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Jørgen Huggler

Faith and Knowledge: Remarks Inspired by Søren Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*

Abstract: In this article, I present some reflections on the relationship between faith and knowledge in some of Kierkegaard's works, primarily the *Philosophical Fragments* from 1844. I ask, what the project of Climacus consists in, and proceed to show that his opposition between faith and knowledge includes a number of decisions that are neither trivial nor particularly stable. By doing so, I want to present my own doubts as to whether the opposition between faith (by Climacus connected to history, becoming and paradox) and knowledge (connected to intellectual understanding, logic, timelessness and necessity) itself is reasonable. Based on the analysis, I argue that the texts authored by Climacus presuppose a substantial acquaintance with Christian thought and doctrine. This is only indirectly acknowledged by Climacus, and perhaps incompatible with his "thought-project." Further, I discuss whether his denial of intellectual understanding of traditional Christian thought as a path to faith gives license to irrationalistic views.

In his *Philosophical Fragments* (1844) Søren Kierkegaard enquires into the epistemic obstacles against becoming a Christian. Some of his other pseudonymous works discuss ethical and psychological difficulties. As such, Kierkegaard's contributions to philosophy of religion stand in a clear contrast to his edifying and devotional works published in his own name. Precisely Kierkegaard's thoughts about faith and knowledge have given rise to a broad spectrum of reactions: from the nineteenth century Danish Kierkegaardians—many of whom (from Hans Brøchner to Harald Høffding), in recognition of the oppositional relationship's radicality, turned their backs on the church, left their theological study and became philosophers (in Brøchner's case, with a type of Feuerbachian theory of religion which views religion as originating in human nature)¹—to the twentieth century assumption that the opposition could be

¹ Cf. Hans Brøchner, *Problemet om Tro og Viden. En historisk-kritisk Afhandling*, Copenhagen: P.G. Philipsens Forlag 1868, p. 226; *Om det Religiøse i dets Enhed med det Humane. Et positivt Supplement til "Problemet om Tro og Viden,"* Copenhagen: P.G. Philipsens Forlag 1869. Recently Hans Brøchners *bidrag til Kierkegaard-receptionen i Danmark*, ed. by Carl Henrik Koch,

used as a pretext for a defensive immunization of faith's territory against the natural sciences, sociology and psychology progressing towards an answer to the mystery of life.² This is a self-protection that can, however, easily lead to a view of theological understanding as being a not-knowing, which is why the price to pay for its defense against the sciences is to become defenseless against other allegedly religious insights that can claim the same ignorance or even possess the knowledge whose place is left empty.

Kierkegaard, however, is firmly rooted in the Protestant tradition. Some of his most radical theses can be seen as a restatement of Luther's central motifs. In a narrower philosophical sense, we can view Kierkegaard's variety of what K. E. Løgstrup refers to as an occasional "intellectual anti-intellectualism"³ as part of a specific tradition. Throughout the Enlightenment's philosophical criticism of religion in the Lutheran area, a specific philosophy was established that was built on the incompatibility of faith and knowledge. This incompatibility, as Hegel highlighted in 1802,⁴ was laid in the philosophy itself; in other words, the limitation of the scope of the philosophical understanding did not originate from the outside—for example, in the form of a recognition that reason cannot adequately construct the factual, positive contents of Christianity—but from the inside: this itself became a philosophy which maintained that, in principle, the absolute and highest could not be understood but simply sensed and believed. Kierkegaard follows the tendency to allow subjectivity to reach its real self-understanding through an experience of its own powerlessness.⁵

Kierkegaard's contribution certainly occupies an extreme position. However, the matter is often the clearest if taken to the extreme. As he formulates the question of faith and knowledge through his pseudonym *Johannes Climacus*,

Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab 2016 (*Scientia Danica. Series H, Humanistica* 8, vol. 13), containing a commemorative article in *Fædrelandet* 1855 and Brøchner's 1849 lectures on the relationship between Christianity and modern philosophy.

2 Carl Henrik Koch, *Den Danske Filosofis Historie*, vol. 4: *Den danske idealisme 1800–1880*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 2004, pp. 361–378 and pp. 435–461, distinguishes between two main phases in the Danish 19th Century discussions about faith and knowledge: 1849–1850 and 1865–1869.

3 Knud Ejler Løgstrup, *Opgør med Kierkegaard*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1968, p. 46.

4 In the introduction to the treatise "Glauben und Wissen, oder die Reflexionsphilosophie der Subjectivität in der Vollständigkeit ihrer Formen, als Kantische, Jacobische und Fichtesche Philosophie," from Hegel and Schelling's *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie* (1802), in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4, ed. by Hartmut Buchner and Otto Pöggeler, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1968, pp. 315 ff.

5 Cf. Walter Schulz, *Die Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*, Pfullingen: Verlag Günther Neske 1975, pp. 8 f.

his discussion adopts the character of a one-man project; Climacus offers a monologue which is occasionally ornamented with burlesque *Verfremdungseffekte* [alienation effects] designed to answer the objections of an imaginary interlocutor.⁶ As Kierkegaard has remarked about Climacus, he seemingly is a man who “knows” what Christianity is.

But what is it he knows by knowing what Christianity is? Is it not the case that Climacus, who distances himself from any religious science, in reality speaks within and against a tradition which he rejects in his conclusion, but which is the overall condition for his being able to formulate his thought projects? Or is it the case that he himself incarnates the problem of faith and knowledge: because, in so far as he is not a Christian (see section II. below), he does not “know” what Christianity is?

I Intellectual Understanding and Faith

When Climacus wishes to criticize *reason* (‘understanding’ as represented by the intellect),⁷ it is philosophy in its early post-Kantian, German Idealist meaning as a self-justifying instance that takes the blame. According to Climacus, a philosophy whose highest aim is to strive towards its own boundary wants to grasp the absolute, which is something beyond thought, and which cannot be grasped by the understanding intellect (which he maintains in accordance with the Enlightenment tradition). In this way, his concept of philosophy becomes a more encompassing caricature than the point of departure within

⁶ Arild Waaler and Christian Fink Tolstrup, “*Philosophical Fragments*—in Response to the Debate between Mynster and Martensen,” *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook* 2004, pp. 208–234, analyze *Philosophical Fragments* in relation to that debate in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* (1839) on rationalism and supernaturalism. Their “tracing the impact of that debate on the overall structure of the *Fragments*” (p. 209) is very convincing, and thus also an indication of the importance of Poul Lübcke’s and Jon Stewart’s pioneer research in the same field, viz. Poul Lübcke, “Guds og verdens visdom. Troen og forargelsen hos Kierkegaard, Mynster og Martensen,” *Filosofiske Studier*, vol. 14, 1994, pp. 131–195, and Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press 2003, pp. 336–377. The debate has been published in Mynster’s “*Rationalism, Superrationalism and the Debate about Mediation*,” ed. and trans. by Jon Stewart, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press 2009 (*Texts from Golden Age Denmark*, vol. 5). However, I do not discuss the *Philosophical Fragments* as a reply in its historical context. Instead my aim is to analyze Climacus’ own stance in philosophy of religion and to highlight some of its presuppositions and consequences.

⁷ “*Forstanden*,” the understanding, the understanding intellect, *SKS* 4, 243 / *PF*, 37.

German Idealism paves the way for; encompassing precisely because of its conceived inner contradictoriness. The tension between immanence and transcendence is presupposed. Philosophy extends from Socrates and Plato via Spinoza to Hegel and Martensen, though, depending on the degree to which it admits being afflicted by its inner contradiction, it can enjoy more or less respectability. In a similar way to Jacobi,⁸ Climacus grounds philosophy's contradictory character in an emphasis of the *human being* and its unavoidable finitude and temporality. The spark of eternity that Platonic thought attributes to the human being appears to be extinguished by the fall as far as the understanding is concerned,⁹ although there are some features that indicate otherwise: because the human being in all its empirical contingency is still drawn by a longing towards the absolute and the eternal. This idea of the human being as a synthesis of the eternal and the temporal is present in Kierkegaard's works *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844) and *The Sickness unto Death* (1849), which also point in this direction.

When Climacus wishes to criticize *faith*, it is Christianity in its institutional-objective and, in addition, its vague popular form that takes the blame. In the pseudonymous authorship, Kierkegaard disrespects a morally interpreted Christianity in favor of the passionate, the absurd and the paradoxically interpreted Christianity. In Denmark, however, the general tendency which was marked by the Enlightenment, just like in Northern Germany, went in the direction of a concretization of natural religion and a highlighting of the revealed religion's generally human traits. Of course, in addition to this came certain romantic, theosophic, speculative tendencies—and also reactions of the “old believers”—in Schleiermacher, Baader, Schelling and Hegel's footprints, in Denmark represented by Martensen;¹⁰ not to forget the religious revival movements and Grundtvig in Denmark.

