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Kierkegaard's Climacus on Discipleship and the Incarnation

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Introduction Christ reigns from the Tree, the Cross. Kierkegaard thinks from the foot of the Tree. All of his thinking, all of his writing, all of it is cruciform. Kierkegaard is not now a philosopher, now a theologian, now a psychologist—he is, always and everywhere, a Christian. He tells us as much in The Point of View for My Work as an Author when he underlines that his authorship was and is a religious authorship. And, 'religious' here means quite definitely, Christian. I judge that most, if not all, of Kierkegaard's most characteristic distinctions—like those between direct and indirect communication, between the how and the what, between the subjective and the objective—are cruciform distinctions, born of various ways of reflecting on the Cross. I will not try to substantiate these claims at the moment. That is a task for another time. What I am going to try to do is to show how Kierkegaard's understanding of discipleship turns crucially on the Cross.

When Kierkegaard thinks about the Cross, he thinks about the Incarnation. Indeed, for Kierkegaard the Cross and the Incarnation have to be thought together, since, for Kierkegaard, unless it is the God-Man who hangs from the Tree, the Cross does not mean what Christians take it to mean. And on the Cross, Christ brings to fullness the self-emptying of becoming man. Noting this is important for understanding Kierkegaard's emphasis on the Incarnation. Commentators sometimes ask why it is that Kierkegaard emphasizes the Incarnation and does not emphasize the Crucifixion. But I think this question is confused: For Kierkegaard, emphasizing the Incarnation is emphasizing the Crucifixion. For Kierkegaard, if I may put the point this way, the Incarnation is not so much an event in Christ's life as it is His life, seen from a particular point of view, a point of view in which its "inner logic" is laid bare: an "inner logic" whose starting-point and controlling initiative is the Cross. The events of Christ's life are all internally related to the Cross, and their meaning is only fully available at the Crucifixion.

So, for Kierkegaard, who has this understanding of the Crucifixion, there is no emphasizing of the Incarnation that does not

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emphasize the Crucifixion. To think the Incarnation is to think the Cross.[1]

Philosophical Fragments, the book of Kierkegaard's I am going to discuss, is written under a pseudonymn, Johannes Climacus. Climacus is also the pseudonymous author of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, the sequel to Fragments. Climacus is a pseudonymous author in whom Kierkegaard has a special investment. Kierkegaard even went to the trouble of writing a novella about Climacus' youthful training in philosophy (entitled *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*). As pseudonymous authors in Kierkegaard go, Climacus is remarkably fleshy.

Fragments and its *Postscript* work to expiscate speculative Christianity. Climacus takes pains to make clear in the books that he is not himself a Christian, but that he has thought deeply about Christianity and particularly about the problem of becoming a Christian. He describes himself as a humorist. That description is obscure. What I think Climacus means by it is best brought out—at least in brief—by a passage from another Kierkegaardian pseudonym, Virgilius Haufniensis (in *The Concept of Dread*). Haufniensis contrasts two different kinds of errors in thought, errors of exposition and errors of modulation:

> The fact that science, fully as much as poetry and art, assumes a mood both on the part of the producer and in the part of the recipient, that an error in modulation is just as disturbing as an error in the exposition of thought, has been entirely forgotten in our age, when people have altogether forgotten the nature of inwardness and appropriation in their joy over all the glory they believed they possessed, or through cupidity have lost it, like the dog which preferred the shadow. However, every error begets its own enemy. An error of thought has outside of it as its enemy, dialectics; the absence of mood or its falsification has outside of it its enemy, the comical. (p. 13).

Climacus' work, while undoubtedly exposing expositive errors, primarily mocks modulative errors. Dialectic is used to combat expositive errors; comedy is used to combat modulative errors. For Climacus, speculative Christians have either mistaken the mood of Scriptures or mistaken the mood of their own speculative work. Scripture is not written, Climacus might say, in an objective mood, it is written in a subjective mood—a mood that conduces to inwardness

[1] Christ's life, culminating in the Cross, shows us what it is to be God ("This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." *Matthew* 3: 17) and what it is to be Man ("Behold the man!" *John* 19: 5). When Christ breathes His last on the Cross, and says, "It is finished", what is finished is the task started in Genesis: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". The first Adam (Adam) is the beginning of the task completed by the second Adam (Christ). The task is the salvation, i.e., the deification, of man, of humankind.

