water gradually increases its heat and the point at which it starts to boil even though one may think the process is gradual. According to Ferreira, these are two qualitatively different phenomena.

A second example she gives expresses a similar idea of an explosive that gets hotter and hotter does not explode gradually; rather, it explodes when it reaches the same kind of threshold. What we have in this example, she says, is what she calls an “extreme asymmetry and directionality”<sup>76</sup> in a change. She states that: “The qualitative change at a critical threshold is decisive.” Nonetheless, such a kind of change, she admits, “is a function of what precedes it.” That is, although the transition with an explosive is not something cumulative *per se*, it is, however, something “integrally related to what goes before.” She claims that:

Something is *registered* during the process leading to the shift; in the case of the boiling water or the explosive, heat is registered all the while. Evidence, like heat, can be registered during a process, even though the qualitative transition occurs only when the critical threshold is reached.<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, Ferreira argues that the qualitative transition that occurs in the Gestalt shift in the cases of water and explosive is free, in the sense that it is neither physically nor rationally forced. At the same time, she notes that the transition that takes place in both cases of the boiling water and the explosive is not “self-consciously intentional” nor does it involve various choices. She argues that:

Qualitative changes can be free without being arbitrary, since freedom does not require a total absence of constraint. An uncompelled activity might nevertheless be subject to some constraint – a response can be free even while it is a *response* to something. Climacus’ emphatic rejection of the category of necessity can, in principle, be maintained without turning either to intentional or arbitrary decision, and the qualitative and free transition that is at stake for Climacus can, in principle, be achieved in ways that have little to do with the emasculated model of decision as a discreet, direct act of will in contrast to other activities.<sup>78</sup>



Thus, she argues that “where freedom is understood by contrast with a necessary or compelled reaction, the idiom of will can be used to emphasize the freedom of the acceptance.”<sup>79</sup>

Moreover, Ferreira suggests that, due to Climacus’ personal biblical commitment to faith as obedience, he believes a person might assume a stronger sense of freedom. This involves “more discontinuity and effectively more arbitrariness.” But she also argues that this does not require freedom of indifference. According to Ferreira, human freedom for Climacus is “compatible with...divine governance and omnipotence.” For this reason, she states that, for Climacus, “constraint is compatible with freedom.” For example, she argues that one’s act of free choice, which is guaranteed in Climacus, is not an “abstract freedom of choice” that is “bare and naked” or “contentless,” achieved by a “perfectly disinterested will.” Rather, his understanding of freedom, she says, is that it is “always an interested, contextualized freedom.” Moreover, she argues that he distinguishes between the “freedom of choice” and “true freedom,” and that, in her view, true freedom is compatible with there being “no choice” in some meaningful sense.

Such a complex understanding of human freedom in general and freedom of choice in particular that we detect in Climacus, says Ferreira, should qualify any biblical understanding of faith as obedience and open the path to a more skillful take on the conditions necessary for a qualitative transition.<sup>80</sup>

Because Ferreira holds that Climacus “unambiguously sees the leap to Christian faith as a transition that is ‘qualitative’ and a ‘break in immanence,’” what is necessary for the leap to take place is that “the transition not be an experience of simple continuity, whether as a necessary unfolding or otherwise merely cumulative result.” What is ultimately at stake for him, she argues, “is that the transition be a free act.” That is, one’s choice to leap (to Christian faith) or to make a qualitative transition from, for example, “Religiousness A” of the historical religious consciousness to the “Religiousness B” of the eternal or really authentic religious consciousness, does not have to be a choice that involves a person’s willful or intentional act. She writes:

Consider what is arguably a more perspicuous example of a qualitative change—namely, a *Gestalt* shift. Such a model of transition is found at its simplest in the duck/rabbit picture, but it can assume far more complex and subtle forms.

Acquaintance with such a model reminds us that qualitative and free transitions can be accounted for without involving a deliberate, self-reflective act of willpower. In a situation in which a Gestalt shift occurs, we initially see only one possibility; at some point, after concentrated attention or perhaps coaching, a different figure comes into focus for us. Seeing the latter figure is not the direct or immediate result of any decision or volition, nor is it a choice in any standard senses since at the outset we recognize no other equally real possibilities from which to choose. We can decide to *look for* the figure we are told is there and cannot yet see, but we cannot decide to see (recognize) it. Recognizing the new and qualitatively different figure is not the direct result of willing or the necessary result of the efforts to look for it.<sup>81</sup>

Thus, Ferreira's argument with respect to the relation between the human will and the divine influence could be summarized as follows. 1) The concept of the leap as the qualitative transition involves divine agency insofar as the latter is the constraining factor in one's choice that leads to the decision. 2) The qualitative emergence of faith from the spiritual threshold forms the critical verge between what precedes the transition itself in such a way that this transition is not solely anthropologically compelled by the humanistic force of the will.

