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KIERKEGAARD'S *PHILOSOPHICAL FRAGMENTS*: A CLARIFICATION

For Søren Kierkegaard, 'How is it possible for one to become a disciple?' was the fundamental question. The *Philosophical Fragments*,[1] first published in 1844 under the pseudonym of Johannes Climacus,[2] propounds a hypothetical metaphysical framework within which an answer to this question is formulated. This framework is usually construed simply as a general account of what must be the case if Christianity is true. But this has given rise to some perplexity regarding how the Climacian framework is to be interpreted. This is the result of the failure to take into account the specific function which it is meant to serve – namely, as the framework for ascertaining how becoming a disciple is a possibility. My present objective is not to pass any judgement on the adequacy of this framework as a model purporting to represent reality. Rather, I shall simply attempt a consistent elucidation of the framework which Climacus presents; and in so doing, I indicate the way in which, given this framework, the question 'How is it possible for one to become a disciple?' is to be answered – what I shall call 'the Climacian answer'.

Part 1 of this article provides a basic account of the framework by explaining its key concepts and their relationship to one another. I then employ this account as the foundation for the thesis developed in Part 2: namely, that, for Climacus, faith is the condition of discipleship. In conclusion, I outline the answer which, on my interpretation, Kierkegaard's Climacian framework yields to the question 'How is it possible for one to become a disciple?'

1. THE *MOMENT*

The pivotal concept in the *Fragments* is 'the *Moment*' (*Øjeblikket*), which it is the burden of this section to explicate, for it is central to a proper understanding of the other key concepts: namely, 'the condition', 'error', 'sin' and 'the Truth'. Kierkegaard's conception of 'the moment' is to be distinguished from the Socratic conception – the latter referring to the moment when knowledge is recalled. Climacus begins the *Fragments* by putting for-

[1] Hereafter referred to as the *Fragments*. All page numbers in parentheses are to H. V. Hong's revised version of D. F. Swenson's original translation of Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962).

[2] On Kierkegaard's pseudonymity, see Mark C. Taylor, *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and the Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). Also see Gregor Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

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ward the hypothesis that the moment is decisive, in comparison to the Socratic moment – which is merely occasional. According to Climacus' hypothesis, if the Socratic approach to knowledge is rejected, the moment that the Truth is appropriated must have decisive significance, because, according to Climacus, this means that the Truth, which previously did not exist, has since come into existence. In a word, the *Fragments* is an inquiry into the implications of this hypothetical. And the most important implication noted by Climacus is that prior to the occurrence of the moment, 'the learner' must lack the condition – although what precisely the condition is does not become clear until much later in the *Fragments*. Explicating the notion of 'the condition' will be the burden of Part 2.

Climacus' text would appear to allow two construals of 'the *Moment*'.[3] On the first construal, 'the *Moment*' is identified as the moment of the subjective appropriation of the Truth (or, conversion);[4] on the second, 'the *Moment*' is identified as the Incarnation.[5] It is my contention that, as an overall interpretative position, adherence to either one of these views without taking into account the other renders a correct understanding of the *Fragments* impossible. Neither construal on its own is reconcilable with the text taken as a whole, however much support each position may gain from passages considered in isolation. While neither approach on its own provides us with a consistent account of the *Fragments*' framework, each is a necessary component of such an account. Thus it is my contention that a correct understanding can be reached through combining both positions; and when one does so, 'the *Moment*' is revealed as the generative concept of the *Fragments*.

The concept of 'the *Moment*' concerns the triad of antithetical relations prominent in the *Fragments*: the God/man; infinite/finite; eternal/historical.[6] In 'the Moment' these elements come together. This is 'the Paradox'. 'The God' becomes man, the infinite and the finite coincide. In other words, the Moment is 'the historical made eternal, and the Eternal made historical' (p. 75). It is transient (historical), 'yet it is decisive, and

[3] That there are two possible construals has not gone unnoticed by commentators, e.g. H. A. Nielsen, *Where the Passion Is* (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 1983), pp. 113f. and M. C. Taylor, *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship*, *op. cit.* p. 313. Unfortunately, the implications of these two construals are seldom developed; a notable exception is J. Colette, *Kierkegaard: The Difficulty of Being a Christian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. 56–80. Colette distinguishes between an 'anthropological category' and a 'theological category'. However, the subsequent development of this interpretation differs at several key points from my own, particularly regarding the content which Colette assigns to the 'anthropological category' and its relationship to faith.

[4] For example, C. Stephen Evans claims that, in the *Philosophical Fragments*, 'the category of "the moment" ... designates the period of time at which the disciple of the God receives the truth'. C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard's 'Fragments' and 'Postscript': The Religious Philosophy of Johannes Climacus* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1983), p. 268. Also see Frederick Sontag, *A Kierkegaard Handbook* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), p. 43.

[5] See, for example, Gregor Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Thought*, *op. cit.* p. 247.

[6] These antithetical relations are common in the works Kierkegaard pseudonymously authored; for example, see Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, translated by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941).

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filled with the Eternal' (p. 22) – the Moment is the 'Fullness of Time' (*ibid.*).[7] Thus, the concept of 'the Moment' contains a profound duality. On the one hand, there is the God, the infinite and the eternal; while on the other hand, there is 'man', the finite and the historical.

It is the God becoming man that enables ordinary humans to encounter the Moment in its duality. But this gives rise to a further duality: between ordinary humans and the God become man. Each side of this second duality corresponds to one of the two common construals of 'the *Moment*'. But each construal is inadequate because what the *Moment* actually consists in is the sublation of this dual duality.