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and appropriation. But speculation, regardless of what it speculates about, is conducted (written) in an objective mood. The mismatch of moods between Scriptures and speculation is the engine of the humor in Climacus' work. Speculative Christianity is a "contradiction" in moods, and so it generates much that is humorous.

In what follows, I explore the depth grammar of Climacus' understanding of Christian discipleship and the Incarnation. I say "depth grammar" because what I am going to discuss goes beyond what Climacus himself had to say. Climacus never, so far as I know, fully exhumes the relationships between these two high points in *Philosophical Fragments*. My exhumation of the depth grammar will not be perfectly orderly, moving in consequent steps from one point to another. Instead, I will follow a winding path, sometimes slowing down, sometimes retracing my steps, sometimes stepping slightly off the path for a moment or two.

Climacus on the Autopsy of Faith Consider the following quotation from Fragments.

> . . .[T]here is not and never can be a disciple at second hand; for the believer, and he alone is a disciple, is always in possession of the autopsy of Faith; he does not see through the eyes of another, and he sees only what every believer sees—with the eyes of Faith. (pp. 85–6)

As Climacus is quite aware, the typical understanding of Christian discipleship is that there once was a privileged class of disciples, contemporary disciples, disciples who heard Christ with their own ears, who saw him, looked upon Him with their own eyes and who touched him with their hands: disciples contemporary with the Word of Life. Other, later, disciples are to be distinguished by their lack of this privilege–they did not hear, see, look upon or touch the Word. They have had to rely on their ears, primarily, but their ears did not listen to Christ but rather to the Gospels. "How can they believe unless they hear?" These underprivileged disciples, call them 'second-hand disciples', are required to believe on testimony what the contemporary disciple believes because he sees. But Climacus rejects wholly the notion that there are privileged and underprivileged disciples. He believes that God is no respecter of persons as He would be if this distinction were to be accepted. Climacus argues that the latest disciple is not underprivileged relative to the contemporary disciple. Each disciple must come to see with the eyes of Faith, a seeing hard to do both when the Teacher is before the disciple in the flesh and hard to do when the Teacher has left the scene.

Let me explain a bit, and let me help with the term 'the Teacher'. 'The Teacher' is the alternative name Climacus uses for Christ. He chooses this name because it facilitates the comparison he explores in the book, the comparison (qua teachers) of Christ with Socrates, and, through them, the comparison of religion (Christianity) with

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philosophy. The central concern of the book is the comparison of Christ as a religious teacher with Socrates as a philosophical teacher.

Climacus concentrates on the scene of instruction of the Teacher and the disciple. I want to consider the scene in which the disciple is contemporary with the Teacher. Consider the beginning of John's *First Epistle* (to which I have already been alluding).

> That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. . .that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Which we have heard, seen with our own eyes and looked upon, which our hands have handled: this is what Climacus calls immediate contemporaneity. Climacus is interested in immediate contemporaneity because he thinks that the fact of it often misleads. It is easy to believe that the Teacher's immediate contemporaries have an advantage over all other disciples. They actually heard and saw and touched the Teacher—no one else has enjoyed such access to Him. The immediate contemporary is not only in temporal proximity to the Teacher, but in sensory proximity to Him, the immediate contemporary has experienced Christ. But Climacus resists the natural idea that this is an advantage. Why?

Climacus argues that immediate contemporaneity is not the only form of contemporaneity. Another form is non-immediate contemporaneity. What immediate contemporaneity seems to achieve with ears and eyes and hands is achieved for non-immediate contemporaneity by faith, by the autopsy of faith. The Teacher can be heard and seen and handled by the ears, eyes and hands of faith: faith achieves contemporaneity. Both forms of contemporaneity seem to me to be present in the verse from *John* 1. That which was from the beginning: but of course no one heard or saw or touched the Teacher from the beginning. And notice that the fellowship with the Teacher mentioned as the verse closes is a present-tense fellowship, a fellowship that was had and that continues, even after the departure of the Teacher. I take this to point to the peculiarity of the Teacher, namely that the Teacher is the God-Man. Had the Teacher been merely a man, then the immediate contemporary really would enjoy an advantage because of his immediacy. Take as a comparison Socrates. Those who were with him enjoy an advantage over those who know him only because of the reports provided by his immediate contemporaries. Some of Socrates' disciples are condemned to being second-hand disciples, discipled by reports originating with those who were first-hand disciples. Even more, the mere fact that Socrates lived is not what is crucial about Socrates; rather, what is