Climacus' idea of faith is not trivial, not only in terms of the belief in the paradox but already because faith is defined as a sense for *becoming*. According to Jacobi, the absolute is present as a *being*. Faith is (subjectively) a direct certainty of this being (the object). Jacobi thus does not clearly distinguish (apart from in his later years) between seeing and believing.

⁸ Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Beylagen zu den Briefen über die Lehre des Spinoza* (1785–1789), in *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's Werke*, vols. I–VI, ed. by J.F. Köppen and C.J. F. Roth, Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer 1812–25, vol. IV.2 (1819), pp. 135–147; *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus. Ein Gespräch* (1787), in Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. II (1815), pp. 208 f.

⁹ Cf. *Philosophical Fragments*, chs. I.B and III: SKS 4, 222 ff. / PF, 13 ff., and SKS 4, 242 ff. / PF, 37 ff.

¹⁰ Cf. Carl Henrik Koch, *Den Danske Filosofis Historie*, vol. 4, pp. 361–378 and pp. 443–461.

Climacus' turn goes hand in hand with his lack of interest in the empirical, but it is also relevant for his rejection of traditional doctrine, which he nevertheless uses as a grindstone to sharpen his thoughts, and later for his discussion of the apostles, the testifiers of truth, and the struggle against the church; because, with this turn, a direct experience of God is rejected. And inner experience is rejected—a theology of feelings in the sense of Jacobi, for which knowledge must either, purely subjectively, be irrelevant or be validated as emanating from the feeling itself. Similarly, the outer experience is rejected, in which one subjects oneself to an allegedly unavoidable authority; for example, through an education, which, in a fundamentalist (biblically orthodox) way relies on a God-given and therefore philosophically undiscussable source.

II The Content of Faith

Climacus appears to show little interest in an account of the *content of faith*. In his *Philosophical Fragments* (whose title indicates an investigation into the philosophy of religion and not theology), Kierkegaard allows his pseudonym Johannes Climacus—a philosophically and theologically erudite agnostic¹¹—to condense the necessary presentation of the content of faith from generation to generation into one sentence: “‘We have believed that in such and such a year the god appeared in the humble form of a servant, lived and taught among us, and then died’—this is more than enough.”¹² According to Climacus, this sentence gives us “more than enough” reason to believe; and this sentence is all that Jesus’ contemporaries need to convey to others.¹³

11 Kierkegaard claims in his manuscript *On My Work as an Author* (1849) that Johannes Climacus [in the *Concluding Postscript*] is a man “who introduced the issue” of what it is to *become a Christian*, but “did not *directly* define himself as being Christian and the others as not being that; no, just the *reverse*—he denies being that and concedes it to the others.” SKS 13, 14n / PV, 8n.

12 SKS 4, 300 / PF, 104.

13 Nowhere in the *Fragments* is Jesus mentioned by name. The text talks about “the god” and “the god in time.” This is briefly commented on in the *Postscript* (SKS 7, 258 / CUP1, 282f.), where it is given a social-critical sting. In the *Fragments*, this is seemingly motivated by the work’s philosophical-experimental character. With the exception of the final few pages, Christianity is not mentioned anywhere in the book. However, because there are direct as well as indirect references to the New Testament and the Christian tradition, I consider it reasonable here (and throughout this article) to read “the god” as Jesus Christ—to avoid the pretentiousness that also lies in Climacus’ preference, which seems connected to the view of the book as a “thought-project.”

Løgstrup claims that Climacus is not particularly interested in the concrete details of Jesus' life or the content of his teaching; everything that Jesus said or did could have been said or done by another human being (in this formulation, Climacus alludes to the trivializing of Christ's salvation work, which he connects with Jesus' teaching and example). Løgstrup, however,¹⁴ points out the striking fact that, in Jesus' life or actions, Climacus does not find a particular indignant "message about the kingdom of God" or a "claim that his words and actions can contribute to bringing about the kingdom of God."¹⁵

Irrespective of this, the entire argumentation in the *Philosophical Fragments* is based on the particular, paradoxical idea of Christianity that can be derived from the sentence about God becoming human; particularly in the way that, to a large extent (but with different implications), many other thinkers within the philosophy of religion, including Hegel, rely on the same Bible passage: the hymn in the second chapter of the Letter to the Philippians in which an answer is given to the question *cur deus homo?*¹⁶

According to Hegel, the fact that God became human means that God honors his connection with the human world. However, Hegel also attaches importance to the statement that God died and was resurrected, which he views as something that, following Jesus' perceptible presence among the people, forces us to explore the meaning of the whole cycle—according to Hegel, God is spirit.

Kierkegaard is primarily interested in the *inwardness* [*Inderlighed*] of faith; his pseudonymous author in the *Fragments* is not concerned with the teaching but with faith as understood as the human's relation to this teaching. As such: if we relinquish all our reservations, what is important is the inwardness with which we believe. However, the notion of *offence* should not be forgotten, since it is very significant for Climacus: the path to faith goes via offence;¹⁷ everything else would be indifference. Seen from this perspective, Climacus' criticism of the understanding intellect not only seems capable of helping faith maintain and settle for its inwardness; in many ways, the understanding intellect creates a negative foundation for faith: through his thought experiments in the *Philosophical Fragments*, Climacus concludes that the understanding by itself encounters an area which it cannot penetrate but which remains

¹⁴ Løgstrup, *Opgør med Kierkegaard*, p. 18.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Concerning Hegel's philosophy of religion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, cf. Jørgen Huggler, *Hegels skeptiske vej til den absolute viden. En analyse af Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press 1999, pp. 183–217 and pp. 266–269.

¹⁷ SKS 4, 253 / PF, 49: "Forargelse."

paradoxical for it; an area which even rejects reason—namely, faith. On the other hand, he also concludes that faith is and remains something whose truth is only subjective. Faith cannot claim an objective, neutral and reasonable understanding—and, if it does, we can no longer talk about faith. If we allow the understanding and faith to collide, the understanding is limited to addressing the purely objective and (as highlighted from a more existential perspective in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846)). For Climacus (in the *Postscript*), this understanding is something essentially trivial in comparison with the ethical and religious knowledge so crucial for the human (strangely enough, he talks about “knowing” [*Erkjenden*] here).¹⁸ Having said this, by demonstrating that it should lack any form of objective certainty, faith is able to achieve a greater inwardness.¹⁹ The biggest threat to faith is therefore not the intellect, but, on the contrary, that the knowledge and faith are mixed together.

This does not mean that (in the *Fragments*) knowledge is deprived of every right. Climacus avoids Jacobi’s idea, which allows our ignorance to spread from the religious to the non-religious domain. However, with the derogatory remarks in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* regarding the existential triviality and approximate nature of objective knowledge,²⁰ the tendency remains the same: it continues to travel in the direction of the rejection of knowledge *per se*. Even trusting the senses is referred to as a deception,²¹ in a way that resembles ancient skeptical ideas (the “old tropes” in Sextus Empiricus) rather than modern skeptical interpretations of perception.

III Why Can the Understanding Intellect not Comprehend God?

How does Kierkegaard’s Climacus come to the conclusion that the understanding is rejected by faith? Answer: he lets it have its point of departure in itself. He assumes that the intellect already has ‘the condition’ [*Betingelsen*] to recognize the truth. In this way, reason is purely human; at least, as Climacus claims, this was how the ancient Greek philosophers understood it. But what is it we think we can *know* in a purely human way—simply on the basis of the

¹⁸ SKS 7, 181 / CUP1, 197.

¹⁹ SKS 7, 186f. / CUP1, 203f.

²⁰ SKS 7, 139 and 174 ff. / CUP1, 149f. and 188 ff.

²¹ SKS 7, 288 / CUP1, 316.

capacities given to us by nature? On the one hand, this knowledge is sensual and immediate. We can see, hear, smell, taste and feel. It is a knowledge of something nearby, of something which is here and now, or, in other words, a knowledge of something temporal. Yet, on the other hand, we have knowledge of things we can reach by reflection or deduce with logic; or, to put it differently, knowledge of something a-temporal. But is this enough to enable the understanding intellect to comprehend God?

Some thinkers believe it is, and, since Antiquity, there have been philosophers who have attempted to establish theoretical proofs for the existence of God; for example, by considering the efficiency or order of nature, by conceiving of creation as divine intervention, or by examining the concept of God itself (as was attempted negatively by Anselm of Canterbury in the Middle Ages and positively by Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz in later centuries). But, as Climacus and many others claim, all these proofs rest on misunderstandings and false conclusions; in other words, if reason seeks to bridge the gap between man and God, it will ultimately fail.