Nevertheless, 'the *Moment*' must be conceived as a duality before its higher-order unity can be grasped. The primary aspect of the *Moment* is the coming into being of the first duality – the Paradox, the Truth: when the God becomes man in the Incarnation. This is the 'Fullness of Time' at which, through love, the gap is bridged between the Eternal and the historical, the infinite and the finite, the God and man (see p. 30). It is this primary aspect of 'the *Moment*' which provides the grounding for its secondary aspect: the subjective appropriation of the Truth – that is, conversion. According to Climacus, the *Moment* must have this dual structure if faith is to be possible, because, in his view, a finite individual cannot be related to an eternal fact in faith unless that eternal fact is also an historical fact.[8] Thus, it seems that 'the *Moment*' construed as the Moment of Incarnation must be both logically and chronologically prior to 'the *Moment*' construed as the moment of conversion,[9] because the former makes the latter possible.

However, both aspects of the *Moment* together form an ultimate unity. In Climacus' terms, this can be expressed as follows: in the moment of subjective appropriation, the subject (in faith) is at one with the Moment – the Truth. And both aspects of the *Moment* are in eternal unity. Unless this distinction is drawn within the unified concept of 'the *Moment*', no intelligible content can be given to Climacus' claim that the Moment can be the object of a faith born in the moment.[10]

[7] The central importance of 'the Moment' is also made clear in *The Concept of Anxiety* (which was published only four days after the *Fragments*), where Kierkegaard describes the 'fullness of time' as 'the pivotal concept in Christianity', adding that it 'is the moment as the eternal, and yet this eternal is also the future and the past'. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, edited and translated by Reidar Thomte (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 89.

[8] As he writes: 'The absolute fact is also a historical fact, and as such it is the object of Faith' (p. 125; cf. pp. 107ff.).

[9] When Kierkegaard elucidates the concept of 'the moment' in *The Concept of Anxiety*, he is concerned with this latter, subjective, construal of 'the moment'. See *The Concept of Anxiety*, *op. cit.*, *passim*. Perhaps this is why the *Fragments* has been misunderstood. Rather than read the *Fragments* in the light of *The Concept of Anxiety*, the latter must be read in the light of the former.

[10] Moreover, my interpretation coheres with Kierkegaard's assertion, in *Training in Christianity*, that 'in relation to the absolute there is only one tense: the present. For him who is not contemporary with the absolute – for him it has no existence.' Søren Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 67.

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In order to understand this more fully, it is necessary to consider the work which Climacus makes the term '*Øjeblikket*' do in the *Fragments*. It appears that Climacus uses the term '*Øjeblikket*' to do the work of three distinct concepts: namely, the Incarnation; conversion; and, lastly, the Incarnation and conversion *together*. In Climacus' original Danish text,[11] only the context of any particular occurrence of '*Øjeblikket*' reveals whether the Incarnation or conversion is the intended referent. However, when he refers to the Incarnation and conversion together – the third concept – he distinguishes it from the other two concepts by highlighting '*Øjeblikket*'.

Fortunately for the English reader, these three concepts are clearly distinguished in David F. Swenson's translation of the *Fragments*, where each of the following signifies a distinct concept:

(1) 'the Moment' (starting in uppercase);
(2) 'the moment' (starting in lowercase); and
(3) 'the *Moment*' (italicised).

Usage (1) 'the Moment' – signifies the aspect of Incarnation. Usage (2) 'the moment' – signifies the aspect of subjective appropriation, or conversion.[12] Usage (3) 'the *Moment*' – signifies the union of these dual denotations, which encompasses the referents of usages (1) and (2) within their ultimate transcendence.[13] And, by containing both 'the Moment' and 'the moment' within it, 'the *Moment*' can be employed to refer both to the sublation of the duality Moment/moment and to this pair of elements contained within that ultimate unity.[14]

In the rest of this article, I refer to Swenson's translation of the *Fragments* as 'Climacus' text'. Thus, I proceed as if Climacus had actually used Swenson's system of reference. And I regard this as justifiable because Swenson's translation, in distinguishing between the three concepts masked in the original Danish by the one term '*Øjeblikket*', enables Climacus to communicate more easily with his readers. Moreover, the concept of 'the *Moment*' is rendered internally consistent only if we presuppose that Climacus

[11] See Johannes Climacus, *Philosophiche Smuler* (Copenhagen, 1844).

[12] Of course, Climacus could not distinguish between the first two concepts by means of upper and lower case letters because of the convention, in Danish, that all nouns must begin in the upper case. The most recent translation of the *Fragments*, that of H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong, follows Climacus' uniform method of reference by simply using 'moment' for '*Øjeblikket*' regardless of whether the Incarnation or conversion is the referent. (H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong also follow Climacus' pattern of highlighting.) See Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). While this is truer to the original text, Swenson's translation saves the reader a lot of work in ascertaining which concept is intended.

[13] Usages (1) and (2) are by far the most frequent in the *Fragments*. By contrast '*Moment*' occurs only eleven times: in Swenson's translation, once on pp. 24, 26, 30, 34 and 37; and twice on pp. 25, 64 and 72. In fact, the second occurrence of '*Moment*' on p. 64 does not follow Climacus' Danish text, where '*Øjeblikket*' is not highlighted. See Johannes Climacus, *Philosophiche Smuler*, *op. cit.* p. 74. In my view, Swenson is correct, and there is a mistake in the original Danish.

[14] It is worth noting that Hegel employs the term 'Moment' for the parts within a dialectical unity.

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did intend it to be understood in the way which Swenson's translation suggests.