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crucial is the consequences of his living: his impact on Xenophon and Plato, on Aristotle, on Hamann, on Climacus, and on countless less noteworthy others. History, call it secular history, has vindicated Socrates and revealed the importance of his life by revealing the consequences of that life.

Climacus on the Incarnation Matters stand otherwise with the Teacher. What matters is that He lived. The consequences of His life do not matter, at least not as they mattered for Socrates. For the Teacher, the God-Man, the simple fact that he exists is everything. He cannot be vindicated by the consequences of His life. His life, His living, is all-in-all. God became man, without change He became man. Whatever the consequences of that might be, the fact of it eclipses them. Since the Teacher is the God-Man, He is not available to the immediate contemporary any more than He is available to those who did not enjoy immediacy. No one can see God and live: and 'see' means see immediately, see with the fleshly eyes. That is true for the Teacher's immediate contemporary. Both the immediate contemporary and the non-immediate contemporary can, in seeing the Teacher, see God, but only with the eyes of faith—and that means that the immediacy of the immediate contemporary is no advantage. The use of fleshly eyes avails nothing.

Importantly, Climacus's view here reveals his firm anchorage in Chalcedonic Christology. I have been trying to bring this out. For Climacus, Christ is fully God and fully human, the Paradox, the God-Man. To surrender Christ to secular history would be to abandon His Godhead. To treat his appearance in history as a mere appearance would be to nullify His humanity. Placing Christ, the Teacher, only in secular history is to be a kind of Ebionite; to place him only in sacred history is to be a kind of Docetist. So, Chalcedonic Christology demands that the Teacher stand in a unique relationship to history, or, more properly, to histories, secular and sacred. To believe that Christ is God is, we might say, to relate to Him as He is related to secular and sacred history. Climacus's idea is that to believe that Christ is God is to believe something that was not, indeed could not ever be revealed directly in secular history. That is the reason why immediate contemporaneity avails nothing, or at any rate, nearly nothing—and, the little it avails is cancelled out by its disadvantages. The immediate contemporary, employing his ears and eyes and hands, hears, sees and handles a man, an individual man, a real man. (True, to faith He is unsimple Man, just as He is also unabstract God.) And not just a real man, but a lowly man, a man of no reputation, and lacking comeliness. But nothing heard, seen or handled reveals His divinity.

We can understand this better if we consider Climacus's idea that Christ came in an incognito. By 'incognito' Climacus means something like what we mean by it and something unlike what we

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mean by it. He does not mean that Christ merely took on a human disguise. No, as Climacus says, humanity is Christ's "true form and figure". Nonetheless, by becoming truly man, while remaining truly God, Christ's divinity is, so to speak, hidden behind his humanity. Those who were immediate contemporaries of Christ thus saw, with their fleshly eyes, a man, a human being. And there was no flaw in Christ's humanity, no seam or gap or hole through which immediate contemporaries could have seen a flash of his divinity. Again, no; all that met their fleshly eyes was the humanity of Christ, seamless, gapless and whole. Throughout the crucial second chapter of Fragments, Climacus uses the statement, "The servant-form was no mere outer garment" as a constant basso profoundo, returning to it again and again to make clear what he is saying. Here is the most important section of that important chapter—call it Climacus' Keontic Hymn:

> Since we found that the union could not be brought about by an elevation it must be attempted by a descent. Let the learner be x. In this x we must include the lowliest; for if even Socrates refused to establish a false fellowship with the clever, how can we suppose that God would make a distinction! In order that the union may be brought about, God must therefore become the equal of such an one, and so he will appear in the likeness of the humblest. But the humblest is one who must serve others, and God will therefore appear in the form of a servant. But this servant-form is no mere outer garment, like the king's beggar-cloak, which therefore flutters loosely about him and betrays the king; it is not like the filmy summer-cloak of Socrates, which though woven of nothing yet both conceals and reveals. It is his true form and figure. For this is the unfathomable nature of love, that it desires equality with the beloved, not in jest merely, but in earnest and truth. And it is the omnipotence of the love which is so resolved that it is able to accomplish its purpose, which neither Socrates nor the king could do, whence their assumed figures constituted after all a kind of deceit. (pp. 24–5)

Climacus begins by noting that elevating the learner to union with God, the Teacher, will not work. Descent of God to the learner will need to be the way in which union is brought about. But it is not enough for the Teacher to descend, say, to the level of the highest among men, say to the level of those who enjoy political power, great learning, immense wealth or widespread fame. God must instead descend to the level of the lowest among men. He must come from a place that promises nothing, He must have been born to parents of no standing, into no sumptuous conditions—not attended by midwife and servants—but rather among animals in a manger. He will possess no accidental characteristics that distinguish Him: noble birth, good looks, great stature. Those characteristics that distinguish him will be essential characteristics, the characteristics of freedom. He will

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not accept distinction from other men; He will come to abolish the existing distinctions among them.

So He will become the equal of the lowest, the lowliest. He will become a servant. He will humble Himself by appearing amongst the humblest of us. His appearance will not be a mere appearance: He really will be a servant, really will be lowly. His servant-form is no mere outer garment. The king's cloak could open to reveal him as king. Socrates' summer cloak could rustle in the breeze and reveal where before it concealed. But Christ's servant-form is his true form and figure. He becomes man, the lowliest of men, a servant. His desire for union—for equality—with the beloved is so real that he realizes humanity in himself. He does not jest. He does not play-act. He does not pretend. He takes on our nature in earnest and in truth. He without change becomes a servant, even while he remains God, and his doing so involves no deceit. The king deceives, but for a noble purpose; so, too, Socrates. God does not deceive.[2]

Climacus's concern with the Incarnation leads him to mention two ancient Christological heresies and two describe two new modern ones: He notes that in antiquity error with respect to the God-Man took one or another of two forms: either Christ's divinity was eliminated (Ebionite) or his humanity was eliminated (Docetist). I have already mentioned each of these. In modernity, there is a different error (and Climacus regards it as far more dangerous). It, too, takes one or another of two forms. Either the God-Man is transformed into a speculative unity of divinity and humanity *sub specie aeterni*

[2] Climacus' claim that Christ came in an incognito may seem to be falsified by what occurs on Mount Tabor, by the Transfiguration. But I do not believe it is. First, although I will not argue for this view now, I take Climacus' treatment of the Incarnation to be Johannine through-and-through. In the *John*, Christ is transfigured from the beginning; He is displayed in His glory from the beginning. In that Gospel, there is no isolable Transfiguration-event. But His glory is not displayed to all: it is instead an indirect glory, available only to the eyes of faith. Many in the Gospel saw Him but were blind to His glory. ("'We beheld His glory." Not all who set eyes on Him did that. 'We' also does not mean all who ever met Him. Caiphas and Herod and Pilate did not behold His glory. But his disciples did.' Temple, W. *Readings in St. John's Gospel*, p. 14. Origen (in his *Commentary on Matthew*, Book XII) comments, "But hear these things, if you can, at the same time giving heed spiritually, that it is not said simply, 'He was transfigured,' but with a certain necessary addition, which Matthew and Mark have recorded; for, according to both, 'He was transfigured before them.' And according to this, indeed, you will say that it is possible for Jesus to be transfigured before some with this transfiguration, but before others at the same time not to be transfigured.") Christ's glory is not a glory revealed to fleshly eyes. If that is right, then it also provides the right response to the Transfiguration as it appears in the Synoptic Gospels. Nothing in the relatings of the event shows that the seeing is not best construed as an act of the eyes of faith. That construal seems generally advantageous, since presumably the Transfiguration-event is not a disproof of the Scriptural prohibition against (immediately) seeing God and living. At any rate, I believe the Transfiguration-event is not foremost in Climacus' mind, and that is why he does not respond to it.