At the beginning of the *Fragments*, Climacus refers to Meno's Paradox in Plato's dialogue; namely, how we can seek a truth that we do not already know. In ch. III, he claims (in the superlative): "This, then, is the ultimate paradox [*høieste Paradox*] of thought: to want to discover something that thought itself cannot think."²² The claim that thinking has to fail already demonstrates a view of the understanding intellect itself. Kierkegaard lets Climacus develop a doctrine of "the proof," which can be seen as a counterpart to Jacobi's critique of "the demonstration." According to Jacobi, to demonstrate something is to present something as conditioned by a reason. As such, according to the essence of demonstration, it is impossible to prove something unconditional; for example, God. The demonstration can only provide a second-hand certainty. Faith, therefore, takes precedence, because it is a first-hand certainty—a certainty about something non-thinking, which precedes thinking.²³

Climacus claims that, when we prove something, we cannot conclude the existence of something; but, on the assumption that something exists, we can conclude specific things about it; just as a *judge* on the basis of a defendant's

²² SKS 4, 243 / PF, 37.

²³ Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Ueber die Lehre des Spinoza, in Briefen an Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (1785), in Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. IV.1 (1819), p. 210. See also Jacobi's *Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung* (1811), in Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. III (1816), pp. 367 ff. In the "Interlude" [SKS 4, 283 / PF, 84], Climacus refers to the related (Spinozistic) distinction between 'cause/effect' and 'ground/consequence' in Jacobi.

existence can conclude that he/she is a criminal, and not the other way round. With this dubious example—dubious not only because the *police* is supposed to have made the reverse conclusion, but in addition because Climacus jumps to some very ordinary example—the way is paved for an argumentation against *a priori*, *a posteriori* and also against *teleological* proofs of God's existence.

In an important note, yet only in passing, Climacus rejects Spinoza's ontological proof of the existence of God in the *Principia philosophiae cartesianae*. This attempt at a refutation follows Immanuel Kant's criticism of the ontological argument (in the *Critique of Pure Reason*), as Climacus argues that there is a difference between "an empirical being" and an "ideal being" expressed in essential definitions; the latter is only a thought being. In the context of ch. III of the *Fragments*, this criticism of the ontological proof also strengthens the general view of for instance teleological proofs of God's existence, so that Climacus can be confirmed in the assumption with which he began his investigation of them: that what you seek to prove is presupposed in advance; namely, that "the god exists."²⁴

In addition to this problem regarding provability as such, Climacus adds two further, more concrete, objections to the intellect's attempts to transgress its own boundaries: namely the *a posteriori* ambiguity as well as the fact that it provides that which should be "the absolutely different" with its own characteristics. However, whereas these objections primarily concern the understanding's own limitations, from a Christian perspective, there is more to say about this striving on the part of reason. We can ask the following questions: 1. why can the understanding intellect not comprehend God? and 2. why does it attempt to comprehend God in the first place?

Christianity answers the first question partly with a reference to the *fall*—we have lost the *condition* [*Betingelsen*] to recognize God because we have sinned against God—and partly with the idea that its content, the incarnation—"the god in time" [*Guden i Tiden*; a term that Climacus only uses in the book's concluding "moral"]²⁵—is a *paradox*; together with the fact that God makes himself equal to the human. Christianity answers the second question by claiming that the understanding intellect makes this attempt, which is doomed to fail, because it has no consciousness of sin.

So how can we enter a relationship with God? The answer: by developing an awareness of our sin; that is, an awareness of the immeasurable difference between God and the human being. We cannot do this unaided, because we

²⁴ SKS 4, 248f. / PF, 42.

²⁵ SKS 4, 306 / PF, 111.

do not have *the condition* within ourselves. This also implies that we do not have the condition in a timeless way. As we lost this condition during *the fall*, it must be returned to us; and this can only occur at a set moment in time. The only one who can give us this condition is God himself. It must be God who (out of love for us) returns this condition to us at a very specific temporal moment—and he can only do this by bridging the immeasurable difference between himself and us, so that we are able to accept his gift.²⁶

God does this—says Climacus with a poker face—in all likelihood (at least, this is a fairy tale we have heard!)²⁷ by becoming a temporal human being. The striking way in which this core content of faith is introduced will be discussed in section X.

IV The Paradox and its Conditions for a Happy Collision with Understanding

For now, let us confine ourselves to the contents and the object of faith without questioning the way in which they are introduced. Seen from the perspective of the understanding intellect, if the content of faith is that God becomes human, then the relationship between faith and understanding only becomes more paradoxical, says Climacus; for it means that the object of faith is a God—something *eternal*—that becomes a *temporal* human being. It is argued (for example, with reference to Tertullian's paradox: *credo quia absurdum*) that this is simply self-contradictory for the human understanding. We can easily understand something we can *perceive* directly. We can perhaps also understand something we can *logically* contemplate. However, we can never understand something that is *both* eternal yet presented in a determinate, temporal moment

²⁶ Victoria S. Harrison, "Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*: A Clarification," *Religious Studies*, vol. 33, 1997, pp. 455–472, argues that Climacus uses three connected meanings of 'moment' and similarly of 'condition.' She follows David F. Swenson's older translation of *Philosophical Fragments*, distinguishing between 'the Moment' (the incarnation), 'the moment' (the subjective appropriation, or conversion), and 'the *Moment*' (the union of these dual denotations; cf. *ibid.*, p. 458). Thus, she evades the conflict between a universalistic position of interpretation, where incarnation is a general necessary condition of faith, and a particularistic position, where individually acquired faith is the necessary condition of discipleship (cf. p. 467). Here, a third, unifying position seems needed (cf. p. 462) to explain the text, for instance SKS 4, 265 f. / PF, 64. This interpretation is surely elucidating for a reading of *Philosophical Fragments*, including issues like paradox, faith and human willing, also dealt with by Harrison.

²⁷ Cf. SKS 4, 233 / PF, 26.

[*Øieblik*]. There is, according to Climacus, a contradiction between what Jesus immediately is for our senses—namely, a simple human being—and what he is as God. This is a paradox that rejects understanding; spoken in a Christian way, it *offends* us. To find something positive in this paradox, we need to use a different organ than the *understanding intellect*. We need to appeal to *faith*; an organ that will believe that which understanding finds *absurd*.

With this discussion of the paradox, Climacus refers to the christological discussions of the Ancient Church,²⁸ though he does not adopt its diplomatic solutions formulated by the creed. It is thus in connection with this way of thinking that Climacus eventually introduces the concept ‘faith’ in the *Fragments*. He first asks: “How, then, does the learner come to an understanding with this paradox, for we do not say that he is supposed to understand the paradox but is only to understand that this is the paradox.”²⁹ And the answer follows immediately:

We have already shown how this occurs. It occurs when the understanding and the paradox happily encounter each other in the moment [*Øieblikket*], [a] when the understanding steps aside and [b] the paradox gives itself, and [c] the third something, the something in which this occurs (for it does not occur through the understanding, which is discharged, or through the paradox, which gives itself—consequently *in* something), is that happy passion to which we shall now give a name, although for us it is not a matter of the name. We shall call it *faith* [*Tro*].³⁰

According to Climacus, if we claim that Jesus is the temporally appearing God, this leads to many interesting—or perhaps paradoxical—consequences. The object of faith is not something that simply *exists* (a substance) but something that *becomes*; something active and therefore also something that has a possibility in itself. I consider this aspect fundamental, because it testifies not only to the fact that Kierkegaard’s Climacus—despite referring to God as the eternal—wishes to avoid the problem that God is reduced from a person, freedom and spirit to a substance; it also testifies to the fact that, contrary to Jacobi, Climacus concludes that God cannot be understood in an *immediate* way. It is from here that his strict distinctions between the different forms of understanding³¹ and his interesting reflections on ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’

²⁸ SKS 4, 238 and 258 / PF, 31f. and 55.

²⁹ SKS 4, 261 / PF, 59.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ In ch. IV of the *Fragments*, the following forms are mentioned: knowledge (either of the eternal or of the finite and the historical), an act of the will, immediate sense perception, representation, remembered sense perception, and imagination (cf. SKS 4, 263–265 / PF, 62f.).

communication in the *Fragments* originate. God is neither given as an object of *perception* nor a *historically* justified fact; in all his paradoxicality, he is only given in faith. God is not given for thought, because thought can only grasp logical necessity. In this way, the paradox is thought's cross.