Due to the necessity of distinguishing conceptually between the first two usages (for we have the ability to think of one or the other but not of both at once) and because of their relationship within his metaphysical framework, Climacus introduces 'the *Moment*' (usage 3) as a unitary term, prior to specifying either the Moment as the Incarnation (usage 1) or the moment as conversion (usage 2). For example, the first occurrence of the term 'the *Moment*' (on p. 24) in the *Fragments* is within a discussion of how humankind is in a state of error. Here, Climacus employs the phrase 'if the *Moment* is to have decisive significance' prior to asserting the conditional 'if the Moment is to have decisive significance the breach is made, and man cannot return.' In other words, it is in virtue of *this* aspect of the *Moment* that humankind is now in a state of error and cannot return to a state of innocence. Climacus then continues: 'whether he ["man"] is to advance beyond this point the *Moment* must decide (although it was already active in giving him an insight into his error)' (p. 25). It is worth citing the rest of this passage, since it also contains the third and fourth occurrences of 'the *Moment*': 'In the *Moment* man becomes conscious that he is born; for his antecedent state, to which he may not cling, was one of non-being. In the *Moment* man also becomes conscious of the new birth, for his antecedent state was one of non-being. Had his preceding state in either instance been one of being, the moment would not have received decisive significance for him' (*ibid.*).

Given the above analysis, an outline of the state of affairs regarding knowledge which is posited in the *Fragments* as obtaining between human beings and the God might run as follows: On a non-Socratic conception of knowledge, the Truth is something to be learned rather than recollected. One who is not in the Truth is in a state of error. 'In the Truth' signifies the state of a person who has subjectively appropriated the Truth. This can only be achieved with the help of the God as 'the Teacher', for as Climacus writes: 'if the learner is to acquire the Truth, the Teacher must bring it to him; and not only so, but he must also give him the condition necessary for understanding it. For if the learner were in his own person the condition for understanding the Truth, he need only recall it' (p. 17). The contrast could be brought out thus: in the Socratic conception, truth is intrinsic to the learner; whereas in Climacus' construal, the Truth is extrinsic to the learner. Hence, it is part of Climacus' hypothesis that the learner owes everything to the Teacher – in other words, to the God.

Error and sin are characteristics of the pre-conversion state. Error is defined as the state of not being in the Truth, but departing from it. If one is in a state of error, then one lacks the condition. According to Climacus, this lack of the condition – the state of being in error – can only result from some deficiency in oneself. This leads to the following definition of sin: the

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state of 'being in error by reason of one's own guilt' (p. 17, cf. pp. 34, 58). Sin is also described as the refusal to actualise what has been made possible (cf. p. 31).

The Moment has decisive significance, and, for the individual, so too has the moment. Conversion can be conceptualised as a complete reversal in a person's orientation: 'In consequence of receiving the condition in the moment the course of his life has been given an opposite direction, so that he is now turned about' (p. 23).[15] This occurs when the learner receives the condition and the Truth; he or she becomes a 'new creature'. 'In so far as the learner was in error, and now receives the Truth and with it the condition for understanding it, a change takes place within him like the change from non-being to being' (p. 23).[16] In turning towards the Teacher, who himself is the Truth, the self is forgotten and the Truth is subjectively appropriated.

Regarding the condition, Climacus asserts: 'The condition for understanding the Truth is like the capacity to inquire for it; the condition contains the conditioned, and the question implies the answer' (pp. 17f.). Accordingly, Climacus presumes, if the Teacher contributes the condition, 'it will follow that the object of faith is not the *teaching* but the *Teacher*' (p. 77). Moreover, to be in a position to give an individual the condition, the Teacher must be the God; while for the learner to encounter the Teacher, the Teacher must be human. 'This contradiction is again the object of Faith, and is the Paradox, the Moment' (*ibid.*).

From this brief outline it can be seen that the *Moment* cannot be construed solely as either the Incarnation or the subjective appropriation of the Truth. Neither construal allows a consistent account to be given of how the *Moment*, paradoxically, could be both the object of faith and the moment at which faith emerges. Moreover, neither construal on its own makes it possible to understand how the relationship which holds between the *Moment*, error and sin is, on the one hand, a retrospective one and, on the other, retroactive. The retroactive nature of this relationship is evident in such passages as the following: 'Because of the Moment the learner is in Error; and man, who had before possessed self-knowledge, now becomes bewildered with respect to himself; instead of self-knowledge he receives the consciousness of sin' (p. 64). The Moment must have occurred prior to an individual's recognition that he or she has resided in a state of error. Yet according to Climacus, the recognition of this is what the moment, in part, constitutes. And in retrospect, the disciple, after the moment of subjective appropriation of the Truth,

[15] For a discussion of this reorientation, see W. C. Davis, 'Kierkegaard on the Transformation of the Individual in Conversion', *Religious Studies*, XXVIII (1992), pp. 145–163. Davis questions whether, to be faithful to Kierkegaard's intentions in the *Fragments*, it is necessary to conceptualise conversion as irrevocable.

[16] This idea is also expressed in the idiom of a 'new birth', e.g. 'the non-being which precedes the new birth contains more being than the non-being which preceded the first birth' (p. 25; see also, pp. 38, 43 and 128).

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'knows that he would have seen nothing without the condition, since the first thing he learned to understand was that he was in Error' (p. 81).

Considering 'the *Moment*' in the aspect of Incarnation, in a sense, when the Moment occurred is not what is important; the crucial thing is not 'when' but 'that' it occurred, for 'if only the Moment remains, as point of departure for the Eternal, the Paradox will be there' (pp. 73f., cf. p. 130). So conceived, the Moment is the beginning of eternity. Paralleling this, considering 'the *Moment*' in the aspect of subjective appropriation, the moment is the beginning of the subject's eternity, when he or she 'receives accordingly the [eternal] condition in the Moment' (p. 77, cf. pp. 71f., 81). Only by taking unity in duality seriously can we make sense of the God both giving the condition as a consequence of the Moment – without the Incarnation faith would not be possible (as, Climacus believes, a precondition for historically situated beings having faith in the Eternal is its manifestation in their historically bounded world) – and giving the condition within the moment. As Climacus writes: 'If the God had not come himself… we would not have had the Moment, and we would have lost the Paradox' (p. 68). In other words, we would not have had the Incarnation as a feature of our reality, and hence subjective appropriation of the Truth (conversion) would be impossible.