Although Ferreira's view has become more common in Kierkegaard studies, not every scholar is convinced. For example, a late Kierkegaard critic, Louis Pojman, contends that Climacus cannot be anything other than a strict volitionalist. In his *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion*, Pojman states that Climacus interprets religious (Christian) faith as essentially active and experienced as a result of one's willful choice of action. According to Pojman, there are initially two kinds of volitionalism: Direct and Indirect. Direct volitionalism argues that the will chooses to believe or disbelieve a certain proposition. Indirect volitionalism treats the will as that which leads a person to submit to a certain influence that in the end affects the person's choice to believe a certain proposition.

Pojman also makes a distinction between what he calls prescriptive and descriptive volitionalism. Prescriptive volitionalism holds normative the notion that it is allowable, or in some instances obligatory, to hold a certain belief. In contrast, descriptive volitionalism is the notion that a person can acquire beliefs by simply willing to acquire them.<sup>82</sup> Pojman refers to Climacus as a volitionalist who holds prescriptive and descriptive elements, one who holds that one can directly acquire beliefs in certain propositions at his or her own willing and that this acquiring of beliefs in those propositions

is carried out because he or she believes that in relation to faith this ought to be. Climacus, says Pojman, believes that it is possible to directly believe what one chooses to believe seeing faith as an obligation.<sup>83</sup> Pojman writes:

Although Kierkegaard [Climacus] is not always as lucid as he could be in these discussions of faith/belief (*Tro*), the context usually makes the concept tolerably clear. Most of what he says I take to be insightful and plausible; however, there is one place where I think Kierkegaard's theory bears especially close scrutiny. I refer his doctrine of *volitionalism*: the thesis that we *can* attain beliefs by willing to have them, and that we *ought* to attain some beliefs in this manner.<sup>84</sup>

Pojman's view of Climacus, with respect to what he believes is the alleged volitionalist view, is based on his idea that Climacus understands the will as an active faculty that claims faith as its own achievement. He declares that Climacus has propagated this idea more than anyone else in the history of philosophy.<sup>85</sup>

According to Pojman, direct volitionalism has three characteristics: first, it has to be a basic in which the beliefs obtained are the direct results of the act of the will; second the acquisition of beliefs must be done in full consciousness; and, third the beliefs are acquired without evidence. These three characteristics indicate that, for the most part, direct volitionalism is "psychologically aberrant, conceptually incoherent, and irrational." The reason, he says, is that beliefs are not typically acquired solely by acts of the will but by the world, which causes us to make certain judgments.<sup>86</sup> A person cannot obtain beliefs directly by the fiat of the will. The will certainly plays a role in the belief formation, says Pojman, but he claims that it does so only to the extent of determining the kinds of beliefs the person obtains. He writes:

Though believing is not an action, actions determine the sort of beliefs we end up with. It is primarily because our actions have an effect on what we come to believe that we speak of being *responsible* for them. We cannot be directly responsible for our beliefs, as though they were actions, but we can be said to be indirectly responsible for them.<sup>87</sup>

This indirect volitionalism is the position that Pojman favors concerning the religious doctrine of the free will against what he believes is Climacus' or the Climacean position of direct volitionalism.

However, to think of Climacus as a direct volitionalist is problematic for the following reasons. First, Climacus cannot be charged with direct

volitionalism because he holds that faith is a result of God's indirect influence on the person. That is faith is something achieved only after the person's will is enabled to believe through the direct paradoxical impressive experience of the eternal (the paradox) as both divine and human.

Second, as we stated earlier concerning the question of the extent to which faith itself enables one to believe in God's existence through accepting the paradox, we concluded that the answer is found in Climacus' view of the trans-historical source and content of the event. He believes that the paradox's essential feature of its trans-historical or eternal character indicates that a person who believes the paradox can never assert that the faith he or she has obtained is through the power or the ability of the person's own will. He asserts that faith results from acquiescence to the contradiction of the paradox which cannot be achieved in his or her historical or natural existence rationally—due to the constant collision that occurs between reason and the paradox.

Third, a careful reading of *Fragments* shows that Climacus does not make the claim for the autonomy of the human will. No where in the book does he say that a person's religious or true faith can be obtained directly by one's will. If any claim is made with respect to faith, it is one that strongly refutes the claim that faith in the eternal is obtained by the person herself.

