

The Failure of Self-knowledge:

Despair and the Limit of Reason in Kierkegaard's Philosophy

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By

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Abstract

Regarding the problem of self-knowledge in Kierkegaard's philosophy, it is common to relate it to the discussion of despair in Anti-Climacus's *The Sickness Unto Death* but not to the limit of reason in Climacus's *Philosophical Fragments*. Indeed, it is possible to see both the limit of reason and despair as the failure of self-knowledge and how these two works complement each other in discussing such problem through the cases of Socrates. These two works share the view that the failure of self-knowledge is due to the misrelation between oneself and the divine. Moreover, an entry from Anti-Climacus puts himself and Climacus as a pair of dialectical twins who share the common concern on "how to be a genuine Christian". So this dissertation aims to demonstrate the dialectical complementary relationship between Climacus's *Fragments* and Anti-Climacus's *Sickness*, by illustrating that paradoxical rationality (the mutual relationship between reason and paradox) is necessary to overcome the failure of self-knowledge. In addition, this dissertation suggests the potential in examining the dialectical reading between Climacus and Anti-Climacus that is commonly neglected among current studies.

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Introduction

There is a short but important entry named the “Climacus and Anticlimacus: A Dialectical Discovery”¹. This entry puts Johannes Climacus and Anti-Climacus as a pair of dialectical twins. Both of them have the same crucial concern on “how to be a genuine Christian”. Meanwhile, there are traces and evidences in *Fragments* and *Sickness* that suggest both of the works complement each other well by regarding “the limit of reason” and “despair” as “the failure of self-knowledge”. I then begin to think, what else, in addition to reason, is necessary to overcome the failure of self-knowledge? And how does it suggest a dialectical relationship between Climacus’s *Fragments* and Anti-Climacus’s *Sickness*? In this thesis, I aim to demonstrate the dialectical relationship between Climacus’s *Fragments* and Anti-Climacus’s *Sickness*, by illustrating that paradoxical rationality (the mutual relationship between reason and paradox) is necessary to overcome the failure of self-knowledge. I will illustrate that both *Fragments* and *Sickness* dialectically complement each other in terms of their discussion regarding the limit of reason and despair as the failure of self-knowledge. Taking up this dialectical, complementary reading allows for a clarification of both texts. Additionally, I will show that the relationship between the two finds its fullest expression and fulfilment when taken up *existentially*, by the person who wills to become a genuine Christian. I will elaborate more on what it means to be a dialectical complementary relationship in part 3 and 4 below. In addition, I attempt to illustrate such relationship by the entry “Climacus and Anticlimacus: A Dialectical Discovery” and two important references in *Fragments* and *Sickness* that concern the cases of Socratic self-confusion and the Socratic definition of sin that leads him to despair. Indeed, both of the cases are consequences of his failure in acquiring self-knowledge. Nevertheless, both Climacus and Anti-Climacus suggests that the genuine failure of Socrates lies not in the lack of knowledge but the misrelation of the self to the divine. Thus, the significance of examining the failure of self-knowledge in *Fragments* and *Sickness* for us is to examine the claim on the (mis)relation between ourselves and the divine through the Socratic failure, so as to overcome the limit of reason and our states in despair (we need to know about ourselves, in order to be a concrete individual who leads a meaningful life).

As the problems of “the limit of reason” and “despair” are indeed the problem of the misrelation between the self and the divine. Thus, the implication of the dialectical complementary relationship between *Fragments* and *Sickness* is to reveal a proper relationship between oneself and the divine. Such implication is indeed responding to their crucial concern on “how to be a genuine Christian”. This serves as the basis to further develop my claim to the dialectical reading between Climacus and Anti-Climacus. As far as I can tell, there are only a few studies that concern the distinct relationship

¹ JP VI 6349.

between Climacus and Anti-Climacus among other Kierkegaardian pseudonymous authors. I then attempt to ask, “Is it possible for us to develop further studies that focus on the dialectical reading between Climacus and Anti-Climacus that is rather new to the current studies on Kierkegaardian pseudonymity?”. In the first half of this chapter, we need to examine 1) how the discussion on the limit of reason in *Fragments* relates to Climacus’s conception of the self, and 2) how the discussion on despair in *Sickness* relates to Anti-Climacus’s conception of the self. The bases of 1 and 2 prepare the discussion background to proceed the second half of this chapter. I then continue to elaborate on 3) how *Fragments* and *Sickness* complement each other that add extra features to clarify each other’s interpretations on the conceptions of god (God)², sin and offense. Meanwhile, in such elaboration, I will examine and compare the cases of Socratic self-confusion and the Socratic definition of sin that leads him to despair. For instance, both *Fragments* and *Sickness* complement each other by affirming the same assertion that “Socrates lacks the consciousness and concept of sin”, despite their different perspectives, that of the non-Christian Climacus and the Christian Anti-Climacus. And I eventually attempt to 4) illustrate how the entry suggests a dialectical reading between Climacus and Anti-Climacus that they dialectically make each other complete through presence in the person who will to be a genuine Christian.

1. The Limit of Reason and the Climacus’s Self in *Fragments*

The purpose of this part is to examine how the discussion on the limit of reason in *Fragments* relates to Climacus’s conceptions of the self in *Fragments*. I will briefly summarize *Fragments* chapter I, II and III as a background to develop my elaboration on the passionate development and the erotic nature in the mutual relationship between reason and paradox (paradoxical rationality) in the person’s self. Eventually, I will explain how the Socratic self-confusion is caused by his unwillingness to overcome the limit of reason. I will argue that Socrates has indeed recognized the limit of reason but refused to refer it as paradox. And this leads him to be confused about himself, a failure in acquiring self-knowledge.

1.1 Summary on *Fragments* Preface, chapter I, II and III

The themes in *Fragments* chapter I & II reappear in chapter III (I use the Hongs’ translation of *Fragments*, unless specified otherwise). As a result, it is necessary to mention the background of *Fragments* in general, before we enter our discussion on *Fragments* chapter III. The preface of

² As we have seen previously in chapter II, Climacus denies himself to be a Christian while Anti-Climacus is a Christian on an extraordinary high level. I thereby use “god” for the pagans (including Climacus and Socrates), and “God” for the Christian.

Fragments has already prescribed the way of reading *Fragments*. More importantly, it demonstrates how Climacus approaches problems. Climacus claims that no question can be less interesting than asking about what his opinion is.³ Climacus regrets people to assume him having an opinion, and to embrace such opinion.⁴ Thus, we should decide our own opinion regardless of his. In addition, Climacus claims that he is ready to risk his own life to play the game of thought.⁵ He has no learning to offer to thought.⁶ This suggests that *Fragments* does not present a set of answers for us to learn. It deals with personal questions which requires us to seek for our own answers. This answer truly matters to each of us, it is worth risking our lives to find.

Climacus then begins chapter I with a thought-project, in which part A concerns the Socratic truth (A-hypothesis) and part B concerns an alternative to Socratic truth (B-hypothesis). Climacus begins the chapter with a core question of the entire book—"Can the truth be learned?". It is important to be aware that Climacus assumes this was a Socratic question.⁷ Thus, what we initially need to examine is what a Socratic truth to Climacus is. From the beginning, Climacus has somewhat identified the Socratic truth as the Platonic truth of recollection.⁸ Such Socratic view of truth assumes that the truth is already present within each person. Thus, the task of reaching the truth is to reveal it to oneself and recollect it. As Climacus puts it, "the ignorant person merely needs to be reminded in order, by himself, to call to mind what he knows. The truth is not introduced to him but was in him."⁹ In such immanent sense of truth, the teacher would only be an occasion to help the learner to see the truth that is already present within himself. Whether the person acquires the truth or not, the truth is already present in him. Thus, the moment of acquiring the truth would be insignificant and merely identical to any other moment. Climacus then continues to consider "whether there is an alternative to Socratic immanent truth?". Climacus constructs his B-hypothesis by revising the conditions of A-hypothesis. Thus, Climacus imagines a situation that the moment of acquiring the truth (or simply as *the moment*) is significant, unlike any other moment. Then, the learner must not have possessed the truth, and Climacus calls it as *untruth*. If the teacher is merely an occasion, the learner will not discover that he has already known the truth but will discover his *untruth*.¹⁰ Thus, the teacher must not only provide

³ *Fragments*, p.7.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Fragments* (Swenson), p.6.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Fragments*, p.9.

⁸ See *Meno*, 81d. The theory of recollection is commonly attributed to Plato instead of Socrates. As Paul Muench claims, "*Fragments* boldly collapses Kierkegaard's usual distinction between "Platonic" and "Socratic" recollection; but we demonstrate that this conflation is conscious, indeed satirical". See more in Possen, David D. "Meno: Kierkegaard and the Doctrine of Recollection," in *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, Vol. 2, Kierkegaard and the Greek World, Tome I: Socrates and Plato*, eds. by Jon Stewart and Katalin Nun. London, UK: Ashgate, 2010, p.27-44.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Fragments*, p.14.

the truth but also the condition for the learner to learn the truth. Climacus believes only the *god* [*Guden*] is capable to be the teacher, no human being is. Climacus continues to argue that, the learner, instead of the god, is responsible for his state of being in untruth (which Climacus later calls *sin*¹¹). I will elaborate on this assertion further when I discuss the relationship between absolute difference and sin below.

In *Fragments* chapter II, Climacus consider the question, “On what ground do the teacher (god) and learner of the B-hypothesis have a mutual relationship in truth?” in a poetical approach. Climacus begins the chapter with Socrates again. Climacus claims that Socrates understands the teacher and the learner as a reciprocal relation¹², which motivates Socrates to be the teacher. The Socratic teacher serves as the occasion, the midwife to reveal the truth that the learner has always possessed within himself, vice versa. Both of them are the occasions to *understand themselves*. Nevertheless, the god does not need any occasion to understand himself. Thus, Climacus assumes that the only motive for the god to be the teacher is nothing but (divine) love. It is important to recognize such love as the divine love (*Gudens Kjarlighed*) which is different from the erotic love (*Elskov*). The erotic love builds upon reciprocity, but the divine love does not. I will explain more later in section 1.4 that is entitled “The erotic nature in paradoxical rationality”. Climacus then makes an analogy between the god (teacher)-man (learner) relationship and a love story of the king and the maiden. The king who loved a lowly maiden worried about the inequality between them. It would possibly stop the lowly maiden from understanding the king. The king wanted the lowly maiden to be truly happy in love, just as the god wanted his untruth learner to be truly happy in love. As Climacus claims, “for only in love is the different made equal”.¹³ Thus, the god concerns to bring about equality between himself and his learner. Climacus then imagines there are two possible ways to remove the inequality, including the union through ascent, and the union through descent. The former option for the king is to raise the lowly maiden to his level as his queen. However, Climacus insists that this option will never satisfy the king and it does not qualify as a mutual love relationship. There is no way to prove whether the maiden is happy because of the king’s glory and fortune, instead of his love. Just as the learner may merely develop his mutual relationship with the god, out of fear of the god’s power. In such sense, the mutual love relationship between the two is not guaranteed. This reminds us of the erotic love that is built upon reciprocity. Indeed, the other option is to let the king himself to descend to the level of the maiden, by disguising himself and staying with the maiden. In this way, the maiden truly loves the king instead of loving his power. This reminds us of the divine love. Nevertheless, in what way does the god disguise himself like the king does? Climacus suggests that the god does not only descend

¹¹ *Fragments*, p.15.

¹² *Fragments*, p.22.

¹³ *Fragments*, p.25.

himself just like the disguised king, but the god turns himself into a servant¹⁴, who has no place to lay his head¹⁵, and who is the lowest of persons. This image highly resembles the Christian doctrine of the incarnation of the God, but Climacus does not provide further explanation between the two. The important point here is to be aware that the god (teacher) concerns to sit with the learner in equality because of his divine love. This is different from the Socratic teacher-learner relationship which is motivated by reciprocity.

The themes in *Fragments* chapter I & II reappear chapter III. The theme of chapter I is to consider whether the truth can be learned. Is there alternative to reach the truth aside from the Socratic approach? In addition, the theme of chapter II is to further demonstrate the B-hypothesis in a poetical perspective that, only love can motivate the god (the teacher) to unite with his learner through descent. In *Fragments* chapter III, Climacus attempts to reconsider the content of chapter I with the method of chapter II. One of the themes in chapter III is to unfold the problem of Socratic self-confusion by imagining the mutual relationship between reason and paradox as a love story. Chapter III initially appears to be epistemological instead of poetical. Nevertheless, it is crucial to see chapter III through the lens of a love story. Otherwise, the whole scenario of the mutual relationship between reason and paradox, which I call “the paradoxical rationality”¹⁶, will not be comprehended. I will continue to elaborate further when I discuss the significance of the analogy between love of self/love of the beloved and reason/paradox in *Fragments* chapter III below. In addition, Climacus begins chapter III by arguing that, “Socrates... the person who certainly knew man best... still was not quite clear about himself”¹⁷. I call it the problem of Socratic self-confusion. Climacus eventually asserts the problem of Socratic self-confusion is due to his lack of sin-consciousness.¹⁸ This resembles the definition of untruth as sin¹⁹ in chapter I. Indeed, the case of Socratic self-confusion has linked up and summarized the themes from *Fragments* chapter I, II and III. I will explain more in the next section. However, it is time to examine each of the themes in *Fragments* chapter III.

1.2 On *Fragments*’ usage of reason and understanding

Climacus uses the Danish word “*Forstaaelse*” to describe the mutual relationship between paradox and reason, where the two “understand” each other.²⁰ Swenson’s translation refers it as “they are at

¹⁴ See Philippians 2:5-7.

¹⁵ See Luke 9:58.