The consequence of this, however, is of primary interest; namely, that *faith* as such is not immediate and unreflective. This goes further than Vigilius Haufniensis' opposition to Hegel in *The Concept of Anxiety*, but even this opposition highlights that the idea of immediacy strips faith of its "historical presupposition."³² Although Climacus—as Løgstrup negatively emphasizes (justifiably in my opinion)³³—allows reflection to remove power from the understanding, it was apparently also his view that faith and understanding are somehow connected. And, as such, the "Appendix" to ch. III in the *Fragments* talks about a "happy" collision between "the paradox and the understanding"³⁴ (a collision which, as mentioned above, is only referred to as "faith" in ch. IV); it is a "happy" collision because it occurs "in the shared understanding of their difference"—as opposed to *offence* (as mentioned above), where the collision occurs without this understanding. However, the problem with this important remark is that it is unclear what such an understanding should contain. Later in the *Fragments*, Climacus himself talks about a "connection" and, in doing so, he highlights the aspect of the will (which, in the "Interlude," presumably due to Kierkegaard's reading of the fourth Cartesian *Meditation*,³⁵ is explicitly opposed to the "understanding"); however, Climacus had previously had the foresight to remark: "It is easy to see, then (if incidentally, the consequences of discharging the understanding need to be pointed out), that faith [unlike belief] is not an act of will, for it is always the case that all human willing is efficacious only within the condition."³⁶ When Climacus, nevertheless, uses the expression "the decision"³⁷

³² SKS 4, 318 / CA, 10.

³³ Løgstrup, *Opgør med Kierkegaard*, pp. 167 ff.

³⁴ SKS 4, 253 / PF, 49.

³⁵ SKS 4, 282n / PF, 83n.

³⁶ SKS 4, 264 / PF, 62. The role of the will seems unclear in the *Fragments*, apart from its connection with sin's voluntariness in ch. I. In which sense can one speak of a will that remains free? Kierkegaard explores this subject in more depth in *The Concept of Anxiety* and *The Sickness unto Death*; in both cases, Kierkegaard does this through an account of the will's ambiguity. The connection that Climacus discusses in the "Interlude" as the opposite of "doubt" can—as lacking the "condition" —, just as its counterpart, be an expression of *despair*. That *angst* is not simply a fear of evil but also a fear of good corresponds to Luther's experience of "the law." However, it is difficult to see how this solves the problem of predestination that the *Fragments* introduced; namely, which role it plays for the enslaved human will. That Kierkegaard

to introduce a voluntary perspective, which is deepened in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, it appears to be motivated by other considerations; namely, the existential meaning of the decision of faith.

But *who* can recognize God in the human being? That continues to be Climacus' question in a *reductio ad absurdum*, even after his discussion of the senses and the intellectual understanding. Who can *see* that the humble servant is God? Perhaps the people who lived in his time—they who actually heard, saw and felt him. Well, says Climacus, these people can certainly be said to have had an *advantage* with regards to common empirical knowledge; but is the recognition of God in this man really a common, straightforward recognition? No. This we have just seen: with our senses we can of course see, hear and feel, but *what* is it that we can see, hear and feel? It is the human being, our contemporary, who stands and walks among us—and only this. The fact that this human being is also *God* himself is something we can never see, hear and feel, because this cannot be perceived by the senses.

The following generation does not have a particular advantage either: the people from that time—for example, the evangelists—were able to collect testimonies from many different people who could remember Jesus, and we can also assume that they had the possibility to exercise a general critique of sources. However, even knowing everything about Jesus' *life and teachings*—being a learned expert—does not take one closer to the essential; namely, that Jesus was *God* presented as a humble servant.

In this way, when there is a difference between 'to see' and 'to believe'—a difference which dates back to the Gospels—and when simple historical facts are rejected, the following question arises: *from where* do we obtain our knowledge of God, of God as spirit?—if we may borrow a Hegelian expression.

is aware of the looming Pelagianism is not only apparent in the previous quotation but also in *The Concept of Anxiety* (SKS 4, 341 and 363/ CA, 34 and 59). At no point does Kierkegaard opt for the semi-pelagian solution, to talk about the will's weakening through sin, which a psychological approach could have suggested. With regards to the problem of faith and knowledge, this book's preoccupation with sexuality (again, a classic Augustinian/Hieronymian topic—Kierkegaard follows Augustine to a large extent) seems to suggest that, with the loss of the "condition," Kierkegaard essentially places more emphasis on *concupiscentia*, bodily desire and self-love (cf. also the *Fragments*, ch. III (SKS 4, 244 / PF, 39)) than he places on knowledge. What is received through faith as a gift of grace is more a justification than a restoration of knowledge. To conclude: freedom of will is lost by sin; thus faith is not produced by will, it is the condition of regaining freedom of will. Faith is primarily the regained will to trust in God (this applies not to the teaching but to the teacher) and secondly the good will; namely, love (*caritas*); "to love your neighbor as yourself" (ibid).

37 "Afgjørelsen," see also *Philosophical Fragments*: SKS 4, 240, 255 and 291 / PF, 34, 52 and 93f.

In the *Fragments*, this question (which also concerns the tradition's significance for the development of a Christian teaching) is only addressed in connection with the previously posed question; that is, within the category of 'occasion.'³⁸ Climacus remarks polemically against Grundtvig that it could be argued that we live in a Christian *culture*; perhaps even a real Grundtvigian culture; a culture that is entirely permeated by Christianity. Should this not give us the *advantage* that we are (so to speak) *born* into faith? No. This is an idea that Climacus will not entertain. He claims it is an idea without meaning or worth: faith is not something you are born into, but, on the contrary, it is a type of rebirth in which we are given back the condition in a personal relationship with God. The course of history has only increased the nonsense: "then every kind of nonsense begins to celebrate,"³⁹ and it has given the previous generation the dubious advantage of "ease." This view perpetuates and sharpens Schleiermacher's view, since Schleiermacher also rejects the history of religion as the history of human stupidity. He rejects the dogmas because he believes that real religion is only to be found in the individual's feeling and awareness of the infinite. Now this view is strengthened, because, just like the anti-pantheistic Jacobi, Climacus cannot follow Schleiermacher's idea that religion is a "view of the universe"—in particular of the universe which constitutes itself in our mind [*Gemüt*].⁴⁰

It is, according to Climacus, not the case that we—in a so-called Hegelian way [Hegel himself thought of time, imagination and necessity inspired by Spinoza]⁴¹—can understand "historical necessity" philosophically; in other words, that we can understand that God, seen in a conceptual-logical way, had to appear in time as a human being. As the "Interlude" in *Fragments* claims, this is a complete conflation of logic and history. The logical is about *necessity*, but something which is historical has nothing at all to do with necessity. For Climacus, the historical is about creation and existence; about *possibility* and

³⁸ See Carl Henrik Koch's *Strejftog i den danske filosofis historie*, Copenhagen: Lindhardt og Ringhof 2000, pp. 106–119, for a discussion of this concept and its connection to 'occasio.'

³⁹ SKS 4, 293 / PF, 96.

⁴⁰ Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (1799) in vol. 1/2, *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1796–1799*, ed. by Günter Meckenstock (1984), in *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vols. 1–, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter 1980–, p. 199 and p. 227.

⁴¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Glauben und Wissen," in *Jenaer kritische Schriften*, ed. by Hartmut Büchner and Otto Pöggeler (1968), vol. 4 in *Gesammelte Werke*, vols. 1–, ed. by the Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Künste, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1968–; pp. 354–357. Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. by Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Reinhard Heede (1980), vol. 9 in *Gesammelte Werke*, p. 429.

reality (actuality); and these categories are fundamentally different from the notion of ‘necessity.’ The historical is something that does not concern mere facts but has more to do with facts that remain questionable; namely, it concerns something which has *come into* existence and therefore something which could have *not* come into existence.

Moreover, the historical is something which demands an *interpretation*, so that we do not simply ascertain its existence, but we go beyond the merely ascertainable “it is there” by interpreting it as something which has *become*. In this way, we leave the immediate certainty behind and win a new certainty by voluntarily adhering to the interpretation: we *choose* to *believe* this—contrary to a contrasting desire, *viz. doubt*, where we choose *not* to adhere to the interpretation. We *see* the star, Climacus asserts, but we do not see that the star is something which has *come into* a temporal existence—this is something we *believe*: it is an interpretation we choose to adhere to. How much more interpretation, how different an acceptance—that is, how different a belief—do we require if it is also about the paradoxical (at least for the understanding) self-contradiction that, at a given time, God would come into existence as a human being and would appear in time as a humble servant? Who dares to talk here about a knowable historical necessity? It is meaningless to talk in advance about necessity in relation to historical events, and this event is also completely illogical. It is paradoxical.