For those reasons, it is my view that Pojman's view of Climacus as a voluntarist who asserts that a person is directly responsible for the person's faith contradicts his understanding of Climacus.<sup>88</sup> This is because Climacus' understanding of faith is such that it can never result from anything other than God's preeminent causal effect on the person's will to believe. Climacus relates religious faith to a person's way of thinking about the world from the higher perspective of the eternal beyond immanent rationality. And the person's will in this activity participates in the process under the higher and more dominant influence of the eternal cause, namely, God.

Therefore, Ferreira gives the more convincing argument of the Climacean concept of the will than does Pojman with respect to how one achieves faith in the paradox/God. However, her view is not without some needed modifications.

First, in discussing the concept of the Gestalt shift (i.e., duck/rabbit picture) she states that "qualitative and free transitions can be accounted for without involving a deliberate, self-reflective act of will power." It is difficult to see how an act of making a qualitative (religious) and free

transition can be done apart from making a deliberate and intentional choice. After all, a choice of making this decision means making a choice for one's moral life and destiny. How does anyone make this kind of choice unconsciously or, as she puts it, without deliberation and reflection? If Climacus is correct in asserting that human beings are ethical beings whose actions in life derive from the divine source of the moral truth, it would be hard to agree with her position. The idea of deriving our understanding from the divine source of the moral truth (God) means that this divine source has already influenced a person, so that all his or her actions are morally impinged upon. As Climacus writes in *Fragments*, all human beings are “untruth” who thus need the help of “a teacher”—the god—who has and can give them the truth.

Second, in the other Gestalt shift example she gives, i.e. those of the boiling water and the explosive, she states that the qualitative transition that takes place in those cases is not “something that is ‘self-consciously intentional’ or involving various choices.” However, Climacus states in *Fragments* that freedom, which he says is the “expression of the will,” involves various choices since there are many possibilities regarding meaning. For example, Climacus writes in the “Interlude” between chapters four and five of the *Fragments* that all that have come into existence have come to be in freedom. That is, its “transition takes place in freedom.”<sup>89</sup> Two pages later, he gives the meaning of this temporal transition as:

What has happened has happened the way it happened; thus it is unchangeable. But is this unchangeableness the unchangeableness of necessity? The unchangeableness of the past is that its actual ‘thus and so’ cannot become different, but from this does it follow that its possible ‘how’ [a way or form in which it comes into being] could not have been different?<sup>90</sup>

It is true that the transition that takes place in the cases of boiling water and the explosive is not self-consciously intentional and does not involve various choices as Ferreira rightly argues. However, these cases of transition are not the same kind of transition that takes place in a person, since it is only in the latter case that we should use the terms such as “self-consciously intentional” and “choices,” since these are humanly traits that do not apply to the former cases involving non-human objects, such as water and explosive. Nonetheless, she rightly identifies Climacus as a non-voluntarist who affirms the will's susceptibility to the higher cause of the divine will or omnipotence

in its relation to the eternal in which its (the will's) own integrity with all of its finite limitations is preserved.

We hold, then, that our interpretation of Climacus as a non-volitionalist is consistent with our general thesis that he finds faith or the eternal to be reasonable. This is so in the sense that we believe that his philosophical position concerning freedom is that he sees the eternal (God) as an object of the will's intention, that the place of one's will in existence is to actualize (should one will to do so), following reflection, what remains a mere possibility in the historical, namely, the eternal.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>4</sup> Perkins, *Søren Kierkegaard*, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 86.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>7</sup> Perkins, *Søren Kierkegaard*, 22.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>9</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith: A Survey of Christian Doctrines*, trans. Henry Zylstra (Grand Rapids: Baker House Books, 1980), 280.

<sup>10</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 75.

<sup>11</sup> Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 102.

<sup>12</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 75.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* "the wonder is for faith, inasmuch as the person who does not believe does not see the wonder."

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-82.

<sup>21</sup> Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, 104.

<sup>22</sup> Caleb Miller, "Faith and Reason," *Reason for the Hope Within*, ed. Michael Murray (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmann Publishing Company, 1999), 140.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>24</sup> See chapter two of our study on the topic of the subjective.

<sup>25</sup> Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, 93.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>28</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 333.

<sup>29</sup> S. U. Zuidema, *Kierkegaard* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1960), 27.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. I elaborate on freedom and the will later in the chapter.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>32</sup> The Hongs define the term “suffering” in two ways: As “a suffering of the mind” [*Affekt*] and “an uncontrolled emotional state” [*Sinds L i d e l s e*].