¹⁶ The word “paradoxical rationality” never appears in any versions of *Fragments*. I use the word to refer the mutual relationship between reason and paradox. It does not refer to the misrelation between reason and paradox that is caused by offense.

¹⁷ *Fragments*, p.37.

¹⁸ *Fragments*, p.47.

¹⁹ *Fragments*, p.15.

²⁰ *Fragments*, p.47.

bottom linked in understanding”²¹ while the Hongs’ translation refers it as “the two have a mutual understanding”²². Climacus stresses that the paradox and the understanding reach a mutual relationship, just as they acknowledge the fact that they need each other. Climacus does not intend to say, both of them “understand” each other in a rational way that reason is superior than paradox.²³ Otherwise, it would be a one-way connection that the paradox must follow the lead of the reason, instead of a “mutual relationship” that allows the two to communicate with each other. It (paradoxical rationality) does not deny the need of reason, it only denies the superiority of reason over paradox (I will then explain, the two “understand” each other in a passionate way like lovers in a relationship). To avoid confusion, I will adopt the phrase “mutual relationship” instead of “mutual understanding” in “the mutual understanding between understanding and paradox”. However, I will keep the word “understanding” in Hongs’ “the mutual understanding” and Swenson’s “they are at bottom linked in understanding”, when I need to cite their translations respectively. Here, we have talked about the distinctive usages of “relationship” and “understanding”. However, we have not yet settled what does “the two” refer to. Climacus refers them as “*Forstanden*” and “*Paradoxet*”. Hongs translate them as “the understanding” and “the paradox”, but Swenson translates them as “the Reason” and “the Paradox”. Before we continue our discussion, it is important to examine whether *Fragments* chapter III has a clear distinction between “understanding” and “reason”. In fact, the Danish word “*Forstand*” can be translated as either “understanding” or “reason”. Upon this question, I agree with Evans’s way of putting it.²⁴ Evans argues, “It is common to recall that Hegel and some other German philosophers made a distinction between reason (*Vernunft*) and understanding (*Verstand*), and claimed that the understanding cannot arrive at absolute truth, reason could”.²⁵ Thus, it might be thought that Climacus argues that the understanding cannot apprehend the absolute paradox but reason can. Evans thinks this inference would be absolutely mistaken.²⁶ In *Fragments*, Climacus certainly claims that human beings are completely unable to apprehend the absolute paradox. In addition, Climacus does not make a clear distinction between understanding and reason. As a result, I will use reason and understanding interchangeably in the following discussion.

1.3 Passionate development of the paradoxical rationality

²¹ *Fragments* (Swenson), p.59.

²² *Fragments*, p.47.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ See Evans, C. Stephen. *Passionate Reason: Making Sense of Kierkegaard’s Philosophical Fragments*. Bloomington and Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1992, p.60, note 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Passion (*Lidenskab*)²⁷ is an important conception in *Fragments*, especially in chapter III. To Climacus, there are different kinds of passion. For instance, paradox is the passion of thought,²⁸ erotic love is the passion of the mutual relation between love of self and love of the beloved,²⁹ faith is the passion of the happy encounter between reason and paradox,³⁰ and offense is the passion of the unhappy encounter between reason and paradox³¹ (I will examine each of them one after another in the following sections). Indeed, Climacus does not define what passion in *Fragments* is. I shall refer passion as the person's awareness on what is important to oneself, and the interest to engage and relate to oneself. It is important to note that, passion is the key element that runs the whole development of the paradoxical rationality in *Fragments* chapter III. Without passion, the relationship between reason and paradox would merely turn into an epistemological discussion that is disengaged from the self, as Climacus puts it as "a mediocre fellow".³² In addition, Climacus does not intend to present the whole scenario in the right order. By adopting the perspective of the passion, it serves as a means to rearrange and present the whole development properly. This helps us to appropriate the claims that Climacus has made in chapter III, and to comprehend our understanding on the context of the chapter. I thereby suggest that the whole development of the paradoxical rationality can be divided into three stages from the perspective of the passion,³³ including the unawakened passion of reason, the awakened passion of reason, and the mutual relationship of reason and paradox in the moment of passion (faith). Also, Climacus claims,

That intimated paradox of the understanding reacts upon a person and upon his self-knowledge in such a way that he who believed that he knew himself now no longer is sure.³⁴

The understanding certainly cannot think it (the paradox) ... cannot understand it and merely detects that it will likely be its downfall.³⁵

²⁷ Indeed, the word *Lidenskab* does not appear in chapter I, and it only appears once in chapter II. Nevertheless, it appears 17 times in chapter III. It suggests the problems about passion are mainly tackled in chapter III. Also, the conception of passion is important even when not explicitly mentioned. It appears in different forms. For instance, chapter II concerns erotic love that is also a kind of passion.

²⁸ *Fragments*, p.37.

²⁹ *Fragments*, p.48.

³⁰ *Fragments*, p.59.

³¹ *Fragments*, p.49.

³² *Fragments*, p.37.

³³ Passion is an irreplaceable element to process the whole scenario of development of the relationship between reason and paradox. The relevant texts that concern each stage of the development, appear to be without order in *Fragments* chapter III. However, by seeing passion as the bridge to connect each stage of the development, we can rearrange the relevant texts in an order, and therefore comprehends our understanding of the chapter.

³⁴ *Fragments*, p.39.

³⁵ *Fragments*, p.47.

The word “intimated” (*anedede*) here indicates that it is only a *potential* instead of an actual close relationship between reason and paradox because the reason is unable to think about the paradox on its own. That is why the passion of reason remains unawakened at first. The paradox (which turns out to be *the god* as elaborated in later section) must provide passion that serves as the initial condition to arouse the unawakened passion of reason. This means that the reason has been satisfied with itself before but with the help of the paradox in providing the condition, the reason is implicitly aware that there is a paradox (that is likely to be reason’s limit and downfall), and the reason is no longer satisfied. There is no explicit interaction between the two until this point. However, Climacus continues to explain the opposing nature between reason and paradox:

The paradox is the passion of thought. But the ultimate potentiation of every passion is always to will its own down fall, and so it is the ultimate passion of the understanding to will the collision ... the ultimate paradox of thought: to discover something that thought itself cannot think.³⁶

For now the understanding’s paradoxical passion that wills the collision awakens and, without really understanding itself, wills its own downfall.³⁷

As stated in the first sentence, the paradox is the passion of thought. This means that the paradox is a type of passion besides other passions, and Climacus wants to indicate clearly that the paradox is exactly the passion of thought but not the passion of something else. In addition, Climacus also wants to indicate clearly that the “collision and downfall” which the paradoxical passion of understanding wills upon is “to think something unthinkable”. Although there is yet to be any explicit interaction between the paradox and the reason, Climacus has asserted that it is inevitable for reason to will and approach the paradox. Climacus then explains how the two confront and interact with each other:

The understanding has strong objections to it (the paradox), on the other hand, in its paradoxical passion the understanding does will its own downfall. But the paradox, too, wills this downfall of the understanding, and thus the two have a *mutual understanding*, but this understanding is present only in the moment of passion.³⁸

For in that happy passion to which we have not as yet given a name (faith) the difference is in fact on good terms with the understanding... but the difference was that the understanding *surrendered itself* and the paradox *gave itself*.³⁹

³⁶ *Fragments*, p.37.

³⁷ *Fragments*, p.38-39.

³⁸ *Fragments*, p.47.

³⁹ *Fragments*, p.54.

In that decisive moment of confronting each other, the reason and the paradox must decide to either accept or reject its opposite. Only if both of them surrender or give itself in the moment of passion (faith), they reach a mutual relationship (the happy encounter). And I refer this mutual relationship between paradox and reason as “paradoxical rationality”. Both the reason and the paradox are opposite to each other, but both of them will the same downfall. Thus, it is only likely but not certainly for them to reach a mutual relationship. It is important to be aware that, the mutual relationship between the two is not guaranteed unless they are in the moment of the happy passion (faith). Climacus puts it with the summary of the whole picture, and eventually give the happy passion a name:

When the understanding and the paradox happily encounter each other in the moment, when the understanding *steps aside* and the paradox *gives itself*, and the third something in which this occurs, is that happy passion to which we shall now give a name ... *faith*.⁴⁰

In *Fragments* chapter IV, Climacus initially and clearly admits that the happy passion is *faith*, after numerous times refusing to give it a name.⁴¹ Indeed, Climacus insists that it is the least part of the matter to give it a name,⁴² and our primary focus is how the happy passion affects the mutual relationship between reason and paradox. That is to say, paradoxical rationality is possible only in faith. Every person has the freedom to choose faith or offense. It is because the person is willing to choose faith, then he can be aware of the revelation from god to receive the “initial condition” as a paradoxical passion that eventually develops into the paradoxical rationality. In short, paradoxical rationality is the consequence of the fact that the self initially chooses to have faith. I will elaborate more later through the case of Socratic self-confusion.

1.4 The erotic nature in paradoxical rationality

As we have seen above, Climacus has elaborated on the whole development of the paradoxical rationality in *Fragments* chapter III. Such elaboration provides the necessary context to see the erotic nature in paradoxical rationality and to appropriate the analogy between love of self/love of the beloved and reason/paradox in the chapter (or we can see the analogy as between self-love/erotic love and reason/faith). I suggest that Climacus has implicitly identified that there are two kinds of love, I thereby call them as the erotic love (*Elskov*) and the divine love (*Gudens Kjerlighed*). Indeed, the

⁴⁰ *Fragments*, p.59.

⁴¹ See *Fragments*, p.48, 49, 54, 59.

⁴² *Fragments*, p.48.

division between erotic love and divine love has constantly appeared throughout *Fragments* chapter II and III. As mentioned above, Climacus differentiates the Socratic teacher-learner relationship from the god (teacher)-man (learner) relationship in chapter II. The former is motivated by reciprocity while the latter is motivated by divine love. As a poetical venture, chapter II employs a love story of the king and the lowly maiden as an analogy for the way god loves his learner. Indeed, Climacus argues that the boundless love that god gives his learner “wills to be the equal of the beloved... neither the king nor Socrates was capable to will”⁴³. This suggests a clear distinction that neither the erotic love of Socrates or the king is comparable to the divine love of the god. Climacus maintains his differentiation between erotic love and divine love in chapter III. In chapter III, the relationship between reason and paradox is similar to the erotic love between the two lovers. It is crucial to see that the erotic love of Socrates is sufficient only to be aware the limit of reason, but not to overcome. Climacus argues that only the divine love is able to overcome such limit. Indeed, Climacus begins chapter III by considering the case of the Socratic self-confusion. Moreover, Climacus turns his focus immediately to the problem of the relationship between reason and paradox, where he begins with the statement “the paradox is the passion of thought, and the thinker without the paradox is like the lover without passion: a mediocre fellow”.⁴⁴ This provides the hints that Climacus intentionally compares thinker to lover as both of them essentially need passion. In fact, Climacus develops his comparison further later by analogizing the relationship between reason and paradox to the relationship between love of the self and love of the beloved.⁴⁵ There are two sections of such analogy. The first section concerns the state of awakening the unawakened passion of reason. Despite the fact that Climacus considers it as “imperfect metaphor”,⁴⁶ the second section concerns the mutual relationship between love of self and love of the beloved in the erotic love. As Climacus puts:

But then the understanding stands still... for now the understanding’s paradoxical passion that wills the collision awakens and... wills its own downfall. It is the same with the paradox of erotic love. A person lives undisturbed in himself, and then awakens the paradox of self-love as love for another, for one missing.⁴⁷

Self-love lies at the basis of love [*Kjærlighed*], but at its peak its paradoxical passion wills its own downfall. Erotic love also wills this, and therefore the two forces are in mutual understanding in the moment of passion, and this passion is precisely erotic love.⁴⁸

⁴³ *Fragments*, p.32.

⁴⁴ *Fragments*, p.37.

⁴⁵ See *Fragments*, p.39, 48.

⁴⁶ *Fragments*, p.48.

⁴⁷ *Fragments*, p.39.

⁴⁸ *Fragments*, p.48.

When the initial condition is given to reason, the paradoxical passion of the reason is no longer unawakened. It is the same for the case of self-love. The person who once lived “undisturbed in himself” has the paradox of self-love awakened in the moment. The paradox of self-love refers to the thought that, when self-love reaches its peak, it wills its own downfall, willing to sacrifice itself for the sake of the beloved. However, Climacus does not mention whether there is an initial condition which awakens the paradox of the self-love. Given that paradox is the passion of thought, the ultimate potentiation of every passion is to will its own downfall.⁴⁹ Thus, the paradoxical passion of reason wills its own downfall just as the paradox of self-love wills its own downfall. In addition, as we have mentioned previously, reason and paradox are opposite to each other. However, both of them will the same downfall and eventually willing to surrender themselves to each other. As a result, they reach their mutual relationship in the decisive moment of passion (faith). Indeed, Climacus immediately continues his argument by analogizing it to the similar circumstance in which the erotic love (*Elskov*) situates.⁵⁰ At the peak of self-love (*Selvkjærlighed*), its paradoxical passion wills its own downfall. Indeed, both the love of the self and the love of the beloved will the same downfall. As a result, they then reach their mutual relationship in the moment of passion, which Climacus has named as erotic love (corresponding to faith in the analogy).⁵¹ Despite the fact that similar circumstances happen in both of the happy encounters, Climacus reminds us that the alternative as the unhappy encounter will happen otherwise. As mentioned previously, the decisive factor of the happy encounter is that it takes place in faith. If the reason refuses to surrender before the paradox, then the encounter is unhappy, and Climacus calls it offense (*Forargelse*).⁵² In the appendix to *Fragments* chapter III, Climacus elaborates on the unhappy encounter in a poetical approach, by imagining the reason and the paradox having conversations and arguing with each other like lovers do.⁵³ As we have seen, Climacus is committed to illustrate the similarity between thought and erotic love. He compares the development of the whole scenario in the relationship between reason and paradox to that in the relationship between love of the self and love of the beloved. Climacus intentionally analogizes thought to love, and further analogizes happy relationship to faith, and unhappy relationship to offense. In other words, Climacus insists the erotic nature in the relationship between reason and paradox throughout the whole chapter. As I have mentioned before, the purpose of this is to see the chapter like a love story. Otherwise, the whole scenario on the relationship between reason and paradox will not be comprehended. The content of *Fragments* chapter III initially appears to be epistemological instead of

⁴⁹ *Fragments*, p.37.