Given that subjectively appropriating the Truth requires that the Incarnation occurred, then it is evident that there is a relationship of dependence of the moment on the Moment. Thus the Incarnation – the Paradox – is not accidental to the subject's relationship to the God, but is essential to it (cf. pp. 68f.). However, the Incarnation only reveals its full significance when the Truth is subjectively appropriated. Thus there is also a relationship of dependence of the Moment on the moment. Due to this relationship of mutual dependence, strictly speaking, there is only the *Moment*, in the inclusive sense of the term.

Questions are often raised regarding the duration of the conversion experience, given the non-Socratic hypothesis of the *Fragments*. However, as the historical and the Eternal are co-present in the subject who possesses faith, such questions miss the point. This is because, according to Climacus, once the condition has been received and one is in the Truth, any subsequent failure to live in accordance with the Truth is not, strictly speaking, historical, but is, rather, eternal.[17] In one respect, the moment of subjective appropriation is historical, in so far as its starting point is necessarily located in history. But in a vital sense this moment is entry into eternity. The disciple is reborn into eternity, which means that his or her existence can no longer be seen from an exclusively historical perspective. However, when the moment of entry into eternity occurs, the disciple nevertheless still finds himself

[17] However, this should not be taken as saying that were one to live permanently in the Truth, then moral lapses would be impossible. On this point, see H. A. Nielsen, *Where the Passion Is*, *op. cit.* pp. 97f.

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or herself within the temporal order – a temporal order which then has to be understood in the light of the subjective appropriation of the Truth. And as Climacus observes:

> It will doubtless be readily perceived that this understanding is not easy, and especially not easy constantly to preserve (for to understand it once for all without meeting the concrete objections that present themselves in life, i.e., to imagine that one has understood it, is not difficult); and he who will make a beginning of practising himself in this understanding will often enough catch himself in a misunderstanding. (pp. 127f.)

Despite the difficulty present in this temporally located situation (which all disciples find themselves in), Climacus affirms that what has been received by humanity in the Moment is an eternal condition: 'The contradiction of our hypothesis is that man receives the condition in the Moment, the same condition which, since it is requisite for the understanding of the eternal Truth, is *eo ipso* an eternal condition' (p. 77). And being an eternal condition, it is presumed that nothing historical can take it from the disciple.

All this allows sense to be made of a key passage in the *Fragments*, which otherwise might appear impenetrable. The passage runs as follows:

> How does the learner then become a believer or disciple? When the Reason is set aside and he receives the condition. When does he receive the condition? In the Moment. What does this condition condition? The understanding of the Eternal. But such a condition must be an eternal condition. He receives accordingly the eternal condition in the Moment, and is aware that he has so received it; for otherwise he merely comes to himself in the consciousness that he had it from eternity. It is in the Moment that he receives it, and from the Teacher himself. (p. 79)

In other words, in the moment of subjective appropriation the learner realises that the Teacher conditioned in the Moment of Incarnation how the Truth is to be understood, and made possible that understanding. In this respect, the Moment is when the eternal resolve of God is actualised in time (cf. p. 30). And what is especially paradoxical is that it is the Eternal which is actualised in historical time.

Let me conclude Part 1 by summarising some of the major features of the Climacian framework. The concept of 'the *Moment*' contains within it two distinct concepts which it sublates. The first is that of the Moment, or the Incarnation, which 'is the Paradox in its most abbreviated form' (p. 64). This is the Moment when the Truth comes into being in the form of the Paradox; it is also the Moment at which the possibility of error becomes an actuality. To be in error is not to be in the Truth. To be in this state is sin, where one does not actualise what has been made possible. The second concept contained in 'the *Moment*' is the moment of subjective appropriation of the Truth (conversion). This removes from life its exclusively temporal character. It is the beginning of the individual's eternal life, and, as such, is

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the condition for eternal happiness (cf. p. 72). This condition, as we shall see, is faith (understood as the condition for the possession of a conception of the God); and the possibility of receiving the condition comes about when 'the Reason' of humanity collides with the Paradox in the Moment.[18] Faith would not be possible without the Moment (that is, the actualisation of the God/man) since, if the Eternal did not become historical, faith would have no object to discern. But in the Eternal becoming temporal lies the Paradox. So, the *Moment* transcends the duality Moment/moment, while the Moment itself contains the duality the God/man.

In short, in my view 'the *Moment*' is the generative concept of the *Fragments*. As Climacus remarks: 'as soon as we posit the Moment everything follows of itself' (p. 64). And on the basis of the above account of the Climacian framework, I now consider Climacus' notion of 'the condition'.

2. THE CONDITION

Having contended that 'the *Moment*' is the generative concept of the *Fragments*, I now contend that only by taking the condition to have the same complex structure as 'the *Moment*' can a comprehensive understanding of the *Fragments* be attained. Such an understanding requires a harmonisation between two broad conceptions of 'the condition' that have been presumed by commentators – conceptions which parallel the two common construals of 'the *Moment*'. The first conception is that everyone has been given the condition collectively in the Incarnation;[19] while the second is that individuals are given it directly and individually.[20] I shall term these two conceptions of 'the condition' the 'Universalist' and the 'Particularist' conceptions, respectively. While these conceptions are not, in Climacus' actual view, mutually exclusive, they have usually been taken to be; and concentration on just one or the other leads their purveyors towards an unbalanced interpretation of the *Fragments*. Rather, what is required is a viewpoint which integrates the positive side of each conception – in other

[18] It is tempting to substitute the term 'grace' for 'faith', as is done in some instances by Colette in *Kierkegaard: The Difficulty of Being a Christian*, *op. cit.* However, irrespective of the appropriateness of such a substitution, and rather than enter into this debate, in this article I shall exclusively employ the term 'faith'.