<sup>33</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 47: “At its deepest level, all offense is suffering. Here it is similar to that of unhappy love. Even when self-love announces itself in the rashest exploit, the amazing deed, it is suffering, it is wounded.”

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>39</sup> The learner is anyone outside the truth.

<sup>40</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 14-15.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>43</sup> J. Heywood Thomas, *Subjectivity and Paradox: A Study of Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 61-2.

<sup>44</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 87.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 87.

<sup>48</sup> Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, 69.

<sup>49</sup> For a discussion on passion's different meanings in Climacus, see Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*.

<sup>50</sup> Harvey A. Smith, *Kierkegaard's Pilgrimage of Man: The Road of Self-Positing and Self-Abdication* (Amsterdam: Free University, 1965), 193.

<sup>51</sup> Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Reason and Society* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 45-46.

<sup>52</sup> James Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 172.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 173: “By distinguishing so sharply between ordinary historical events and the unique paradoxical event, Kierkegaard establishes a cleavage at the heart of history which he does not attempt to bridge and which, perhaps, he thinks neither can nor ought to be bridged.”

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 29.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen Evans, *Passionate Reason: Making Sense of Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 126.

<sup>60</sup> Some, however, oppose Climacus' claim. They argue that human reflection or the historical dimension of human thinking in Climacus is something that palliates itself as a kind of "second" coming into existence, (so to speak), within the historical. For example, according to one critic, H.A. Nielson, the meaning of human ability to reflect on anything, for instance, is not that this indicates a person's ability to reflect metaphysically about an object (as Climacus does with his own aim of incorporating it—existence—into metaphysical and religious arguments), but only the access to the person's etymological ability. Nielson claims that what can at times be thought to be the indication of the thought's metaphysical possibilities in one's life (e.g., God's existence)—as Climacus and Climacean philosophy conveys—is none other than an experience of reflection of the natural life that has taught the person how to speak about the world, with all its possibilities in its natural etymological foundation. That is, Nielson sees the world as a natural state whose metaphysical experience of eternal possibilities is encapsulated within the world's finite empirical bounds. For this interesting approach to Climacus' metaphysical understanding of human existence, see: H. A. Nielson, *Where the Passion Is: A Reading of Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments* (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 1983), pp.? However, even though one think that there is/could be a connection between a person's ability for language and ideal or metaphysical reflection, this does not prevent Climacus from thinking how it is thought's reflection and not the person's linguistic ability that ultimately affects and produces language in all its statements and assertions (a matter that requires a separate discussion and elaboration). For Climacus, the problem of reflection at the end testifies not so much to human language *per se*, but as to how thought's reflection may ground itself in the broader category of privileged human freedom, which extends beyond our empirical experience of the world to the eternal that is disproportionate to human language or to any other human quality. Let us suppose that human language, in the form of propositions and theories, is taught in life in its natural foundation, as Nielson argues. Still, this idea cannot in principle eliminate the notion these etymologies emerge from some form of inner capacity of accomplishing thought that serves as the very source of natural etymological expressions. This inner structure of accomplishing thought for him is what ultimately constitutes the ways of various etymological forms of human language. If Climacus is correct in viewing human language as rooted in the broader inner capacity of human thought, then we must accept his notion that human language, and all other humans' natural qualities for that matter, does not reside within the larger realm of the human consciousness. That is, for Climacus, human language or any other humans' natural ability it is not innate to the thought structure of humans' natural reason. Rather, his idea of the broader interiority of human thought represents nothing else than the metaphysical *a priori* that is part of the larger construction of human thought as a whole, namely, the religious or eternal that enables every natural human ability as such. Climacus' intention in presupposing the religious or eternal nature of human reflection is to clarify our ordinary methodological understanding of the natural world within the context of scientific psychology outside the boundary of scientific or empirical epistemology.



<sup>61</sup> M. Jamie Ferreira, “Faith and the Kierkegaardian Leap,” *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 208-09.

<sup>62</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 40.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43.

<sup>64</sup> See Stephen Evans, “Can God Be Hidden and Evident at the Same Time? Some Kierkegaardian Reflections,” *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 23, no. 3 (July 2006): 241-52 (especially, 242-3).

<sup>65</sup> Ferreira, “Faith,” 221.

<sup>66</sup> Here, the phrase “willful commitment to believe” could be said to be equivalent to a “willful choice to believe” in the paradox. The debate concerning the idea or concept of choice is mainly brought about as a result of dispute between the naturalists and their religious opponents. Naturalism advocates the idea of one single scientific or natural world that does not operate under some higher supernatural cause. The religious view (i.e., Christianity, Judaism, Islam) contends that the world is not a single natural entity but is constituted by the natural and supernatural; that all human choices are caused by the higher supernatural force, namely, God. With respect to the meaning of choice in Climacus, it is not the former naturalistic view but the latter view of the religious or supernatural that one finds. Yet he retains human agency in one’s act of choice making, although one’s act of choice is always a relative choice carried out under the higher force of the divine will of the Creator. He preserves the idea of absolute-relative distinction between human and divine agency with respect to the problem of free choice.