⁵⁰ It is worth reminding ourselves that Hongs’ translation distinguishes “erotic love” (*Elskov*) and “love” (*Kjærlighed*) here, but Swenson translates both of them merely as “love”, knowing that the two Danish words have different meanings.

⁵¹ *Fragments*, p.48.

⁵² *Fragments*, p.49.

⁵³ See *Fragments*, p.52, 53.

poetical. It is certainly a rare way of exploring the problem. Still, we can see it as an attempt to explore serious philosophical problems with the aid of a poetical perspective.

1.5 The god as the unknown, the paradox, and the limit to reason

In the previous sections, I have elaborated the passionate development and the erotic nature in paradoxical rationality in the self. Nevertheless, we have yet to consider what exactly is the origin of the initial passion? Indeed, Climacus refers the initial passion as “that condition that the paradox provides”⁵⁴. Regarding the origin of the initial passion, Climacus insists that it is the paradox that provides the condition for the initial passion⁵⁵. Here is another question raised immediately: Suppose the paradox gives itself to the surrendered reason to reach for the mutual relationship in the moment of faith, how is it possible for the paradox to provide the condition for the initial passion at the beginning of the whole scenario (before the awakening of the unawakened passion in reason, and then the happy encounter)? Indeed, it is the *god* (being the paradox) who provides the condition for the initial passion at the beginning of the whole scenario. It is crucial here to see how Climacus connects and equalizes the conception of the limit of reason, the unknown, and the god together. Climacus merely differentiates them thematically, and there are different ways to talk about the same conception.

The paradoxical passion of the understanding is continually colliding with this unknown...the understanding does not go beyond this; yet in its paradoxicality the understanding cannot stop reaching it and being engaged with it. It is the unknown because we cannot know it ... What is the unknown? It is the *frontier* that is continually arrived at... it is the *absolutely different*.⁵⁶

If a human being is to come truly to something about the unknown (the god), he must first come to know that it is... absolutely different from him. The understanding ... must come to know this from the god.⁵⁷

Climacus clearly states that the unknown is beyond the reason. In such sense, reason is completely unable to grasp or comprehend the unknown. In other words, the unknown is the frontier and limit of the reason. Moreover, the ultimate paradox of thought is to think something unthinkable. Therefore, the paradoxical passion of reason cannot stop trying to reach the unknown, and the reason can never

⁵⁴ *Fragments*, p.59.

⁵⁵ Thus, the initial passion can wake the unawakened passion of the reason, allow it to will its own collision, and eventually surrender before the paradox for mutual relationship.

⁵⁶ *Fragments*, p.44.

⁵⁷ *Fragments*, p.46.

reach it. In addition, Climacus insists, “if the unknown is not solely the frontier, then the one idea about the (absolute) different is confused with the many ideas about the different”.⁵⁸ To Climacus, reason cannot absolutely transcend itself.⁵⁹ Thus, reason can think about difference, but it cannot think about difference which is absolute. In short, the limit of reason is the unknown, and there is an absolute difference between reason and the unknown.

In addition, Climacus continues to assert that the unknown is the god.⁶⁰ In such sense, the absolute difference between reason and the unknown implicates the absolute difference between the person and the god. Indeed, it is hard to consider that the reason has its own passion. Therefore, to be precise, it is the person’s passion that affects his own reason. Climacus does not intend to discuss pure thought or pure conception of the reason that assumes no concrete person behind. As I have mentioned previously, Climacus has stated in *Fragments* preface that he is ready to risk his own life to play the game of thought.⁶¹ The discussion in *Fragments* concerns personal questions that must be answered with the decision of the reader as a concrete person. In other words, the discussion of chapter III concerns the relationship between the reason and the paradox (as a passion of the person’s thought) within a concrete person’s thought. To Climacus, the reason that assumes no concrete person behind is as strange as a poem without poet⁶² and a thought without thinker. For now, we inevitably need to consider the conception of sin and the case of the Socratic self-confusion in *Fragments*.

1.6 Socratic self-confusion and the consciousness of sin

Again, this part aims to examine how the discussion about the limit of reason in *Fragments* relates to Climacus’s conceptions of the self in *Fragments*. One way to examine the Climacus’s *self* in *Fragments* is to study his account on the development of the paradoxical rationality in the self. However, the exploration on Climacus’s *self* will be insufficient without examining it through the case of Socratic self-confusion. The task in this section (1.6) is to argue that the problem of the Socratic self-confusion is caused by his failure in overcoming the limit of reason. To be precise, Socrates is aware of the limit of reason, but he is unwilling to accept the limit of reason as the paradox (god).

⁵⁸ *Fragments*, p.45.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

⁶⁰ See *Fragments*, p.39, 45, 46.

⁶¹ *Fragments* (Swenson), p.6.

⁶² This resembles the text from *Fragments* p.35, where Climacus claims that, “If there is no poet when there nevertheless is a poem—this would be curious, indeed, as curious as hearing flute playing although there is no flute player”.

Socrates remains as a central figure throughout the entire *Fragments*. As we have seen previously from *Fragments* chapter I to III, Climacus intentionally begins each chapter by considering the case of Socrates. In addition, Climacus begins chapter III with the case of the Socratic self-confusion. Nevertheless, Climacus does not explain much in the beginning of chapter III besides quoting the reference from *Phaedrus* 229,⁶³ where Socrates claims his failure in seeking self-knowledge. As Socrates puts, “I am still unable... to know myself... Am I a beast more complicated and savage than Typhon, or am I a tamer, simpler animal with a share in a divine and gentle nature?”⁶⁴ The reason that Socrates (the connoisseur of human nature) was disinclined to ponder the nature of myth was that he still was not quite clear about himself.⁶⁵ In other words, Socrates is yet to acquire his self-knowledge, and the knowledge on myth merely does not help his acquisition. Surprisingly, Climacus eventually deduces a conclusion that initially appears to be irrelevant:

The connoisseur of human nature became almost bewildered (confused) about himself ... What did he lack then? *The consciousness of sin*, which he could no more teach to any other person than any other person could teach it to him. Only the god could teach it—if he wanted to be teacher.⁶⁶

In *Fragments* chapter III, Climacus explicitly claims that Socrates lacks the consciousness of sin, so he almost confused himself. No human beings (not even Socrates) but only god can teach the consciousness of sin. In other words, the learner lacks the ability to gain the truth (in this case, the consciousness of sin). Climacus believes only *god* is capable of being the teacher, no human being is. With reference to the definition of sin in *Fragments* chapter I, the learner instead of the god, is responsible for his state of being in untruth, and eventually in sin.⁶⁷ But why it is the learner’s fault? To Climacus, there are two possibilities that would have lead the person to be in untruth, including the act of the god, and by accident. However, Climacus simply rejects both possibilities by asserting that both of them are contradictions. In other words, Climacus does not elaborate on his reason in detail. We may need to comprehend the assertions for Climacus. As we have seen previously, Climacus assumes the god must provide the condition to the learner. Thus, it is simply a contradiction to assume that the god also takes away the condition from the learner (otherwise the action of providing the condition would be redundant, and Climacus will fail to construct an alternative to the Socratic view). Similarly, it is also a contradiction to assume that the deprivation of the learner’s condition is accidental. Otherwise we will return to the Socratic view, which assumes the condition that has

⁶³ Climacus does not explain much about the problem of Socratic self-confusion. Until the end of *Fragments* chapter III, Climacus eventually asserts that the reason for Socratic self-confusion is his lacking of sin-consciousness.

⁶⁴ See *Phaedrus*, 229e-230a.

⁶⁵ *Fragments*, p.37.

⁶⁶ *Fragments*, p.47.

⁶⁷ *Fragments*, p.15.

provided to the learner is merely occasional. To Climacus, the guilt for the deprivation of the learner's condition must therefore fall on the learner himself. I examined the conception of sin in *Fragments*. However, the purpose in such examination is to understand the case of the Socratic self-confusion. So how does sin relate to the problem of self-knowledge?

To Climacus, the god does not only serve as a limit to let the paradoxical passion of reason collide but it also “disturbs man and his self-knowledge”⁶⁸. As Climacus later insists, “Through the moment, the learner becomes untruth; the person who knew himself *becomes confused about himself* and instead of self-knowledge he acquires the consciousness of sin”⁶⁹. This is to say, the learner (in the B-hypothesis) was expecting himself to be able to acquire the truth, after receiving the condition through the moment of revelation from god. The moment, however, only reveals the learner's untruth and consciousness of sin to himself. In other words, the learner (the person) who thinks he has known himself becomes confused about himself. It is important to be aware that this is where Climacus combines the discussion on the conceptions of god, the condition, untruth and sin in chapter I, to the discussion on the conceptions of god, the unknown, the limit to reason and the self-knowledge in chapter III. We have seen the difference between the learner (who acquires the consciousness of sin) and Socrates (who lacks the consciousness of sin), but we have yet known the exact reason which leads to such difference. Why does Socrates lack the condition? I suggest that such difference is due to the lack of faith from Socrates. Without faith, Socrates is incapable of being aware of such revelation to receive the condition (even if he has the chance to receive it). As I have mentioned previously, *Fragments* chapter III is a continuation of the discussion of chapter I. In *Fragments* chapter III, Climacus argues that the development of the relationship between reason and paradox can be either a happy encounter that happens in faith or an unhappy encounter in offense. I suggest that the result mainly depends on whether the person is willing to have faith or offense. Nevertheless, is either faith or offense a function of the will? I suggest that both of them depend on both the knowledge and the will of the person, but the will is much more decisive than the knowledge. As Climacus claims, “belief is not a knowledge but an act of freedom, an expression of will”.⁷⁰ This seems to indicate that Climacus only attributes belief as solely depended on the will without knowledge. However, as we have already noted, faith is possible only in the mutual relationship between reason and paradox. It does not only require “reason surrendered itself” but also “the paradox gave itself”.⁷¹ This is to say, faith does not only depend mainly on the will to believe the paradox, but it also requires the knowledge on what to will for. I will elaborate more on this question in section 2.3 “The Socratic definition of sin”. This is to say, every person is free and capable to be the learner in B-

⁶⁸ *Fragments*, p.39.

⁶⁹ *Fragments*, p.51.

⁷⁰ *Fragments*, p.83.

⁷¹ *Fragments*, p.54.

hypothesis (instead of A-hypothesis) by willing to acquire faith instead of offense. In such sense, the offended Socrates is responsible for his failure in overcoming the limit of reason and the failure in receiving the condition to acquire the truth, the consciousness of sin and eventually the self-knowledge. Up to this point, we have examined how Climacus relates the discussion on the limit of reason to the self through the case of Socratic self-confusion in *Fragments*. Moreover, I will only continue to examine Climacus's conceptions of god (God)⁷², faith, sin and offense in *Fragments* and their correlation that leads to Socratic self-confusion, after I have examined the following part on *Sickness*. It is because the general understanding of the context on *Sickness* is necessary to understand how *Sickness* and *Fragments* complement each other on those discussion.

2. Despair and the Anti-Climacus's Self in *Sickness*

The purpose of this part is to examine how the discussion about despair in *Sickness* relates to Anti-Climacus's conception of the self, so as to prepare the elaboration in the next part which focuses on the complementary relationship between *Fragments* and *Sickness*. Indeed, Anti-Climacus divides *Sickness* into Part One (The Sickness Unto Death is Despair) and Part Two (Despair is Sin) in a rather misleading way to the readers. It seems that *Sickness* Part One and Two are disconnected in a way that Part One merely focuses on the sickened self from a non-religious and psychological perspective, and Part Two merely focuses on the sinful self from a Christian perspective. Nevertheless, I argue that such interpretation has misunderstood the intention of Anti-Climacus's division. In fact, both perspectives are closely combined throughout the whole book, but only Anti-Climacus hints that the Christian perspective is prior to the non-religious and psychological perspective on evaluating and understanding the self. The significance of examining the genuine intention of Anti-Climacus's division is to provide resources in supporting my account. It focuses on the indispensability of God in one's self by examining the crucial conception of "before God". Then I will build on this account to examine the correlation between the conceptions of the self and despair in *Sickness*, by elaborating on the case of the Socratic definition of sin that leads Socrates to despair.