[19] Alistair Hannay, for example, opts for an account of the condition in which the God's coming into the world is the condition for human beings understanding the eternal. See Alistair Hannay, *Kierkegaard* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991). Also see W. C. Davis, 'Kierkegaard on the Transformation of the Individual in Conversion', *op. cit.*, p. 147; and see Ferencz Tankó, '*Ewigkeit in Zeit: Max Müllers Umdeutung des Kierkegaardschen Augenblicks*' (Rome: Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1992), p. 26. Both Davis and Tankó claim that, according to the Climacian framework, sin-consciousness is given by the Incarnation, and that sin-consciousness is the primary condition for understanding the truth.

[20] Proponents of the view that, according to the Climacian framework, individuals are given the condition directly and individually generally hold some version of the thesis that the condition is faith. See, for example, Louis P. Pojman, *The Logic of Subjectivity: Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1984), *passim*, particularly p. 91; also see C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard's 'Fragments' and 'Postscript'*, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

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words, an interpretative standpoint which manages to adhere simultaneously to the insights contained in both conceptions.

2.1 *Faith and the Teacher*

The condition has been identified as faith by some (leading to a Particularist conception), and as the Teacher by others (leading to a Universalist conception). Allow me to begin my explication of Climacus' conception of 'the condition' by first commenting upon each of these identifications in turn.

Some commentators identify the condition with faith.[21] And there is clear textual support for this. For example, Climacus claims that faith 'must be the condition of which we have spoken' (p. 73). However, he also claims that '[t]he God gave to the disciple the condition that enables him to see him, opening for him the eyes of Faith' (p. 80). This suggests that the God gave the condition which enabled faith. But then, it would seem that faith cannot be *identical* to the condition. Moreover, Climacus remarks:

> Faith is itself a miracle, and all that holds true of the Paradox also holds true of Faith. But within the framework of this miracle everything is again Socratic, yet so that the miracle is never cancelled – the miracle namely, that the eternal condition is given in time. (p. 81)

The subjective acquisition of faith at the moment of conversion comprises a changed state in a particular individual.[22] Faith, if it is the condition, would thus appear to be temporal, not 'eternal'. But, then, any talk of an 'eternal condition' would surely be inconsistent with the assumption that faith is the condition.[23]

The difficulties with this 'Particularist' position have led some commentators to seek an alternative. Hence, some commentators have identified the condition with the Teacher.[24] But consider the following passage: 'the God's presence is not accidental in relation to his teaching, but essential. The God's presence in human form, aye in the humble form of a servant, is itself the teaching, and the God must give the condition along with it … or the learner will understand nothing' (pp. 68f.). Here, Climacus appears to be asserting that '[t]he God's presence … is the teaching'. But, on the other hand, Climacus seems to be asserting that 'the God must give the condition' along with the presence. If the condition were simply the presence of the God in the form of the Teacher, it would make no sense to say that the God must

[21] For example, H. A. Nielsen in *Where the Passion Is*, *op. cit.*

[22] Frederick Sontag subscribes to the view that the condition is merely such a changed state in a particular individual. See Frederick Sontag, *A Kierkegaard Handbook*, *op. cit.*, pp. 92f.

[23] Some of the difficulties involved in maintaining simply that faith is the condition are discussed in Alistair Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, *op. cit.* pp. 112–116.

[24] For example, Davis writes: 'The condition for faith is obviously the teacher', 'Kierkegaard on the Transformation of the Individual in Conversion', *op. cit.* p. 147, adding that '[t]his is the central assumption in Climacus' thought experiment in the *Fragments*', *ibid.* n. 11.

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give the condition along with the presence. Clearly, 'the God' and 'the condition' would appear to be conceptually distinct. Moreover, Climacus continues by remarking that the God's presence 'is essentially without value for one who does not receive the condition' (*ibid.*). This would also seem to entail that the condition cannot simply be identical with the God's presence – the God-as-present being the Teacher.

Thus, the Teacher's being present among human beings is not on its own sufficient to generate the existential movement from learner to disciple. Something more is needed – and that would appear to be the condition. This shows that the condition cannot be taken simply as a universal condition.

A clue to how we might best construe 'the condition' is to be found in Climacus' remark that 'all that holds true of the Paradox also holds true of Faith' (p. 81). In Part 1, I argued that 'the *Moment*' is best construed as a sublation, and contained within it is the Paradox – the Moment. Perhaps, then, we should regard faith as being contained within a parallel sublation. If so, then the *Fragments* might have been less prone to misunderstanding had a similar typology for 'the condition' been employed as for 'the *Moment*' – namely, by using 'the *Condition*' to signify the sublation of 'the Condition' (itself being used to signify the Teacher), and 'the condition' (being used to signify faith). And by means of such a construal of 'the *Condition*', Universalist and Particularist accounts could be reconciled.

So, my contention is that, just as Climacus' notion of 'the *Moment*' transcends the Moment of Incarnation and the moment of conversion, what we might refer to as 'the *Condition*' transcends Universalist and Particularist interpretations. Thus, what we might refer to as 'the Condition' is given to all in the Moment, while what we might refer to as 'the condition' is given individually in the moment. Hence, as Climacus writes:

> the *Moment* is really decisive for eternity! Unless the God grants the condition which makes it possible to understand this, how is it to be supposed that the learner will be able to discover it! But that the God himself gives this condition has been shown above to be a consequence of the *Moment*, and it has also been shown that the Moment is the Paradox, and that without it we are unable to advance, but return to Socrates. (p. 72)

What it is necessary for the learner to understand is not the Paradox itself, but that the Moment is the Paradox. Such an understanding can only come about 'when the Reason and the Paradox encounter one another happily in the Moment, when the Reason sets itself aside and the Paradox bestows itself. The third entity in which this union is realised … is that happy passion …. We shall call this passion: Faith' (pp. 72f.). Thus, it is evident that the proper relationship of the disciple to the Teacher can only be expressed in 'that happy passion we call Faith, whose object is the Paradox' (p. 76).[25]

[25] Consequently, Climacus rules out the possibility that the Paradox is an object of knowledge, in the strict sense of the term. Concerning the object of faith, see *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, *op. cit.* p. 290.