<sup>67</sup> For an extensive discussion on this subject, see the section under “An Analysis of Transcendental Critique in *Fragments*” in chapter two of this study 36-50 where these and other relevant points are made.

<sup>68</sup> Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, 98.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Ferreira, “Faith,” 214.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 217-18.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* 219.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 219-20.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>82</sup> Pjoman, *Kierkegaard’s Philosophy*, 187.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 190-91. See 190, especially, for different types of illustrations he gives.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 192-93.

<sup>89</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 75.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 77.

## Chapter VI: Summary and Conclusions

In this last and short chapter I will draw a summary and conclusions. I will do that by describing the main intention and argumentation of *Fragments*.

The nature of my study is that it contains discussions with respect to the issue concerning the relation between faith and reason. In this work I show that there is objective aspect to the eternal (God) in the thought of Johannes Climacus who is the pseudonymous author of Kierkegaard's book *Philosophical Fragments*. In contrast to the standard view that sees *Fragments* as intending to reject reason, I argue that the text is not intended to serve this purpose but to present a view that is sympathetic to reason. I argue that Climacus in *Fragments* argues for the objectivity of the eternal, that there is correlation between the eternal and human knowledge. I argue that Climacus presents the eternal as an object of historical knowing, that it subjects to reason's intellectual or ideal appropriation.

The book is divided into six chapters. Chapter one gives an introduction of the book. It gives the overall structure of and the discussed themes and sub-themes in the thesis.

Chapter two contains two main sections: a discussion on Spinoza and his pantheistic philosophy; a discussion on the issue of subjectivity in Climacus and Husserl. In both of these discussions I argue that the reason that it is possible for human beings to think about the eternal is because Climacus believes that there is an objective aspect to the eternal which yields to human thought.

Chapter three discusses the problem concerning the Absolute Paradox, the Incarnation of God. I argue that this transcendent event in time, in spite of its paradoxical nature of eternal (God)-historical (man) unity (thus "absurdity") is an occurrence that subjects to reason's ideal appropriation. I argue that on the basis of my understanding of the text that the reason that we do not believe in the paradox, according to Climacus, is not because there is no objective aspect to the paradox but because of human sin. That is, if one gives a careful thought to the paradox, one will be able to appropriate the truth of the paradox.

Chapter four also presents an argument for the objectivity of the eternal. It includes a discussion on Hegelian philosophy. There I argue that Climacus' rejection of Hegelian philosophy is not for its philosophical formulation *per se* but for its misinterpretation of the relation between the eternal (God) and the historical (world). I argue that what Climacus' critique of Hegelian philosophy intends is to reject the Hegelian methodology of constructing the eternal-historical relation as a natural synergy, and not to reject reason' ability to rationally formulate that system.

In chapter five, I discuss different theoretical concepts that Climacus introduces in *Fragments*, such as "coming into existence," "moment," "condition" and so on. I intend to show that Climacus uses these concepts to argue for the objectivity of the eternal. While it is fair to say that Climacus makes the necessary distinction between faith and reason in the text by using these concepts, it is my view that these concepts can also be viewed as being used to show the objective aspect of the eternal.

Chapter six provides a summary of the book.

Kierkegaard was the most prominent philosopher in the period following Kant to write about the proper identity of and balance between faith and reason. Using the pseudonym of Johannes Climacus, Kierkegaard discusses the relationship between faith and reason in *Philosophical Fragments*. He does it in such a way that the integrity of each—faith and reason—is preserved without eliminating their interdependence and interrelation.

As much as Climacus separates religious faith from any tie with historical reason in absolute terms, and thus eliminates all of reason or philosophy's unraveling of faith, he does not isolate them from each other completely. Despite the fact that he views human reason as having undermined Christianity throughout Christian history, he does not reject its place in human life altogether. In his *Kierkegaard's Pilgrimage of Man: The Road of Self-Positing and Self-Abdication*, Harvey A. Smith correctly alludes to the fact that what Climacus felt was needed (in order to save the place of reason in Christian thought) was that reason be modified to show its limits and that it was subject to the claims of higher faith, since it is within those limitations that reasoning, especially about faith, has its place.<sup>1</sup>