2.1 The indispensability of God in the self

The previously considered gradation in the consciousness of the self (in *Sickness* Part One) is within the category of the human self, or the self whose criterion is man. But this self takes on a new quality and qualification by being a self directly *before God*. This self is no longer the merely

⁷² As we have seen previously in chapter II, Climacus denies himself to be a Christian while Anti-Climacus is a Christian on an extraordinary high level. I thereby use "god" for the pagans (including Climacus and Socrates), and "God" for the Christian.

human self but is ... the theological self, the self directly *before God*.⁷³

Anti-Climacus clearly divides *Sickness* into Part One and Part Two. He claims that the whole deliberation of Part One “dialectically take a new direction” into the discussion of Part Two.⁷⁴ In addition, Part One considers “the human self ... the self whose criterion is man”,⁷⁵ while Part Two considers “the theological self ... the self directly before God”. Despite Anti-Climacus hopes “not to be misinterpreted”, I argue that this differentiation between *Sickness* Part One and Part Two is rather misleading to the readers. As I suggest that the self is indeed unlike what Anti-Climacus has claimed to “take on a new quality and qualification”, which gives an impression of a complete transformation from the human self to the theological self (I will argue later that what has really changed is not the nature of the self, but the state of awareness of the person towards God. The self has changed from being ignorant to becoming aware of the implicit relation between itself and the God.) In fact, Anti-Climacus insists on the indispensability of God in the self. As Anti-Climacus repeatedly insists that God is the power that established the self.⁷⁶ This is to say, whether it is a human self or a theological self, the self is grounded and established by God. Be reminded that, the significance of examining the genuine intention of Anti-Climacus’s division is to provide resources in supporting my account. It focuses on the indispensability of God in one’s self (the self’s complete dependence on God) by examining the crucial conception of “before God”. In order to avoid confusion, I suggest that the genuine opposition in Anti-Climacus’s differentiation is between “being spirit” and “being spiritless”, but not between “human self” and “theological self”. It is because “being spirit” and “being spiritless” is an either/or situation, a person cannot be in both states. And this makes a clearer differentiation than the ambiguous one between “human self” and “theological self”.

Before I continue to elaborate on this, I need to briefly explain what do “spirit” and “spiritless” refer. In fact, Anti-Climacus begins the book of *Sickness* by asking, “A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self”.⁷⁷ He continues to claim that, “the self is not the relation but is the relation’s relating itself to itself ... and to another”.⁷⁸ Within this ambiguous expression of the self from Anti-Climacus, “relating itself to itself ... and to another” indicates that the self is a reflective self that reflects upon itself by comparing to itself and to others. Also, the phrase “the relation’s relating” indicates that the self is a dynamic self instead of a static self. The self is an ongoing process of

⁷³ *Sickness*, p.79.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ “Criterion” refers to the standard that something has based upon for its definition. In *Sickness* p.79, as Anti-Climacus puts it, “The criterion for the self is always: that directly before which it is a self, but this is the definition of “criterion.””.

⁷⁶ See *Sickness*, p.14, 30, 49, 73, 82, 124, 131.

⁷⁷ *Sickness*, p.13.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

becoming.⁷⁹ It is adopted to change by actively relating, reflecting and comparing to itself and others. In addition, Anti-Climacus continues to claim that the self is a synthesis of different opposing elements, namely possibility and necessity, and infinitude and finitude. Anti-Climacus also insists that the self is a derived and established self by God. Thus, the self is able to maintain an equilibrium relationship with all of the opposing elements, only when it wills to declare its dependence on God instead of itself. To Anti-Climacus, “spirit” is an equilibrium self that depends on God, while “spiritless” is a disequilibrium self that depends on itself and eventually leads to despair (sickness of spirit). For instance, one expression of the disequilibrium of the self is the lacking of possibility. Anti-Climacus illustrates it with the case of the fatalist, who is in despair and spiritless. To the fatalist, “everything has become necessity” and lacked possibility.⁸⁰ This is to say, the fatalist denies declaring his dependence on God, as he denies believing that, “everything is possible with God”. As a result, the self of the fatalist is in disequilibrium (due to the imbalance between possibility and necessity) and despair. I will elaborate more in later part of this section.

So why does Anti-Climacus make such a misleading differentiation between the human self and the theological self? The answer lies in what it means to be “before God”. In the beginning of *Sickness Part Two A*, Anti-Climacus provides the definition of sin as “sin is: *before God, or with the conception of God*”.⁸¹ I do not intend to talk about sin here, as I will closely examine it in the following sections. However, it clearly hints that the meaning of “before God” is closely related or even identical to “the conception of God”. Anti-Climacus claims that the concept of God is unlike the concept of man, as “the concept of God embraces everything, and in another sense he has no concept”.⁸² This means God is the source and origin of all concepts. However, this only suggests the mighty characteristic of God but fails to give further details on what kinds of concept is “the concept of God”. For this matter, Jamie Ferreira has remarked that, “the Danish expression Anti-Climacus uses for “conception of God” (*Forestilling om Gud*) is much more accurate than the English translation suggests. A “conception” of God sounds like a vague idea or thought of God. The word Anti-Climacus uses – *Forestilling* – has important connotations of performance or presentation – for example, the mime show in Tivoli Park is advertised as a *Forestilling* at a particular time. It is not an abstract idea one has, but a performance, an active presencing”.⁸³ This is to say, to have a conception of God is not to have an abstract knowledge of God, but to have an engaging knowledge with “the active presence”⁸⁴ of God to oneself. This also means that, I, being the single individual as a sinner,⁸⁵

⁷⁹ *Sickness*, p.30.

⁸⁰ *Sickness*, p.40.

⁸¹ *Sickness*, p.77.

⁸² *Sickness*, p.121.

⁸³ Ferreira, M. Jamie. *Kierkegaard*. New Jersey, US: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p.161.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

⁸⁵ See *Sickness*, p.121.

have no place to hide before God, as God is actively present and engaged in everything. Moreover, this fits what Richard McCombs has suggested that, to Anti-Climacus, “knowledge is ‘very important’ – not for its own sake, but insofar as it supports and informs action. In other words, Kierkegaard (Anti-Climacus, my emphasis) values practical knowledge”.⁸⁶ When we return to Anti-Climacus’s claims that I have cited above, we have a better sense now on understanding that, “the new quality and qualification” of “before God” can only be acquired through action (instead of abstract knowledge) that is taken by the self. I will argue later that such action is to acquire faith to God, who is the power that established the self.

But we have yet to settle why does Anti-Climacus make such a misleading differentiation between the human self and the theological self? I suggest that Anti-Climacus intends to introduce the Christian antithesis of sin/faith into the discussion starting from *Sickness* Part Two (I will closely elaborate on both of the concepts later). Both the conceptions of “sin” and “faith” is new to the discussion before Part Two. I suggest that it is both unnecessary and unconvincing to introduce sin and faith in Part One. To be precise, Part One is designed to examine despair as the psychological sickness of “the human self”, where the self only refers to himself as the standard for living. In Anti-Climacus’s language, whose criterion is man instead of God. In this sense, “the human self” are ignorant of the theological connection that is implicit within himself and every human being – he is indeed a spirit and a self before God. For the case of “sin”, Anti-Climacus claims that, “all sin is before God”.⁸⁷ This is to say, “the human self”, who has yet to become aware that his self is a self before God, is simply incapable to recognize sin as the genuine cause that leads him to despair. In addition, Anti-Climacus strategically assigns the content of *Sickness* so as to, as the book subtitle indicates, “awaken” the readers. This strategy is indeed a form of “indirect communication” in *Sickness*. Anti-Climacus tries to awaken the pagan readers from their illusions. For instance, the illusion harboured by most of the people, including himself, is not in despair. And the illusion that recognizes himself, just like everyone, is living with his own standards instead of before God (I will elaborate on both of these illusions in the following paragraphs). But these illusions can only be removed indirectly from behind.⁸⁸ Anti-Climacus does not want to present his discussion explicitly from the Christian perspective at first, but to present *Sickness* gradually from psychological to Christian discussion as a process of awakening the readers. Beside the case of “sin” that is mentioned above, this also explains why Anti-Climacus does not reveal “the formula to completely root out despair”, that is indicated in the beginning of Part One⁸⁹, is indeed “faith”, until the last section of Part One.⁹⁰ Moreover, Anti-

⁸⁶ McCombs, Richard. *The Paradoxical Rationality of Søren Kierkegaard*. Bloomington and Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2013, p.8.

⁸⁷ *Sickness*, p.81.

⁸⁸ *The Point of View*, p.43.

⁸⁹ *Sickness*, p.14.

⁹⁰ *Sickness*, p.49.

Climacus initially mentions the phrase “the power that established the self” in the beginning of Part One, but only gradually revealing it as “God” and eventually as “Christ”. In short, Anti-Climacus has made a misleading differentiation between “the human self” and “the theological self” in *Sickness* Part Two due to his intention to gradually introduce the Christian antithesis of sin/faith into the discussion. It is also the strategic intention of indirect communication by Anti-Climacus to present *Sickness* gradually along the awakening of the readers (to avoid a slap in the readers’ face by initially accusing them as sinners who are responsible for their despair). I will elaborate more on indirect communication later in part 4.

Before we examine the correlation between the self and despair in *Sickness*, we need to continue our discussion on what it means to acquire faith. Throughout *Sickness*, Anti-Climacus repeatedly stresses that faith is “the formula to completely root out despair” that requires “the self in being itself and in willing to be itself rests transparently in God (the power that established the self)”.⁹¹ So what does it mean to rest transparently in God? As I have argued previously, the qualification of “before God” can only be redeemed and reclaimed through action (instead of abstract knowledge) that is taken by the self. And such action is to acquire faith to God, who is the power that established the self. This is to say, the person must not only become aware of the implicit yet already obtained indispensable connection to the God (aware the self is established by God), but also willing to declare his complete dependence on God. As Lippitt puts, this “resting transparently” is a “manifestation of self-knowledge insofar as the self knows what it owes to God, but experiences this not as guilt and debt but gratitude for the forgiveness of sins”.⁹² A concrete example of what it means to declare complete dependence on God is to acquire and depend upon faith in believing that “everything is possible with God”⁹³, including the forgiveness of sin (I will explain more on the forgiveness of sin in the sections that examine sin and offense). Based on the account of the indispensability of God in one’s self that I have examined in this section, it is time to examine the correlation between the conceptions of the self and despair in *Sickness*.

2.2 Despair and sin in *Sickness*

This part aims to examine the correlation between the conceptions of the self and despair in *Sickness*, by elaborating on the case of the Socratic definition of sin that leads Socrates to despair. Before examining the case, some background on the conception of despair in *Sickness* is needed. In this

⁹¹ See *Sickness*, p.14, 30, 49, 82, 124, 131.

⁹² Lippitt, John. "Self-knowledge in Kierkegaard," in *Self-Knowledge: A History*, ed. by Ursula Renz, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017, p.8-9.

⁹³ *Sickness*, p.38, 39, 40, 71.

section 2.2, I will focus on the types of despair that are defined by consciousness for now, and the conception of sin in *Sickness* later.

To Anti-Climacus, despair is the sickness that leads to death of the self as a spirit. Moreover, *Sickness*, as its subtitle indicates, is a “Christian exposition” that presents itself in “the way a physician speaks at the sickbed ... of a sick person (my emphasis)”.⁹⁴ In addition, *Sickness* is applicable to all readers, as “there is not one single living human being who does not despair a little”.⁹⁵ This is to say, the phenomenon of despair is universal.⁹⁶ As a result, Anti-Climacus, the physician, aims to diagnose the spiritual sickness of despair among all his readers (patients). He points out that the common view assumes “everyone must know himself best whether he is in despair or not (my emphasis)”.⁹⁷ However, he continues to argue that the common view has a very poor understanding of despair and most people do not think they are in despair, as “it can be so hidden in a man that he himself is not aware of it”.⁹⁸ Anti-Climacus then insists that, “to be unaware of being defined as spirit is precisely what despair is”.⁹⁹ But in what sense? This urges us to briefly examine the types of despair (that are defined by consciousness) that Anti-Climacus has identified. Regarding despair as defined by consciousness, Anti-Climacus has identified two types of despair that the person is either ignorant or conscious of being in despair. He claims that, “the increasing intensity of despair depends on the degree of consciousness, the greater the degree of consciousness, the more intensive the despair”.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the person who is ignorant of his despair, is despair at its minimum.¹⁰¹ As we have mentioned above, most people are ignorant of their despair. This is to say, they are unconscious of themselves as spirit. Anti-Climacus then defines it as the state of spiritless or what I call “the unawakened spirit”.¹⁰² This is because the person is still a spirit despite his ignorance of this fact. Indeed, others are conscious of their despair. Anti-Climacus then continues to distinguish two types of conscious despair: not to will to be oneself (weakness), and to will to be oneself (defiance). The person who does not will to be oneself is indeed “to will to be someone else, to wish for a new self”.¹⁰³ Such a person despairs over himself and wants to be rid of himself.¹⁰⁴ For instance, an ambitious man wants to be Caesar, but he fails. Anti-Climacus insists that the intolerance is not his failure, but it is the self which will never be Caesar that he cannot get rid of.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the person in despair willing only

⁹⁴ *Sickness*, p.5.

⁹⁵ *Sickness*, p.22.

⁹⁶ *Sickness*, p.23, 26.

⁹⁷ *Sickness*, p.22.

⁹⁸ *Sickness*, p.23, 27.

⁹⁹ *Sickness*, p.25.

¹⁰⁰ *Sickness*, p.42.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² See *Sickness*, p.45.

¹⁰³ *Sickness*, p.53.

¹⁰⁴ *Sickness*, p.19.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

to be oneself is to sever the self from any relation to God. Such a person wants to be master of the self or to create the self. It is such a misrelation of the self to God that leads to despair. In other words, a person with either types of despair refuses to declare complete dependence on God.