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Climacus' claim is that the Teacher and the Paradox are to be identified with one another: the Teacher is the 'object of Faith, and is the Paradox, the Moment' (*ibid.*). The Teacher's role in contributing the condition excludes any identification of the condition with the coming into being of the Teacher, the Paradox or the Moment. Instead, the coming into being of the Teacher, put in any of the above ways, is the *necessary condition* – 'the Condition' – for supplying the condition to any individual human being.[26] As Climacus remarks:

> if the learner is to acquire the Truth, the Teacher must bring it to him; and not only so, but he must also give him the condition necessary for understanding it. For if the learner were in his own person the condition for understanding the truth, he need only recall it. The condition for understanding the Truth is like the capacity to inquire for it: the condition contains the conditioned, and the question implies the answer. (Unless this is so, the moment must be understood in the Socratic sense.) (pp. 17f.)

Compare my view, then, with the Universalist and the Particularist positions. The Universalist position maintains that the condition is the coming into being of the situation in which faith is made possible – this situation being construed as both necessary and sufficient for the possibility of discipleship. This position recognises only one facet of 'the *Condition*', which parallels construing 'the *Moment*' solely in terms of the Incarnation – a construal which we have seen to be inadequate. The Particularist position, in contrast, holds that the condition is faith, which comprises *in itself* the necessary and sufficient conditions of discipleship. Again this constitutes recognition of only one facet of 'the *Condition*', parallel to construing 'the *Moment*' solely in terms of the subjective appropriation of the Truth – an equally inadequate construal, as we have also seen.

To sum up my viewpoint: there are two facets of 'the *Condition*' paralleling the two aspects of the *Moment*. First, 'the Condition' as pre-condition, parallel to 'the *Moment*' as Incarnation, and focusing upon the Paradox/Truth/Teacher, which pertains to all. Second, 'the condition' as faith, parallel to 'the *Moment*' as conversion, and pertaining to the individual human being. Both facets are necessary but not individually sufficient for discipleship.[27] The parallelism between the common construals of the concepts 'the *Moment*' and what I am terming 'the *Condition*' can be represented as follows:

[26] Cf.: 'God's act in Christ is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition of the individual's salvation'. M. C. Taylor, *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship*, *op. cit.* pp. 324f.

[27] This has relevance for Kierkegaard scholarship in general: if we accept the metaphysical framework of the *Fragments* as representative of Kierkegaard's own thinking at this period of his intellectual development, we must rule out the possibility of his holding, what has been anachronistically termed, an 'anti-realist' doctrine of God – or a purely existentialist philosophy of religion. With regard to this, consider the following: 'Let no innkeeper or professor of philosophy imagine that he is a shrewd enough fellow to detect anything, unless the God gives the condition' (p. 80). On this point see C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard's 'Fragments' and 'Postscript'*, *op. cit.* pp. 249f.

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	MOMENT	CONDITION
Universalist position	Incarnation	Incarnation, i.e., as general presupposition of faith
Particularist position	subjective appropriation, i.e. conversion	individually acquired faith

What follows in Sections 2.2 and 2.3 aims to show how a satisfactory interpretation of the Climacian framework requires the kind of synthesis between the Universalist and the Particularist positions which I am proposing.

2.2 *Error and Freedom*

We have already noted that error (*Usandhed*) is defined by Climacus as not being in the Truth but departing from it. As this is thought to be brought about by oneself, it constitutes a state of sin. Error and sin are features of the human situation prior to conversion.

Within Climacus' framework, the learner lacks the condition through his or her own fault. As Climacus remarks: 'the learner has himself forfeited the condition and is engaged in forfeiting it' (p. 19). Consequently, the learner is in a state of sin. Due to this situation the learner 'is in reality unfree and bound and exiled; for to be free from the Truth is to be exiled from the Truth, and to be exiled by one's own self is to be bound' (*ibid.*). Once a person is in error he or she is unable to make any decision. In short, freedom has been lost. If, on the contrary, 'by willing to be free he could by himself become free, the fact that he had been bound would become a state of the past, tracelessly vanishing in the moment of liberation; the moment would not be charged with decisive significance' (pp. 19f.). Moreover,

> there was … a time when man could have bought either freedom or bondage at the same price, this price being the soul's free choice and commitment in the choice. He chose bondage; but if he now comes forward with a proposal for an exchange, would not the God reply: Undoubtedly there was a time when you could have bought whichever you pleased, but bondage is a very strange sort of thing; when it is bought it has absolutely no value, although the price paid for it was originally the same. (p. 20*n*)

It is clear from the context of this remark that it applies to humankind universally. Therefore, according to Climacus' framework, this situation effects each individual human being. And as he makes explicit: 'By the terms of our hypothesis therefore, he will not be able to set himself free' (p. 21).

Given this portrayal of the human state in terms of error and sin, it might be helpful to consider precisely why, according to Climacus, this situation obtains. Since error is definable only by its relation to the Truth, it follows that its existence is parasitic on the existence of the Truth. Only by virtue of the coming into being of the Truth – Paradox/Moment/Teacher – is error a possibility of human life. Because of this, according to the Climacian framework, the Incarnation decisively alters the way human beings stand

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before the God.[28] This new situation must be taken as a necessary pre-condition for moving into the right relationship with the God. But it also means that, on the one hand, by virtue of the Incarnation human beings face 'the most crucial and terrible decision' (p. 42), while on the other hand, they are not free, so they cannot move into the right relationship with God without receiving the condition from the God.