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or else the person of Christ is cast aside and all that is kept is his teaching. Each of these modern heresies is worth a few more words.

Take the first, call it the Speculative Unity Heresy. Whereas the God-Man is a unity of God and man in an actual historical setting, the Speculative Unity Heresy unites God and man in (as Climacus puts it) the "nullipresent medium of pure being". A speculative unity is a unity in possibility, not one in actuality. A union of God and Man in possibility, in the nullipresent, and not in actuality, cannot save, cannot really achieve the union and equality Christ wants with the beloved. "What has not been assumed cannot be healed." Christ, to save us, has to actually take on our nature. The fact that we prestidigitate speculatively with empty concepts and thus convince ourselves that we have united divinity and humanity does nothing to heal us, to save us. A union in possibility is not a saving union.

The second heresy, call it the Pure Doctrine Heresy, eclipses the teacher by the teaching. Christ falls away, no more needed for the assessment of what matters, His teaching or doctrine, than Spinoza is for the assessment of what matters in his teaching or doctrine. But this loses what is distinctive about Christianity. Christianity's "first principle" is not a thought, in the Fregean sense, but rather a Person. On Gottlob Frege's view, a thought is something objective, a denizen of the Third Realm, a realm distinct from the realm of actuality, a realm distinct from the causal nexus. The person who thinks a thought thus cognitively grasps an item in the Third Realm. And the thinker makes no difference to the thought. It remains whole and inviolate, despite the cognitive grasping of it. The Pure Doctrine Heresy locates Christianity in the Third Realm. Christianity is a set of thoughts, a teaching or doctrine, and can strictly speaking be considered in isolation from Christ, the teacher. But this gets things wrong. What Christ says matters because he, the God-Man, says it; not the other way around. Christ is the God-Man, He speaks as the Incarnation. Each of these heresies makes of Christ something comfortably fit for the lecture hall. But for Climacus, Christ is not comfortably fit for the lecture hall.

Contemporaneity Until now I have been talking about contemporaneity without much ado. I have relied on the contrast between immediacy and contemporaneity as if it were clear. Of course it is not clear.

Climacus inherits his use of 'immediacy' from Hegel. Climacus uses the term in Fragments as a way of generalizing across human sensory powers. Seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling are each forms of immediacy. To exist in immediacy with respect to something is to enjoy sensory awareness of that thing. So, those who were literally on the scene with Christ—there, with him, in, say, Jerusalem—and saw or heard or touched him existed in immediacy

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with respect to Him. But the question of whether they were contemporaneous with him is not settled by their being in immediacy with respect to Him. So, contemporaneity, despite its apparent meaning of sharing His locality in space and time (on earth) with Him, cannot be so understood here, since immediacy would normally require contemporaneity so understood. What I have said earlier about Christ's divinity should have suggested that contemporaneity cannot here be so understood. Climacus has something else in mind. But what he has in mind is something that it still makes sense to call contemporaneity.

Neither you nor I can be contemporaries of Christ's in virtue of having been with him in Jerusalem. We were not there. We were not there—and so are not in that sense His contemporaries. But Christ is not merely a man—He is also God.[3] As the God-Man, he is, so to speak, available as a contemporary to anyone at any time. True, neither you nor I can simultaneously be immediate with and contemporaneous with Christ. He is no longer immediately available. But He remains available to contemporaneity. So, we can share time with Christ, although not the time of his earthly ministry. We can however share the time of our life with Christ. The question is—How do we do so?

Before I answer, some background: the deep diffculty of understanding contemporaneity is that it is a cross-mood equivocal term. (Recall the passage from Haufniensis I quoted earlier.) The term can be understood objectively or it can be understood subjectively. To understand it objectively is to understand it as such that it applies in virtue of something that importantly has little and likely nothing to do with the person who is in an objectively contemporaneous relationship. Imagine, for example, that I am standing before you, reading this essay aloud. So imagined, I am in a relationship of contemporaneity with you. We share a spatio-temporal locality. In fact, we are also in a relationship of immediacy. You can see me; I can see you. That relationship obtains independently of how I or you feel about it, independently of how in attitude I comport myself toward you or you toward me. I can be either happy about or regret our present contemporaneity, and neither my happiness nor my regret affects the fact of our present contemporaneity. Such contemporaneity is a matter of the my what, my present physical circumstances, not a matter of my how, of the way I relate myself in attitude toward those circumstances.