But what is sin? And what is its correlation to despair and offense? We need to consider these questions before elaborating the case of the Socratic definition of sin. It is crucial to be aware that Anti-Climacus has no intention to talk about particular sin but the Christian definition of sin in *Sickness*. As he claims that, “for me (Anti-Climacus) to begin to describe particular sins in this little book would be out of place, and ... the attempt might fail”.¹⁰⁶ He stresses that the main point in *Sickness* is to demonstrate that the Christian definition of sin has already “embraces all forms of sin”.¹⁰⁷ In the beginning of *Sickness Part Two*, Anti-Climacus claims that, “Sin is: *before God, or with the conception of God, in despair not to will to be oneself, or in despair to will to be oneself*”.¹⁰⁸ In *Sickness Part One*, Anti-Climacus defines despair as the gradation of the consciousness of the self in the form of weakness (not to will to be oneself) and defiance (to will to be oneself). In *Sickness Part Two*, Anti-Climacus extends the definition of despair by asserting that sin is the “intensification of despair” with the qualification of before God.¹⁰⁹ As Ferreira claims that, “Anti-Climacus suggests a continuum – a continued description of an escalation in gradations of despair until it reaches the highest intensity, sin”.¹¹⁰ In addition, Anti-Climacus later describes sin as “the self has a conception of God and yet does not will as he wills, and thus is disobedient”.¹¹¹ The person in sin (the intensified despair) must be conscious of himself before God but choose not to obey God. Nevertheless, this only partially defines what is sin for the Christian (who has already aware of himself as spirit before God and with the conception of God). Anti-Climacus claims that, “every sin is before God”.¹¹² But he also mentions that, “the pagan did not have his self directly before God. The pagan has the merely human self as his criterion (my emphasis)”.¹¹³ So, is it possible for the pagan to be in sin? This is a tricky question, but Anti-Climacus does comment on this important matter. He claims that, “it may be correct to regard paganism as immersed in sin, but the sin of paganism was essentially despairing ignorance of God, of existing before God. Therefore, from another point of view, it is true that in the strictest sense the pagan did not sin, for he did not sin before God, and all sin is before God”. This is to say, from a Christian perspective, it seems that the pagans are in sin, as they are yet to become aware of themselves before God. This is the state of spiritlessness and despair due to the misrelation

¹⁰⁶ *Sickness*, p.82.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Sickness*, p.77.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, p.161.

¹¹¹ *Sickness*, p.80.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

between the self and the God. Nevertheless, the pagan simply does not will to be in such sin intentionally. As a result, they are not responsible for their sin.

Anti-Climacus continues to enrich the definition of sin by relating “before God” to the conception of offense. As he asserts “before God” as a “qualification that has Christianity’s crucial criterion: *the paradox, the possibility of offense*”.¹¹⁴ So, how does “before God” relate to the paradox and offense? Unlike Climacus’s discussion on the conception of paradox in *Fragments*, Anti-Climacus does not comprehensively elaborate on the conception of paradox in any of the chapters in *Sickness*. But Anti-Climacus does claim that the teaching of Christianity is “too high” for the human mind to grasp.¹¹⁵ This reminds us of his claims later in other chapters that the teaching of Christianity is a “paradox” that the mind cannot comprehend.¹¹⁶ Due to such paradoxical nature of the Christian teaching, anyone can either believe it or be offended by it. The offended people will then refer the Christian teaching as non-sense and folly.¹¹⁷ However, how does “before God” relate to the possibility of offense? Regarding this question, Anti-Climacus argues that the possibility of offense lies in the fact that “as an *individual* human being a person is directly before God and consequently, that a person’s sin should be of concern to God”.¹¹⁸ The emphasis of “individual” implies that every human being must face the God by himself. However, not every individual, namely the pagan, admits himself as spirit that is established by God. As Anti-Climacus puts it, “sin is not the turbulence of flesh and blood but is the spirit’s consent to it, and ... before God (my emphasis)”.¹¹⁹ In other words, the pagan is simply incapable of being in sin. So, the same question arises once again: is it possible for the pagans to be in sin? Interestingly, the pagans simply do not know or unwilling to know what sin is, as they are offended by the paradoxical Christian teaching on sin. As a result, they are not responsible for their sin. Instead of continuing to elaborate on the general pagans, it is time to examine the case of the Socratic definition of sin that leads Socrates to despair.

2.3 The Socratic definition of sin

Sickness Part Two chapter 2 is entitled “The Socratic definition of sin”. In this chapter, Anti-Climacus initially claims that there is a defect in the Socratic definition of “sin is ignorance”.¹²⁰ Socrates does not explain much about the nature of such ignorance and its origin. As Anti-Climacus puts it,

¹¹⁴ *Sickness*, p.83.

¹¹⁵ *Sickness*, p.83, 85.

¹¹⁶ *Sickness*, p.98, 100, 106.

¹¹⁷ *Sickness*, p.84, 86.

¹¹⁸ *Sickness*, p.83.

¹¹⁹ *Sickness*, p.82.

¹²⁰ *Sickness*, p.87, 88.

Is this an *original ignorance*, is it therefore the state of someone who has not known and up until now has not been capable of knowing anything about truth, or is it a *resultant*, a later ignorance? If it is the latter, then sin must essentially lodge somewhere else than in ignorance. It must lodge in a person's efforts to obscure his knowing.¹²¹

Anti-Climacus tries to clarify different types of ignorance before asserting that all kinds of ignorance are sin. Anti-Climacus distinguishes *original ignorance* from *resultant ignorance*. The former is the state of someone who is completely unable to know anything about truth while the person in the latter case is able to know the truth. Then only the person with the resultant ignorance is blameworthy for his sin. Moreover, such sin does not lie in his ignorance but in his efforts to obscure his knowing. In addition, Anti-Climacus further distinguishes two types of resultant ignorance by considering a question "whether a person was clearly aware of his action when he started to obscure his knowing".¹²² If the person does not acquire such awareness, then it is doubtful that his unintentional action of obscuring his knowing as sin. However, the person with such awareness is then blameworthy for his sin. But it is a sin of his *will*, not his obscured knowing. This is to say, the Socratic view presupposes that there is no one who can knowingly not do the good or do wrong.¹²³ As a result, Anti-Climacus eventually deduces that what the Socratic definition of sin lacks is "the conception of the will and defiance" and "the transition from having understood something to doing it".¹²⁴ In addition, Anti-Climacus then incorporates the comparison between the Socratic and the Christian definition of sin. He insists that the Christian definition of sin has accurately captured such transition which is lacked in the Socratic definition of sin. The Christian definition of sin shows that, "all sin is rooted in willing and arrives at the concept of defiance, and fastened the end ... by means of the paradox (my emphasis)".¹²⁵ We have previously discussed that every sin is before God. This means that sin is disobedience to God, as the person in sin intentionally refuses to follow God's will but choose to follow his own will (defiance). However, how does this relate to the paradoxical nature of Christian teaching and the possibility of offense that we have discussed before? As Anti-Climacus repeatedly claims that the criterion of Christianity is the paradox that cannot be comprehended by any human mind.¹²⁶ Anyone can either believe it or be offended by it. Thus, Anti-Climacus suggests that the revelation from God is the only way to learn what sin is.¹²⁷ In such sense, sin is the failure to believe the paradox. In other words, as we have discussed previously, sin is the failure to acquire faith in believing "everything is possible with God". Nevertheless, how is it possible for the pagans,

¹²¹ *Sickness*, p.88.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Sickness*, p.90, 93.

¹²⁵ *Sickness*, p.93.

¹²⁶ *Sickness*, p.98, 100, 106.

¹²⁷ *Sickness*, p.95.

especially Socrates, to receive the revelation from the Christian God? Is it fair to criticize Socrates's claim on "sin is ignorance" if he does not have the chance of receiving the Christian revelation on sin? Is he in the state of "original ignorance" that is not blameworthy?

Throughout *Sickness* Part Two, Anti-Climacus consistently criticizes the pagans' conception on sin. Moreover, Anti-Climacus claims, "what really makes human guilt into sin is that the guilty one has the consciousness of existing before God".¹²⁸ This is to say, only the self before God or with the conception of God, which the pagans lack, is qualified to be in sin. Thus, the pagans are only guilty not sinful. So what is the purpose for Anti-Climacus to criticize the pagans (human self) with the standard of the Christian teaching (theological self)? Previously, I have mentioned that *Sickness* Part Two is a continuum of *Sickness* Part One despair, "a continued description of an escalation in gradations of despair until it reaches the highest intensity that is sin".¹²⁹ In other words, the order for the escalation of despair is from "ignorance despair" (Part One C B a) to "conscious despair" (Part One C B b) to sin (Part Two). More importantly, I suggest that such "continuing connection" between *Sickness* Part One and Part Two implies a progressive scenario of resolving despair by faith. The continuing intensification of despair implies that whether the pagans are situated in "ignorance despair" or "conscious despair", the only way to resolve their despair is to further intensify such despair into "sin" before acquiring faith as the cure of despair. So, how does faith cure despair? As I have discussed previously, "to acquire faith" means the person must not only become aware of the implicit yet already obtained indispensable connection to the God (aware the self is established by God), but also willing to declare his complete dependence on God. In such sense, the misrelation between the self and the God, that leads the person to despair, has been restored to an equilibrium state of spirit by believing that "everything is possible with God". This includes the possibility of restoration of the self and the forgiveness of sin. In short, the purpose for Anti-Climacus to criticize the pagans with the standard of the Christian teaching is to illustrate that all human being, including all pagans with different intensity of despair, are inevitably required to experience such journey to resolve despair by faith. In addition, we have previously considered the same question in section 1.6 "Socratic self-confusion and the consciousness of sin" that: Is faith a function of the will? Both *Fragments* and *Sickness* suggest that it depends mainly on the will and the rest on the knowledge of the person, both are indispensable. In *Sickness*, Anti-Climacus claims that, "sin is not a matter of a person's not having understood what is right but of his being unwilling to understand it".¹³⁰ This seems that sin is solely a matter of will but not knowledge. Just as the Socratic definition of sin fails to recognize the transition between understanding to doing is the will.¹³¹ However, Anti-Climacus also

¹²⁸ *Sickness*, p.80.

¹²⁹ Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, p.161.

¹³⁰ *Sickness*, p.95.

¹³¹ *Sickness*, p.93.

claims that, “in comprehending a person one may err by accentuating knowing exclusively or willing exclusively”.¹³² This is to say, both of them are required to be in sin and to acquire faith. As the person in sin must not only know what the sin is but also deliberately willing to be in it. Similarly, the person who has acquired faith must not only be willing to believe the paradoxical teaching of Christianity that “everything is possible with God”, but also initially know what to will for.

The same problem appears in the discussion that concerns Socrates as a pagan. But it is even more complicated in the case of Socrates. Throughout the discussion in *Sickness* Part Two chapter 2 “The Socratic definition of Sin”, Anti-Climacus does not intend to “go beyond Socrates” and argues that the Socratic definition is wrong, rather he intends to contrast the Socratic definition with the Christian definition of sin.¹³³ To Anti-Climacus, the Socratic definition is too naïve and too defective to the Christian standard. As we have seen previously, the Socratic definition fails to capture the transition from understanding to doing.¹³⁴ Moreover, it fails to demonstrate the crucial distinction between “not being able to understand” and “not willing to understanding”, where the former is regarded as “original ignorance” that is not blameworthy and the latter is regarded as “resultant ignorance” that the person is responsible for his sin.¹³⁵ As a result, the same problem appears again: If Anti-Climacus does not aim to criticize Socrates, on what grounds does Anti-Climacus compare the Socratic definition with the standard of the Christian definition of sin? Even if we consider Socrates as a pagan, it is difficult to answer the problem raised here. Even if the purpose of Anti-Climacus’s discussion is to awaken the pagans to be aware of their own stage of despair and eventually move on to acquire faith to resolve despair, Socrates, a pagan who lives before the incarnation of God has taken place, has no chance to receive the Christian revelation for sin-consciousness or even further to faith. Thus, this leads us back to the unsolved problem that we have mentioned before: On what grounds can Anti-Climacus claim that faith is the cure to root out despair with different criteria (pagan and Christian) and with different intensity?¹³⁶ The continuing intensification scale of despair certainly illustrates the path of the sickness from *Sickness* Part One to Part Two. In addition, *Sickness* Part Two has demonstrated how the possibility of offense in the human self leads to despair. However, it is far from clear that *Sickness* has demonstrated the way for the pagan (especially Socrates) to acquire the qualification of before God, to come across the transition from the human self to the theological self, from the “unawakened spirit” to the fully self-aware spirit, and to acquire faith that is supposed to cure the sickness unto death. In such sense, even Socrates is “ignorance of what sin is”¹³⁷ (he does not

¹³² *Sickness*, p.48.

¹³³ *Sickness*, p.92.

¹³⁴ *Sickness*, p.93.

¹³⁵ See *Sickness*, p.88, 95.

¹³⁶ Daphne Hampson argues that, “Is it clear that SK considers Christological belief to heal existential despair. He never to my knowledge suggests this”. See Hampson, Daphne. *Kierkegaard: Exposition & Critique*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013, p.250.

¹³⁷ *Sickness*, p.96.

will to obscure his knowing to the genuine definition of sin: the Christian definition of sin), it is difficult to blame him for his state of being in despair. This is to say, it is difficult to claim that Socrates is fully responsible for his failure in self-knowledge in which he fails to cure his despair as the misrelation with the divine. In the following chapter, I will further elaborate and compare the conception of faith and the self in Anti-Climacus's *Sickness* and Climacus's *Fragments*. This serves as a way to examine how the relevant discussion in *Fragments* and *Sickness* complement each other on despair and the limit of reason.

3. The Limit of Reason as Despair: Does Socrates Despair?

The purpose of this section is to illustrate that both *Fragments* and *Sickness* dialectically complement each other in terms of their discussion on the limit of reason and despair (using the resources that are gathered in the previous sections of this chapter). Such complementary relationship initially appears to be how *Fragments*'s viewpoints and *Sickness*'s viewpoints add extra features to clarify each other by reaffirming the same position on the failure of self-knowledge and the relevant discussions on God/god, sin and offense. Nevertheless, it turns out that the complementary relationship between *Fragments* and *Sickness* makes each other complete through presence in the person who will to be a genuine Christian. In this section, I will 1) examine the figures of Socrates in *Fragments* and *Sickness*. Then, I will 2) demonstrate such dialectical complementary relationship by examining how *Fragments* and *Sickness* clarify and reaffirm each other's viewpoints on the conceptions of god/God, sin, and offense. I will elaborate on how they make each other complete in the next part.