There is another horn to this dilemma, upon which human beings are impaled: the Unknown is the limit of Reason, it is the God (cf. p. 49). The Unknown is the absolutely different, and '[w]hen qualified as absolutely different it seems on the verge of disclosure, but this is not the case; for the Reason cannot even conceive of an absolute unlikeness' (p. 55). It follows that

> if man is to receive any true knowledge about the Unknown (the God) he must be made to know that it is unlike him, absolutely unlike him. This knowledge the reason cannot possibly obtain of itself… this would be a self-contradiction. It will therefore have to obtain this knowledge from the God. But even if it obtains such knowledge it cannot understand it, and thus is quite unable to possess such knowledge. (p. 57)

Within the Climacian framework, this situation of absolute difference is a result of sin. As such, it is derived from human beings themselves. It is this situation which requires the absolute Paradox for its repair (p. 58). The absolute Paradox has the function of both 'revealing the absolute unlikeness of sin', and doing 'away with the absolute unlikeness in absolute likeness' (p. 59). Given this argument, as regards restoring the right relationship with the God, humankind is entirely dependent upon the God's prior initiative. And the situation can only be resolved when 'the Paradox and Reason come together in a mutual understanding of their unlikeness' (p. 61) – a union which can only be actualised in the form of a passion which is faith (cf. p. 73).[29]

All of this points to faith's miraculous character. In so far as faith is considered as miraculous, it could not be relegated to the human side of divine-human interaction, as it conceivably could be were faith considered to be merely a product of the human will. For under no circumstances could a mere human being be expected to perform a miracle. Thus, it is plain that faith, for Climacus, is not dependent on human ingenuity or volition, but rather must be given as the condition for recognising absolute unlikeness and entering into the right relationship with the God.

2.3 *Faith and Volition*

As Climacus writes: 'Faith is not an act of the will; for all human volition has its capacity within the scope of an underlying condition' (p. 77). Faith results from the Reason being set aside. And as Climacus adds: 'if I do not

[28] Thus, within the framework, 'error' and 'sin' are, in fact, principally Christological concepts. Unfortunately, lack of space prevents a fuller spelling out of the significance of this for the Incarnational realism of the *Fragments*.

[29] Cf. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, *op. cit.* p. 182.

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have the condition (and this is our assumption, in order not to be forced back on the Socratic order of things) all my willing is of no avail; although as soon as the condition is given, the Socratic principle will again apply' (*ibid.*). Only if one has faith can one will. Hence, for Climacus, the role of the will in coming to faith is of far less significance than has sometimes been supposed. Rather, the ability to arrive at religious faith through the unaided exercise of the will depends upon possessing some prior notion of the proper object of faith. But, according to Climacus' hypothesis, prior to the Moment any such notion is lacking.

Moreover, in the *Fragments* it is also argued that the ability to form a conception of the God depends upon the possession of the condition. Put another way, faith is the condition for the possession of a conception of the God. The argument can be schematised in the following three premises and conclusion:

Premise 1: Human willing depends on a prior condition.
Premise 2: That condition is the possession of a conception of the God.
Premise 3: Faith is the condition for the possession of a conception of the God.

Conclusion: Human willing depends on faith; one cannot simply will to have faith.

Thus, 'when he shuts his eyes he will presumably try to form some conception of the God. But if he is able to do this by himself, he is evidently in possession of the condition' (p. 78).

Climacus then goes on to probe the nature of the condition. He puts the question: 'What does the condition condition?' (p. 79). One who took this question as only about the necessary pre-condition – the Moment – for the possibility of faith would be faced with the problem of giving an account of how somebody could be aware of the possibility of faith, without having faith. This raises the issue of how an understanding of mutual unlikeness is to be reached. But, ultimately, according to Climacus, an awareness of the possibility of faith presupposes faith; that is, without faith the (awareness of the) possibility of faith has no content.[30]

[30] Climacus elaborates on this idea by means of the traditional religious metaphor of 'seeing with the eyes of faith'. This style of expression depicts the moment and the condition by way of the analogy of sight. For instance: 'The God gave to the disciple the condition that enables him to see him, opening for him the eyes of faith' (p. 80). The phrase 'opening for him' is of particular significance as it is evident that the ultimate agent of the 'opening' is the one who is responsible for its occurrence, that is, the God. Building on this, Climacus continues: 'every moment that Faith was not present [it is possible] to see only the servant form' (p. 81). This is another way of expressing the Climacian view that the presence of that which is properly seen with the eyes of faith is not in itself sufficient, although it is necessary. In other words, the presence of the Teacher alone is not a sufficient condition for discipleship. Only with faith are we enabled to see. 'So it is with the disciple, who knows that he would have seen nothing without the condition' (*ibid.*). Furthermore, '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' (p. 128, cf. pp. 81, 87).

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Nevertheless, within the hypothesis of the *Fragments*, the will does have a place. It is re-introduced through the concept of 'belief': 'By way of contrast it now becomes easy to see that belief is not a form of knowledge, but a free act, an expression of the will' (p. 103, cf. p. 76). Thus, belief, not faith, is the proper area for the exercise of the will.[31] Climacus had available to him the one Danish word '*Tro*', which can be translated into English as either 'faith' or 'belief.'[32] Each translation conveys both a difference in the state of the subject and a distinction regarding the proper object. 'Belief' conveys the direct and ordinary sense, whose object is immediate. In belief we can employ the will to exclude doubt. 'Faith' conveys the eminent sense, whose proper object is the non-immediate, that is, the divine. For as Climacus remarks: 'divinity is not an immediate characteristic' (p. 116, cf. pp. 108f.).