This indicates that the problems of God's existence and his human appearance in history, an idea or doctrine known theologically as God's divine or special revelation in the world, can be approached both religiously or theologically and philosophically. Thus in this study I have tried to engage

and analyze the problem of the relationship between (religious) faith and (human) reason from a philosophical and theological perspective in order to give each of these two theoretical-existential categories their proper meaning as found in *Fragments* by Climacus. In our study, we have provided a theoretical-comparative study of the two different fields of faith (religion) and reason (philosophy) in *Fragments*, discussing not only how they are canceled in absolute terms but also how reason ideally appropriates and objectively relates to the eternal. The result is that even though faith and reason are separate categories of experience, and thus absolutely irreconcilable by any human means, one could still make a reasonable case for the eternal based on one's intellectual or ideal appropriation and objective experience of it. Transcendental analysis does not prove the existence of the eternal, but shows that human consciousness as such presupposes an idea of it, that is its existence. From this, it follows that humans have of the eternal must be taken seriously because those experiences are not normal subject-object relations, but involve those experiences that are at the deepest level of human existence where the how question of being constantly hovers over and normal functions of reason and methods of academic research do not apply. The reason that those experiences must be taken seriously is because they reveal the truth of existence for Climacus, namely, the eternal. In this study, this is expressed by the term "reasonable" instead of rational because our position is that the possibility or reality of the eternal is reasonable.

Climacus employs the concept of the eternal as used religiously which is fundamentally different from how the concept is used in philosophy. He states that its use in philosophy lacks the qualitative element of faith, which ultimately gives content to the content-less philosophical use. To illuminate this point, we highlighted some important concepts introduced and discussed by Climacus in *Fragments*. These concepts include God, faith, paradox, subjectivity, moment, condition, leap and will. We have argued that these philosophically and religiously significant concepts, in spite of their appeal to the authoritative and uncompromising nature of Christianity, nonetheless show that there is an objective relation between faith and reason. We have thus argued for two main theses that derive from our study of this book: 1) there is absolute disparity between faith and reason; 2) there is a relative relation between faith and reason.

First, concerning the problem of disparity between faith and reason, Climacus makes a simple claim that human reason by itself cannot obtain the

truth of God's existence. God's existence, he declares, is not something that our reason can prove on its own. This is because, from the standpoint of Christianity, God's existence is beyond the reach of reason and requires one's spiritual conversion. For Climacus, faith demands more than just the mind's assent; it demands a radical transformation of one's life from unbelief to belief which is possible through genuine faith in God's existence. According to Climacus, no philosophical argument for God's existence, no matter how constructive or persuasive, demonstrates its reality absolutely. No philosophical argument by itself is so powerful that it can convert a person from unbelief to belief. No theoretical defense of any sort is able to fully convince a person to believe in God's existence. Climacus holds that all rational arguments for the existence of God are prevented, by their historical character, from acknowledging the existence of such a being absolutely. Faith in God's existence, he says, is a "gift" that is received on non-rational grounds, namely, grace, and is not achieved by someone's rational or existential merit. Because he believes that religious faith and historical reason are absolutely contradictory categories between which is an infinite gap these two opposite categories of human thought cancel each other out in an absolute way with no achieved harmony.

For Climacus, a person's historical reason as such is an immanent category in the historical dimension. Therefore, its task is limited to simply giving historical perspectives on the natural world and the eternal other. At best, it engages in undertaking a speculative pursuit to discover what can only be found by faith—the truth of God's existence.

We proved this point in chapter two in our analysis of Husserl and the Husserlian concept of the other. There we demonstrated that, from the perspective of Climacus, Husserl and Husserlian philosophy fails to portray the true being of the other, since one's subjectivity—one's inward experience of the other—is formulated on a presupposition-less intentionality. For that reason, the other, in Husserl and Husserlian philosophy, loses its otherness and therefore is reduced to a being without any particular content.

In chapter three, we also examined the inimical attitude of human understanding toward the paradox. There, we asserted that reason collides with the paradox and does not permit itself to have the access to the truth. We noted Climacus' assertion that in order to access the meaning of the paradox, one must perceive this event from the religious perspective of faith and not from the perspective of one's theoretical assessment. The reason we

gave is because the meaning of the paradox does not fit into the rational aspect of human knowing by reason or defining. Simply put, the truth of the paradox is beyond all historical or intellectual appropriation because it is an event that requires authentic appropriation.