3.1 Socrates in Climacus's *Fragments* and Anti-Climacus's *Sickness*

Before we turn our discussion to demonstrate the complementary relationship between *Fragments* and *Sickness*, we need to briefly examine the way Climacus and Anti-Climacus articulate the Socratic view¹³⁸ in both of these works. Eventually, I aim to question whether the figure of Socrates in *Fragments* and *Sickness* is representing different kinds of view upon the problems on self-knowledge, the limit of reason and despair? And how this influences the complementary relationship between *Fragments* and *Sickness*.

¹³⁸ The Socratic view is the way Climacus understood the arguments and positions that Socrates would hold upon different matters, for instance, Socrates insisted that truth is always already possessed within each person. This immanent sense of truth is one of the Socratic views. However, there are some views that may only appear to be Socratic to Climacus but controversial to others. For instance, Climacus repeatedly claims the theory of recollection as one of the Socratic views, which is commonly recognized as Platonic.

Socrates remains as a central figure throughout the entire *Fragments*. As we have seen previously from *Fragments* chapter I to III, Climacus intentionally begins each chapter by considering the case of Socrates (especially the case of the Socratic self-confusion in chapter III). In fact, Climacus ends *Fragments* with a final section named “The Moral”. It is a short but essential passage that represents the way Climacus articulates the Socratic view in *Fragments*. He claims that, “this project (*Fragments*) indisputably goes beyond the Socratic, as is apparent at every point. Whether it is therefore truer than the Socratic is an altogether different question, one that cannot be decided in the same breath, inasmuch as a new organ has been assumed here: faith; and a new presupposition: the consciousness of sin; and a new decision: the moment; and a new teacher: the god in time”.¹³⁹ As we have seen previously, the theme of *Fragments* chapter I (as its title already suggested) is to construct a thought-project, an alternative (B-hypothesis) to the Socratic teacher-learner relationship (A-hypothesis). Indeed, I suggest that the entire work of *Fragments* should be treated as a thought-project. As Climacus puts it, “this project (the entire *Fragments*, my emphasis) indisputably goes beyond the Socratic, as is apparent at every point”.¹⁴⁰ Throughout *Fragments* chapter I to III, there is a repeated statement pattern, as it states that, “if this (B-hypothesis or the divine approach, my emphasis) is not the case, then we return to the Socratic”¹⁴¹. For instance, in the appendix to chapter III, Climacus claims, “if we do not assume the moment, then we go back to Socrates, and it was precisely from him that we wanted to take leave in order to discover something”¹⁴². The opposition between the Socratic approach and the divine approach is, as Climacus claims, apparent at every point. In such sense, *Fragments* is a thought-project that attempts to construct an alternative to the Socratic approach. In addition, the alternative, to Climacus, is beyond the Socratic. Nevertheless, “beyond” here only indicates that both of them are different; instead, the alternative is necessarily truer than the Socratic approach. According to “The Moral”, the new organ for the thought-project is faith, the new presupposition is the consciousness of sin, the new decision is the moment¹⁴³, and eventually the new teacher is the god in time. Certainly, we can list out the Socratic version by summarizing what we have seen in the previous discussion. In contrast to the thought-project, the original organ in the Socratic view is reason, the original presupposition is ignorance, the original decision is occasion, and eventually the original teacher is anyone¹⁴⁴. Nevertheless, this is not the

¹³⁹ *Fragments*, p.111.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Fragments*, p.25. This repeated pattern also appears in p.13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 28, 51 and more.

¹⁴² *Fragments*, p.51.

¹⁴³ We need to aware that, the meaning of “the moment” (*Øieblikket*) here is different from “the moment of passion” that we have previously discussed. We have seen that the mutual relationship between the reason and the paradox can be reached only in the moment of passion (faith). Nevertheless, most of the time throughout *Fragments*, “the moment” indicates the decisive moment that the individual obtains the truth. This is the opposite to the Socratic view that, with the immanent truth, the moment that the individual obtains the truth is merely an occasion.

¹⁴⁴ To Socrates, all human beings have always already possessed the truth within themselves. Thus, anyone is qualified to be the teacher.

whole story. Surprisingly, in *Postscript*, Climacus has made an important remark on the Socratic figure that he has portrayed in *Fragments*. He admits that he has intentionally distorted Socrates into a speculative philosopher like Plato, by “holding Socrates to the thesis that all knowing is recollection”.¹⁴⁵ And he claims the reason in doing this is to “elucidate properly the difference between the Socratic and the imaginatively constructed thought (*Fragments*, as we have examined, as a thought experiment), which actually goes beyond the Socratic”.¹⁴⁶ This is to say, Climacus distorts the Socratic view of A-hypothesis, in order to differentiate it from the alternative of B-hypothesis with a significant difference between them that benefits the convenience of discussion. How about the figure of Socrates in *Sickness*?

In *Sickness*, Anti-Climacus portrays Socrates as a pagan ethicist with a unique position that is different from speculative philosophy or Christianity. Anti-Climacus differentiates Socrates from speculative philosophy that is in “pure ideality, where the actual individual person is not involved”.¹⁴⁷ It is important to be aware that, both speculative philosophy and Socrates have failed to meet the standard of Christianity in terms of the transition between understanding and doing. However, they fail in different ways. Speculative philosophy supports pure ideality that denies the difficulty in the transition between understanding and doing, as everything is necessary.¹⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Socrates, as we have discussed previously on his definition of sin, simply lacks the consideration regarding the transition from having understood something to doing it.¹⁴⁹ In addition, Anti-Climacus continues to assert that such transition is precisely where Christianity begins. Christianity has what Socrates lacks. As a result, Socrates is representing the opposite of Christianity as a pagan but distinct from speculative philosophers. This means the portrayal of the Socratic figure in *Fragments* and *Sickness* are significantly opposite, where he is a speculative philosopher in *Fragments* that he is not in *Sickness*. In addition, Climacus claims that *Fragments* “indisputably goes beyond the Socratic as is apparent at every point”, while Anti-Climacus claims that going beyond Socrates is not an urgent matter in *Sickness*.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, both of them confirm that the Socratic view is significantly different to Christianity. In the following sections, I attempt to demonstrate that both *Fragments* and *Sickness* develop a complementary relationship upon their positions to the problems of self-knowledge, the limit of reason and despair. And such complementary relationship is developed upon their consensus on the differences between the Socratic view and Christianity, despite the opposite presentations of the Socratic figures in *Fragments* and *Sickness*.

¹⁴⁵ *Postscript*, p.207.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Sickness*, p.91.

¹⁴⁸ *Sickness*, p.93.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ See *Fragments*, p.111 and *Sickness*, p.92.

3.2 The god/God in *Fragments* and *Sickness*

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how *Fragments* and *Sickness* complement each other by adding features to clarify and reaffirming each other on the conceptions of god/God through the cases of Socrates. In fact, at the end of *Fragments*, Climacus admits that he deliberately mixes some borrowed phrases in what has been said in *Fragments*.¹⁵¹ I suggest that the idea is borrowed from Christianity, as he claims that he has “wanted to forget this (Christianity)”.¹⁵² This means Climacus pretends to forget about Christianity but indeed deliberately “borrowed” the Christian teaching as the alternative (B-hypothesis) to the Socratic view (A-hypothesis). In such sense, both Climacus and Anti-Climacus refer the conception of god/God as the Christian God that is different to the pagan god of Socrates. Thus, we should expect that both works have similar views upon the conceptions of god/God and other related matters, namely, what it means to acquire faith to god/God. Also, I will follow Hongs’ translation in referring “god” to both the “Christian” god to Climacus and the pagan god to Socrates in *Fragments*, and “God” as the Christian God to Anti-Climacus in *Sickness* in my discussion.

Before examining the case of Socrates, we need to examine how *Fragments* and *Sickness* complement each other on the meaning of acquiring faith. As we have discussed previously, to Climacus, paradoxical rationality is the mutual relationship between reason and paradox. It is only possible in faith. Nevertheless, Climacus does not explicitly explain why it only happens in faith and in what ways the acquisition of faith is necessary to allow the person to be aware and receive the “initial condition” from god’s revelation. However, *Sickness* does answer these inquiries in several ways. Firstly, Anti-Climacus defines “faith” as the will and longing for possibility and he claims that, “to believe is to lose the understanding in order to gain God”.¹⁵³ This reminds us that, in *Fragments*, reason (understanding) must surrender before paradox, otherwise the mutual relationship between them will not be reached.¹⁵⁴ I have then deduced that it is because the person is willing to choose faith instead of offense, then he can be aware of the revelation from god to receive the “initial condition” as a paradoxical passion that eventually develops into paradoxical rationality. We have previously considered *Sickness* as a guide to illustrate that all human beings, including all pagans with different intensity of despair, are inevitably required to experience the journey to resolve despair by faith. To the pagan, it is a journey of becoming aware of himself as a self before God by willing to acquire faith. In *Fragments*, Climacus comments on this matter that, “whether one is offended or whether one believes, the advantage is (simply) to become aware ... awareness is by no means partial to faith”.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ *Fragments*, p.109.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Sickness*, p.38.

¹⁵⁴ *Fragments*, p.54.

¹⁵⁵ *Fragments*, p.93.

This means “becoming aware” does not guarantee the person to be in faith or offense. As we have previously discussed in sections 1.6 and 2.3, it depends mainly on the will (and the rest on the knowledge) of the person. In such sense, the person is responsible whether he is deliberately engaged in faith or offense. Moreover, as we have seen previously, “passion” is a crucial concept in *Fragments*. Faith itself is a passion that implicitly initiates the paradoxical passion of reason (understanding) to a point that the reason wills its downfall. This means the acquisition of faith is the decisive factor in allowing the person to be initially aware of the revelation from god and generating the passionate development on the mutual relationship between reason and paradox. Surprisingly, Anti-Climacus agrees with Climacus that, “whether a person is helped miraculously (revelation from God) depends essentially upon the passion of the understanding (my emphasis)”.¹⁵⁶ Secondly, both *Fragments* and *Sickness* share similar views on how the meaning of acquiring faith is connected to the conception of humility. Anti-Climacus argues that “sufficient humble courage” is the precondition for someone to acquire faith.¹⁵⁷ This is opposite to “brash courage” that only makes the person offended.¹⁵⁸ Anti-Climacus continues to explain that the reason for the person to be offended is that the paradoxical teaching of Christianity is too high for the person’s mind to grasp or comprehend.¹⁵⁹ Thus, the offended person regards such teaching as nonsense and folly.¹⁶⁰ This reminds us of the offended Socrates in *Fragments*. As Climacus argues that Socrates, the speculative philosopher, who regards “the moment is foolishness, the paradox is foolishness”, is offended by the Christian teaching of B-hypothesis.¹⁶¹ This shared view between *Fragments* and *Sickness* has inspired an important question to consider. In the previous sections, we have closely examined the meaning of the acquisition of faith with different perspectives in both of the works. For instance, faith as the passion that decisively initiates the passionate development of paradoxical rationality, faith as the opposite of offense, and faith as the cure of despair by declaring complete dependence to God and believing everything is possible with God. But we have yet to extend our discussion to consider what is the precondition that enables someone to will to acquire faith (as we can imagine that the person is free to be involved into offense instead of faith)? It is the quality of being humble to God. Before we continue to elaborate on the connection between humility and faith through the case of Socrates, it is necessary to briefly examine the conception of god to Socrates.

In *Fragments*, Climacus does not provide a comprehensive discussion on “the god of Socrates”. However, Climacus has briefly mentioned his interpretation on the matter. In *Fragments* chapter III, Climacus insists that, “Socrates constantly presupposes that the god exists... he presumably would

¹⁵⁶ *Sickness*, p.39.

¹⁵⁷ *Sickness*, p.85.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁰ *Sickness*, p.86.

¹⁶¹ *Fragments*, p.52.

have explained that he lacked the kind of courage needed to dare to embark on such a voyage of discovery without having behind him the assurance that the god exists”.¹⁶² To Climacus, Socrates is certain that there is a (pagan) god. In addition, it was his god who guarantees courage on Socrates to begin his “voyage of discovery”. As I have mentioned previously, Socrates has yet acquired his self-knowledge, and the knowledge on myth merely does not help his acquisition. As a result, Socrates is disinclined to ponder the nature of myth. In addition, the “voyage of discovery to know myself” was, as Socrates claimed, the order from the Delphic inscription (the order from the god, my emphasis). As Climacus puts, “Socrates, however, was a midwife examined by the god himself. The work he carried out was a divine commission”¹⁶³. In other words, Socrates thinks that he is fulfilling the divine commission to know himself, by serving as the teacher to elucidate the truth that has always already been possessed within himself and his learner. In such sense, the elucidation in the Socratic teacher-learner relationship only appears reciprocal on the surface, but it also is a divine commission to explore the self of Socrates. This is the key to differentiate the Socratic view (hypothesis-A) from the divine approach which Climacus proposes (hypothesis-B). It is certain that Climacus has assumed that the god (as the teacher) is to love his learner (although it is doubtful how Climacus presupposes the persona of the Christian God to the god of hypothesis-B, it is not our focus of the discussion). Nevertheless, it is not necessarily true to Socrates.¹⁶⁴ Otherwise, the god of Socrates will consider providing the condition of understanding the truth (which eventually leads to the sin-consciousness and the self-knowledge) to his learner, instead of encouraging Socrates to fulfill his divine commission of “know thyself” by serving as the teacher in the reciprocal relation. According to the passage I have cited previously, Climacus claims, “What did he (Socrates) lack then? The consciousness of sin, which he could no more teach to any other person than any other person could teach it to him. Only the god could teach it—if he wanted to be teacher”¹⁶⁵. The last sentence suggests that Climacus thinks the god of Socrates does not intend to be the teacher in the Socratic teacher-learner relationship. Thus, it is impossible for Socrates to acquire the consciousness of sin that must be activated by initially receiving the condition from the revelation of god. In addition, Socrates is trapped in untruth without receiving the condition. As Possen describes, “the god (of Socrates) simply did not allow him to discover the secret of his (Socrates) absolute untruth”.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Climacus does not only put the blame on the pagan god of Socrates but also on Socrates himself, since Socrates, the speculative philosopher that Climacus has portrayed, only embraced reason but rejected paradox. This means the speculative Socrates is offended. As a result, the moment will never be posited, and

¹⁶² *Fragments*, p.44.