What can we conclude from all this? According to Climacus, the fact that we are all equal in *faith* is the relationship to God—this relationship is not due to us and our will but exclusively to *His* love for us—and it is this relationship that establishes our simultaneousness with him (as opposed to some kind of specified simultaneousness establishing this relationship). Even the historical account of Jesus’ life cannot be anything other than an impetus; with regards to the *object of faith*, the paradox, and God in the form of a servant, everybody is positioned equally. We are not positioned differently on the basis of outer conditions or criteria that could give some people advantages and other people disadvantages. It is irrelevant whether we live simultaneously with Jesus or a short or long time after his death: we can after all not see, hear, feel or intellectually understand that he was God. *Faith and knowledge are fundamentally different*. Faith does not relate to an objective truth but to our personal relationship with a truth that can never become objective.⁴²

⁴² SKS 4, 224, line 11: “Læreren er da Guden, der giver Betingelsen og giver Sandheden.” This assertion is lost in the Hong’s translation of the *Fragments* (PF, 17, the beginning of line 9).

Johannes Climacus ends as he started his reflections on faith and knowledge in the *Fragments*; namely, with an opposition between the Platonic/Socratic learning through ‘recollection’ and the Christian; “the god in time” is called the new teacher. As stated in the *Fragments* ch. I, it is this teacher that gives the disciple *the condition* [*Betingelsen*] to ask for and understand the truth, and who reminds the disciple that he/she is to blame for being in untruth. The teacher does not simply give the condition but *also* the truth.⁴³ The teacher is very significant: “A teacher such as that, the learner will never be able to forget, because in that very moment [*Øieblik*] he would sink down into himself again, just as the person did who once possessed the condition and then, by forgetting that God is, sank into unfreedom [*Ufriheden*].”⁴⁴

This point is discussed to its extreme in ch. IV, where it is directly stated that the *teacher* himself, and not the *teaching*, is the object of faith. “The presence of the god in human form—indeed, in the lowly form of a servant—is precisely the teaching,”⁴⁵ Climacus claims. Perhaps this assertion is a consequence of his thought project. Some pages later, it states: “Now if we assume that...the teacher himself provides the learner with the condition, then the object of faith becomes not the *teaching* but the *teacher*, for the essence of the Socratic is that the learner, because he himself is the truth and has the condition, can thrust the teacher away.”⁴⁶ The object of faith is not a ‘teaching’ but the ‘teacher.’ We talk about truth, but the truth is the teacher himself. This is the *what* of faith we seek in *Philosophical Fragments*: “the god in time.”

V An Interlude Against Historical Necessity

Climacus’ concept of intellectual understanding is not a given thing. We have seen that he reduces it to the narrow sense of the formal, logical conclusion, which he opposes to, yet occasionally also supplements with, the senses. This lies behind his rejection of Spinoza’s essentialist, ontological proof of God and, later, it also motivates his rejection of a so-called historical necessity.

In the “Interlude,” Climacus very clearly borrows the modal conceptuality for this from his critique of Spinoza’s ontological proof of God in ch. III of the *Fragments: Essence* (the ideal) and *logical necessity* (Climacus rejects any other type of necessity) belong together; *possibility* and *actuality*, on the contrary,

⁴³ SKS 4, 223f. / PF, 14f.

⁴⁴ SKS 4, 226 / PF, 17.

⁴⁵ SKS 4, 258 / PF, 55.

⁴⁶ SKS 4, 264 / PF, 62.

involve the real, that is, existence and becoming. It is therefore a category mistake to talk about historical necessity. If we are inclined to view *what has been* as more necessary than *what is to come*, this is because we mistakenly confuse the *possibility* (that has been actualised and in which the possibility is annihilated [*tilintetgjort*] by becoming reality) with *necessity*. However, if we do this, we can (by using Diodorus Cronus' modal-logical 'master argument,' which implies fatalism) as well conclude "that the future would also be necessary."⁴⁷

Climacus highlights that all coming into being rests on *freedom*, not on necessity;⁴⁸ consequently, this must also hold for historical coming into being. Past events do not become more or less necessary through memory any more than future events become necessary through prophecy, or the present events become necessary through our understanding them. Neither does a *providence* of the future "confer necessity upon it," as we learn in the *Fragments* with reference to Boethius' thinking in the *Consolation of Philosophy* V, Prosa 4–6.⁴⁹

Climacus thus asserts without reservation his reflections on *changes* (from before to now and from now to later), also for a division between past, present and future. Primarily, he vehemently rejects all other ways to think the relationship between possibility and necessity;⁵⁰ hence Aristotle's modal-logical idea in *De interpretatione*, chs. 12–13.⁵¹ In order to avoid the inconsistency that 'the necessary' implies 'the possible' whilst 'the possible' implies the negation of 'the necessary,' we have to establish whether by 'possible' we mean (one-sided): 'that which is not impossible' (not by necessity is not), or whether we mean (two-sided): 'that which is neither necessary nor impossible' (so together: not by necessity is or not by necessity is not).

47 SKS 4, 277 / PF, 77. Arild Waaler, "Aristotle, Leibniz and the Modal Categories in the Interlude of the *Fragments*," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 1998, pp. 276–291, analyzes profoundly the philosophical consequences due to Kierkegaard's use of various secondary expositions of the historical sources (commented in SKS K4, 262–287), for instance Leibniz, Tennemann and Poul Martin Møller.

48 SKS 4, 275 / PF, 75.

49 SKS 4, 279 / PF, 80. Cf. Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Philosophiae Consolationis*, in *Boethius. The Theological Tractates and The Consolation of Philosophy*, ed. and trans. by H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand, London and Cambridge, Massachusetts: William Heinemann and Harvard University Press 1968, pp. 382–411.

50 SKS 4, 274 f. / PF, 74.

51 Aristotle, *De interpretatione*, in *Aristoteles Graece*, vols. 1–2, ed. by Immanuel Bekker, Berlin: Academia Regia Borussica, Georg Reimer 1831, vol. 1, pp. 16a-24b. Climacus refers to 22b29–23a26, and indirectly (via P. M. Møller) to 18a28–19b4.

According to Climacus, it is untrue to say about the absolutely ‘necessary’ that it has a possibility of the latter kind, because only changeable things have this. And, of course, this Aristotelian reasoning, in contrast, would have spoilt the entirety of Climacus’ argumentation. If, when talking about past events, one is used to claiming that such events can no longer be changed, Climacus’ argument, which is based on a concept of the “change of becoming,” is unsound. Therefore, a little later in the “Interlude,” this objection is averted with a distinction between ‘unchangeableness’ and ‘necessity.’⁵² This distinction gives way to possibility in the form of “a higher change,” whereby there is a direct reference to atonement (repentance), which, for example, wishes to abolish a reality.⁵³ From a philosophical-historical perspective, we could think of Peter Damian’s notion that, for God, nothing is impossible; not even changing the past. But this would go too far in relation to Climacus’ concept of atonement, where the past cannot be erased but is kept alive by a mind that has regretted, regardless of whether this leads to reticence [*Indesluttethed*] or the liberation due to faith.⁵⁴

If we think in a Hegelian way, we can ascertain that Climacus attempts to relate to a problem in Kant and Jacobi; namely that the structure of the discussion of the relationship between faith and knowledge is determined by a separation of object and subject. Just like Jacobi, Climacus does not believe that this makes the sensual world questionable, undefined or indeterminate. In general, he is not a sceptic with regards to experience, but his idea of consciousness turns this sensing into something specific and momentary, which, for the subject, is unconnected to thought. It is not clear how he can speak about “change” epistemologically on the basis of this idea; behind this there seems to be a metaphysical theory of time, which we may know a bit more about from *The Concept of Anxiety*.⁵⁵ The objective, according to the

⁵² SKS 4, 276 f. / PF, 77.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ SKS 4, 227 / PF, 19: “Let us call such sorrow *repentance*, for what else is repentance, which does indeed look back, but nevertheless in such a way that precisely thereby it quickens its pace toward what lies ahead!” In this article, I have chosen to follow the more differentiated notion in *The Concept of Anxiety*, SKS 4, 417 ff. / CA, 114 ff.