[3] To be clear: if I am contemporaneous with Christ, I am not contemporaneous only with Christ-as-divinity; I am contemporaneous with the Crucified Christ, the God-Man. I am contemporaneous with the Savior, who has assumed my nature (and who has not divested himself of it, but rather taken it into heaven, opening the path for me, with my nature, to follow).

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The distinction between the objective and the subjective mood is not the traditional epistemological distinction between the objective (as that which can be intersubjectively known) and the subjective (as that which can be known only by me). The distinction is not that traditional epistemological distinction—and treating it as if it is destroys our understanding of Climacus. The distinction, rather, marks a difference in the relationship between a subject and an object. If what matters in the relationship is the object, then the relationship is objective; if what matters is the subject-in-relationship, then the relationship is subjective. In each, there is a relationship between subject and object, but the focal point of the relationship shifts. When the relationship is objective, the relationship is one of disinterested reflection. When the relationship is subjective, the relationship is one of 'concern' or interest. An interested relationship, for Climacus, is a relationship internal to the task of forming the self (into a particular kind of person) or to leading a life (in accordance with a particular conception of what is valuable).

Recall that the contemporaneity of the disciple, for Climacus, is a matter of faith: this means that it is a subjective contemporaneous relationship. In such a relationship, everything turns on the how, on my attitude or my comportment toward the contemporary. I am subjectively contemporaneous with Christ only for so long as I have faith in him. Were I to regret my present contemporaneity, it would vanish. There is no what here that is invulnerable to changes in the how.

I may be able to make this clearer by means of a brief comparison. Consider the phenomenon of transparency of belief. If I believe that p, then the world is such for me that p. When I decide whether or not I believe that p, I do not step back from myself and, weighing my past and present doxastic antics, decide: "Huh, I guess I believe that p." No, normally I decide whether or not I believe that p by scrying the world itself. And, most importantly, if in so scrying I find come to doubt that p, then I no longer believe that p. We might take this to be part of the story, at least, about the paradoxicality of Moore's Paradox: I cannot simultaneously express a belief in something while also being dubious of it.[4] Each of the (propositional) attitudes "ejects" the other. So, too, do the attitudes of faith and regret, etc., in the sort of case I am imagining. "Christ is Lord but I regret it" is an attempt to express faith while undermining it. It manifests a kind of double-mindedness, to use St. James' term.

Of course, it is possible for someone to say "Christ is Lord but I regret it" where the person is not using the first conjunct to express faith but rather express a belief about Christ's place in some (objective) structure. Something like this explains Christ's comment

[4] The locus classicus for discussion of Moore's Paradox is not really in G. E. Moore, but in Ludwig Wittgenstein: see his *Philosophical Investigations* Part II, Section X.

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in *Luke* 6: 46: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Christ's point is that the term 'Lord', coming off the lips of those He is addressing, is an objective term, a term that indicates no subjective relationship to Him but only an objective one. (Compare: an insubordinate soldier who nonetheless addresses his sergeant as "Sergeant".) Understood this way, Christ is not so much accusing those He addresses of insincerity as He is of the wrong sort of sincerity or a confused sincerity. They take themselves to stand in a subjective relationship to Him but their relationship (if there is one at all) is objective.[5]

One way of going wrong here is to lose sight of what Climacus is doing with the notion of 'object'. He is not denying that the subjective has an object, that is intentional. Faith is certainly intentional. What Climacus is trying so hard to make clear is that, in subjectivity, the intentional object varies with the disposition of subjectivity. Think of the intentional object as the subjective correlative of a subjectivity, thus-and-so disposed. Here is an abstract schema. Imagine I claim to be leading my life by a certain value, V. Whether I am or am not leading my life by that value is not, it turns out, simply up to me. The life of anyone who leads his life by that value will be a life that participates and is ever more participant in the value, V. To participate and be ever more participant in that value is to have a subjectivity that is disposed V-ly. Only a subjectivity disposed V-ly can have V as its subjective correlative. I may believe my subjectivity is V-ly disposed, and, unfortunately, be wrong about that. In such a case, although I believe V to be the subjective correlative of my subjectivity, V is not. Maybe something else is, maybe nothing is.[6] The disposition of my subjectivity, its how, determines what, if anything, is its subjective correlative.