¹⁶³ *Fragments*, p.10.

¹⁶⁴ See more in Howland, Jacob. *Kierkegaard and Socrates: A Study in Philosophy and Faith*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.57-78.

¹⁶⁵ *Fragments*, p.47.

¹⁶⁶ Possen, *Phaedrus: Kierkegaard on Socrates' Self-Knowledge—and Sin*, p.80.

Socrates will never acquire the consciousness of sin. But what urges Socrates not to embrace paradox but only reason? This is due to his lack of humility before God.

Relating to this matter, McCombs argues that Climacus affirms the human capacity for self-knowledge by claiming that everyone is able to know the limit of their actual knowledge.¹⁶⁷

McCombs makes a reference from Climacus's *Postscript* that claims, "Every human being ... can just as essentially ... draw the distinction qualitatively between what he understands and what he does not understand".¹⁶⁸ McCombs then asserts that, "this knowledge of one's limit is valuable because it helps one to be *humble* and receptive to God and truth, and because it helps to prevent one from getting lost in vain speculation".¹⁶⁹ In such sense, this echoes what is deduced previously, that, *Fragment's* Socrates is fully aware of the limit of reason that has caused his failure in self-knowledge, but he is unwilling to accept the limit of reason as the paradox and the god. This is to say, although Socrates begins his "journey to self-knowledge" as divine commission, Socrates does not choose to humble himself before god but only humble before reason.¹⁷⁰ In this sense, reason is his god. In the language of *Sickness*, the speculative Socrates only has the brash courage to begin his "voyage of discovery to know himself" but lacks the humble courage to acquire faith and declare his complete dependence on god. Up to this point, we have seen that, *Fragments* and *Sickness* complement each other on the conceptions of god/God and other related matters, including the meaning of acquiring faith and its connection to humility. I have also considered how they complement each other through the case of the speculative Socrates and his problem of self-confusion in *Fragments*. It is time to reconsider the case in *Sickness* that concerns the Socratic definition of sin and his despair in the following section.

3.3 Sin in *Fragments* and *Sickness*

This section aims to demonstrate how *Fragments* and *Sickness* complement each other by adding features to clarify and reaffirming each other on the conceptions of sin and absolute difference through the case of the Socratic definition of sin that leads him to despair in *Sickness*.

In *Fragments*, Climacus stresses that no one can learn the Christian teaching of sin by himself, only god can teach it through *revelation*.¹⁷¹ This means the nature of the Christian teaching of sin is *paradoxical*. Anti-Climacus agrees with this by repeatedly claiming that, "there has to be a *revelation*

¹⁶⁷ McCombs, *The Paradoxical Rationality of Søren Kierkegaard*, p.9.

¹⁶⁸ *Postscript*, p.558.

¹⁶⁹ McCombs, *The Paradoxical Rationality of Søren Kierkegaard*, p.9.

¹⁷⁰ The figure of speculative Socrates in *Fragments* is similar to the case of the "poet-existence verging on the religious" in *Sickness*, who "cannot humble himself under it in faith". See *Sickness* p.77-78.

¹⁷¹ *Fragments*, p.47

from God to show what sin is”.¹⁷² According to *Sickness*, this is precisely because the Christian teaching of sin is indeed the *paradox* that no one can comprehend, and it must be believed by acquiring faith.¹⁷³ Beside these shared views, both *Fragments* and *Sickness* agree that Socrates fails to acknowledge the teaching of sin. It is reminded that the figures of Socrates are different in both of these works. As I have mentioned previously, Climacus deliberately distorts Socrates as a speculative philosopher in *Fragments*, while Anti-Climacus presents Socrates as a pagan thinker in *Sickness*. On the one hand, the speculative Socrates in *Fragments* simply lacks the consciousness of sin and eventually leads to his failure in acquiring self-knowledge, as we have repeatedly mentioned. On the other hand, near the end of the section “The Socratic Definition of Sin” in *Sickness*, Anti-Climacus hints that the pagan Socrates is offended by the paradoxical teaching of sin. As I have discussed previously, Anti-Climacus has rejected the Socratic definition of sin as ignorance. Then, he ironically responds to the offended Socrates that, “in this sense ... from the Christian point of view, sin is indeed ignorance: it is ignorance of what sin is”.¹⁷⁴ This is to say, sin is not, as the pagan Socrates thinks, a failure in knowing, but a failure in willing. However, the pagan Socrates is not intentionally willing to obscure his knowing to the paradoxical teaching of sin. This explains why Anti-Climacus never explicitly claims that the pagan Socrates is fully responsible for his state of being in despair. In short, *Fragments*’s Socrates fails to acquire the consciousness of sin, while *Sickness*’s Socrates fails to recognize that the cause of sin lies in the will instead of knowledge. So, how do *Fragments* and *Sickness* complement each other in the conception of absolute difference?

In *Fragments*, Climacus argues that there is an absolute difference between the god and the person.¹⁷⁵ As he claims that, “if the god is absolutely different from a human being, this can have its basis not in that which man owes to the god (for to that extent they are akin) but in that which he owes to himself”.¹⁷⁶ This means the absolute difference does not lie in the difference between human’s finitude and the god’s infinitude. This is to say, the absolute difference can be accounted for “what man derives from himself” instead of “what man derives from the god”.¹⁷⁷ Otherwise, such difference merely serves as a connection that claims, “the god and the person are akin”. Thus, to Climacus, the absolute difference is nothing but sin, which sin refers to the person’s state in untruth and is through his own fault.¹⁷⁸ As Evans suggests, “Climacus obviously thinks that sin has rather profound epistemological implications... he thinks that the B-hypothesis requires such an implication”.¹⁷⁹ As has been discussed previously, it is only possible for the person to know the absolute difference from

¹⁷² *Sickness*, p.89, 95, 96.

¹⁷³ *Sickness*, p.106.

¹⁷⁴ *Sickness*, p.96.

¹⁷⁵ *Fragments*, p.46.

¹⁷⁶ *Fragments*, p.46-47.

¹⁷⁷ See Swenson’s translation of *Fragments*, p.58.

¹⁷⁸ See *Fragments*, p.15, 18, 19, 46-47.

¹⁷⁹ Evans, *Passionate Reason: Making Sense of Kierkegaard’s Philosophical Fragments*, p.75-76.

the god, where the god (teacher) initially provides the condition of understanding the truth to the person (learner) through revelation. Through the B-hypothesis, Climacus proposes that a person lacks the ability to understand truth. In other words, the nature of sinfulness indicates there is a *pre-truth period* for the person. Nevertheless, the speculative Socratic view in A-hypothesis denies such a period, as truth is already possessed within every person. As Evans puts it, “It is sin that distinguishes the B-hypothesis from the Socratic view”.¹⁸⁰ In other words, the offended reason of Socrates refused to recognize there is an absolute difference between the god and the person, and the offended Socrates denies his need for the moment. Thus, Socrates eventually lacks the sin-consciousness and it leads to his failure of self-knowledge and the problem of self-confusion. So, how does *Sickness* complement *Fragments* on the conceptions of sin and absolute difference? In *Sickness*, Anti-Climacus refers “the absolute difference” between the God and the person as “qualitative difference” and sometimes as “qualitative abyss”.¹⁸¹ Anti-Climacus agrees with Climacus that the qualitative difference is indeed confirmed by the Christian teaching about sin, as Anti-Climacus adds that “everyone is sinner before God.”¹⁸² Moreover, he once again agrees with Climacus that the state of being in sin is the person’s fault.¹⁸³ As Anti-Climacus explains that, “no one is born devoid of spirit”.¹⁸⁴ I have discussed previously that Anti-Climacus regards the state of spiritlessness and sin as disobedience and misrelation of oneself to God, where the person deliberately refuses to follow God’s will but chooses to follow his own will. And the person is responsible for such sinful deliberation.

Interesting, *Fragments* and *Sickness* hold opposite views upon the connection between Socrates and the conception of absolute difference. To be precise, they are opposite because of the different presentation of the Socratic figures in *Fragments* and *Sickness* respectively. As we have just seen above, Climacus insists that the absolute difference is sin and the speculative Socrates lacks the consciousness of sin. Thus, the speculative Socrates simply does not acquire the conception of absolute difference. Nevertheless, Anti-Climacus praises the pagan Socrates being on guard duty to maintain the qualitative difference between god and man.¹⁸⁵ Anti-Climacus explains that the Socratic ignorance, as what we previously refer as “the divine commission of the journey to self-knowledge”, is a fear and worship of the pagan god, that “guards faith against speculation” and maintains the qualitative difference between god and man.¹⁸⁶ This proves that Anti-Climacus is indeed praising the pagan Socrates in acquiring faith to his pagan god instead of praising the speculative Socrates in *Fragments*. However, Anti-Climacus does not explain whether such “praise” on the pagan Socrates is

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ See *Sickness*, p.99, 117, 121, 122, 129.

¹⁸² *Sickness*, p.121.

¹⁸³ *Sickness*, p.102.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ *Sickness*, p.99.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

compatible with his state of despair that is caused by his ignorance of the paradoxical teaching of sin. Nevertheless, it is clear that the opposing views between Climacus and Anti-Climacus are only aimed at the different presentation figures of Socrates in both of these works. After all, both of them still complement each other on the conceptions of sin and absolute difference.

3.4 Offense in *Fragments* and *Sickness*

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how *Fragments* and *Sickness* complement each other by adding features to clarify and reaffirming each other on the conception of offense through the cases of Socrates. According to *Fragments*, what exactly is offense? Climacus argues that, “all offense is a suffering... but precisely because offense is a suffering... it does not belong to the understanding but to the paradox”. As Evans claims, the word “suffering” (*lidende*) in the Hongs’ translation is an adjective formed from the verb *at lide* (to let or allow) that emphasizes passivity, but not the common Danish noun for painful suffering (*lidelse*).¹⁸⁷ Thus, offense is “something that the reason suffers or undergoes as a result of the activity of the paradox”.¹⁸⁸ Nevertheless, in what sense is offense passive? To Climacus, “offense comes into existence with the paradox”¹⁸⁹, offense is originated from paradox. Climacus continues to assert that offense can only be understood by paradox instead of understood by itself. As a result, offense is “an indirect testing of the correctness of the paradox” and “an acoustical illusion” that merely imitates and resounds the paradox.¹⁹⁰ This seems to indicate that the paradox is superior to offense. As offense fails to recognize its dependence on and origin in paradox and instead blames the failure on the weakness of paradox. Moreover, reason, rather than paradox, is blamed for the unhappy relationship between the two. As Climacus asserts that offense is the unhappy love of “reason” instead of “reason and paradox”.¹⁹¹ This means offense is the unhappy love only from reason while faith is the happy love from reason and paradox. This is to say, offense is the key which distorts the equality between reason and paradox into an inequality.¹⁹² To be precise, offense misunderstands the need of the reason (wills the same collision with the paradox, in order to reach a mutual relationship between the two) as controlling over the paradox.¹⁹³ As Evans puts, the offended reason “misunderstands its own relation to the paradox ... it fails to see that it is not an independent,

¹⁸⁷ Evans, *Passionate Reason: Making Sense of Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments*, p.83.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. For the sake of consistency with my previous discussion, I have emended Evans’ “understanding” to “reason” in this citation.

¹⁸⁹ *Fragments*, p.51.

¹⁹⁰ *Fragments*, p.53.

¹⁹¹ *Fragments*, p.49.

¹⁹² This resembles the opposite statement that claims, “for only in love is the different made equal” in *Fragments* p.25.

¹⁹³ Evans refers the view on “reason as an instrument of control” as “imperialistic reason”. See Evans, *Passionate Reason: Making Sense of Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments*, p.61, 93.

disinterested party”.¹⁹⁴ Rather, the reason is “a passionate responder to the initiatives of the paradox”.¹⁹⁵ But how does *Sickness* complement *Fragments*’s conception of offense?¹⁹⁶ In *Sickness*, Anti-Climacus agrees with Climacus that offense is originated from paradox. As Anti-Climacus claims that, “offense is Christianity’s weapon against all speculation” and the paradoxical teaching of Christianity is too high for the person’s mind (it is the speculative Socrates’s mind in *Fragments*’s case) to grasp.¹⁹⁷ Thus, the person (again, the speculative Socrates) finds it as “nonsense, and folly”¹⁹⁸ (just as *Fragments*’s Socrates claims the paradoxical teaching of the moment is foolishness).

But how does this relate to the case of the speculative Socrates in *Fragments*? As Climacus argues that, “From the Socratic point of view, the moment is not to be seen or to be distinguished ... and will not come. Therefore, the learner himself is the truth ... The expression of offense is that the moment is foolishness, the paradox is foolishness”.¹⁹⁹ This is to say, the moment is foolishness to Socrates. Because Socrates insists that everyone is already qualified to understand the truth (including the self-knowledge and the consciousness of sin), without the need of the condition which is provided by the god through revelation. In other words, the conception of immanent truth has assumed that self-examination is a way to get to the truth. Beside the speculative Socrates in *Fragments*, how does the conception of offense from *Fragments* and *Sickness* relates to the pagan Socrates in *Sickness*?