⁵⁵ In *The Concept of Anxiety* (SKS 4, 384–396 / CA, 81–93), Kierkegaard (Vigilius Haufniensis) expands on the idea of the human being as a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal through some Platonically inspired—perhaps late neo-Platonic (Iamblichus and his successors), but clearly not classical Platonic—time-theoretical remarks, which are connected to the words in 1 Cor 15:2 that there will come an indivisible moment when we will all be changed. *Time* is essentially seen as the “infinite succession,” an on-going succession with no point of reference; a snap, a “foothold” [*Fodfæste*] it can only obtain with regards to *the eternal* (SKS 4, 388 f. / CA,

Fragments, can only be reached through sensation, but, since this is connected to the human being as sensuous, it is a finite knowledge for which the eternal and infinite—namely, God—remains something beyond. Faith, which, on the contrary, is called another *sense*; namely (in its simple meaning), a sense for *coming into existence*,⁵⁶ for *history*, and (in an eminent meaning) a sense for the *paradox*, becomes something else here; it is subjective, determined by the will, reflective, and, in a certain way, a-logical.⁵⁷ However, Climacus' point is that a human being cannot reach beyond the constitution of understanding by itself. But the understanding is nevertheless directed towards and dependent on the absolute and the eternal, which, through reflection, it can be open for; but only to the extent that the absolute gives itself to it—not as eternal and absolute but as “the god in time.”

The question remains, however, whether *Climacus* with his passionate subjectivity—in contrast to Luther with his piety—tends to turn faith into an achievement. Here it should be noted that in *The Sickness unto Death*, Anti-Climacus offers the eminent Lutheran insight that the self is its own obstacle.

85f.). It is only in this way that time is something other than the infinite disappearance and emptiness of *change*. It is only by deflecting and reflecting *the eternal* that the succession is *divided* by “the present,” so that something in the process is conceived *as before*, as having been passed, and something else in the process is conceived *as after*, as still to come. The *eternal*, however, is that which is always *present*. *Time*, in contrast, is succession—that which goes by. The eternal is the present, and thus *the present* is “full” [*det Fyldige*]*—that which fills time when touched by eternity. It is this touching which is referred to as the “moment”; the trivial expression “to live in the moment” is only used figuratively because, in this case, one can only think of the succession. But the moment is ambiguous; 1. it penetrates time, so the succession is halted and something is emphasized and given amplitude [spatieret], 2. but it also divides eternity, so that, for the human being’s “temporality” it is, only in consequence of its dependency on eternity, divided into temporal categories: the past, the present and the future “time,” although, in a certain way, the “future” is everything, “the incognito in which the eternal, even though it is incommensurable with time, nevertheless preserves its association with time” (SKS 4, 392 / CA, 89)—just as when we, contrary to the ancient Greeks, talk in a Christian way about “the eternal life.”*

56 SKS 4, 279f. / PF, 80.

57 Hegel and the late Jacobi would prefer to say “rational” [*vernünftig*] because it reaches beyond the contradictions of the understanding [*Verstand*]. Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, Erster Band, Die objective Logik* (1812–1813), ed. by Friedrich Hogemann and Walter Jaeschke (1978), vol. 11 in *Gesammelte Werke*, p. 7 and pp. 17f., and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, Zweiter Band, Die subjective Logik* (1816), ed. by Friedrich Hogemann and Walter Jaeschke (1981), vol. 12 in *Gesammelte Werke*, pp. 41f. This passage seems to refer to the controversy concerning *Verstand* and *Vernunft* between Jacobi and Schelling, occasioned by Jacobi’s *Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung*, Leipzig: Georg Fleischer 1811, pp. 175 ff.

The deeper it penetrates itself, the more prominent that which separates it from God becomes. It is only outside itself that the human being can locate the power in which it can “transparently” rest or ground.⁵⁸

VI Human Understanding and the Eternal in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*

Kierkegaard lets the pseudonym Climacus continue with a *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*. This “postscript” adds some mainly ethical and contemporary-critical but nevertheless new, *existence*-related, aspects to that which has already been said about faith and knowledge.

According to some older philosophical ideas, the human being could recognize God simply because we, in our understanding, partake in God’s own wisdom, albeit it in a limited way. In his *Essais de Théodicée* (1710),⁵⁹ Leibniz emphasizes that there is a difference between claiming that the truths of faith are higher than the truths of reason and claiming that the truths of faith conflict with the truths of reason. He rejects the latter claim. Seen historically, it is no truism to claim that we think on the basis of incompatibility. Climacus himself implicitly refers to this when he alludes to the *via negationis/via eminentiae*⁶⁰ and indirectly to Anselm of Canterbury,⁶¹ and in fact to Leibniz, to whom (i.e., the *Théodicée*) he refers quite directly in his formulation of the problem in the title of the “Interlude.”⁶² However, we have seen Climacus disregard such ideas with his separation of faith and knowledge, which was again based on the fact that the Christian belief in “the god in time” not only presupposed a historical notion, which, because of its paradoxical nature, was not belief in the sense of ‘acceptance of something which has become’ but belief in the eminent sense of ‘acceptance of something paradoxical.’ We have also seen how the understanding intellect falls short in this regard. It cannot reconcile this paradox by itself. As far as we have followed Climacus to this point, he has opposed faith and knowledge in such a way that it is impossible to bridge

58 SKS 11, 130, 146, 161, 196 and 242 / SUD, 14, 30, 46, 82 and 131.

59 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l’homme et l’origine du mal*, ed. by Jacques Brunschwig, Paris: Garnier-Flammarion 1969, pp. 65f. and pp. 84f. (“Discours de la conformité de la foi avec la raison,” § 23 and § 60).

60 SKS 4, 249 / PF, 44.

61 SKS 4, 248 / PF, 43.

62 SKS 4, 272 / PF, 72; cf. SKS K4, 262.

this contradiction in advance; and, seen in this way, the development of his arguments has only served to clarify this contradiction.

In the *Postscript*, Kierkegaard's author (once more: Climacus) plays a trump card, to which he only very cautiously alluded in the *Fragments*; namely, that the specific human *being* excludes a theoretical understanding of God. And therefore, to a large extent, he uses newly produced philosophical terminology, which (beyond the terminology and the ideas of *Fragments*) with "existence" and "existential" as key words, almost overwhelm the reader.⁶³ The human being, claims Climacus now, is in the process of becoming [*i Vorden*].⁶⁴ This determines our entire situation of understanding and makes the theoretical—in the language of the *Postscript* "speculative"—understanding of God impossible. Knowledge of God should be ruled out, for it is unachievable for a human being. Only he who has forgotten what it is to *exist* as a *human* being will be deluded into thinking that faith and knowledge are compatible.

The human being has no possibility to understand the infinite and the eternal with a *certainty* that is based on the assumption that its understanding itself is infinite and eternal, as the speculative philosophers have claimed (here Climacus is arguably referring to Hegel). On the contrary, the human being—as Socrates claims—has to capture the infinite in the finite, which is given with its own existence; namely, to be 'in the process of becoming.' For such an existence, the eternal is changed into something *to come*, "the future [*det Tilkommende*],"⁶⁵ which can be understood as uncertain. No so-called objective understanding—however good it may be—provides the human being with access to the eternal. This also means that the human being cannot build its most crucial decisions—namely, those decisions that relate to its relationship with God—on a stable, objective foundation.

What happens next? Next, the certainty of the eternal has to be obtained *despite* the "objective uncertainty" in a subjective way, which is faith's "passion."⁶⁶ It is the highest ethical task of the individual to become subjective ["becoming subjective"];⁶⁷ to become itself in its relationship with God. "This development or remaking of the subjectivity, its infinite concentration in itself under a conception of the infinite's highest good, an eternal happiness, is the developed possibility of the subjectivity's first possibility."⁶⁸

⁶³ Cf. Frithiof Brandt, *Søren Kierkegaard*, Stockholm: Natur och kultur 1955, p. 61.

⁶⁴ SKS 7, 174 ff. / CUP1, 189 ff.; cf also *The Concept of Anxiety*: SKS 4, 443 / CA, 143.

⁶⁵ SKS 7, 279 / CUP1, 307.

⁶⁶ SKS 7, 186 / CUP1, 203 f.

⁶⁷ SKS 7, 121 ff. / CUP1, 129 ff.

⁶⁸ SKS 7, 122 / CUP1, 130.