Objectivity, taken to its extreme, absolutized, bears striking resemblances to what Bernard Williams calls the Project of Pure Inquiry, the Project that includes the Method of Doubt.[7] In that Project, all interests are laid aside, rendered indifferent, except those interests that are internal to inquiry and the search for truth. The individual pursuing this project becomes the Pure Inquirer. Now, of course, the ordinary inquirer need not become the Pure Inquirer, need not lay aside all interests except those internal to inquiry. But insofar as the person is an inquirer, she will need to pursue some method of

[5] What we may have here is a device that also serves to mark the distinction between (ordinary) belief and faith: an expression of ordinary belief coexists hospitably with regret, but an expression of faith does not.

[6] If nothing, then my subjective disposition is so jumbled, so wavering, I am so double-minded that there is no fact of the matter about its subjective correlative because no fact of the matter about my subjective disposition.

[7] Bernard Williams, *Descartes: The Project of Pure Inquiry*; see especially Chapter 2.

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inquiry, a method that she wants to be reliable. And her method will close on reliability in part as a function of her ability to lay aside her interests other than those internal to inquiry for at least the duration of her inquiry.[8] Now, Climacus has no quarrel with the ordinary inquirer or with ordinary inquiry: he lauds science and scientific investigation. Climacus does wonder about Pure Inquiry and the Pure Inquirer; he has doubts about the Method of Doubt.[9] But that is not my concern at the moment. What Climacus deplores is not objectivity but the confusion of objectivity and subjectivity, especially the illusion—which he takes to be appallingly common—of believing that one believes subjectively what one only believes objectively, if one believes anything at all. Climacus as we have seen believes that Christianity is subjective; but he also believes that most who claim to be Christians understand Christianity objectively. For Climacus, I am only a Christian, only related to Christ, when my subjective disposition is Christlike. (Here I am putting supplying some content to my earlier abstract schema.) When my subjective disposition is not Christlike, I stand in no relationship to Christ. Christ is my Savior or my Teacher only to the extent that I am subjectively disposed in the right way. And so on.[10] "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." (*Matthew* 5: 8)

Climacus' story about Christian discipleship is itself a story that turns on Christ's Incarnation as God-Man. Climacus's story of discipleship requires that discipleship involve a response to the-human-and-the-divine-natures of Christ. The contrast here again is with Socrates. We cannot be Socrates' contemporaries, but we can be imitators of him. Imitation does exhaust my "access" to Socrates.

I asked earlier how we share the time of our life with Christ, and before I could answer, I slowed down and stepped aside so as to discuss the objective and subjective moods. I want now to ask that question again: How do we share the time of our lives with Christ?

One tempting answer here is this: we become contemporaries of Christ by imitating Him in our lives. There is, I have no doubt, something to this answer—that is why it is tempting. Contemporaneity and

[8] The duration of an inquiry, for an ordinary inquirer, is itself something that may be decided by interests that are not internal to inquiry: some inquiries are such that conducting them thoroughly or conclusively require more investment the inquirer is rightly willing to make in them.

[9] Much of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* targets the Pure Inquirer; much of *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est* targets the Method of Doubt.

[10] "If someone who lives in the midst of Christianity enters, with knowledge of the true idea of God, the house of God, the house of the true God, and prays, but prays in untruth, and if someone lives in an idolatrous land but prays with all the passion of infinity, although his eyes are resting on the image of an idol—where, then, is there more truth? The one prays in truth to God although he is worshipping an idol; the other prays in untruth to the true God and is therefore in truth worshiping an idol." *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 201.