In chapter four we indicated the same point through our analysis of Climacus' critique of Hegel. There we argued that Climacus sees Hegel or Hegelian philosophy as a philosophical scheme that systemizes the truth in such a way that the truth is wrongfully placed under the dominance of reason, promoting reason's sovereignty. According to Climacus, the transcendent structure of Christianity is at risk in the Hegelian system of absolute idealism, which identifies the divine and the world as an undifferentiated unity. In contrast to this negative dialectic that synthesizes the divine and the world in a systemized theoretical scheme, Climacus offers an alternative that positively identifies the eternal and the world such that God's transcendence and the singularity of human existence are properly preserved. This is the alternative of true faith.

In contrast to the Hegelian philosophy and all other rationalist traditions, faith, for Climacus, commences a new pursuit: it enables a person to believe in the actual truth of the existence of the eternal beyond the historical. For Climacus, the way one achieves the religious condition that transforms a person's unbelief into belief is by believing in the paradox of God's appearance in the world. The central belief of Christianity, for him, is the belief in God's Incarnation. And faith, he argues, is the only thing that enables a person to truly accept this revelation. He argues that, with respect to this paradox of God's appearance in the world, "only the person who personally receives the condition [of faith] from the god...only that person believes."<sup>2</sup>

One would do well to look closely at the third chapter of *Fragments* to discover a detailed exploration of the supersessive nature of faith over human rationality. There Climacus discusses faith as a concept that transcends all reasonable categories of human understanding. He declares that faith cannot be a philosophical concept, principally because faith is, with respect to its essence, incongruent with the natural structure of human understanding. Faith, he declares, transcends all philosophical aims and imagination and never derives any portion of force from its rational counterpart, reason. Faith, he says, exceeds all that is historical in the world. It does not have its origin in the historical but rather in the eternal.

Hence, we see in *Fragments* Climacus' strong case for the absolute disparity between faith and reason which may come across as a vigorous case for fideism. He formulates a strong position for the uncompromising disparity between religious faith and human reason. What he asserts, as Evans rightly states, is that what faith discloses is an independent transcendent character that stands above the force and limits of humans' historical understanding.<sup>3</sup> Climacus promptly argues that the historical event of the paradox of the God-man unity offers nothing that would enable a person to recognize its claim. This recognition, he says, is achieved through faith. He argues that no rational accommodation can be useful to a person who lacks this non-historical condition (faith). This condition of faith, Climacus says, is something that is historically or rationally non-adaptive, and therefore any historical or rational attempt to rationalize the event ultimately betrays a lack of confidence in the divine essence of faith.

Second, in addition to presenting a case of what may at first glance seem to be a case for fideism in *Fragments*, we have also argued that Climacus does not reject reason, altogether. Despite his apparent fideistic position, he still believes that the eternal is objective and that the reality of God's existence can be objectively known as we have argued at the end of each chapter of our study. For those who believe, this knowledge would be invoked at the limits of thought and driven toward believing in the eternal.

Even as he abandons allowing any place in one's existence for reason to unravel faith as the dominant force (over reason), he nevertheless admits that reason is related to the eternal (God) and lays the bridge for the person to cross to the other side of the horizon. In other words, we may say that Climacus presents reason in a positive light as a means to see the reasonableness of Christianity. He shows the objective side of faith. This is not to say, however, that he thinks that, if one "walked the road of existence until he stood alone before God," that person "would become a Christian" as some argue.<sup>4</sup> Instead, he holds that, for an unbeliever, Christianity is a "reasonable gamble" that may liberate the person from his or her absolute uncertainty in the existence of the eternal.

The relation between these two separate categories of faith and reason in human experience thus expresses the dialectical constitution of one's experience of the two worlds of time and eternity, simultaneously. In Climacus, these two worlds are intertwined in such a way that reason—without disrupting the gap between the eternal and the historical—yields



intellectual benefits for one's leap to Christianity. It forms the historical or reasonable bridge over the horizon of existence into the world of the eternal. Even as he affirms the uncompromising stance of the traditional "faith-reason dichotomy," Climacus also argues that one could believe in Christianity in the light of one's general knowledge of it.<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately reason cannot prove the existence of God, but faith can. What results in having the proof of God's existence is one's leap to Christianity. This concept as such implies one's discontinuity from the life on earth. It proves the truth of a new reality that asserts meaning other than dread and anxiety: the world outside the suffering soul. It proves that one must leave this world, so to speak, and enter the world of different existence that stresses love and genuine kinship between individuals. This crossing—from the world of labor to rest, as it were, is born in the moment of believing in the paradox, the God incarnate.