It is the task of the individual to become itself as it should be; again a theme which was only alluded to briefly in ch. I of the *Fragments* (under the title “Conversion”), and which even after the *Postscript* demands further development; a task which Anti-Climacus takes upon himself with richer dogmatic means in *The Sickness unto Death*. In other words, metaphysical speculation with its serenity is ruled out for the human being. Instead, the human being must be infinitely concerned with itself. Instead of being able to reflect on the infinite, it is given a task; namely, to understand itself in existence. For something that exists in this way, there is no possibility of a mediation between a subjective and an objective relationship; a connection so that, in a subjective and true way, we relate to an objective truth. Ethically and religiously seen, the “road swings off.”⁶⁹ The human being must decide whether to take the objective path (and, as such, stray from itself) or the subjective path, “with the infinite passion of need.”⁷⁰ This is the “highest truth there is for an *existing* person.”⁷¹

This idea, which emphasizes subjectivity’s only possible true relationship to the truth, is called “Religiousness A.” The “existing subjective thinker”—for example, Socrates—can also assume and maintain this relationship to the eternal, to the truth, which is given with and limited by the human being’s being in becoming. However, in the *Postscript*, Climacus claims that this idea is radicalized in “Religiousness B,” which is religiousness in a Christian sense. This occurs partly because (1) with the doctrine of the fall, and even though Christianity complies with the idea that “subjectivity is the truth” (just like Socrates), at the same time it sees subjectivity as “untruth”;⁷² partly because (2) the eternal truth itself (albeit objectivity is inaccessible on subjectivity’s conditions) in Christianity is the paradox; “the god in time.” Here it is not simply the human being’s existence that prevents it from reaching the eternal truth. At the same time as Jesus Christ brings the eternal very close to the human being, because of the paradox, the eternal is taken away from the human being in a far more radical way than within usual human religiousness, as Socrates according to Climacus represents in an exemplary way. This idea, however, is already anticipated in the *Philosophical Fragment*’s teaching about the paradox, as it states in ch. III:

⁶⁹ SKS 7, 182ff. / CUP1, 199ff.

⁷⁰ SKS 7, 184 / CUP1, 201.

⁷¹ SKS 7, 186 / CUP1, 203.

⁷² SKS 7, 189 / CUP1, 207.

The connoisseur of human nature [i.e. Socrates] became almost bewildered about himself when he came up against the different; he no longer knew whether he was a more curious monster than Typhon or whether there was something divine in him. What did he lack, then? The consciousness of sin, which he could no more teach to any other person than any other person could teach it to him. Only the god could teach it—if he wanted to be teacher...Thus the paradox becomes even more terrible, or the same paradox has the duplexity [*Dobbelthed*] by which it manifests itself as the absolute—negatively, by bringing into prominence the absolute difference of sin and, positively, by wanting to annul this absolute difference in the absolute equality.⁷³

In this way, the novelty in the *Postscript* lies less in the determination of “Religiousness B” in relationship to “Religiousness A” but more in the richer explanation of the Kierkegaardian anthropology—and of the limits of usual philosophical anthropology.

VII Sin as the Opposite of Faith in *The Sickness unto Death*

In sin, there is the untruth of subjectivity; in other words, in sin, the self fails in its relationship to itself. Apart from being a correction of Climacus through his stricter Christian understanding, *Anti-Climacus*, like the other pseudonyms, has apparently also made the effort to develop the concept of “the self”—this a recurring theme in Kierkegaard’s authorship from *The Concept of Irony* and *Either/Or* to *The Concept of Anxiety* and *The Sickness unto Death*. Anti-Climacus’ point, as highlighted by Arne Grøn,⁷⁴ is in the stress on negativity, which the relationship with God covers in the human being’s relationship with itself. It is not directly (with regard to the content of faith) but indirectly (with regard to its implication for self-understanding) that Anti-Climacus claims that “[the] pagan and the natural man have the merely human self as their criterion [*Maalestok*].”⁷⁵ On the basis of his idea, the opposite of faith is not virtue or knowledge, but sin.⁷⁶

Sin is disobedience: to be “before God in despair not to will to be oneself, or before God in despair to will to be oneself”;⁷⁷ an ignorance which “lodge[s] in a

⁷³ SKS 4, 251f. / PF, 47.

⁷⁴ Cf. Arne Grøn, *Subjektivitet og negativitet: Kierkegaard*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1997.

⁷⁵ SKS 11, 194 / SUD, 81.

⁷⁶ SKS 11, 196 and 242 / SUD, 82 and 131.

⁷⁷ SKS 11, 195 / SUD, 81.

person's efforts to obscure his knowing."⁷⁸ The self is offended, not only because of the paradox, but also because of the forgiveness of sins, and it perhaps also declares 'Christianity' to be untruth.⁷⁹ Despite all its consciousness, such a self remains unclear to itself. Faith, on the contrary, is "the state in which there is no despair at all: in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it."⁸⁰ However, with this line of thought—which borders on the Augustinian certainty of salvation, with which the *Confessions* begin—there is no alternative for (simply a dogmatic psychological explanation of) the claim in the *Fragments* that the understanding cannot go beyond itself in the direction of the absolute and that, by attempting this, it becomes unclear to itself. This attempt has to be understood as despair; that is, as sin and serfdom in sin.

In these definitions of offence and faith that Anti-Climacus provides, there is still no other *content* than his "You shall!"—You shall believe! With reason's accessibility, the content of faith is affected in a way that firstly overturns the whole relationship to God in its dialectical meaning for the normativity of the relationship of the self. And, secondly, overturns this relationship in the normativity in the relationship to the other, as can be seen in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*.

VIII Faith without Tradition and Teaching?

There remains, however, this question, whether this theoretical opposition between faith and knowledge removes the ground from under Climacus *as well as* Anti-Climacus. Because *from where does the teaching*—and it is a teaching (doctrine)—about the fall *originate*; and, with this, the teaching about faith as the God-given condition, and, with this, the teaching (doctrine) in *Fragments* about how Christianity cannot be explained on a philosophical-Socratic level? By focusing on "this individual" and the individual's correct relationship to God, all the dogmatic criteria fall away; for example, the church creeds and the sacraments.⁸¹

⁷⁸ SKS 11, 201 / SUD, 88.

⁷⁹ SKS 11, 236 / SUD, 125.

⁸⁰ SKS 11, 242 / SUD, 131.

⁸¹ Following church discussions about the forced baptisms of the baptists' children in his time, Kierkegaard discusses this problem in the *Postscript* (cf. SKS 7, 331ff. / CUP1, 363ff.). The unwillingness to accept the magical nature of the sacrament is also clear in the *Fragments*, but not without costs: with regards to the predestination problem, which emerges as an obvious

With the tradition, the “teaching” disappears, as emphasized by Hegel in opposition to Jacobi.⁸² This also applies to Climacus. He vehemently rejects that “that fact is supposed to have been *naturalized* little by little”⁸³ and that “the [human] race, after the supervention of that fact, became an altogether different race.”⁸⁴ If the “contemporary [person] gives the condition to one who comes later, then the latter will come to believe in him,”⁸⁵ that is, in the authority of the teacher, and not the paradox.

consequence of Kierkegaard’s idea, the compromise solution about the sacrament as baptism of an essential part of God’s grace, which was ratified by the Orange Synod in 529, is rejected. The same applies to Luther’s thought (in *The Large Catechism*) about baptism as God’s promise to man, “God’s order and word,” which cannot be shaken or changed by humans, and by whose inalienability alone “penance”—an everyday attack on the old human being, which we have to live with lifelong—and the beginning of a new life has a foothold. Cf. Martin Luther, *Deutsch Catechismus (Der Große Katechismus)* (1529), in vol. 30/1, ed. by Oskar Brenner et al. (1910), of *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimarer Ausgabe), *Schriften*, vols. 1–56, Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger 1883–1929, p. 220: “Denn Gottes ordnung und wort lesset sich nicht von menschen wandelbar machen noch endern.” Not penance and contrition taken as something independent, because faith alone leads to salvation; remorse without faith is despair, but faith needs something—a word from God and an outer order—“that it can abide by and build upon” (ibid., p. 215), that is, something objective. But, just as in Luther’s *enslaved will*, there remains a contradiction between this objective word and the thought of faith as a gift of grace. This is called a “wonder” in the *Fragments*, ch. IV (cf. SKS 4, 267 / PF, 65). Climacus rejects “the god’s incognito” (SKS 4, 266 / PF, 64; cf. SKS 4, 258f. / PF, 56), but, with his teaching about the paradox, he is nevertheless close to Luther’s thought about a “*deus absconditus*,” the hidden God, whose will determines the predestination. Cf. Martin Luther, *De servo arbitrio* (1525), in vol. 18, ed. by A. Freitag (1908), of *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimarer Ausgabe), p. 685. Climacus seeks to abide by revelation by Christ and man’s voluntary reaction to this; however, he cannot completely renounce the thought of God’s wrath, as apparent in ch. II (SKS 4, 240 / PF, 34); even though Climacus, just like Luther, prefers to abide by grace more than God’s arbitrariness, cf. SKS 4, 258f. / PF, 58.

82 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Theorie Werkausgabe*, vols. 1–20, ed. by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1971, vol. 20, p. 326: “Aber das unmittelbare Wissen ist das natürliche, das sinnliche Wissen; und wenn der Mensch dazu gekommen ist, von Gott zu wissen als nur Gegenstand des Geistes, so ist dies Resultat vermittelt durch Lehre, durch lange fortgesetzte Bildung. Die Ägypter haben ebenso unmittelbar gewußt, daß Gott ein Ochse, eine Katze ist; und die Inder wissen noch jetzt mehr dergleichen.” Cf. Kierkegaard (Climacus): “Now, if the problem is to calculate where there is more truth” (SKS 7, 184 / CUP1, 201).