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imitation are related to each other, intimately related; but, they are not so intimately related as to be the self-same. Think back to what has already been said. To be contemporaneous with Christ is to see him with the eyes of faith. So, to achieve contemporaneity is to have faith. Having faith, we might reasonably think, involves imitating Christ. So we cannot achieve contemporaneity without having faith and without imitating Christ. But we cannot reduce contemporaneity to imitation. If we could, then were Christ merely a man, we could be contemporaries with Him despite his no longer being amongst us in the flesh. If we could, then Climacus' insistence on Christ's Divinity would be unnecessary, at least with respect to discipleship as Climacus understands it. That we can effectually imitate Christ is a result of His having been immediately available, a man, as other men. But my imitation of Him does not exhaust my "access" to Him. I can be His contemporary.

'Imitation', in the relevant sense, is itself a subjective term. As an objective term, 'imitation' would be imitation external to forming a self or of leading a life. A crude example of objective imitation would be the imitation that means only to display someone's psychological or behavioral oddities, the kind of imitation that some comics specialize in. Subjective imitation clearly will matter for contemporaneity, but, again, contemporaneity does not reduce to subjective imitation. Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever: equally accessible to subjective contemporaneity. To be Christ's subjective contemporary is to have met him, to come to know him (subjectively) by (in part) subjectively imitating Him. Subjective imitation creates the inwardness, the appropriation, that brings about a contemporary relationship with Christ. To be Christ's subjective contemporary is to achieve inwardness with Christ Himself, it is not merely to have subjectively imitated someone who is not available to contemporaneity. To achieve contemporaneity is to have achieved that state that St. Paul describes when he declares that it is no longer he that lives, but Christ who lives in Him. I do not take St. Paul here to speak merely of the completeness of his subjective imitation of Christ; he speaks of something more, of subjective contemporaneity. Here are some of the words of a prayer from the *Book of Common Prayer*:

> For, if thou be away, by and by all things become numb, weak, and stark dead: whereas, if thou be present, they be lively, sound, strong, and lusty. And therefore, like as I wrap my body in these clothes, so clothe me all over, but specially my soul, with thine own self. Amen.

I take these words to express the a desire for what St. Paul describes, despite the differences in the imagery. Here is one other, related prayer from the same source, one that captures much of Climacus' thinking:

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> Wretched are they, O Lord, to whom thy day-sun goeth down, —I mean that sun of thine, which never setteth to thy saints, but is always at the noon-point with them, ever bright, and ever shining. A droopy night ever deepeth the minds of them, even at high noontide, which depart from thee. But unto them that are conversant with thee, it is continually clear day-light. This day-sun, that shineth in the sky, goeth and cometh by turns: but thou (if we love thee in deed) dost never go away from us. O that thou wouldest remove away this impediment of sin from us, that it might always be day-light in our hearts! Amen.

To be subjectively contemporary with Christ is to be indwelt by Christ, to behold His glory. It is not to subjectively imitate someone present as an objective contemporary. For Climacus, Christ is not available as an object to the mood of objectivity, so His eternity is not to be treated as a kind of indifferently available objective contemporaneity. No, for Climacus, Christ is available only subjectively, and so the contemporaneity to be enjoyed is subjective contemporaneity. We subjectively imitate Christ so as to relate to him as a subjective contemporary. Only the Christlike subjective disposition, loving Christ in deed, has Christ as its subjective contemporary, as its subjective correlative: only that relationship provides continually clear day-light in our hearts, keeps us at our spiritual high noontide. This is sharing the time of our life with Christ.

Discipleship and the "Contradiction" of Moods We should be able to see in closing that Climacus understands discipleship as he does because he takes the typical understanding of it to invite, even to demand, a modulative error. If discipleship is understood such that immediacy matters decisively to it, and so objective contemporaneity matters decisively to it, then there is a distinction among disciples that privileges one group over others. From Climacus' perspective, such a distinction fails to respond correctly to the God-Man. But also from Climacus' perspective, such a distinction would demoralize the non-immediate disciples, make them second-hand disciples. But discipleship is open to all, equally open to all. To wish that one could have walked with Christ during His earthly ministry is, in one way, all well and good. But what truly matters is walking with Him during the time of your life, forming a self that He informs, leading a life that is lead by Him. Climacus' aim is to undo the demoralization of the disciple that objective contemporaneity causes, and, by recapturing subjective contemporaneity, to exhilarate the disciple.

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