In conclusion, I wish to make two additional remarks. First, it is my wish that our study of the text, *Philosophical Fragments*, will influence the opinions of those scholars in the field of the broad philosophical discussions about faith and reason, who view Climacus or Kierkegaard as someone who is indifferent to reason. Climacus/Kierkegaard is often a target of attack by religious and secular thinkers alike, whose hostility is triggered by what they see as his radical turn toward the subjective and away from the objective. For what they see as relinquishment of human knowledge, many "brutally censure" his thought.

However, I wish to convey a different view. Counter to what may be called the "deconstructive" and "essentialist" projection of the critics for the reason that we just gave above, I wish to argue that his well-known idea or concept of human subjectivity does not at all deny reason a significant place in human life, especially with respect to its relation to faith. For example, I would contend, with Richard Coolidge and others, that the concept of subjectivity in Climacus denotes the idea of what Coolidge calls an "implicit 'subjective ontology'."

The idea or concept of implicit subjective ontology states that a person's inner being (i.e., soul, spirit and so on) is filled with passionate interest, which serves as an instrument to lead the person to the divine threshold of strengthened and intensified religious (Christian) faith. Rather than depicting it as a way of abandoning objectivity, I see his "rehabilitation of subjectivity," as it were, in its "uncontested strength" as a way of safeguarding human

existence and freedom in the world against all attempt to annul their place, especially against the abstract enemy of speculative thinking. Climacus wishes to preserve the eternal-historical difference in its purity at all costs and thus safeguard Christianity in its true form, against the false imitations from being tarnished or diminished by what had already become the cultural and ecclesiastical blast in his time in Denmark and elsewhere during his time under their powerful influence of speculative philosophy.

Second, our study of *Fragments* is ethically relevant. Just as we could find many of Kierkegaard's works to be of strong ethical caliber, the *Fragments*, too may be thought of as a work that is ethically precocious since this notable work—with all of its theoretical and metaphysical elements—spells out the inevitable danger should faith or Christianity become befallen by the force of reason: human happiness. From the distinctive Climacean perspective, the issue of the relation between the eternal (God) and the historical (world) really comes down to the question: How can one, in the fallen world of sin and corruption, find the way to a better place of freedom and hope? His response: by faith, since reason cannot perform this task because it cannot break through the limitations of this finite world.

All of the epistemological stances present in *Fragments* in this sense, then, could be taken in the light of the ethical concerns that are also present in some of Kierkegaard's other texts (this is not to say that Kierkegaard and Climacus should be viewed as one and the author) such as *The Attack upon Christendom*, *The Present age*, *Fear and Trembling* and *The Concept of Dread*. This fact implies that the problem concerning morality is unmistakably linked to our epistemological makeup, the *Weltanschauung*. In one's view of the world, the idea of the eternal from the strictly theoretical or philosophical point of view, as we saw in the rational heritage of philosophy (i.e., Socrates, Plato, Kant, Hegel, Husserl and so on), is something that is abstract and has no content. In contrast, from the Christian point of view, it is something sacred. It is an idea "that grows out of the conviction 'that there is something sacred'" outside the human soul.<sup>6</sup> Human life as such is "a life lived in touch with this idea."<sup>7</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *Kierkegaard's Pilgrimage*, 190.

<sup>2</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, 103.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Evans, for example, argues that *Fragments* does not have to be inconsistent with apologetic arguments of a non-foundationalist kind. Evans claims that, although Climacus may not have foreseen and would not have accepted his view, Climacus did not have adequate grounds to reject all traditional apologetics. See C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard on Faith and the Self: Collected Essays* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 148-49. I agree with Evans in the sense that an object of uncertainty (i.e., God's existence) can be believed on the basis of a person's ideal appropriation or intellectual experience of it, although the real choice at hand for a person, even with this experience, is always whether to make a leap of faith or remain in doubt given the inadequacy of its absolute proof.

<sup>4</sup> Harvey Smith, for example, in his *Kierkegaard's Pilgrimage of Man: The Road of Self-Positing and Self-Abdication* makes this argument. There, he claims that "Because he himself bowed before God when he had been driven to stand alone, at the extremity of existence, before him, Kierkegaard supposed that all men would react in the same way." Smith, *Kierkegaard's Pilgrimage*, 193.

<sup>5</sup> In a 1845 journal entry, Kierkegaard writes:

Note: Reminiscent of *Fragments*, in which I said that I do not believe that God exists [*er til*, (eternally) is] but know it; whereas I believe that God has existed [*har været til* (the historical)]. At that time, I simply put the two formulations together *and* in order to make the contrast clear did not emphasize that even from the Greek point of view the eternal truth, by being for an existing person, becomes an object of faith and a paradox. But it by no means follows that this faith is the Christian faith as I have now presented.

<sup>6</sup> Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Critique*, 45-6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.



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