Indeed, in *Sickness*, Anti-Climacus’s attitude towards the pagan Socrates is ambiguous. As we have examined previously, Anti-Climacus praises the Socratic ignorance as a way to respect god and praises him as a model to the Christian in guarding the qualitative difference between God and man. But Anti-Climacus hints that the Socratic ignorance lacks the quality to humble himself before god instead of reason. As a result, we may spare some space to elaborate on the rationale behind the Socratic ignorance as self-examination. As Gregory Vlastos suggests, “The method by which Socrates ‘examines himself and others,’ which I am calling ‘the elenchus’... involves the form of argument: a thesis is refuted only when its negation is derived ‘from the answerer’s own beliefs’ (where Socrates thought his respondents shall say only what they believed)”.²⁰⁰ In other words, the elenchus is to examine and to test the consistency within oneself and others’ convictions. Thus, the elenchus, as the Socratic way of examination suggests, is only submitted to reason but not to paradox. Indeed, both

¹⁹⁴ Evans, *Passionate Reason: Making Sense of Kierkegaard’s Philosophical Fragments*, p. 93.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ In *Sickness* p.131, Anti-Climacus claims that one of the forms of offense is “the suffering of unhappy love with respect to love”. This reminds us that, in *Fragments*, Climacus refers offense as “the suffering of reason’s unhappy love”, with respect to love that is analogized as faith.

¹⁹⁷ *Sickness*, p.83.

¹⁹⁸ *Sickness*, p.86.

¹⁹⁹ *Fragments*, p.51-52.

²⁰⁰ Vlastos, Gregory. *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*. Ithaca, US: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 111.

presentations of the speculative figure of Socrates in *Fragments* and the pagan Socrates in *Sickness* are committed to depend on rational knowing instead of considering the possibility of willing. To Climacus, the reason of Socrates (both in *Fragments* and *Sickness*) is offended. And to Anti-Climacus, Socrates (both in *Fragments* and *Sickness*) does not choose to humble himself before god but only humble before reason. As a result, even Socrates is aware that there is a limit of reason, he only insists that the god must be consistent with reason. The offended reason of Socrates has prevented him to recognize the god as the paradox, and the paradoxical Christian teaching of sin and faith.

4. The Climacus – Anti-Climacus Dialectical Relationship

In the previous part, we have examined how *Fragments*'s viewpoints and *Sickness*'s viewpoints add extra features to clarify each other by reaffirming the same position on the failure of self-knowledge and the relevant discussions on God/god, sin and offense through the cases of Socrates in both of the works. Based on our previous discussion, this part continues to examine how the dialectical complementary relationship between *Fragments* and *Sickness* is completed only existentially, in the life of the person who wills to be a genuine Christian. Moreover, this part attempts to illustrate how the entry “Climacus and Anticlimacus: A Dialectical Discovery”²⁰¹ suggests a dialectical reading between Climacus and Anti-Climacus. The entry *JP* VI 6349 states,

For we are related to each other, but we are not *twins*, we are *opposites*. Between us there is a fundamental relationship, but we never get any farther than to a *repelling contact*... The point we are seeking is this: to be a genuine Christian... Just one thing is impossible—that we both say the same thing about ourselves; on the other hand it is possible that we both could vanish... Actually, we do not exist, but he who does come to be a genuine Christian will be able to speak of us two brothers—opposites—just as the sailor speaks of the *twins* by which he steers.²⁰²

And the following entry *JP* VI 6350 states that,

The “Postscript” by Anticlimachus could well make a complete little book under the title: Climacus and Anticlimachus. For Climachus (the former spelling of Climacus) is already known and the idea implicit here (by placing the two together) is authentically *dialectical*.²⁰³

²⁰¹ *JP* VI 6349.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *JP* VI 6350.

It is important to be aware that, the full title of the entry is “Climacus and Anticlimacus: A Dialectical Discovery by Anticlimacus - Postscript”. It (the first citation above) is signed by Anti-Climacus, while the entry that follows (the second citation above) is from Kierkegaard. As Kierkegaard reaffirms the claim of Anti-Climacus’s entry that the relationship between Climacus and Anti-Climacus is indeed *dialectical*. Moreover, Kierkegaard admits that the topic of such distinct dialectical relationship between the two is worth to be developed into a complete book.²⁰⁴ This means such relationship is a significant issue that is worth serious studies. With the brief discussion on the dialectical reading between the two in this part, I hope it shows the potential significance of engaging with such a topic that is rather new to the current studies on Kierkegaardian pseudonymity. But how is it dialectical? In the entry, when Anti-Climacus talks about his “malevolent”²⁰⁵ character, he claims that he has taken the position as an extraordinary Christian “simply out of spite against Climacus”.²⁰⁶ Moreover, he insists that Climacus and himself are not (biological) “twins”. They are opposite to each other. These claims from Anti-Climacus is supported by Kierkegaard, where he explicitly explains that the opposite nature of Anti-Climacus to Climacus is exactly the reason to represent Anti-Climacus.²⁰⁷ As Anti-Climacus claims in the entry that, in one sense, they have everything in common, but in another sense, they are utterly different.²⁰⁸ This means they are dialectical not only because they are opposite to each other, but also, as Malanschuk claims, they “complement” each other.²⁰⁹ I suggest that they complement each other not only, as have been examined in the previous part, by adding features to clarify each other’s viewpoints, but also by making each other complete existentially, in the person who wills to be a genuine Christian. Anti-Climacus then claims that, “Actually, we (Climacus and Anti-Climacus) do not exist, but he who does come to be a genuine Christian will be able to speak of us two brothers—opposites—just as the sailor speaks of the *twins* (in constellation) by which he steers”.²¹⁰ It is important to be aware that they exist as pseudonymous abstractions that are different from concrete individual beings. They can eventually represent themselves as a set of viewpoints that is dialectical complementary to each other. But this must be and can only be fulfilled in a concrete individual being (who becomes a genuine Christian). Otherwise, they only clarify but not complete each other. They exist as the “twins in constellation” that Malanschuk describes as “points of orientation”.²¹¹ As he adds that these two orienting viewpoints can serve as guiding principles for individual life.²¹² This is to say, the sailor orients himself by following

²⁰⁴ *JP* VI 6349.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *JP* VI 6442.

²⁰⁸ *JP* VI 6349.

²⁰⁹ Malantschuk, Gregor. *Kierkegaard's Thought*. Edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971, p.336.

²¹⁰ *JP* VI 6349.

²¹¹ Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Thought*, p.336.

²¹² *Ibid.*

the guidance of the constellation, just as the person orients himself to be a genuine Christian by following the guidance of the Climacus-Anti-Climacus dialectical twins. This connects to the purpose of my entire thesis. To be precise, “dialectical reading between Climacus and Anti-Climacus” means it is possible to demonstrate that both Climacus’s *Fragments* and Anti-Climacus’s *Sickness* aim to illustrate their *repelling contact point*²¹³ (“how to be a genuine Christian”) by revealing how to restore a proper relationship from oneself to the Christian God. This is also the implication of the dialectical complementary relationship between them, as I have examined it throughout this paper. More importantly, such examination on the topic only matters to us when we relate ourselves to it, as we have elaborated in previous parts, the failure lies in the will instead of knowledge. The value of the knowledge that is deduced from the dialectical complementary account of Climacus-Anti-Climacus can only be revealed through a concrete individual. Both the overcoming of the limit of reason and the state of despair, and the restoration of the proper relationship from oneself to God are actions that can only be taken by a concrete individual (who does not only know but willing to act). But how precisely do they serve as “guiding principles” for people willing to be a genuine Christian?

The answer lies in Kierkegaard’s usage of indirect communication by taking advantage of the dialectical (opposing yet complementary) relationship between Climacus’s *Fragments* and Anti-Climacus’s *Sickness*. As Kierkegaard strategically adopts pseudonyms to communicate with his readers. Beneath Kierkegaard’s pseudonymity lies the conception of “indirect communication”. Indeed, there are two distinctive ways to relate oneself to an idea, namely the indirect communication and direct communication. Direct communication relates in a “disengaged and impersonal manner” while indirect communication relates “oneself appropriately to certain idea *in the first person*”, as John Lippitt puts.²¹⁴ For instance, a student attempting to learn and memorize the knowledge of physics equations in the lecture has to relate himself to the knowledge in a disengaged manner. The student’s first-person experience of gravity loss in his dream in bed last night, obviously, will not change the equation of gravity by any means. However, such first person experience does matter when the student begins to reflect on how the anxious experience of learning and memorizing the knowledge of physics equations in the lecture leads to his nightmare last night. To be specific, Kierkegaard suggests that ethical and religious matters should involve relating oneself in the way of indirect communication instead of direct communication. This means both Climacus’s *Fragments* and Anti-Climacus’s *Sickness*, which concern “how to be a genuine Christian”, have adopted the strategy of indirect communication to engage with their readers. But how is it possible? Firstly, the significance of the “indirect communication” on Kierkegaard’s pseudonymity is best described in the

²¹³ Ibid, as mentioned in “Climacus and Anticlimacus: A Dialectical Discovery”.

²¹⁴ Lippitt, John. *The Routledge Guidebook to Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling*. London, UK: Taylor Francis Ltd, 2016, p.8.

well-known appendix named “A First and Last Explanation”.²¹⁵ As he claims that, “In the pseudonymous books there is not a single word by me. I have no opinion about them except as a third party ... if anyone wants to quote a particular passage from the books, it is my wish, my prayer, that he will cite the respective pseudonymous author’s name, not mine.”²¹⁶ Although I have no space here to elaborate on the dilemma between such claim and the fact that (in the beginning of “A First and Last Explanation”) Kierkegaard admits for all of the works that are published with his pseudonyms. But it is clear that pseudonymity is a strategy of indirect communication to prevent readers from overinterpreting the personal influence of Søren Kierkegaard to the writing of any of his pseudonymous authors’ works. Otherwise, readers are not only risking themselves in reading against the wish of Kierkegaard’s withdrawal, but also disallowing oneself to engage with the works in a first-person manner.

Secondly, as I have mentioned previously in section 2.1 that, Kierkegaard claims that the readers’ illusions can only be removed indirectly from behind.²¹⁷ As a result, the strategy of indirect communication aims to remove the readers’ illusions, as Lippitt claims, by entering into the readers’ point of view.²¹⁸ It is reminded that, not only has Kierkegaard adopted indirect communication by creating the pseudonyms of Climacus for *Fragments* and Anti-Climacus for *Sickness*, but also have both Climacus and Anti-Climacus adopted indirect communication in their works. Neither Climacus nor Anti-Climacus has explicitly claimed that they have a particular group of readers in mind. But I suggest that Climacus’s *Fragments* primarily targets the speculative readers and aims to remove their speculative illusions. And Anti-Climacus’s *Sickness*, as we have discussed in section 2.1, primarily aims to remove the illusions by awakening its pagan readers. According to the previous discussion in section 3.1, Climacus deliberately distorts Socrates as a speculative thinker in *Fragments*. This aims to set up *Fragments* as a thought-experiment that contrasts the speculative Socratic view with its alternatives as the Christian view. I suggest this is the way Climacus attempts to remove the illusions of the speculative readers of *Fragments*. Similarly, according to the previous discussion in section 2.1, Anti-Climacus deliberately makes a misleading differentiation between “*Sickness* Part One concerns the human self” and “*Sickness* Part Two concerns the theological self”. Because Anti-Climacus does not want to present his discussion explicitly from the Christian perspective at first, but to present *Sickness* gradually from psychological to Christian discussion as a process of awakening and removing the illusions of the pagan readers of *Sickness*. This means Climacus and Anti-Climacus deliberately adopts indirect communication in their works to remove the illusions of their speculative

²¹⁵ It was signed with Kierkegaard’s real name instead of Climacus, and attached in the final section of *Postscript*. See *Postscript*, p.625-627.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ *The Point of View*, p.43.

²¹⁸ Lippitt, *The Routledge Guidebook to Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling*, p.8.

readers and pagan readers. These illusions are self-deceptions that hinder the readers to examine themselves and to recognize their misrelation to the divine. We can thereby see the strategy of indirect communication as their agreement in serving as the “guiding principles” for someone to be a genuine Christian. This is to say, Climacus’s *Fragments* and Anti-Climacus’s *Sickness* dialectically complement each other well as a guidebook for anyone willing to be a genuine Christian, only when the person is willing to acknowledge and act according to the way Climacus and Anti-Climacus have jointly revealed as a proper relationship from oneself to the divine (through their complementary discussion regarding the limit of reason and despair as the failure of self-knowledge and the misrelation to the divine). Then, it is possible for him to speak of the Climacus-Anti-Climacus dialectics as “twins in constellation” and guiding principles that allows himself to be a genuine Christian.

In this paper, I have illustrated that, to Climacus’s *Fragments* and Anti-Climacus’s *Sickness*, paradoxical rationality is necessary to overcome the failure of self-knowledge. This is illustrated in the way that *Fragments* and *Sickness* complement each other on their discussions that regard the limit of reason and despair as the failure of self-knowledge, especially through the cases of the Socratic self-confusion and the Socratic definition of sin. Such complementary relationship does not only add extra features to clarify each other’s viewpoints, but it also dialectically makes each other complete existentially, in the person who wills to be a genuine Christian. This is then demonstrated with the reference to the “Climacus and Anticlimacus: A Dialectical Discovery”. Eventually, I have examined the dialectical reading between Climacus and Anti-Climacus. I point out its potential in suggesting a new approach to the current studies on Kierkegaardian pseudonymity, which lacks a serious engagement on the dialectical relationship between the two that is distinctive from others.

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