83 SKS 4, 292 / PF, 95.

84 SKS 4, 294 / PF, 97.

85 SKS 4, 298 / PF, 101.

Climacus claims that the only thing a believer can pass on to another person is, in its paradoxical form: “‘I believe and have believed that this happened, *although it is foolishness to the understanding and an offence to the human heart.*’”⁸⁶ But to relay “the content of the fact, a content that still is only for faith, in quite the same sense as colors are only for sight and sounds for hearing” is “talking nonsense” and not a communication in the strict sense.⁸⁷

As an entry point to Christianity, nothing other than the paradox is left. The paradox functions as a dogma to the extent that an understanding (precisely an understanding) is expressed, and it is expressed so adamantly that, afterwards, there is no longer anything to discuss—only something to misunderstand. But in the rupture of continuity among people in favor of the direct passionate relationship to God, the subject of an atomized establishment of churches arises. However, a *dogma* is a fundamental creed, humans collectively may gather around and which both literally and figuratively brings them to a parting of ways: it lays the foundation for a community, but also the opposite: “He left the Church,” James Joyce writes in *Dubliners* about a renegade of the dogma of papal infallibility.⁸⁸

This development calls for a commentary. It would make sense to attempt to elucidate the problem of faith and knowledge by referring to the aspect of religious language that is highlighted in Thomas Aquinas’ doctrine of *analogy*; namely, that, on the one hand, we cannot assume that God in his essence and goodness is (univocal) exactly as we understand him and human goodness, but, on the other hand, God cannot carry his name accidentally (homonymous, equivocal).⁸⁹ As Hegel emphasizes, Christians do not worship an unknown God but a revealed God. Christ is the foundation for statements about God.⁹⁰ For Hegel, the revelation is paradoxical for finite thought, but, in essence, it is a non-paradoxical revelation of God’s metaphysical qualities, and, as an extension of this, of the status of creation and of the truth about the community of human beings. The revelation reveals that God is more than nature; in other words, that he is spirit.

But what about Climacus? He cuts himself completely loose from an *analogous* way of thinking, including an assumption of God’s existence as

⁸⁶ SKS 4, 299 / PF, 102.

⁸⁷ SKS 4, 299 / PF, 102.

⁸⁸ In the story “Grace.” James Joyce, *Dubliners*, ed. by Hans Walter Gabler and Walter Hetsche, New York: Vintage Books of Random House 1993, p. 154.

⁸⁹ Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I,13,5; *Summa contra gentiles*, I, chs. 28–34.

⁹⁰ Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, vol. I, in *Theorie Werkausgabe*, vol. 16, p. 315.

certain on the basis of the goodness of creation. Theoretical proofs are already impossible because of human nature, and an observation of temporal nature and temporal life, which the human being is perhaps capable of, also leads to nothing. Nature and life are all too ambiguous for a teleological proof of God (Climacus does not discuss an interpretation along the lines of the Augustinian idea that even partial order comes from God). It is not only the paradox claim, but also these reflections that, in the *Fragments*, definitively remove the possibility that the understanding intellect can access the revelation, because it is unable to find proofs either for or against God's existence and love. Therefore, the choice between faith and offence is no longer rational, nor a decision of the will, but simply a gift of grace. In this way, faith justifies itself. It does not rest on another certainty; it is the more eminent certainty.

IX The Highest Certainty and 'Øieblikket' as an Event

For faith is "the 'thus and so' of that which has come into existence...most certain,"⁹¹ i.e. the highest certainty. With this concept, which is developed in the "Interlude" in the *Fragments*, Climacus breaks through the shell in which his opposition of faith and knowledge keeps him captive. Because, seen in this way, in the "autopsy" of faith (ch. IV and V), the believer is the "contemporary" (ch. IV);⁹² there is not and there can be no question of a follower at second hand (ch. V).⁹³ We have seen how the opposition of faith and knowledge is supported by a number of other oppositional pairs; for example, the philosophically questionable conceptual pair "subjective" and "objective." If we look at Kierkegaard's edifying and religious speeches, or his book *Works of Love*, these oppositions appear to be something strained.

We can, however, express the certainty of faith in another way; namely, as an experience of something that breaks through one's blindness and ignorance; an event that presents things in a new light—that illuminates that which was in darkness. It is possible that this *event* only takes the things closer to the one it happens to. It is possible that, for the Jews, it is an offence, and, for the Greeks, it is stupidity. It is possible that it does not fit into a narrow conception of knowledge. But it does not need to reject knowledge. It does not need to isolate

91 SKS 4, 282 / PF, 83.

92 SKS 4, 270 / PF, 70.

93 Cf. SKS 4, 301 / PF, 104.

itself from sensual understanding or from history (in a simple sense). It can—without losing its answer to the question “certainty of what?”—answer “yes” to the question: “Can a historical point of departure be given for an eternal consciousness?” And it can explain the question: “how can such a point of departure be of more than historical interest?” as well as the question: “can an eternal happiness be built on historical knowledge?”⁹⁴

Interestingly enough, Climacus’ perhaps most important concept, “the moment in time” [*Øieblikket i Tiden*]⁹⁵ signals a decisive moment but also a decisive new view of things—a quick glance, “swift as a blink of the eye,” which yet is “commensurable with the content of the eternal,”⁹⁶ namely: “*the fullness of time*.”⁹⁷

X Does Climacus’ Thought-Project Presuppose a Theory of Religion?

In the way Climacus presents his idea of the relationship between faith and knowledge in the *Fragments*, he both conceals and suggests that his development of this thinking presupposes a religious theory. This is due to the skillful way in which Climacus interrupts himself with side comments regarding the degree to which he has conjured up or stolen—and from whom (!)—everything; and it is also due to the fact that these remarks are counter-balanced by remarks about God’s possible *incognito*, and not at least the ineradicable doubt that, in one way or another, the whole thing is actually a tale: “at the very bottom of devoutness there madly lurks the capricious arbitrariness that knows it itself has produced the god.”⁹⁸

The left Hegelian theory of religion (and perhaps also the Schellingian or the Grundtvigian notion of mythology) has deprived Climacus of immediate innocence.⁹⁹ The most significant manifestation of this is the abhorrent tale in ch. II of the king who loved *a lowly girl* [*en ringe Pige*].¹⁰⁰ Of course, lovers—of an unequal social standing—appear virtually everywhere in Kierkegaard; but what is important in this context is that this tale indicates the overall religion-

⁹⁴ SKS 4, 213 / PF, 1.

⁹⁵ SKS 4, 222 / PF, 13.

⁹⁶ SKS 4, 390 / CA, 87.

⁹⁷ SKS 4, 226 / PF, 18.

⁹⁸ SKS 4, 250 / PF, 45.

⁹⁹ Cf. SKS 4, 305 / PF, 109.

¹⁰⁰ SKS 4, 233ff. / PF, 26ff.

theoretical structure within which Climacus presents his opposition of faith and knowledge. The model is Hegelian. God (the king) appears before the believer (the girl) in a particular perceptible form (the epiphany). The tale is certainly about love, yet it is a clear analogy to the teaching about reconciliation, i.e. a fundamental doctrine of the Church as well as of Christian philosophy of religion, although with many different interpretations.

Hegel's own notion of absolute spirit and religion's place in it as its changing historical interpretations would focus on the fact that religions become present as stages on the way towards clarity and spirit: from substance to subject, and from the loss of substance in subjectivity towards a substantiality on the basis of subjectivity. Spirit understanding itself as spirit is the ultimate stage. Thus, this development of religions would also need a teaching about how consciousness may develop in order to understand its own relationship to this seemingly objective evolution, and how the unity can only appear through a transformation of ways to understand, i.e. from representation to the conceptual comprehension of thinking. Only through human acting and thinking can spirit be spirit and understand itself as spirit: "*das Selbst führt das Leben des absoluten Geistes durch*" [the self accomplishes the life of the Absolute Spirit].¹⁰¹

Climacus, on the contrary, concentrates on the punctual, the "event," where God presents himself "in time." He seems to rule out even the conditions for formulating his own thought project. It was not Kierkegaard's intention to make it easy to understand oneself as a Christian. However, Climacus' narrow focus on the understanding intellect—in contrast to the German concept of reason [*Vernunft*] and in contrast to the Hegelian conception of a historical development of human understanding—seems to invite anti-rational interpretations of Christian faith and to leave the place open for alternative claims of every kind.¹⁰²

101 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 426.

102 I wish to thank Sarah Jennings who translated the present article.