Despite these observations about the will's positive place, the role of the will has limited scope within the framework of the *Fragments*. This is because the exercise of the will only becomes significant once it is located within the context of faith: alone it is not enough to effect the proper relationship with the God. In other words, the will is never enough. The proper relation with the God requires faith – the condition – to be given by the God.[33]

3. CONCLUSION

In this article my approach to the *Philosophical Fragments* has been to view it as an attempt to construct a framework which serves to provide an answer to the question 'How is it possible for one to become a disciple?' I now address this question directly and indicate how it may be answered by means of the analysis of Part 1 and my interpretation, presented in Part 2, of the condition.[34]

Climacus' answer to the question 'How is it possible for one to become a disciple?' is as follows: 'From the God himself everyone receives the condition who by virtue of the condition becomes a disciple' (p. 126). On my interpretation this assertion can be re-expressed provisionally as: From the

[31] See David Wisdo, 'Kierkegaard on Belief, Faith, and Explanation', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, XXI, 2 (1987), pp. 95–114.

[32] See Lee Barrett's discussion of this in 'The Paradox of Faith in Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*: Gift or Task?' in *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, International Kierkegaard Commentary, vol. 7, ed. R. L. Perkins (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1994), p. 263.

[33] Clearly, my interpretation of the Climacian view of faith is opposed to that of Terence Pendelhum and Louis P. Pojman, both of whom claim that Climacus is a clear-cut example of a volitionalist. See Terence Pendelhum, *God and Scepticism* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: D. Reidel, 1983), pp. 46–47; and Louis P. Pojman, *The Logic of Subjectivity: Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion*, *op. cit.*, *passim*. However, if the Climacian view of faith leaves the human will out of account, does this not imply that Climacus held some version of the doctrine of predestination? I think not, because, according to the Climacian view, a person must accept that he or she is sinful before he or she can have faith. And Climacus argues that this acceptance – or the refusal to accept – is something which each individual must take responsibility for. With regard to this acceptance – or rejection – Climacus writes, 'the Socratic principle holds, ... the Teacher is merely an occasion whoever he may be, even if he is a God' (p. 17).

[34] Of particular relevance here is the final Chapter of the *Fragments*, especially Section Two, 'The problem of the disciple at second hand'.

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God himself everyone receives faith, who by virtue of faith becomes a disciple. Viewed retrospectively, this means that only those who have become disciples have received the condition. In short, for Climacus, faith is the condition of discipleship, and it is acquired in the *Moment*.

But in what sense of 'the *Moment*'? Prior to the moment of subjective appropriation of the Truth, the learner possesses no knowledge of the Truth to recall. When faith – the condition – is given in the moment, the learner becomes a disciple and enters eternity. From the standpoint of eternity, however, the disciple is able to recall both the Truth and the fact that 'the Condition' – the pre-condition – needed to see the Truth were given at the Moment of Incarnation. As such, the *Moment* is both the moment of conversion and the Moment of Incarnation – the moment being, in a sense, temporal, and the Moment being, in a sense, eternal.

In short, there is a sense in which faith – the condition – is given temporally (and individually), while the Teacher – the Condition – is given eternally (and universally). But only those who receive the *Condition* temporally effectively receive it eternally. In other words, whereas the possibility of seeing the Truth is, in one sense, universal – a pre-condition – that possibility is only actualised by those who acquire faith – the condition for seeing the Truth – at the moment of conversion. And the Truth can only be seen by those who have faith because it is only from within faith that an adequate conception of the God arises. In other words, faith determines the cognitive content of a conception of the God. Hence, faith is the condition, for without it the Truth cannot be grasped.

The Particularist would agree that the possibility of discipleship depends upon an individual having faith. However, in the view of Climacus, faith itself presupposes the Paradox. This universal pre-condition for faith is downplayed in the Particularist interpretation. On the other hand, when one considers the answer the Universalist – who holds simply that the Incarnation was the condition for having faith – would be compelled to give to the determining question of the *Fragments*, it is evident that the interpretation offered here is superior. The Universalist, when challenged to re-express the assertion 'From the God himself everyone receives the condition who by virtue of the condition becomes a disciple' (p. 126) would be committed to claiming in effect that from the God himself everyone receives the possibility of faith who by virtue of the coming into being of the Truth (Paradox/Moment/Teacher) becomes a disciple. That this is absurd can be shown by the following *reductio*. If the Universalist assertion were accepted, one would be compelled to hold that everyone who receives the possibility of faith, by virtue of the coming into being of the Truth, becomes a disciple. But the Universalist holds that the condition, and therefore the possibility of faith, applies to everyone. But this entails, on the Universalist position, that everyone becomes a disciple, which is clearly false.

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In conclusion, within the framework of the *Philosophical Fragments*, an adequate answer to the fundamental question 'How is it possible for one to become a disciple?' can only be provided by means of the interpretation outlined here – an interpretation which yields the answer: 'Only by individual faith, along with the Incarnation of the Teacher, is it possible for one to become a disciple'. And whether in any particular case the condition of faith obtains or not is entirely dependent upon the God, since faith is not an act of the will. Nevertheless, the situation still demands 'the most crucial and terrible decision' (p. 42). However, this should come as no surprise, for as Climacus asks: 'is not Faith as paradoxical as the Paradox?' (p. 81). But then, perhaps his conception is of a '*Faith*' that unifies a duality paralleling the *Moment* and the *Condition*. In which case, the (temporal) moment of conversion would require 'the faith' which allows one, by entering into eternity, to recall 'the Faith' given in the Moment.[35]

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[35] I am grateful to Dr Alan Carter for suggesting this last point to me, and for his comments on an earlier draft of this article.

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